

REGINA TAYLOR

MAGNOLIA

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MAGNOLIA

by REGINA TAYLOR

Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam

And admit that the waters
Around you have grown

And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone

If your time to you
Is worth savin'

Then you better start swimmin'

Or you'll sink like a stone

For the times they are a-changin'.

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize
with your pen
And keep your eyes wide

The chance won't come again

And don't speak too soon

For the wheel's still in spin

And there's no tellin' who

That it's namin'

For the loser now
Will be later to win

For the times they are a-changin'.

Come senators, congressmen

Please heed the call

Don't stand in the doorway

Don't block up the hall

For he that gets hurt

Will be he who has stalled

There's a battle outside

And it is ragin'

It'll soon shake your windows

And rattle your walls

For the times they are a-changin'.

Come mothers and fathers

Throughout the land

And don't criticize

What you can't understand

Your sons and your daughters

Are beyond your command

Your old road is
Rapidly agin'

Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.

The line it is drawn

The curse it is cast
The slow one now

Will later be fast

As the present now

Will later be past

The order is

Rapidly fadin'

And the first one now

Will later be last

For the times they are a-changin'.

-BOB DYLAN

Magnolia Cast Breakdown

THOMAS.

Thomas is 40. He is direct, strong-willed- very intelligent. He speaks well. Shoulder to the wheel. Must be able to move language forward. Has a humor and a bite to him.

LILY.

47. Bohemian. She is a sensual, passionate and outspoken. Optimistic. An explorer. Of the air- she takes flight out of a need to get away from the hard knocks of her life- and the constrictions of being a woman in the place and times in which she was born. Worldly. Must have a wry sense of humor-and joy of life at all cost. Need to experience life to the limits. She can be raw and edgy. Anarchist.

BEAU.

46. Born of privilege- he is optimistic- usually things are taken care of for him. The last ten years have been a slow slide down. Very attractive though his looks are fading from too much carousing.

CARLOTTA.

55. Larger than life. Robust, bawdy, upbeat. She hides the bruises that life has given her with her humor. Great singing voice.

SAMUEL.

Wry, dry, matter of fact. Wise. Has seen it all in his over one-hundred years of witnessing and weathering. Has humor and grit to him.

WILLIAM.

48. Practical. Sweet and romantic around the edges but framed by practical rigid borders. Handsome but plain.

MESHACH.

22. A steady-Eddy. Constant, trustworthy, hardworking, passionate. Must be a great blues singer.

ANNA.

16-17. Her ingénue looks belie the passionate young woman who takes very much after her mother's spirit.

MAYA.

21. Beautiful. Her fierce, sharp-tongued- take-no-prisoners-attitude

is juxtaposed against a dreamy soul.

ARIEL.

25. A work-horse. Loyal, fierce, strong, compassionate. Insecure about her place in this world.

CAIN.

23. Light complected. Worldly. He seems to be arrogant and above it all. He is very articulate and passionate. Trying to create himself- and find his own place in this world. Would like to escape his skin.

PAUL.

29. Reads Jack Kerouak and Allen Ginsberg. Sings like Bob Dylan. Poet, dreamer, philosopher- wanderer. A little lost. Trying to find his way.

Haunt

To frequent a place or appear to somebody in the form of a ghost or other supposed supernatural being.

To cause somebody unease, worry, or regret by continual presence or recurrence in his or her life.

To go often to a place.

A place that somebody likes and often visits.

A supposed supernatural being or a manifestation of one, especially one associated with a particular place.

Haunted

Inhabited by or visited regularly by a ghost or other supposed supernatural being.

Looking strangely frightened or worried.

Haunting

Evoking strong emotion, especially a sense of sadness that persists for a long time.

The play takes place at the beginning of 1963 and 'the times they are a changing'. The year prior- John Glenn orbited the earth and returned to an America where protest and sit-ins shift the social landscape.

New mayor of Atlanta, Ivan Allen- trying to dissuade black realtors from buying land over the invisible line that separates blacks and whites- makes his first mistake. He erects Peyton Wall, which is quickly photographed and labeled by the media and the world as Atlanta's Berlin Wall. The tide of social change is rolling towards Atlanta threatening many of its walls.

Situation- Land where you are born and said you would never go back to is in foreclosure- and will be sold/lost unless someone does something about it.

Question- Why do you go back to that land and try to redevelop/salvage/save it?

What is lost and gained in the bargain?

Thomas and Lily each have different perspectives of the place of their birth. Both -slaves to the Forrest Estate - have tried to escape to find personal freedom.

Still, they are *haunted* by this place- where- how they see themselves/self worth is defined and deeply rooted here- where past present and future intertwine beneath this soil/skin.

Lily needs to hold onto this place that remembers her in her innocence. Thomas needs to control this place where his innocence was torn apart.

In their attempt to hold ownership of this land- do they gain control of themselves or is self bargained away?

SUGGESTED SET.

ACT ONE.

Black Pearl's and Kerry's Restaurant are the same set. Switching restaurant's is a matter of changing hanging restaurant logos and lighting different hanging fixtures. Lighting might help in changing color schemes for each restaurant. We see an appropriate number of chairs and three tables covered with tablecloths or a horse-shoe booth and tables - set in the front third of the stage- close to the lip. Two door frames. Moss colored carpet.

There is an outdoor bench at the entrance door next to white's only and colored's only drinking fountains.

ACT TWO.

INTO BIRTHDAY PARTY SCENE-

Kerry's Restaurant is struck in the black out. We open the stage to reveal a larger space- the Magnolia Estate. Moss colored carpet. There are the same chairs and tables without the table clothes and the bench. -A swing that hangs from the catwalk is introduced. In the back is a doorway into the Main house.

INTO THE FINAL SCENE-

In the black out the furniture is struck and the swing flies out. The moss carpet is rolled up to reveal a hard wood floor. There are two or three boxes in the middle of the room. There are suitcases by the door. The same exterior doors are now interior doors of the house. A crystal chandelier hangs from above.

In the Black Out- WE HEAR the voice of a horn calling out- a familiar – haunted sound.

As Lights up-

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Black Pearl's Restaurant

Mid-January, 1963.

THOMAS sits at a window table reading his morning paper. At a second table sits MESHACH studying a book.

MAYA

(singing off-stage) It's gonna rain/ It's gonna rain/You better get ready/ and bear this in mind/ God showed Noah/ the rainbow sign/ he said it won't be water but fire the next time.

(As MAYA enters she stops at Thomas' table)

THOMAS

(to Meshack)

Woke up last night from a dream about ...a tree.- Couldn't get back to sleep. Where's my coffee. Maya?

MAYA

What happened to you?

THOMAS

(a cut on his face)

Shaving.

Looked in the mirror this morning and an old man was staring back at me.

MAYA

The usual, Mr. Thomas?

THOMAS

Worked here less than a month and you're talking about -the usual.

MAYA

Pearl told me that you always have scrambled eggs, cheese grits, biscuits and gravy- every morning for the last twenty years.

THOMAS

-Longer than that.

MAYA

Pearl told me just how you like things.

THOMAS

Where is my Pearl?

MAYA

She moved to Chicago. You know that- and everyday you keep asking me-

THOMAS

-Pearl knew what I like. How I like it.

MAYA

I'm cooking the same things for you exactly how she told me to.

THOMAS

She knows I like my eggs scrambled *soft*.

MAYA

Mr. Thomas-

THOMAS

Yours is scrambled too hard.

MAYA

I know what to do- been cooking all my life-

THOMAS

Your eggs give me indigestion. Don't taste nothing like Pearl's. Man come into Black Pearls restaurant- You expect to see Black Pearl- Been that way since she opened her doors in 1903 -What happened to my Pearl.

MAYA

Chicago.

THOMAS

She'll be back.

MAYA

Not till they take down Peyton Wall. She said between the marching and that new mayor putting up that wall to keep the Coloreds from buying over the White line- she said- "Things here have turned into a topsy turvy mess."

.

THOMAS

-Things aint that different up there.

MAYA

- Said she aint' coming back until things are set straight again. Until then she's with her people/ in Chicago.

THOMAS

/Except it's too cold in Chicago. She'll know that soon enough. I just know she best come back soon. She's about to lose a regular customer if she doesn't come back soon. Regular paying customer has got a right to get what he wants the way he want it- how he's used to it being done. Got a right to take his business elsewhere if he ain't satisfied.

MAYA

Every morning I've been fixing you the usual. Everything just the way she does.

THOMAS

Pearl was soft spoken. Man could eat his breakfast and read his paper in peace.

Why did you quit working for the Forrest's all of a sudden?

MAYA

Born on that plantation and baptized in that river. Just like you. All my people work for them since slavery. Just like yours. My mama- her mama- my great-grandma all were cooks for the Forrests. I'm free. I got the right to come and go as I please. Just like you left, Mr. Thomas-

THOMAS

Why I left has nothing to do with how you fix my eggs. Your mother was a fine cook, too. And though you do favor her about the eyes- and them hips is definitely Mabel's daughter- you don't favor her in the kitchen at all. And she had a fine disposition too. Knew how to talk- just like Pearl- "What can I get for you Mr. Thomas.- Yes, sir, right away, sir." Simple like that and it's done. Even when you were working for the Forrest's you would sashay around -sashay like you were more like the Queen of Sheba than the maid. You understand your place in this world and your eggs won't be coming out too hard- your gravy too thin. Once you get that understanding everything else will follow.

MAYA

I'm not gonna be a cook all my life.

THOMAS

Sure they didn't fire you?

MAYA

I quit. Half the time they don't pay you these days.

THOMAS

Hmph.

Martha Forrest- I got nothing against her- she's always done right by me.

MAYA

Can't expect people to work for free.

THOMAS
Who's cooking now?

MAYA
Ariel.

THOMAS
Little Ariel.

MAYA
Until they can find somebody to work for room and beans everyday,
/it's her.

THOMAS
Her own grand-daughter

MAYA
They keep calling me to come back – especially now that Miss Lily has
come home.

THOMAS
Lily Forrest-Ayers. Seven years since I laid eyes on her.

MAYA
Came back this past week on account that they told Miss Lily about
her mother-Ms. Martha hasn't been looking herself lately. And if they
take their land-

THOMAS
The land?

MAYA
It's in foreclosure- I thought you knew.

THOMAS
Long as there's breath in Miss Martha's body –nobody's touching that
land. They'll figure a way.

MAYA
They've been trying to keep it quiet- just how bad things have gotten.

THOMAS

Hm-
Maybe if I set my mind to it-
Maybe I'll go by this week.

MAYA
You said you'd never go back to that plantation.

THOMAS
Go by and pay my respects.
Wonder if she'd recognize me.

MAYA
You're just the same, Mister Thomas. Except for that belly of yours.

THOMAS
Where's my coffee. Where's my eggs?

MAYA
Coming Mr. Thomas.

MESHACH
And could I have another cup of coffee, Maya?

MAYA
(sharply)
How many hands does it look like I got?

(Maya exits)

MESHACH
Getting married soon. Me and Maya.

THOMAS
My condolences.

MESHACH
I love her Mr. Thomas. That's all I know.

THOMAS
Same old same o'.

MESHACH

I asked her to marry me but she said I don't make enough to support myself let alone- So now I got three jobs. Still work off and on for the Forrests- do stock down at Rich's department store- and wait tables at Kerry's. I graduate next year- accounting- but I can't seem to make things add up.

THOMAS

A Morehouse man.

MESCHACH

Yes sir.

THOMAS

Lily Forrest got her mother to offer to send me to Morehouse- everything paid. I didn't take them up on it. You don't want to owe nobody cause then they *own* you. Anyways—I was too dark to pass the paper bag test to get in that place in my day. Went into the military instead. Still -Lily Forrest was the first one to see inside me and said -I could make something of myself- threw me that lifeline.

Three jobs, huh?

MESHACH

And still broke than a broke dick dog- sir. Trying to figure a way-

THOMAS

You think she's gonna marry you?

MESHACH

All I know is that I look at her and see my salvation.

THOMAS

You're a damned man for sure. What makes a man chase after something that don't want him.

MESHACH

You never married.

THOMAS

Dodged that bullet.

MESHACH

Mr. Thomas- They say you got shot when you were a numbers man.
That you started out selling moonshine-

THOMAS

I'm a legitimate businessman now.

MESHACH

Yes sir. No offence. You're the best real estate man in this county.
Everybody says. Yes sir. Just trying to figure a way- You know how
hard it is for us.

THOMAS

It's hard for any man born naked into this world.

I know what folks say about me- "The field hand's son". My Pa-

MESCHACH

-*Lead* field hand.

THOMAS

He was always- "Yes-suh- no suh"-

MESCHACH

Out in the fields- His voice got weight-

THOMAS

Barking out orders- from sun to sun-

MESCHACH

-What he say – you best do. He say jump--/

THOMAS

-You say- how high? –Worked in the field till the day he died. He
gambled drank and pissed everything away. All he left me was his
name and his debt.. He always said- I'd never amount to the dirt up
under my feet.
This morning I saw his face- staring back at me in the mirror- How can
that be?

MESCHACH

(sings)

Born on a day when the sun didn't shine.
Picked up my shovel and I went to the mine.
Loaded sixteen tons o' number nine coal,
And the straw boss said well bless my soul.
Loaded sixteen tons, what do ya get
Another day older and deeper debt.
St. Peter don't you call me, cuz I can't go.
I owe my soul to the company sto'.

-

THOMAS

You see my clothes, boy? See these shoes- Italian. See my
Oldsmobile parked outside?
How much do you think it cost?

MESHACH

I don't know, sir.

THOMAS

A hell of a lot.
Still I know what most folks say about me. Nobody takes Old Tom's
son seriously. Junior. Like I must be like him. Ain't got the respect
some other folk got- Don't have the same say- even with my money.
Still working off his debt.

MESHACH

Plenty of folks across Atlanta come to you for your advice, Mr.
Thomas.

THOMAS

Some.

MESHACH

What I'm saying is true.

(beat)

THOMAS

After you graduate- you come up to Hunter's Point and knock on my
door. Though I ain't promising you nothing.

MESHACH

Thank you sir.

THOMAS

I say where're my eggs? Where's my coffee? Where's my Pearl?

(Maya enters with a plate and coffee.)

MAYA

(Exaggerated mammy)

I is coming!

THOMAS

Certain things a man expects because it's always been. Like the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. When that surety's snatched away- makes a man begin to question who he is himself.

I don't like my coffee from the bottom of the pot.

MAYA

A fresh pot's on the stove, Mr. Thomas.

MESHACH

And if I could trouble you for another cup.

MAYA

(Salty)

Said I'm making another pot.

THOMAS

Don't you be wondering why -if you don't see me in here tomorrow.

MESCHACH

Haven't seen you at Kerry's Restaurant yet, Mr. Thomas.

THOMAS

Why would I want to eat at Kerry's?

MESHACH

Cause we can now-

THOMAS

I haven't been waiting for William Kerry to let me come in his front door to sit down and eat. Don't want to go to Kerry's and wonder if somebody's gonna spit in my food when I'm not looking. Aint' no victory in that. Every day I eat my breakfast and lunch at Black Pearl's- Ham sandwich for lunch and go down to Paschal's for my chicken dinner every night. Listen to my music at the Blue Lantern. Or go to Odd Fellows for some other various entertainment. Got my own colored doctor-policeman- got Herndon for my banker- I don't need to eat, sleep let alone pee next to no white folk. Everything I need I got- right here in Sweet Auburn.

MAYA

We got our own as long as we stay in our place. That's why they put up that wall.

THOMAS

I ain't studying about no Peyton Wall. That don't mean nothing to me. That's in the hands of the courts now anyways. Peyton wall will come down soon enough. No need for all that shouting and carrying on. All that's for those desperate starving Mississippi Delta Negroes that ain't never been cut a sliver of the pie- You're one of them - student protesters.

MAYA

I've marched with the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Junior- Yes.

THOMAS

Junior. He's a dreamer. Me- I'm a practical man. How come Atlanta got the airport contract and Birmingham didn't- Cause Atlanta understands -negotiation. To get something you may have to give something in return.

Atlanta- understands- that all those folks rioting and sicking dogs- ain't good for nobody's cash register. Nothing personal about business. It doesn't care about any color except the color of green. That wall will be down soon enough. And when it /does-

MESHACH

-When it does I'll bet you'll be the first to buy over that line.

THOMAS

I'll be the second. After the first colored family moves in the rest of them homes will be a sweet deal.

MAYA

Dealing with folks who'd rather sell at a loss than live next to you doesn't bother you at all?

THOMAS

We're all in agreement that a person should have the freedom to live next to whomever he chooses. And for that freedom – if they want to sell to me for cheaper than what they bought- who am I to judge what that's worth for them.

MAYA

You go half a mile outside of Atlanta and a colored mans green money still can't buy white land.
You belong to yesterday, Mister Thomas.

THOMAS

What's past has no chains on me.
Yesterday, today, tomorrow- Business is business.

(CARLOTTA, CAIN enter)

CARLOTTA

We're hungry!

THOMAS

Carlotta! Cain!

CAIN

Bonjour.

THOMAS

Back from Paris I see.

(They join Thomas at his table.)

CARLOTTA

Can't get no Bar-B-Que and greens on the leftbank or the right. Told Samuel- Ariel got to come into Atlanta to the fabric store today anyways -so he better drive us in too.

Heard Black Pearl moved to Chicago. – Maya- We've been eating Ariel's beans and rice since we got back. Girl don't even know to put some ham hocks in. Only thing she can cook without burning it. Everybody else in the house- of the one's that's left- are stretched thin. Asking me to cook. I told them -when I started to work for the Forrests thirteen years ago- I'm the governess to your children. And I can be the maid. Watching over and cleaning after- those're the only two parts I know to play. I don't know nothing about the clanking of no pots. Meshach! Maya!

MESHACH

Ma'am.

MAYA

Carlotta- You finally made it back.

CARLOTTA

Six months. Couldn't send Anna- that innocent baby across the ocean by herself to drag her mama back home.

MAYA

Cain--

CAIN

Oui, madam.

MAYA

You know you know me- We grew up on that same plantation- your ma cleaned- and my ma-

CAIN

Hm- I know you by the back- you must be Mabel's daughter.

MAYA

All you were supposed to do is escort Miss Lily to the train station-Your mama's been calling every week from Augusta for the past seven years asking folks if you'd sent any word.

CAIN

Madam Lily took me by the hand- Next thing you know we're in Spain. The first time I sat down and ate tapas and drank Andalusian wine- tasted like freedom.

La Petite Mademoiselle, sil vous plait -un cafe?

MAYA

(sweetly)

Just putting on a fresh pot. How do you like it?

CAIN

Very black, sweet and hot.

CARLOTTA

And some fried catfish, cheese grits and some potlicker with some cracklins- to start. And a cup of that sassafras tea.

THOMAS

You gonna read us the tea leaves, Carlotta? Tell us our future.

CARLOTTA

Maybe after I eat- we'll see what kind of mood I'm in.

(then)

Um.

Storm's coming. My knees never lie.

(As Samuel enters.)

THOMAS

How's your day, Samuel?

SAMUEL

Gabriel must've lost his horn. Judgment day done been postponed.

THOMAS

They still let you drive old man?

SAMUEL

My eyes still as sharp as a hawk.
(to Maya)
Gimme my usual, Pearl.

MAYA

It's me- Maya, Mr. Samuel.

SAMUEL

Does that change what I want?

MAYA

Burnt toast and fig preserves-and a bottle of Coca-Cola.

(Maya exits.)

SAMUEL

She keeps saying she's waiting for a sound- Miss Martha.

THOMAS

A sound-

SAMUEL

To let her know that the day of reckoning is nigh.

CARLOTTA

Miss Martha's been talking more and more out of her head since we got back. Talk about things that happened sixty years ago like they just happened earlier in the day. And when Miss Lily finally sashayed in -Miss Martha says- "Blood of my blood has finally come home. Come sit by my bedside- my sweet Minerva."

THOMAS

Minerva. She called her by my -grandma's name?

SAMUEL

I remember a sound before the troubles come down.

THOMAS

The troubles-

SAMUEL

Yes suh. Back about a week after I got married- that was way before your Pa was even thought about- yes suh- I remember a sound like the rising call of some bird. Sound got closer each day. Before freedom fell down. And trouble came tumbling after.

CAIN

Nothing wrong with freedom, old man-

SAMUEL

Before- everybody knew where they belonged. They knew they'd eat regular and where they were gonna lay they wooly heads at night. The earth knows to stay it's course- to avoid catastrophe. Freedom came rearranging the order of things and trouble came tumbling after. That's when Sherman's men came over that hill- She says she been waiting on -a *sound*. She says she *hears* it- faintly-coming around the bend.

CARLOTTA

Worried out of her head. If they don't do anything- by the end of this month they'll be foreclosed. Then what'll happen to me. I'm old.

THOMAS

-That wall is coming down any day and when it does-

I'm gonna pay my respects to Lily Forrest this week and if anybody asks me - I'll tell them what they need to do to save themselves before it's too late.

CARLOTTA

You want to try to tell the Forrests what they got to do-

THOMAS

It's all in understanding the gain against the loss. She'll listen-

You say -Ariel is at the fabric shop?-

SAMUEL

Yes-suh.

(Thomas exits.)

CARLOTTA

Nobody's gonna want to hear his tune.
Who the hell does he think he is- trying to tell somebody what they
got to do.

SAMUEL

Old Tom's son.

CAIN

The yardman's boy- He thinks just because he and the Forrests /share
blood-

MAYA

Blood ties-

CAIN

He's still Black and nobody wants to hear/ about -

SAMUEL

His grandma- Minerva- was white/ as cotton-

CAIN

Old Tom could pass for /white-

SAMUEL

- Old Tom-

MAYA

/Old Tom died of a broken heart after what they did / to his oldest-

CAIN

Strung up his oldest/ from a tree out there-

MAYA

Why Mister Thomas left that plantation -

MESCHACH

-And ain't set foot on it again.

MAYA

Why he never sets a foot outside Sweet Auburn after dark.

CARLOTTA

Oh my!

SAMUEL

Anyone who knew Tom senior –knew he was/ a-

CAIN

- A mean drunk-

SAMUEL

-sweet tenor.

MESHACH

- He made extra money singing/ on the side-

SAMUEL

Everybody loved to hear Old Tom sing- He'd always finish with that-
"Bye Bye Blackbird" song.

CAIN

- He sang in Black/ face-

SAMUEL

He sang in black tux and tails. Called himself /Moe-

CAIN

-Moe the Black Crow.

SAMUEL

He'd do a fine shuffle/ off to buffalo-

CAIN

-Buck his eyes and grin.

Folks would throw nickels and dimes at him-
"DOES YA'LL WANTS SOME MOE?"

CARLOTTA

-Ha!

MESCHACH

Mr. Thomas-

(Thomas has returned- unseen until now. He stands in the doorway and then crosses to his table. No one says anything.

Thomas retrieves his fedora he'd left behind, straightens his tie and exits.

BEAT

Cain turns on the radio- WE HEAR THE NEWS OF THE DAY-JANUARY OF 1963- "...the astronaut who will orbit the earth... into BLACK OUT. In the blackout we hear a collage of news and music circa 1962- '63.)

SCENE TWO

KERRY'S RESTAURANT

One day later.

LILY and BEAU sit at a table by the window. WILLIAM KERRY stands next to their table. He's always fidgeting with his silver lighter. MESCHACH enters as the waiter.

LILY

In Greece they scooped up fish from the ocean and fried them over an open fire on the beach. In Japan we ate sushi-

WILLIAM

You ate raw fish?

LILY

In France we ate snails drowned in garlic-picked them with a tiny silver fork straight out of their shells. In Australia- fried alligator-

WILLIAM

Oh my!

LILY

In India -cooked crickets are delicate and sweet - Oh -But my dear Lord-what I missed most is fried green tomatoes. Salmon croquettes. Macaroni and cheese.

WILLIAM

Of course dinner's on the house-

BEAU

Nonesense.

WILLIAM

Then may I offer some champagne- Miss Lily Forrest is home again and everything's now right with the world.

LILY

Sweet William.

WILLIAM

Miss Georgia Peach- three years in a row.

LILY

Was that me?

I remember when this restaurant first opened.

WILLIAM

A year after we opened the one in Marietta. Then Pa gave this restaurant to me- right after graduation. Business has been slow these recent months- what with the troubles here- but that too will pass- I've been down for the count many a time over the years -Me and my family over the years. First was the boweevils- ate up all our cotton. 1836 my people were eating nothing but turnip greens. But then the railroad came through and bought up all our land! Then there was the war. Our property didn't survive Sherman's terrible march to the sea. Had to start from scratch selling fried fish at a stand just off Peachtree and third. And finally we were able to open our first restaurant in 1933! But then came the depression. All we managed to hold onto was a little plot out by the racetrack. That's what saved us - was their building the airport out there!

We never gave up our hope. With sweat and fortitude and-

BEAU

Dumb luck- Like rolling the dice each time.

LILY

(to William)

Yes. Yes.

I've missed you -my old friend-

WILLIAM

Your hair is as red as your Miss Martha's- that fine lady.

LILY

Just like our father to marry a woman with hair redder than his own.
What can one expect?

WILLIAM

You've been gone too long- and not one postcard.

(William touches Lily's hand and exits.)

LILY-

There was always *something* about his hands-

BEAU

He started out as the busboy here. His Pa groomed him good- A good man- his Pa. A good pinch hitter- William.

We can't eat out everyday- but just for today I thought-

LILY

I needed to get out of that house. Just for today- then back to Ariel's beans and cornbread-

BEAU

- She does the best she can-

LILY

The dear heart.

BEAU

Under the circumstances-

LILY

Is this the "last supper"- brother?

BEAU

-Dear sister- In a matter of three weeks our home will be sold.

LILY

Mama will never allow that, Beau.

BEAU

Our Mother has dictated the guest list for her funeral.

LILY

-She'll be carried in a horse drawn carriage to the First Presbyterian Church where our dear Pastor will say a few words- before the funeral procession will wind its way through the city then carry her home- where she'll be lowered down into the ground next to our dear beloved Pa. Oh yes and Samuel will walk along this venue playing his Dixie trombone. (*imitating trombone-*) Waaa-wa-wa wawa waaa- Mama's been planning her funeral for over ten years now-

BEAU

Ever since Pa died.

LILY

She's survived.

BEAU

Pa always said I'd never measure up.

LILY

We've just run into a spell of bad luck, brother. That's all.

BEAU

A string of bad calls- /bad investments-

LILY

-Between fast women – and slow gin- Baby brother-

BEAU

I know- I know. I wish it had all gone to you-

LILY

You're the one they sent to college- their only son-

BEAU

- I wish it had all gone to you. Then you'd know how hard it is- How hard it is for anyone.

LILY

Baby brother-

BEAU

Never wanted to be anybody's businessman. Never wanted any of it-

LILY

Things are as they are. How they've always been.

We still have some Coca-Cola stocks.

BEAU

I had good balance- a sweet swing and my fast ball- whoo eee-

LILY

-Fast Ball Beau.

BEAU

Yep- Top of the fifth- first man up- We still got time. Yes. Our name still means something. I'm meeting next week with Ned Bradley.

LILY

He was a terrible shortstop.

BEAU

Two left feet- but now he heads the steering committee at the Chamber of Commerce. He always looked up to me. Admired my speed. And he still has a crush on his favorite Georgia Red.

LILY

Send him my regards.

BEAU

It's important right now how we show ourselves- Let them know we're the sure bet. You're the matriarch now-

LILY

She seems to be getting stronger everyday since I got back- Mrs. Martha Forrest -the last keeper of the gate.

BEAU

The prodigal daughter has returned to the fold.

LILY

(like a sheep) Baaaa-
(then-)
She can't remember my name.

BEAU

You need to start acting more like yourself – dear sister.

LILY

Myself-
HA!

BEAU

It's serious- Lily. We're sinking. We are sinking. And I need you – I need you to start acting more like one of us. Mother always said to remember/ to whom you belong.

LILY

(Lily folds her hands primly.)
/ "Remember to whom you belong."
HA!
(She puts her fingers on either side of her head)
Look -I'm a martian- "Your Earth and it's ways are so strange to me- and I to it."

BEAU

Where are your girls.

LILY

I gave them my purse and left them shopping at Paxson's.

BEAU

Lily-

LILY

Anna's birthday is in less than a month. And poor Ariel-

BEAU

Annie looks more and more like you.

LILY

Nothing like me.

(Lily looks out the window)

LILY

Today we shopped at Davison's, J.P. Allen and Rich's. Then sat for a while in the Paradise room. I missed the Paradise room. I missed the kudzu.

A Hindu priest in Burma said to me- "It's important what you hold on to. It's important what you let go."

BEAU

What does that mean?

LILY

(Shrugs- then)
Everything looks so different now.

BEAU

Urban development. Urban development. Worse than Sherman's fires.

LILY

The French say we Americans have gone mad-

BEAU

We ain't Birmingham.

LILY

I don't remember it being-

BEAU

-*Old* Mayor Hartsfield was a smart man. He warned that *young* turnip-

LILY

-Maybe it's always been - But I don't remember seeing-

BEAU

--Hartsfield warned -our new young Mayor Ivan Allen *Junior*- to do nothing you can take a picture of. /"Do nothing you can take a picture of." Coloreds- circling round-

LILY

Everything's changing so fast- brother-

BEAU

Colored realtors circling round the Peyton neighborhood-

LILY

So much I don't recognize. -My head's spinning-

BEAU

Circling round like vultures. So what does he do the young turnip-
what does Jr. do first chance he gets but build that damn barricade.
People take pictures. Front page of the Times- ATLANTA'S BERLIN
WALL-

LILY

Could you ever imagine-

BEAU

Atlanta ain't Mississippi.

LILY

That astronaut last year-

BEAU

John Glenn--

LILY

-A handsome man- Can you imagine- Orbiting- Free of earth's gravity-
Why would he ever come back-

BEAU

They said if he veered off course just a fraction of an inch- he could
never come back- floating out there lost forever.

LILY

Whether or not he could ever come back-I think- I think- He would
just need to know that earth would always be there. And that it would
always be the same as he remembered it- and that it would always
remember him. -That's what would keep him whole.

- Have I changed so much? Has it been so long? Have I gotten so
old?

(pained) She couldn't remember my name.

(Samuel enters.)

SAMUEL

(greeting) Miss Lily.

You left your scarf in the car Mr. Beau. Catch your death.

LILY

That wall will have to come down and then-

BEAU

Damned if they do- damned if they don't.

SAMUEL

The dam broke in 1906- When the fires rose in the streets of Atlanta- Just like before when the troubles rained down— I remember the sound just like before- then again in 1915 when they strung up that white man- *Leo Frank* was his name.

LILY

What are you saying?

BEAU

He's old, poor Samuel.

SAMUEL

Don't know how you leave the house with one blue one brown-Here's your socks and a tie that's more apropos-

BEAU

Thank you Samuel.

SAMUEL

Been dressing you since you were in short britches and you still is a certifiable mess.

BEAU

I can tie it myself, old man.

SAMUEL

Since when?

LILY

Samuel, I'm so glad you're still with us.

SAMUEL

What, ma'am?

LILY

I'M GLAD YOU DIDN'T DIE.

SAMUEL

Yes I did. Day before yesterday I believe.
(*then*)

But I just refused to lie down until I could see your face again. (*joke.*)
Home. You made it back home.

LILY

Whenever I tried to describe to someone where I came from-
In the spring- as far as I could see- magnolia trees - blossoms - white
as snow as far as I could see-

BEAU

Forty-two acres.

LILY

Skirting the outsides – were blossoms of pink, yellow, some shades of
purple- almost a blue-black hue.
Eden.

SAMUEL

In times before, about forty or fifty years ago, the magnolias were
dried, soaked used for perfume-

LILY

Yes-

SAMUEL

Used to be fresh picked and sent all over the county for weddings and
various functions. They'd send carloads off to Savannah, Albany
Augusta... Oh, there was money galore. And the smell /to them...

LILY

/Yes- the smell-

SAMUEL

They knew a way of doing it at that time.

LILY

Where are those times now.

SAMUEL

Folks done forgot.

LILY

(feeling lost)

I always knew that no matter how far I traveled- Like Gretel's
breadcrumbs -I could always find my way back-

SAMUEL

Those magnolias have always been there from before anyone's
memory.

LILY

(feeling lost)

-and that this place would remember me when I was young and
innocent.

SAMUEL

Some things never change.

Ma'am.

(Samuel exits)

BEAU

(Gently touches her face.) You were seventeen and the smartest in
your class- You and Jim Crosby were vying for Valedictorian-

LILY

-And I won!

BEAU

You devoted every Saturday to the *Women's Charity Board*.

LILY

-Was that me?

BEAU

You wanted to become a defense lawyer-

LILY

Our parents wanted me to *marry* a lawyer-

BEAU

Our mother called you- her Precious Heart-

LILY

-Precious -

BEAU

To Pa you were his Angel Divine-

LILY

-Angel-

BEAU

Flawless in your devotion to family and church- A soloist (*Lily ghosts: Soloist*) in our choir- What was that song they'd always ask you to sing?- How did it go?-

LILY

How did it go? How did it-

(*Beau sings or hums- Amazing Grace-*)

LILY

No- No that wasn't it-

(*Lily sings or hums- Just a Closer Walk with Thee-*)

BEAU

No-

(*both sing or hum -Abide with Me-*)

LILY

Definitely not-

(*WILLIAM, ANNA, ARIEL and CAIN enter. PAUL follows after.*)

WILLIAM

(to Anna) You are the image of your mother when she was your age.
An innocent flower.

(to Lily) And you ma'am - are more beautiful than before-

LILY

My sweet William.

ANN

I found the prettiest white dress-

LILY

Your seventeenth birthday. How can that be?

ARIEL

Shouldn't have bought so much-

CAIN

No more packages will fit in the car, Madam.

LILY

You and Samuel take the packages home and return for us later.

CAIN

Senoirs y Senoiras – arreviderci.

(Cain exits)

BEAU

Boy has forgotten where he came from.

WILLIAM

More champagne and sweet tea for the young ladies.

MESCHACH

Yes sir.

PAUL

(in beatnik clothes, carries a guitar.)

Lily Forrest-

LILY

And who is-

ANN

Look who we found on the street.

WILLIAM

Your daughter Ann insisted that I let him in.

ANN

I was only nine years old the last time you saw me-

PAUL

-I just wanted to stop in a minute and say hello.

I tutored-/your children- Such a kind and loving mother-

(Lily embraces Paul)

LILY

/The teacher- Paul- I remember- My son, Nathan, loved you. I remember. That summer. My beautiful son drowned in that river- That's not how it's supposed to be- Why would God let that happen?-

BEAU

Sister-

LILY

Paul- It's been seven years. Looks like you've been to hell and back.

PAUL

Been on the road-

BEAU

(under his breath)

Long haired freak.

PAUL

A colored woman on the bus would call me- "That bearded lady". This past year I've been on Freedom Rides.

WILLIAM

Seven years now and still no degree.

PAUL

Ghandi considered himself a student until the day he died.

BEAU

Damn red commie peacenik- Trying to avoid the draft.

LILY

You look homeless, poor thing- Here take this.
(offering him money.)

PAUL

No – no- no need.
I live off of songs and my poems.

Ma'am-
*(presenting ** guitar)*

LILY

Yes-

PAUL

The Phoenix.
(he sings-)

All my dreams/ drowned in flames
Down to the ground/ Nothings the same
I come home/ Root to vein
I come home again

Searching for a new song to sing
To wash away my guilt and stains
Free me of my guilt and sin
I come home again

As another season dies
Waiting for that bird to rise
Red feathers -blackened wings
Up from ashes -hear it's cries-

(then)

Ma'am.

(Lily embraces Paul again.)

BEAU

Now- now-

*(Beau separates Lily and Paul.
William follows Paul out.)*

ANN

Groovy.

BEAU

No hope of making a living off of that. His own family disowned him.
Lives in a rooming house in Sweet Auburn.

(Meshach crosses in to take their orders.)

MESHACH

Ma'am?

ANN

Apple pie a la mode, please.

ARIEL

Nothing for me. Thank you.

Meshach exits.

I went to Black Pearl's yesterday to talk with Maya- I already knew
what she'd say- who could blame her- And here we are- shopping-
eating out- things we can't afford.

LILY

Our credit's still good.

BEAU

-In a slump- that's all.

LILY

(to Ariel) You look out of your eyes like some old woman with the
weight of the world on your shoulders- You have my mother's eyes- as
if passed down by blood. The day your own mother put you in my
arms and walked away. I held you like you/ were

ARIEL

Like I was your own.

LILY

Such serious eyes- Your hair has grown so wild.

ARIEL

I saw Thomas Forest yesterday-

LILY

Thomas!

ARIEL

He said to send his best.

You know he just built those homes on Ashby-

LILY

(proud that Thomas made good his escape)

I always said he would make something of himself.

BEAU

Shanty towns.

ARIEL

He said he would like to come by and talk with you. He thinks he might know a way out of our situation-

BEAU

Our business is none of his concern.

LILY

I'd like to hear what he has to say. Did he say when he'd like to meet?

BEAU

Lily-

LILY

(with a bite to Beau)

With a proper education- can you imagine how far he would have gone.

BEAU

Bases loaded, no outs, three balls, no strikes-
Here's what we gotta do-
I'm talking to the Chamber of Commerce-
Lily- you always had a gift- Could always wrap people around your
little finger. Even William-You could start by talking with him. And
then there's our Grand-Aunt in Savannah.

LILY

Ha- Grand-Aunt Clara wouldn't give us the spit -/ the spit from her
mouth.

BEAU

-Lots of water under that bridge. You up and married that Yankie-

LILY

-You never married at all.

BEAU

But our little Ann is an innocent lamb in that woman's eyes.

ANN

Great-grand-aunt Clara reminds me of mothballs.

BEAU

Ann, we need to depend on you to go to Savannah and speak with her.
If we each do our part- cover all our bases- I know we can pay off the
mortgage.

LILY

And what again is my part?

BEAU

(to Lily)

-I need you to believe in me this one time-

ANN

Uncle-You've never let me down.

BEAU
That's all I need to hear-

ARIEL
I believe in you too, Uncle.

BEAU
Yes. Well and so.

(William enters with cigars.)
WILLIAM
Hand rolled Cubans. Been saving them for a special occasion. And in the back room is a bottle of scotch with your name on it, Beau-

LILY
Sweet William, could I have a light? *(holding up a cigarette)*

WILLIAM
(taken aback)
A light? -

LILY
One of a handful of affectations I picked up in France.

BEAU.
This ain't France- dear sister-

WILLIAM
Please Lily- If you don't mind-

(William touches Lily lightly.)

LILY
Sweet William-
(She puts away her cigarette)

- I forgot to ask you- about *your Irene?*

WILLIAM
I'm sure Irene would love to have you over sometime soon. We both would.
I'll open that scotch and let it breathe.

(William exits-)
(pause)

LILY

Trying to tell somebody what they can and can not do.
I know- behave. Behave. I need to behave like- hm.
Never thought I'd be back here and here- I am.

BEAU

His restaurant- his right. Please, sister-

(Beau exits)

LILY

(to Ann) You will go to college.

(to Ariel) And you should have gone when-

ARIEL

-Running the household is a full time job. I'm fine.

LILY.

"Boys will be boys but a woman- A Forrest woman"
-hm-

(to Meschach) Some bourbon, would you please.

In the desert of Arabia – You know I never could tan- I dyed my skin
and hair with henna's made by a Tunisian holy man-

I traveled to Marrakech with the bedouin. I dressed as a boy. A
woman could never travel by herself. Alone. I called myself Abdul-
Haqq. It means servant of the truth. Abdul could go wherever he
wanted. Do whatever he wanted. And no one ever knew. Boys
traveling with men through the desert are sometimes used as
concubines. Still- no one ever knew- who I was- what I was-

ARIEL

MOTHER-

(Meshach exits.)

LILY

Every month your grandmother would send a girl all the way to Athens to pick up her cigarettes. Athens Georgia, so that no one would recognize a maid from the Forrest's household. And every Tuesday afternoon our mother would sit with a short glass of bourbon and she would smoke three cigarettes and nurse that one drink for the hours before the children came back from school. I discovered this was one day I had come home early. I saw her smoking and drinking and humming- Her face to the sun. She never looked happier than on her Tuesday afternoons when she thought she was alone and free.

(Meschach returns with bourbon. Lily takes out a cigarette-)

LILY

(to Meshach)

- Do you have a match?

ARIEL

Mama-

MESCHACH

Ma'am, I don't know-

LILY

Don't you worry- I'll get it myself-

ANN

Mama- Why can't you-

LILY

Why can't I - Why can't I what?

ANN

Nothing.

LILY

I'm still your mother. "Why can't you ..."
Why can't I? I can and I will.

(Lily exits.)

ARIEL

I keep praying to God that things will be set straight.

Grandma is getting stronger.

ANN

If she dies-

ARIEL

Don't say that-

ANN

But if-

ARIEL

-God will make a way-

ANN

-we're sunk.

ARIEL

He gives us no more than we can bear.

ANN

They want to sell our home. Then years from now - when everyone who remembers it is dead- people will talk about us- about the Forrest Estate- like - Atlantis-

ARIEL

You sound so morbid. Stop.
God will save us.
Mama will talk to Thomas-

ANN

What did he say?

ARIEL

I just know that he's a smart businessman.

ANN

You've always kept up with the news of that one.

ARIEL
Thomas has always been our friend.

ANN
Every time you say his name-

ARIEL
(*defensive*)
-He helped to raise me as much as anyone.

ANN
You're blushing-

ARIEL
Stop it.

ANN
I've seen stranger things. In these last six months-

ARIEL
Annie-

ANN
ANNIE.

ARIEL
What?

ANN
Annie bananie foe fannie-

ARIEL
What-

ANN
My name is Anna.

ARIEL
Sister-

ANN
I'm old now.

ARIEL

You're still my baby sister. Always will be. And you're only sixteen.

ANN

Almost seventeen.
I feel so old.

ARIEL

When we get home I'll make you some warm milk. You've been gone so long. You're tired is all. I'll tuck you in.

ANN

Sweet Ariel. You are better than my own mother-

ARIEL

-Our mother in Marseille learned to pilot a plane and then flew solo across the Atlantic in twenty- two hours and thirty-six minutes. In Africa she went into the bush with machete and gun and helped to deliver medical supplies to a Bantu village-

ANN

-I had to beg her to come back.

ARIEL

She hurts so much-

ANN

She fell in love in Spain- He followed her to France-
-He wants her to come back to him- over there. In Paris we all lived in this one little apartment. I could hear them through the walls all hours of the day and night. The walls- banging. The next time I'd see her--- bruises up and down. And he'd be just as black and blue - She gave as good as she got- she said- because I told her I couldn't understand why she'd let him put his hands on her like that - She has no shame. No shame. She's never apologized - for leaving- For anything. She didn't want to come back. But I brought her home. Now everything can be the way it was before...

(Lily comes back with William's cigarette lighter. She lights her cigarette- sips her bourbon and hums. Ann looks away- ashamed.)

ARIEL

(scolding-)
Mama-

ANN

Who are you?

LILY

(singing- trying to remember-)
I shall not be-
I shall not be moved-
I shall not be
(stronger)
I shall not be moved-
Like a tree planted by the river-
I shall not be moved.

That's how it went!

(As BEAU enters- He takes the cigarette from Lily's mouth and stamps it on the floor. Lily takes out another cigarette defiantly and ignites the lighter-)

BLACKOUT.

(In the black out we hear hammering, then PAUL's VOICE-singing BOB DYLAN'S "HARD RAIN"- }

PAUL

**Where have you been my blue-eyed son-
Where have you been my darling young one-)**

SCENE THREE
BLACK PEARL'S RESTAURANT.
ONE WEEK LATER
CARLOTTA, CAIN, MESHACH, PAUL.

PAUL plays guitar as MESHACH is the rhythm section.

PAUL

(song continued-)

I stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains
I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways
I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests
I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans
I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard
And it's hard/ And it's hard/ And it's hard/ And it's hard-
And it's hard rains are gonna fall.

(Hammering fades out. MAYA enters with coffee for CARLOTTA)

CARLOTTA

"I don't know nothin' about birthin' no babies".

I went in for that role. Didn't get it. That Butterfly heffer stole it from me. I wanted to audition for Mammy. Hattie McDaniels got it. They said I wasn't hefty enough. I was a skinny little something back then. Couldn't have been more than ninety pounds soaking wet. They wanted somebody big and fat to play Mammy. I told Selznick that I was born to play that role. Why does Mammy have to be so fat. Why can't Mammy be a skinny colored woman. He just laughed. Said he had a part perfect for me. I went in- "I don't know nothing about birthin no babies". Victor Fleming the director was crawling on the floor. I swear he peed- laughing so hard. Knew I had it. Knew that part was mine.

Then that Butterfly heffer- and I am not spreading no tales but every body knew how she got that role. Not that I knew her personally but everybody who knew her personally *knew*- And that's all I have to say about that hussy.

Everybody would know my name now. What the hell kind of name is Butterfly anyhow? And Hattie- when she won the damn Oscar- that could have been me.

After that I took my act on the road- that night that bitch won my Oscar. I went back to my nightclub act. Told Hollywood to kiss my black ass. Been on the road since I was six-years-old. My mamma

and daddy both died. I don't remember them much. Don't remember my real name or how old I am exactly but I feel young. Some show biz folk took me in. Traveled all over- Kansas- Wyoming- Chi-ca-go- South America- Europe- That fat black heffer got my Oscar- I got my boys together- Carlotta Mendoza and the jungle kings. I was married to a Cuban with a wandering eye. That's how I got my neck slit. 1950. His other wife, she jumped me. Right in the middle of a set. Jumped up on my stage - "Teach you to mess with my man." - She cut my throat. Then she stabbed out my husband's eye- "The one eye I leave you - you better be sure you keep it on me." And he left out with her. Couldn't blame him for that. She didn't cut me too deep- Didn't lose my voice. Just lost my taste for the road. What else could I do except hire out as a mammy- what else? Who else could I be? In those days.

(to Paul)

Where I've been.

Well our errands are done- What time was Samuel to pick us up? Not like him to be late.

CAIN

He's old.

MAYA

To travel...

(Paul plays the guitar and Meschach is the rhythm section- BLIND WILLY MCTELL'S "BROKE DOWN ENGINE BLUES.")

MAYA

You've seen things.

I'm not gonna be a cook for the rest of my life. I want to go to University of Georgia-/someday.

CAIN

-Why do you want to force yourself on something that doesn't want you.

MAYA

How do you see me?

CAIN

You smell- like black Georgia earth after a rainy day. You have the smell of things I thought I had forgot- Here- from pulling mint, and vidalia's. There- Murray's pomade- like my grandma's hair. And the slight smell of lavender- the home made soap we used every Saturday

night when my eight brothers and sisters took turns in the bucket. I was always last- the youngest – Always the water had already turned cold and grey.

Your blouse- boiled outside in lye soap- hung up on a line- smells like the sun. You smell of things I've tried to forget but like my father who worked in the smokehouse half his life- even after he worked for the railroad – some things seep into the skin- down into the bone. He still smelled of where he came from no matter how hard he scrubbed. Still he didn't mind. It reminded him of what he had loved.

MESHACH

(sings for Maya)

I went down in my praying ground fell on my bended knees
I went down in my praying ground fell on my bended knees
I ain't crying for no religion
Lord give me back my good girl please-

If you give me back my baby I won't worry you no more
Don't have to put her in my house, Lord, just lead her to my door.

Lordy Lord Lordy Lord Lordy Lord Lordy Lord Lordy Lord

Can't you hear me rappin baby, rappin on your door
Can't you hear me rappin baby, rappin on your door
Now you hear me tappin, tappin across your floor
I feel like a broke-down engine ain't got no drive at all
I feel like a broke-down engine ain't got no drive at all
What make me love my woman she can really do the Georgia crawl
I feel like a broke-down engine ain't got no whistle or bell
I feel like a broke down engine ain't got no whistle or bell
If you're a real hot mamma come take away daddy's weeping spell.

CARLOTTA

Oh my my my my my!

MESHACH

How I sing is how I make love to a woman.

MAYA

A lot of slobbering and noise.

MESCHACH

What's wrong with that?

CARLOTTA

-If I had two dimes to rub together I would open up a club back there
- They love them some Negroes up in France.

PAUL

Unless their Negroes come from Tunisia, Algeria-

CAIN

Savages.

PAUL

What's savage is what's happening in Birmingham, Mississippi,
Arkansas...
Freedom rides give you a different perspective of the world.

CAIN

In France- La Chocolate Madam -Josephine Baker has Frenchmen
following her down the street.

CARLOTTA

They roll out the red carpet for that butt-naked heifer-

CAIN

You didn't lack company in France- Carlotta.

CARLOTTA

Neither did you Mister Café au lait.
Not that I prefer white men over colored men. A man is a man in that
they are all dogs at the end of the day.

MESHACH

I ain't nobody's dog.

MAYA

(to Cain and Carlotta)

I was at the first sit in Atlanta. Marched in/ Selma Alabama-

PAUL

Selma Alabama- Mississippi-

MAYA

We were there-

MESHACH

Where have the marches gotten us?

MAYA

You'd rather be a good behaving Negro- All your life you do what they tell you to do.

MESHACH

I'm not in school to end up in jail- I'm going somewhere.

MAYA

How do you plan to get any where-

MESCHACH

Getting a job with Mr. Thomas after I graduate-

MAYA

Mr. Thomas-

MESHACH

Mr. Thomas never begged for nobody to give him anything -

MAYA

Mister Thomas - he knows who he is on this side of the wall- Take down them walls and he knows he might have to start all over again.

MESHACH

Mister Thomas-

MAYA

Your Mister Thomas he'd rather go backward than forward- Saw him this morning heading back out to the Forrest estate because Miss Lily called for him- And he went - just like a good behaving Negro-

MESHACH

You're the good behaving Negroes - following King Junior down on your knees-

MAYA

Dr King's call for sit ins-

MESCHACH

King Junior is the one telling ya'll to be calm and obey.

PAUL

(showing the scars) In that Montgomery Alabamy jail house I got cracked twelve times with a billy-club across my body- my head. Womp bomp a loomopa wop bang boom. They had me singing Tutti frutti- oooooo- all night long.

MESHACH

Begging like some dog-

MAYA

(to Cain)

When they dragged us from that lunch counter- a man burnt me with a cigarette butt – here-

MESCHACH

Naw. I won't be down on my hands and knees-

MAYA

And here the scar from a broken coke bottle- and here- see? –do you see-?

MESCHACH

--asking somebody to recognize me as a man. Naw. That just ain't me.

PAUL

(writing in his notebook)

Racism is a cultural disease--a malignancy – it grows from within- spreads through tissue –blood- organs- skin -chokes off all sensibilities-makes us deaf- blind and dumb. Passed down through blood- the only way for a healing is the coming of the flood-Tide waters about to break- what was buried now rises above- /what was unspoken and unseen-now rears it's head and screams.

CAIN

A first memory- was waking up one morning on the Forrest estate to see hanging from one of those Magnolia trees- a Colored man in uniform. I couldn't have been more than three. Mister Thomas' brother- they said- He'd just come back from overseas- They said he had just gotten off the train- he was talking loud about Jim Crow- He drank from a white fountain and they dragged him home- strung him up in that tree. And I'm looking up at him that morning- asking Mister Thomas- "Did he fly up there with his wings?" The wings pinned to the jacket of his uniform.

MAYA

(To Cain- Pitying-)
Cain-

MESHACH

Colored man is jinxed. From the day he is born. And more likely to be killed by one of our own than the ku-klux-klan.

(to Maya)

May as well kill yourself --right? Nobody's gonna care anyway you go-right? Some people would be relieved -
Right? -

MAYA

Meschach.

MESHACH

I need to speak to you, Maya.

MAYA

Speak.

MESHACH

Alone.

MAYA

Later.

MESHACH

What you need isn't over in France- It's standing right in front of you.

MAYA

I said later.

MESHACH

Yeah.

OK.

(then)

I thought- Everybody always said- expected us-

MAYA

But none of them ever asked *me*.

MESHACH

OK. OK. Yeah.

PAUL

(to Meshach.) Got some - uh- smokes out in the car. *(indicates weed)*

MESHACH

Why not.

(Paul and Meshach exit.)

CARLOTTA

In my day it was the – “If you don’t like it – Go back to Africa Movement” -I bought that ticket- and I was left with nothing but an empty pocket-book at the station- That boat sailed off without me- Maybe this time-

(She sees that Maya and Cain only have eyes for each other.)

CARLOTTA

No need to waste good weed on youth.

(Carlotta exits following Meshach and Paul.)

(- Thomas enters.)

MAYA

You're late this morning Mr. Thomas- Quarter past noon.

THOMAS

Where's my coffee-

MAYA

The usual?

THOMAS

Want a bowl of rice-

MAYA

Mr. Thomas-

THOMAS

-Want it like my grandma made- with some butter, sugar and a touch of condensed milk.

MAYA

You always have the same -

THOMAS

Ain't nobody's field Negro here. I'll eat what I want when I want.

(Maya exits. Cain remains.)

THOMAS

Been calling Lily Forrest every day for the past week. Catch up a little on the phone but no time. No time to hear what I got to say. Times running out- Two more weeks that land will be sold. What's it to do with me. Who are they to me. Who owned my great-grandma— Great- great- grandpa-

Who built that estate with their own hands? Those hands owned by Nathan Bedford Forrest's kin.

All that business is past and gone. Got nothing to do with me.

All are dead and gone now. I'm the last of the colored line of Forrests. Every one of them are buried out there in the colored cemetery- just below the river where I was baptized. All of them buried out there under them Magnolia trees. My ma. She died pushing me out. My Pa slapped me and I took my first breath. And then- my brother- first born son- Pa's heart- broke that day- Pa died on that day. It just took years for him to let them lay him in the ground. Still some things never die. Like what he said to me when they cut my brother's body

down. Pa said to me- "It should have been you. Shoulda been you. You ain't worth the dirt you was born from." Hm.
I walked away from that place the very next day - said I was never coming back.

Yesterday Miss Lilly called- asked me to come out there to meet her this morning. Haven't been back in over twenty years. I get out of the car and I'm standing in the middle of this place that named me. I remember strong what I hated about it. Don't remember it being so- The smell - and the earth so black. The servants quarters where I was born- a blue green shade. Worn down. And the east meadow- where my Pa -drunk- he'd beat me good most nights.

Same meadow he taught me to ride my first horse. Funny how some memories can eat up other memories. Some things we forget- like they never happened. Other things harder to shake-like our shadow. Our shadow's with us till the day we die- I think our shadow lives on way after we're gone. Like my father's shadow- dragging me back - Like my father's voice- I feel the weight of his voice- like hands wrapped around my neck strangling me before I can even yelp. I stand silent in this yard.

Yeah.

I'm walking towards the house when - who do I see- leaning over the vegetable bed- a tall thin woman- white as cotton - flaming red hair. I could swear it was my grandma Minerva. And then my Aunt Bessie - Uncle Theo- Great aunt Clayola- My own mother- she's there- They're *all* of them there surrounding me- their voices rustling the leaves they are falling from the branches like blossoms- Magnolia blossoms grown too heavy with their own scent, secrets and memories. All these ghosts I thought I left behind- surrounding me as I'm walking towards the house - Knocking on the door of the house- I'm standing in the threshold trying to summon the courage to open my mouth to call out my own name- And then I hear this sound- crying- hollers- Voices- rushing like water out of the mouth of that house-

Naw.

Hm-

I still can't believe- Mrs. Martha Forrest is dead.

Naw.

(As the lights go down we HEAR then SEE SAMUEL in SPOTLIGHT- playing his Dixie TROMBONE.)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

In blackout we hear voices born of black Georgia soil-

VOICES:

I shall not be – I shall not be moved

I shall not be- I shall not be moved

I'm like a tree planted by the river

I shall not be moved.

As Lights Up-

SCENE ONE

ONE WEEK LATER

Thomas, face lathered, studying himself in his mirror- holding razor to his neck.

THOMAS

(As Thomas slowly shaves himself.)

WE SEE SHADOWS OF Ghosts and Thomas' Father in a white African robe/

We see Thomas- razor in hand- as he turns and slashes out at the ghosts- (fighting himself). He turns back to the mirror and sees blood on his own face.

INTO BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO
PEARL'S RESTAURANT
THAT SAME DAY

RADIO PLAYING MUSIC OF THE DAY- We see MAYA, PAUL ,CAIN and ANNA DANCING (the Jerk- Mashed Potato- the Twist) in Pearl's Restaurant.
Then- OVERLAP-

PAUL
(chants) The wall has got to fall-

PAUL, CAIN, MAYA, ANNA
THE WALL HAS GOT TO FALL-

CAIN
But when?

As THOMAS enters-
MAYA turns off the
radio.

MAYA
The usual, Mr. Thomas?

THOMAS
Who can say- these days.
Your people know where you are, Miss Anna.

ANNA
Cain is here.

THOMAS
Cain.

CAIN
She was here when I got here. This is my day off.

PAUL

I brought her here.

ANNA

I'll be seventeen in a week.

THOMAS

Cain call the house. I'm sure their nerves are already stretched.

ANNA

So many people have been out there since the funeral two days ago- nobody notices if I'm there or not.

(Cain exits to make phone call)

THOMAS

It was fine funeral.

MAYA

Fine funeral.

ANN

Grandma was laid out in her favorite dress. Emerald green. Because it matched her eyes.

MAYA

So many people.
Everybody loved your grandma.

ANNA

I loved her very much. Thank you for the flowers, Mr. Thomas.

MAYA

I hope you got the casserole I sent.

ANNA

Yes. Thank you Maya.

I've lived here all my life and never been here- Sweet Auburn.

THOMAS

(To Paul)

And *you* brought her here.

ANNA

I ran into Paul downtown. My cousin from Birmingham was heading back and dropped me by the train station. I ran into him there. Passing leaflets. So I helped. Up and down Peachtree Street. Then we headed over here – he showed me his room-

PAUL

-She wanted to see my records.

ANNA

Coltrane-

(She makes sounds like Coltranes horn)-

Whooooo- hu-hoo-

PAUL

We played records in my room then came here to eat.

THOMAS

Coltrane-

ANNA

I never heard anything like it. Whooo-waa-hoo - Rumbling like I imagine the sound of the A-train in New York City where I've never been. Have you ever been to Paul's room, Mister Thomas?

THOMAS

No.

ANNA

Books lined up and down the walls. Records and books. A record player. A mattress and a lamp. That's all.

(As Anna is speaking she sits at Thomas' table.

There is a frozen silence/ held breath- as everyone in the restaurant focuses on Thomas' reaction. For the generation present- Cain, Maya and Paul- they own the right to congregate together in broad daylight. For Mister Thomas- Anna's innocent gesture of her own independence by sitting next to him is an affront- because it causes him to fear the consequence of being a Black man even innocently sitting next to a

White woman- in the South that he's grown up in.
He is caught for a moment between getting up from his own table and telling her to get out- He is caught in this moment -facing the encroaching tidewaters of change- threatening to displace him even inside his safe ground of Sweet Auburn.)

THOMAS

Hm.

(Anna feels the tension and sits frozen for a moment- before Maya comes down with a bottle of Coka-Cola for her at Paul's table.)

ANNA

Oh.

(As Ann crosses back to Paul)

MAYA

(gently)

I'll bring you that coffee just the way you like it Mister Thomas.

THOMAS

(hating Maya's pity.)

Hm.

Make sure it's fresh.

MAYA

(softly)

Right away, sir.

THOMAS

(regrouping)

Hm.

Coltrane-

CAIN

Coltrane is King- Mr. Thomas.

PAUL

There's Canonball Adderly-

THOMAS

-Canonball- yeah -yeah- But the King of Kings is Miles. First time I heard Miles- He plays his first note and you know who he is- who you're talking to- who you're dealing with -just from his first breath. People *respect* him for that. That he found a sound that belongs only to him. All of them young ones- Coltrane- all of them study up under him- cause he's found that- **what everyman wants: To own his own. But few dare.**

PAUL

To dare to own your own sound.- Yeah.

THOMAS

Yes.

How he arrived at that- is a sweet mystery.

(to Paul)

You know I always got some work- painting- some hammering- If you don't mind a little heavy lifting-

PAUL

I'm doing alright selling my songs.

THOMAS

You mean you wouldn't want to work for me.

PAUL

I just don't need money to measure my worth.

THOMAS

Hmph.

ANNA

Hm.

PAUL

Old fashioned values don't belong to me. Our actions – our *reactions* are not our own but passed down by blood. That can't be me. Can't build nothing on a cracked foundation.

THOMAS

Sometimes it's good to know where you belong.

I don't belong to the past.

CAIN

Right.

PAUL

(more to himself)
Only a fool can say that.

THOMAS

You know my father-

PAUL

Yep.

THOMAS

(ironically-bitterly)
The good right and honorable Pastor Richard Steele-

PAUL

Yep.

THOMAS

He was there that night-

PAUL

Yes. I know.

THOMAS

Yet here I am today.

PAUL

THOMAS
You're free to come and go as you please. What's new in that? What does that mean to me?

(ARIEL enters -)

ARIEL
I've been looking all over for you.

CAIN
I just called the house.

ARIEL
Samuel's out front- Uncle is waiting for you at home.

ANN
There's plenty of time.

ARIEL
He's driving you to Savannah today- You know Great-grand-Aunt Clara- She doesn't tolerate tardiness.

ANN
I can at least finish my fries and my Coke.

ARIEL
Mr. Thomas.

THOMAS
Ms. Ariel.

ARIEL
What happened to your face?

THOMAS
Shaving.

ARIEL
Thank you for the flowers.

THOMAS
It was a fine funeral.

ARIEL
I didn't see you there.

THOMAS
The procession.

ARIEL

Oh.

I saw you in the yard the day Grandma Martha died.

THOMAS

It'll be a blue moon before I would ever go back there again. But
please send everyone my best.
How are you holding?

ARIEL

Fine.

THOMAS

Hm.

ARIEL

We'll make a way- we always have

THOMAS

Yes-
Now that Martha Forrest has passed- I assume-

ARIEL

The creditors were at the door before she was laid into the grave.
If we lose our home-

THOMAS

If everything is lost- what would you do?

(beat)

ARIEL

That time we went fishing-

THOMAS

Hm.

ARIEL

We went catfishing one time-

THOMAS

You were already there- Fishhead Creek. I used to go out there every Tuesday One early morning – you were already there- Staring out at the water by yourself.
What were you- ten?

ARIEL

Twelve.

THOMAS

Your eyes were all red.

ARIEL

You taught me to cast- to sit quiet and be patient.
Time to push everybody's voice out but your own- you said.

THOMAS

I did?

ARIEL

Yeah.
"Time to hear and value your own voice."

THOMAS

I said that?

ARIEL

Even when no one else will listen- to give weight to your own counsel-
That I've held onto.

THOMAS

Hm.
I'd put money down on that advice.

(then- THOMAS writes on the back of his business card.)

THOMAS

Please give Miss Forest this note with my regards.

business

*ARIEL accepts THOMAS'
card.*

BLACKOUT.

IN THE BLACKOUT WE HEAR-

LILY'S VOICE:

I shall not be
I shall not be moved-

SCENE THREE

KERRY'S RESTAURANT

As lights come up

WILLIAM

You did your mama proud- you gave her a beautiful homecoming.

LILY

I still can't believe-

WILLIAM

The finest folks – they all came out- You were the perfect hostess- just like your mama-

LILY

That morning- I put on her favorite lipstick – tangerine.
Summers- Thirty years ago... My mother's parties at our house-
Almost every day- music and dancing and gunfire and laughter. And
the culmination was always the fourth of July picnic. We'd gather and
watch the fireworks- and my daddy was so proud. "Bigger and
brighter each year." With the best and brightest assembled each year-
You, sweet William- you were the fairest of them all. A golden-haired
boy-

WILLIAM

-My hair's mostly grey now, what's left.
Miss Georgia Peach - three years in a row.

LILY

Runner up. I was always the first runner-up. Three years in a row.

WILLIAM

Sally Jackson's father paid off all the judges. That's the only way she could have beaten you.

LILY

Sally Jackson was a charming girl.

WILLIAM

She had huge buck- teeth. Though her lisp was adorable.
You danced like an angel. Isadora Duncan. You danced like Isadora Duncan. I'll never forget the spring concert your senior year in high school.

LILY

(waving her arms about.) Miss Jenkins- "Ladies must be as sprite as hummingbirds. " -

WILLIAM

Remember Prom night?

LILY

You escorted me in a horse-drawn carriage.

WILLIAM

I didn't dare hold you too close.
Every one thought-

LILY

Yes.

WILLIAM

Everyone expected-

LILY

Yes.

WILLIAM

Irene is a good woman. A fine wife. An excellent mother. Our Natalie will graduate in May. We're planning her wedding for December to Joe Delaney's boy.

LILY

Hm.

WILLIAM

I have no regrets. Do you?

(pause)

WILLIAM

Some would think me a funny and boring man.

LILY

Well- I never thought you boring.

WILLIAM

I am a practical man.

LILY

I don't think we ever spoke the same language.

WILLIAM

It's what made you so fascinating to me.
Always knowing things will somehow get done without ever having to lift a finger.

I envied you for that.

LILY

"Life is just a bowl of cherries-"

(then)

Things have been tough since -

WILLIAM

Your son-

LILY

You shouldered my Beau at my son's gravesite. Just as you did last week. You've been a good friend, William. A constant friend.

WILLIAM

I wish I could do something now. I'm cash poor at present. And these boycotts haven't helped. I desegregated my restaurants three months ago. I lost half my white customers though I don't get more than four coloreds a week if that.

LILY

I'm proud of you.

WILLIAM

Colored protest is bad for business in the long run. Atlanta's no Little Rock.

LILY

The Atlanta way.

WILLIAM

That's right. Myself, I'll never drink from the same fountain as a Negro.

LILY

Never is a long time.

WILLIAM

And I love my Essie dearly. She's been with us from before I was born. And when she can no longer do for us- we'll do for her till the day she dies. It's how I was raised.

Some of us don't have the luxury of running away-

(then)

Even now, after all these years, just your wrinkling your brow-

Maybe I can do something- If I could- How might we seal the deal.

LILY

-Beyond the customary handshake?

(Beau and Ann enter)

WILLIAM

(to Meshach)

A scotch. Sweet tea. And for the lady- more champagne.

(William exits.)

LILY

How was Savannah?

BEAU

Three balls, one strike – too many errors - bottom of the ninth.

ANNA

Great Grand-Aunt -Clara said – no way.

BEAU

The Chamber of Commerce keeps postponing me.

LILY

All those people who came to the funeral- Everyone who owes this family-

BEAU

-The rules have changed.

ANNA

If we lose our home we can always move and start over some place else.

(Beau and Lily look at

Anna)

BEAU

(pulls out some money and gives it to Anna)

Go across to the Pharmacy and get some aspirin, angel. And get yourself a root-beer float.

ANNA

Uncle-

BEAU

Anna- please-

(Anna takes the money and exits)

BEAU

Our mama's closest friends have died - the rest - looking down their noses. They've cut us off one by one. Grand-Aunt Clara thinks we're too irresponsible to hold onto our inheritance even if we weather this. Said now we have to pay for the choices that we made. You eloped the week after your high school prom-

LILY

I don't have anything to apologize for-

BEAU

-Broke your mother's heart-

LILY

I loved who I loved.

BEAU

A northerner -

LILY

I chose who I chose.

BEAU

-He used you for your money-

LILY

No. That's not true. -

BEAU

-Used you and left you when he was done.

LILY

No- Michael Ayers was the first to not give a damn who I was-

BEAU

He didn't care about this family or you-

LILY

My choice-

BEAU

And our Father never forgave you.

LILY

He refused to take a dime from my father- refused to work for him.

BEAU

But you lived on the Estate.

LILY

Just till we could save up -

BEAU

William is a good man -

LILY

Mother had arranged that while I was still in her womb-

BEAU

He could have given you /everything-

LILY

Michael and I had two beautiful girls- and then our Nathan-
Remember when he was born-

BEAU

Yes.

LILY

-Everybody was jumping up and down like the Second Coming.

BEAU

Yes.

LILY

I'd sit rocking him. So smooth. So perfect.

BEAU

A boy.

LILY

He would grow up and he would be able to do anything- anything.
After they cut the cord and he was put in my arms-I knew he would
always be mine. I poured my dreams in him. I loved him so much. I
loved him more than- More than my girls. I loved him the best. Yes-
it's true. My son. It was then- I understood my mother. And I was so
ashamed- because - Because-I wanted not to- not to love my son
more than- And I always questioned -What is it in me that -

We were walking back to the house that morning and - just for a moment I turned my head and he was gone. I begged God- to please forgive me- to please forgive me for-
That night they found my baby boy floating in that river-
I'll never beg for – never apologize again for – What?- Because *I dare* question- Because *I dare*-

BEAU

-You abandoned everything –everyone-

LILY

I never wanted to see that river again.

BEAU

I thought if you came back-

LILY

Our inheritance-

BEAU

Grandaunt Clara said-without a male heir-

LILY

Don't-

BEAU

If Nathan were still alive-

LILY

-BEAU-

BEAU

Just telling you what she /said-

LILY

Now you look just like our Daddy-

Remember what he called you-

BEAU

-Everybody knows what you've become.

-

LILY

You lost your knee your freshman year but you never really were that good.

BEAU

RUINT - you ruint yourself so- nobody could ever love you-

LILY

A failure at everything- If they had given the estate to me-

BEAU

You crossed over the line- and that's why God took your son- that's on your head-

LILY

Daddy always told me – Mama said so too-if I were a boy- If I were a son-

BEAU

-Your coming back is what drove Mama to her grave.

LILY

-He always called you -his worthless bastard.

(pause)

BEAU

What're we gonna do now, sister?

LILY

Remember to whom you belong.

(as William crosses--)

BLACK OUT

(We hear the news of the day- KENNEDY, KING and the plans for the next ORBITING ASTRONAUT...

AS WE SEE THOMAS FORREST standing outside- looking up at the sign that reads KERRY'S RESTAURANT.

THOMAS takes a breath and then crosses into KERRY'S RESTAURANT.)

SCENE FOUR
KERRY'S RESTAURANT

LILY with THOMAS' business card sits at the window table with ARIEL. WILLIAM enters with THOMAS-a new band-aid on his face.

WILLIAM

This gentleman says he's here to see you.

LILY

Thomas! You know Thomas, William.

WILLIAM

Old Tom's son. I remember your father. Amazing voice made of gold- could make a grown man cry. How did that song go...

THOMAS

Miss Lily Forrest.

(William exits)

LILY

Yes. Yes- Thomas.

THOMAS

Yes.
Miss Ariel.

ARIEL

Mister Thomas.

(Meshach offers Thomas a menu.)

THOMAS

(to Meshach.)

I'll just have a glass of ice water, Meschach. -And if you could pour it yourself and bring that to me.

MESHACH

Yes sir.

(exits)

THOMAS

Thank you, my friend.

(to Lily)

Yes. It's been a while.

LILY

Ariel has always kept me up on all the things you've done.
I always said-

THOMAS

Yes- you did-

And I'm much obliged now to offer whatever counsel-

LILY

Ariel has great confidence in you-

THOMAS

Yes well – I think there's a way to protect your future.

LILY

You have my ear.

THOMAS

What you have – is a once in a lifetime chance.

The cut and dry-

When that wall comes down – some people will want to move.

LILY

We've seen it in other cities already. Whites moving out in droves. .

THOMAS

In droves. You have prime real-estate a half an hour outside the city. You pair with a sound investor- any one of your family's friends. Any good businessman knows this is a sure deal. You tear down the old buildings- The old mill could be a post office- In the east meadow - you could build a school. Where the old slave quarters are now- there you can have a restaurant and other businesses. Most homes are built on half acre lots. You cut up those forty-two acres- build on the land- then rent or sell them- You're set for life!

LILY

This is your plan?

THOMAS

If you would hear me out-

LILY

And our home? – What would happen to the house?

THOMAS

It sits right in the middle of- You always said you wanted to be free of that place-

LILY

The walls- hand painted murals by Italian artists- museums have-

THOMAS

This is your opportunity -

LILY

The Grove was featured in encyclopedias- Life Magazine- that alone-

THOMAS

Independence is what you've always wanted.

LILY

My mother's body rests there now- My fathers bones- his father's- It's always been -

THOMAS

Foreclosure. It's going to be sold in two more weeks. It's about what to do with what's left of your inheritance -

LILY

What's passed down- It's always belonged to us and we've always belonged to it.

THOMAS

You could end up with nothing. It's about what you make of a loss- If you can turn it around-

LILY

-It's sacred- And you want to cut it up like- You may as well say to cut off my own head.

THOMAS

To reshape a loss into a win- If I could I would put up my own money on something like this- You'd be able to start over-

LILY

-You don't understand *her* value goes beyond a handful of - wanting to put her on an auction block-

THOMAS

Property is a different thing altogether.

LILY

No.

THOMAS

I'm offering this advise- because I've always felt- I wanted to repay the debt .- Ever since my mother died -

LILY

No---this plan of yours just won't do.

THOMAS

You always treated me like family -

LILY

No. I can't imagine- I refuse to believe that this is the only way-

ARIEL

- There has to be another way, Mister Thomas.

LILY

We've always survived.

Can you believe our little Annie will be off to college next year- And our Ariel- always busy taking care of every little thing-

THOMAS

Always a hard worker in everything she does.

LILY

(Lily takes in Thomas and Ariel-then)

After we're clear of all this- what is it that you'd want, Ariel?

ARIEL

I don't know what you mean. I like overseeing the house-

LILY

That home is her heart-

ARIEL

I was thinking- maybe - I'd like to take a vacation some day-

LILY

To travel. A lot of me in this one.

THOMAS

I think if you would hear me out-

LILY

I won't- I can't- I can't use a word of what you're saying. You don't understand what a place like that means-

THOMAS

I thought you - I thought you- What I'm offering is - I thought- I always thought- thought- If anyone- I thought *you*- I-

Hm.

LILY

What?

(He opens his mouth – then closes it. Speechless.)

LILY

What?

ARIEL

Mr. Thomas?-

THOMAS

(he clears his throat)
Nothing.

(Thomas shakes his head. Starts to go-)

LILY

Don't go. Stay. A minute.

THOMAS

I really-

LILY

Please.

(Thomas sits back down. Then-)

LILY

Here we are today sitting together at a table in this restaurant- a common thing in France, - some parts of New York too- Why not here. Our own Wesley Dobbs-his youngest daughter- I heard her sing at the Paris Opera- a beautiful colored girl- married a Swede. A fine couple. I see nothing wrong with it. If you would want to do that too-

ARIEL

To marry-

LILY

You've always liked each other. No shame in that-

THOMAS

I never- I don't know how to say this to you- **but-**

ARIEL

He use to push me on a swing-

LILY

-And now you're a full-grown woman-

THOMAS

-I want to be clear that I **never-**

LILY

-Let's look at it this way-

Her mother is white. That's for certain. We met her ourselves. But her father was listed as unknown on the birth certificate. Her hair is a little curly- had you noticed?

ARIEL

Mama-

THOMAS

I don't know what to say-

LILY

-I know- it's still illegal **here** for the two of you- But if she were mulatto. If we could find a way to make it easier for you to live together-

ARIEL

You can't think of selling the land- but as for me-

LILY

No- I understand your fears/ of what people would think-

ARIEL

/-Who's the highest bidder for your Ann.

LILY

No you misunderstand- I've seen the way you look at each other.

ARIEL

Ann is your flesh and blood.

LILY

My parents tried to suffocate me- I'd never do that /to you-

ARIEL

Ann is your blood- So you think you can afford to give me to ---

THOMAS

-Um.

ARIEL

(apologetically to Thomas-)
I didn't mean-

THOMAS

I think you don't understand your mother's sense of humor. To marry her daughter off to me- who's been more like an uncle than anything else. Nothing to take seriously. A joke. Obviously. A joke.

LILY

No-
I'm offering you freedom to do what you want-

(William enters.)

WILLIAM

Yes, Yes-yes- It was- 'Do'se you want some Mo". A very funny man- Then he'd open his mouth and sing- Not a dry eye in the house. But funny as all get up. Ha!

THOMAS

Um.
Well it's getting dark- I need to head back.

LILY

Thomas-

THOMAS

Miss Forrest.

(As Thomas exits-)

LILY

Sweet William-
You have my ear.

(- As Lily offers her hand to William- Thomas for a moment- turns around in the doorway and looks at Lily. Ariel, still stunned- turns away – staring out the window. Meshach witnesses from the side. LIGHTS fade down to THOMAS in the threshold in SPOTLIGHT- then silence into BLACKOUT.)

(In the BLACKOUT we HEAR a 45 record- playing- CHUBBY CHECKERS
– “THE TWIST”

SCENE FIVE

LAWN of the MAGNOLIA ESTATE.

THOMAS sits at a picnic table – Hanging from a tree above is a swing. Behind him are the DOORS to the MAIN HOUSE.

A Door to the Main house is open and we hear from inside- party sounds. – WE HEAR on a phonograph* - "TWIST AND SHOUT". We see Ann dancing with Paul, Cain dancing with Maya- Carlotta in the doorway- as Samuel passes through carrying a tray of drinks.

CARLOTTA

(to Samuel) I need some of that seltzer water. You know I got high blood pressure. I've already had two strokes. My left hip is bad so I can't dance the way I used to. But as they say- when you run with the pack you gotta bark and wag your tail. *(to Thomas)*
Come on and dance with me, Thomas.

THOMAS

Naw. Not right now.

CARLOTTA

Here you are at little Ann's seventeenth birthday party and you act like you're at some funeral.

THOMAS

Somebody pulled down a section of the wall last night. Burned it down. They had it back up by noonday. It'll be down next month anyways- when the courts finished with it. It'll come down. Fools.

CARLOTTA

The police are talking to different folks. They say the police want to question Meshach. He didn't show up to work- and nobody's seen him all day.

THOMAS

Meshach?

(LILY enters.)

LILY

Have you seen Beau? He hasn't called and he's not back yet. Maybe the auction was postponed. But why isn't he back? He must have bought it.

CARLOTTA.

(Trying to distract Lily by entertaining her.) My, what nice weather we're having.

WOMAN'S VOICE/CARLOTTA THE VENTRILOQUIST

(Speaks out of one side of her mouth.) Hasn't had weather like this since a month of Sundays.

CARLOTTA

And how long have you resided in this house.

WOMAN'S VOICE

1810. I was brought here when I was nothing but seven?
Brought here as a playmate for my mistress.

LILY

I never knew you were a ventriloquist, Carlotta.

CARLOTTA

Neither did I. That wasn't me, Miss Lily. You don't see my mouth moving.

WOMAN'S VOICE

This is the only home I've ever known since. And I ain't moving.

LILY

Carlotta!

CARLOTTA

Now for my next illusion-

LILY

Tell me my future, Carlotta.

CARLOTTA

Well now... *(Laying the cards on the table one by one.)* The queen of spades. The ace of spades. *(She looks at the next card without laying it down.)*

LILY

What did you see?

CARLOTTA

It's a boring old game.

Nobody can tell the future. Least of all me. I predicted I was going to be a great singer and then an actress. Who can tell what life is going to bring.

THOMAS

(Gently) Would you grace us with a song, Carlotta?

CARLOTTA

That was a lifetime ago.

My real name is Nellie Bell. Nellie Bell Adams. Born on a chicken farm in Eufaula Alabama. I used to go inside the chicken coop and talk to them, entertain them for hours at a time and they'd just nod their heads. My first audience.

(Then)

(Singing) I see fields of green/ red roses too/ clouds of white for me and you/ And I say to myself/ what a wonderful world/ And I say to myself/ what a wonderful world.

(Thomas and Lily applaud. Carlotta bows and exits back into the house.)

LILY

Nothing changes here.

THOMAS

Nothing's changed.

(pause)

(then)

LILY

It's getting late. It'll be dark soon. I suppose you have to go.

THOMAS

I thought I'd wait here with you.

LILY

Thank you Thomas. He must have bought it.
William said he would help as he could. He wouldn't have gone to the auction if he didn't have a plan.

THOMAS

Is that what he said?

LILY

We shook on it.

THOMAS

That's as good as any promise.

LILY

He's a good businessman.

THOMAS

That he is.

LILY

If anyone can save this place-

THOMAS

Hm.

LILY

Thomas-

THOMAS

It's a beautiful night for a birthday party.

LILY

I hate birthday parties.

THOMAS

I've never had one.

LILY

No? - No- O my goodness- O my. I didn't-Well you haven't missed a thing.

I hated the ponies- the balloons- I don't need gunshots to announce that- I am here.

I'm standing right here on my seventeenth birthday announcing to my parents - That I want to be the first Forrest woman to go to College-Business School to understand how best to run the estate- My father sits there- my mother -over there- they sit me down and explain the limits of this Magnolia Grove. Then everybody sings happy birthday - The chocolate cake is brought out-and they tell me- "Now make a wish and blow out the candles"-

THOMAS

You eloped two weeks later.

LILY

We came back three months later. I was in love- but I never knew what broke actually meant. I had to come back home.

THOMAS

-You came back having tasted the possibilities-

LILY

I came back because I was afraid-
If this place is lost then-- What's left.

THOMAS

You still have yourself-

LILY

Everyone is buried here-All their Bones- placenta and cords-
Why did they do that- the midwives- bury the placenta and cords of all the babies born here.

THOMAS

I don't know-

LILY

What did that mean-?

THOMAS

Miss Lenora remembered-

LILY

Yes- Maya's grandma- She delivered me-

THOMAS

Me too-

LILY

Yes- I remember-

THOMAS

What *did* it mean?

LILY

Lenora's dead now.

THOMAS

Maybe it was to bind us here- I think.

LILY

Lenora's gone now.

THOMAS

Miss Lenora used to sit me on a stool in the kitchen and I'd watch her prepare whatever meal was at hand... And she'd tell me what she recalled. Nothing left of those who came before but bits and scraps. The sale paper from my Great grand uncle Obadiah. Six foot five. Bought for eight hundred dollars. A dark complected field Negro -the paper said. But it didn't say what he liked to eat. Was he ever in love? What he dreamed. Lenora could recite everybody's name- and little details that had been passed down. She couldn't remember birthdays- but whose was whose- whose father- whose mother- and what happened to them if they didn't get sold too deep down south. She gave me a picture of my father's grandmother- Sarah. She had high cheekbones and almond-shaped eyes and smooth dark skin and she's holding a baby as white as cotton and tight red hair. That baby was her own child- My-grandma Minerva. And her father /was your great-grandfather-

LILY

(not wanting to revisit this shared family history)

-Who can remember-Things that happened way before we were even thought about.

THOMAS

The picture-

LILY

Even if it were written down. What we remember- how we remember- some things get tangled in time.

THOMAS

The picture Lenora said was proof of blood-

LILY

What difference does it make-

THOMAS

Bloodties sometimes change how we see each other-

LILY

What does it mean to us – what *may* have happened –one hundred years ago-

THOMAS

Bloodties can change how we see things to come-

LILY

Horrible things have happened here –yes- People were forced against their will- Thomas, you’ve always been like- We’ve always been friends.

Mama use to give so much money to different causes-“ to wash away the stains of the forefathers”

- Hoping to even the balance for the next generation-

THOMAS

-Washed clean. If everything could be washed clean-

LILY

There’s something different about your tone- tonight.

(then)

THOMAS

Used to think that if I could walk away - Unbind myself- leave them all behind.. But those ghosts followed- I wrestle with their shadows everyday.

LILY

When I was a child – I was so bright- so wise- so special – The rules would never apply to me. I would sit up on that rock over there- and dream of who I’d become- Now here I am trying to find my way back. Back to someone I barely remember now myself.

THOMAS

See that spot over yonder where my Pa knocked me down when I was fourteen. See –that’s my tooth- still there.

LILY

She couldn’t remember my name.

THOMAS

That tree there- where they found my brother-

LILY

-Yes. Yes. Yes-
I remember-

We hear a phone ringing.

LILY

Could be Beau- could be him-

(Lily exits into house. Thomas is left alone. WE HEAR- WIND- THOMAS looks up at the tree- then goes inside as ANN and PAUL dance in – MUSIC- TWISTIN THE NIGHT AWAY.)

ANNA

We're finally alone-

PAUL

Thought we'd never shake your shadow-

ANNA

Ariel's just afraid- she doesn't understand-

PAUL

Doesn't understand what we have-

ANNA

What we have-

(She kisses him- He pulls away.)

PAUL

What we have is pure.

ANNA

Um-

PAUL

-Lets keep this uncomplicated- OK?.

ANN

Well- OK.

PAUL

See that moon-

Soon a man will walk on that moon. It is in the here and now.- This technological revolution- And we will witness it. We are a part of it. What's coming around the bend. We live in a day, said philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, ' When civilization is shifting it's basic outlook, a major turning point in history where the pre-suppositions on which

society is structured are being analyzed, sharply challenged and profoundly changed."

What's happening now with the freedom revolution is profoundly American- can only be understood through the lens of America's past. But the world's eyes are on us today searching for signs that will impact their future. Their ears pressed to the earth- listening to the deep rumbling discontent of the disinherited masses- rising from darkness of the buried past – breaking the cold hard ground of oppression- reaching up towards the bright hillsides- Freedom songs- These are Dr. Kings words- not mine- but I was there when he spoke them. There in the forefront.

Yeah- we are "shifting our basic outlooks"- and the redistribution of earths territory has now begun. Change is on it's way- I can feel it in my bones-

ANN

I can't wait-

This fall I'm going to college- one way or another. Let them sell this place out from under us. I can't wait to get out of here.

(she kisses him)

PAUL

So innocent.

(takes out a book)

A book- for you.

ANNA

Thank you.

PAUL

(reading)

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
madness, starving hysterical naked
dragging themselves through the Negro streets at
dawn looking for an angry fix
angel headed hipsters burning for the ancient
heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the
machinery of night-
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high

sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of
cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities
contemplating Jazz”-

ANNA

-I like the way you talk – I just can’t understand a word you say.

PAUL

(frustrated)

Just trying to connect to you where I’ve been.

ANN

I’m not- your student anymore. Everyone still sees me as a child.
Come- walk down to the river with me-

(She kisses him again)

PAUL

Not yet- Lets not go yet- there’s time- so much time-

ANNA

It’s alright- I’m not afraid--

(Doors to House open and Ariel steps outside)

ARIEL

(To Ann) I’ve been looking all over for you.

ANN

OLLY-OLLY-

*

ARIEL

*ANN! COME BACK INTO THIS HOUSE THIS INSTANT I’M NOT
CHASING AFTER YOU!*

ANN

OLLY-OLLY ONTZIN FREE!

ARIEL

ANN-

(As Ariel chases after her into the woods)

LILY

Have you seen Beau?

PAUL

What happens when- what you thought would always be -is no more-

LILY

A walking nightmare-

PAUL

You have sold yourself to the idea of individual freedom without regards to your responsibility of a global family. I've given up everything for the greater good- and I've never looked back.

LILY

You are too young- too young to lecture me about the cost of what's lost along the way-

PAUL

I've put my life on the line- for what I believe in- while you were-

LILY

You have never lost everything that you loved. You run headlong into the flames convinced of your immortality- never looking back – to see the consequences of your actions.

PAUL

I don't understand why a woman like you-

LILY

Like me? What about you. Afraid to touch my daughter not to spare her innocence but because you're afraid. Afraid of what you'll feel if you touch her- what truth would you find- On the road- how many strangers have had their hands on you. How many women- men- Afraid you won't feel anything at all-

PAUL

You don't know me.

LILY

You have traveled too far out- veered off course- Floating up there- dreaming of the earth that you can never return to-grabbing the air for something that will- do what? Bind you.

PAUL

You don't know the first thing about me-

LILY

Dreaming of clawing the earth- searching for what might be left of the bones- placenta- cord- for something that'll make you whole again.

PAUL

You don't know me at all-

LILY

I know you like I know myself.

(Anna enters- and close behind Ariel Ann pulls Paul into a dance- THE TWIST. THEY DANCE INTO THE HOUSE- LILY SITS ON THE SWING. Ariel goes back into the house. - SAMUEL AND CAIN ENTER -and light lamps surrounding the yard as- THEY STEP TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE-)

CAIN

You don't look good old man.

SAMUEL

To be over one hundred years old- I suspect I'm doing right fine.

CAIN

You don't even know your own age-

SAMUEL

Nobody writ down the day I was born- but from the days what I can remember- unless it was what somebody else told me- those memories are my own- or another Samuel that come before me- otherwise I am who I am. And I am old.

CAIN

Older than these woods. It's time you made room for the young.

SAMUEL

Them trees gonna be here long after me or you. Magnolias- heart root- several and deeper than most- and spread further out underneath the soil- birthing saplings along the way. No matter how far out they grow- all of them joined down beneath- and twisted around that one root ball- - all of of em -- the whites- the near whites- yellows reds the purple blue black blossomed - all twisted around together- underneath - all entwined - to the same knotted root vein. Ain't getting away from none of that. Same blood. Same dreams.

CAIN

How does it feel to have outlived your relevance?

SAMUEL

The young ones twisted loose from the vein- is dead for sure. A rootless thing - scattered to the wind.

CAIN

Babbling like Uncle Remus- or Uncle Rochester- or Uncle Amos and (Samuel Lightly touches flame to Cain)
Ouch!

SAMUEL

(he puts fire to his own hand)
Fire can't touch em- Cut em down- they sprout back up with more vigor.

CAIN

Crazy old man.
(Maya enters)

LILY

You should sit down Samuel, before you fall over.

SAMUEL

I haven't sat in over a hundred years. Aint gonna start now. Otherwise nothing would get done around here.

(WE SEE as LILY LOOKS inside the house- GUESTS surround Anna and sing:)

ALL

Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday dear Anna, Happy Birthday to you.

ARIEL

Make a wish.

(Anna makes a wish- blows out the candles. We hear the phone ringing)

CAIN

Madam. When you go back to France. Let me go with you. I can't take it here another day.

(Lily - goes inside the house- Music from phonograph continues- TWIST AND SHOUT-)

MAYA

Cain- come and dance with me.

CAIN

Don't feel like dancing with you anymore.

MAYA

Just one last dance.

CAIN

I said I'm done dancing with you. Do you understand?

(As Meshach barrels in with Thomas close behind-)

THOMAS

Come on, now Meshach-

MESHACH

(Confronting Maya)

You don't want to see me anymore-

MAYA

What do you want-?

MESHACH

I've been taught to be patient all my life. Worked hard all my life. Treated you good. Wasn't I good to you-?

(To Cain)

What are you looking at? -

(Meshach hits Cain before Thomas can step in. Meshach and Cain start slugging.)
(Ariel enters.)

THOMAS

(trying to break them up)
Meshach!- This isn't the way to go! Cain! We can't be acting like this.
(Thomas steps inbetween and Meshach accidentally knocks Thomas to the ground- Everyone stops.)

MESHACH

OH MAN!

ARIEL

Police just called- said somebody set fire to Peyton Wall last night-
The police say they want to question you, Meshach.

MESHACH

I'm outtta here-

THOMAS

Wait- Meshach-

(Meshach exits with Thomas following after him.)

(Beau and William enter from across the lawn. -Lily enters from the house.)

LILY

Beau!

BEAU

(drunk) Bottom of the ninth- - The bases are loaded- the Babe is at the plate--two strikes - And he swings-
(Beau swings and falls- William goes over to help him-)

BEAU

Don't you touch me- Don't you - Get away from me. Damn Judas!
Damnit!

SAMUEL
Leave him be-
(Samuel helps Beau up.)

BEAU
You're a good man, Samuel.
(Samuel takes Beau into the house.)

SAMUEL
I'll get you to bed - You'll sleep.

LILY
What happened-

WILLIAM
It's sold.

LILY
Who bought it?

(As Thomas re-enters.)

WILLIAM
(taking papers out of his jacket.)
The deed.

(He hands the deed over to Thomas.)

LILY
What's happening-
(Thomas offers his hand- William hesitates – then – nods- declining to shake Thomas' hand.)

LILY
William -

WILLIAM
Some memories- best left untouched.

(William exits.)

THOMAS

William is my proxy. He gets a handsome fee. I bought it.

LILY

-What does this mean-

THOMAS

Why couldn't you hear me, my friend?

LILY

No- no- no- no-

Why would you do that to me- Why would you do that-

Why would you do that to me-Why-

I'm not apologizing- why should I apologize -for what-

Ask forgiveness – For what-

I'm not apologizing for a damn thing-

- I am who and what I am. Damn – Damn you

Why would you- who the fuck do you think you are

You know what you are-You are nothing-

Lower than nothing to me-

Why would you -

You are nothing-You are nothing but uh-//

You are nothing but uh

ARIEL

Mama- Mama- stop- no-no It's alright hush-// hush now=

(as Lily and Ariel exit into the house-)

THOMAS

I own it now. Mine. This dirt that I stand on. All forty-two acres.
Everything on it.

If they could see me now- my great- great- my grand- my Ma- My
brother- Pa-

(then)

I'm gonna chop down every one of these trees. Raise it down to the
ground and build everything new. Build everything new from the
ground up.

BLACKOUT.

(WE HEAR IN THE BLACKOUT- THE TWIST.)

SCENE SIX

EMPTY ROOM

A few chairs- tables- covered with white sheets. Boxes and suitcases.

WE HEAR the BUZZ of CHAINSAWS outside.

THOMAS stands in the middle of the room. CAIN is tying a box.

(ARIEL enters and hands Thomas keys.)

ARIEL

I can't believe that you're cutting down the grove before we even
leave the house.

THOMAS

It's mine now.

ARIEL

Right. It's yours now to make whatever you want out of it.

THOMAS

Right.

(more conciliatory)

And right.

*(Thomas exits out of the house- A short time after the chainsaws
stop..)*

ARIEL

Has Samuel been taken to the hospital?

CAIN

How many times do you have to ask?

ARIEL

Poor Samuel- That poor old man ...

(Maya enters.)

MAYA

I just dropped by to say goodbye.

Your mother called- she's taking the bus up from Augusta- says she hopes to see you at the airport tomorrow before you leave.

CAIN

Back to France - A foreigner here- Can't live here. Fed up with the ignorance- I'll be so happy to get the hell out. I'm done.

(sadly)

I'll never see this place again.

MAYA

I won't miss you. But I'll write to you and tell you what a great life I've made for myself.

CAIN

(to THOMAS as he enters)

Mr. Thomas- This future you see – You think they'll buy from you?

THOMAS

No turning back now.

MAYA

Meschach said to thank you for the lawyer-

(LILY, BEAU, ANNA and CARLOTTA enter.)

ANNA

The car is already out front.

BEAU

Still standing. After the storm- we discover ourselves- resilient as ever.

I'll be working for the Trust Company Bank- a financier. It's a whole new ballgame.

LILY

(She is handed her hat and coat) - Carry out my things, Cain.

(Cain exits.)

(LILY embraces Anna)

ANNA

I'll get a job in Atlanta- or Savannah. Work my way through college- here or there. I don't need much.

LILY

I always thought-

I never knew what to say to you- I'd always hear my mother's voice- I don't know how to-

ANNA

I'm going to be alright.

(We hear Carlotta

humming-)

LILY

You'll be just fine.

I know you will.

(Enter THOMAS.)

CARLOTTA

(sings)

Blow ill wind blow away...

(Then to Thomas)

Can you find me a job?

THOMAS

I'll find one for you, Carlotta- don't you worry.

(LILY and THOMAS

never

acknowledge each other
through this scene.)

CARLOTTA

I don't know where I'll end up.

THOMAS

No need to worry.

BEAU

Now we can go. - Samuel!- Where's Samuel?

ARIEL

Samuel went to the hospital this morning. All we can do is pray for him now.

BEAU

A good man.

THOMAS

Gone to join the ancestors.

BEAU

Mister Samuel Ezekiel Blacksmith.

THOMAS

Where are you going now, Ariel?

ARIEL

Me? I'm going to the Peace Corp. But first I'm going fishing.

THOMAS

(Pause) Well.

ARIEL

And so.

LILY

Now we can start a new journey.

ANN

Hello new life!

BEAU

My friends, my dear - leaving this house forever- "We are sojourners before you as were our fathers. Our days on earth are as shadows and there is none abiding."

ANNA

(gently): Uncle.

LILY

(CAIN re-enters)

BEAU

Has everything been taken?

ARIEL

I think so.

ANN

(saying goodbye-)
Mister Thomas-

THOMAS

Anna-

CAIN

It's time.

ANN

Time to say goodbye- to this old house.

MAYA

Goodbye- to this place where we all were born.

ANN

Yes.

CAIN

Hm.

ARIEL

Hm.

(Maya exits with Ann, Cain and Carlotta. Ariel looks around the room and goes out slowly. Thomas exits. Lily and Beau remain alone. Nothing left but memories)

LILY

There I am- five years old- running around this room- around and around galloping – dreaming of places-
Where will that little girl go now. Where will she – Gone. All gone.

As Lily goes around the
room-
She stops.
Lily places her hand over her
heart-

No –
Here she is. Yes.
(reclaiming her *whole* self)

BEAU

(gently touches her face- Looking into his sisters eyes)

Sister...

(Voice of ARIEL: "Mamma!")

LILY

Coming.

(Beau and Lily exit THEN Thomas enters)

THOMAS

Anybody else here?

(All have exited except Thomas. Thomas walks around the room – The sound of cars driving away. Then silence.

. We all have a song passed down by blood- have to wrestle with it to make it our own.

Thomas opens up his mouth and sound comes out. He begins to own his father's voice- It is both an exorcism and an owning of ones own voice.

Working through the song- he begins to recognize and to own himself.)

THOMAS

Singing-

Pack up all your cares and woe
Sing it high sing it low
Bye by' blackbird
Where somebody waits for me
Sugar's sweet so is she
Dwee dee dwee dee
No one here can care or understand me
Oh what hard luck stories ya-wa-yay-o
Make the bed- light the light
I'll be home late tonight

Black bird bye- by'-

(Footsteps are heard. SAMUEL appears in the doorway on the right. -)

THOMAS

Thought you left for the hospital, old man.

SAMUEL

So they say- but I didn't make it I suspect- just refused to lie down.

(then- hearing chopping-)

That sound-

THOMAS

They'll chop and burn every last one. Nothing left then.

SAMUEL

-But the root.

- *THE SOUND OF A TREE FALLING AND THE WAIL OF A HORN*
takes us into -

BLACK OUT

CHRONOLOGY

1836 the Railroad Terminal voted to be built in Atlanta, and the city begins to boom

1840 Nathan Bedford Forest born

**** According to Samuel, he is born around this time****

1841 LILY AND BEAU'S -GREAT GRANDFATHER BORN- LEE

*1845 THOMAS' GREAT GRANDMOTHER – SARAH

*1861 LILY AND BEAU's grandfather born –LEE jr.

*1861 Thomas Forest's grandmother born –MINERVA who is the child of Lee and Sarah (Minerva has a son- Jebediah who is father of Thomas Sr.)

1861-1865 American Civil War

1864, September 1, Confederate troops burn Atlanta as part of March to the Sea

1864, November, Sherman's troops burn Atlanta as part of March to the Sea

1880 Beau and Lilly's father born- Lee 111

*1880 MINERVA Thomas Forest's GRANDMOTHER MARRIES THOMAS' grandfather Jebediah

*1890 OLD TOM is born (son of Minerva and Jebediah)

1898 Spanish-American War

1906 Beginning of "Sweet Auburn" section of Atlanta's boom

1900 Lily's and Beau's Mother is born- Martha

1914-1918 World War I (United States is in war 1917-1918)

1917 Lily is born (currently 46)

1915 Beau is born (currently 44)

1921 Thomas' brother is born Jebediah

*1923 Thomas Forest born (currently 40)

Thomas' Mother dies in child birth

1929 Stock Market crash brings on Great Depression

1933 Paul is born (currently 28)

1938 Ariel is born and adopted by Lily and her husband - (currently 25)

1939 Gone With the Wind

1941-1945 United States in World War II

1945 Ann is born (currently 17)

1950 Nathan is born

1953 Paul starts University and begins to tutor Nathan

1951 Carlotta comes to work for Lilly as a Nanny

1956 Nathan drowns (at age 6)

1957 Lily goes to France

1960 Kennedy elected President of the United States –first Roman Catholic President.

1963 Setting of Magnolia