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Till

- a new musical -

Music and Lyrics by
Leo Schwartz
Book by
Leo Schwartz and DC Cathro

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON THE PLAY

TILL is a retelling of the story of Emmett Till, a 14 year-old African American youth who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. His offense, according to the defendants in the murder trial, was that he made sexually suggestive remarks and whistled at Carolyn Bryant, a white woman.

The accounts of what happened that day vary, even among the eyewitnesses. They cover a stunningly wide range: from a mistake of intent to a blatant sexual advance.

Emmett's death, regardless of inception, was horrific and unconscionable. And though we do not wish to create disinformation, it is not our intention to reconcile the inconsistencies or to bring resolution. We choose only to explore the wide range of emotions present in this human tragedy.

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON THE GOSPEL QUARTET

The Gospel Quartet (four male singers) provide back up vocals on both words and onomatopoeic sounds. The members of the Gospel Quartet can be double cast to play other characters, for instance the Reverend, Wheeler, Samuel Johnson, Gene Mobley, Roy Bryant, etc. The Gospel Quartet can always be someplace on the stage and can step in and out of the action, as needed. They should serve as reminder that this is a remembrance happening at Emmett's Funeral, the bookends of the show.

AUTHOR'S SUGGESTION ON THE SET

There are three projection screens over the stage. On them, at varying times to set place and mood, are projected stock pictures in black and white of the era (Maxwell Street, State Street, Roosevelt Road, Jim Crow South, etc.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(The doublings for the Gospel Quartet are merely suggestions by the authors)

Emmett Till ("Bo")

Mamie Till (Emmett's Mother)

Alma Till (Mamie's Mother, Emmett's Grandmother, aka "Mamoo," Matriarch)

Mose (Mamie's Uncle, Alma's Brother-in-law, aka "Preacher") (GQ)

Wheeler (Emmett's first cousin once removed, Emmett's best friend)

Maurice (Mose's eldest son) (GQ)

Simeon (Mose's youngest son)

Thelma (Mose's daughter) / (Triple cast as LIZZY and WOMAN)

Carolyn Bryant (Wife to Roy Bryant and owner of a country store)

Juanita Milam (Carolyn's sister-in-law)

Samuel Johnson (Store Customer) (GQ)

Roy Bryant (Husband to Carolyn and owner of a country store) (GQ)

Reverend Davis (Pastor of Emmett's Church) (GQ)

Gene Mobley (Mamie's suitor) (GQ)

Man (any available GQ)

Gospel Quartet (four singers who can take on the roles of the various above characters.)

GQ 1 – Tenor I

GQ 2 – Tenor II

GQ 3 – Bass I

GQ 4 – Bass II

LIST OF SONGS

1. Opening Gospel
2. When He Comes Back Gospel Quartet (GQ)
3. I'm Gonna Build You A House Emmett, Mamie, & GQ
4. Cherish The Child Alma, Mamie, & GQ
5. If Love Were Like The Movies Carolyn & Juanita
6. On Maxwell Street GQ & Entire Ensemble
7. Money, Mississippi Mose (GQ4) & GQ 1-3
8. Let That Woman Free Alma & Mamie
9. Strong Black Woman Reverend, Gene, and & GQ 1-4
10. Beauty Queen Of The County Carolyn
11. Jim Crow Thelma, Alma, and Emmett
12. If You Could Change The World GQ 1 – 4
13. Just Plain Me Gene Mobley, Mamie, GQ 1, 2, & 4
14. The World Turns Round GQ 1 – 4
15. Coming Home To You Emmett, Mamie, Alma, GQ 1-4 & Entire Ensemble
- 15A. Entre-Acte
16. Gonna Walk Right In GQ 1 - 4
17. When Does A Man Become A Man Emmett
18. Brand New Life Gene
19. Gonna Jump Ya GQ 1 - 4
20. Mississippi Trouble GQ 1 - 4
21. Let It Go Mamie, Alma, Emmett, & Maurice
22. Devil On A Rampage GQ 1 - 4
23. God, Please Bless This House Mose, Lizzy, & GQ
24. The Lord Is My Shepherd GQ 1 - 4
25. I Want Him Back Mamie & Entire Ensemble

TILL

PROLOGUE

(MAMIE, a strong woman, walks onto stage. In another part of the stage stands the Gospel Quartet. The pianist plays a slow Gospel number under the following. The GQ will begin singing the opening lament on ALMA's last two lines.)

MAMIE

(Addressing the audience)

My faith tells me that I must love others as I love myself. When faced with such a tragedy, to not seek vengeance. To turn the other cheek. And though I need Jesus' help to do this, I will. I will forgive these men. But the Lord knows I cannot forget...

(Over the course of the following lines she becomes more emotional until she cannot complete her words)

For there is one unwritten, universal law: a mother should never... NEVER have to see her baby... my baby...

(MAMIE loses control. ALMA, a fiery Matron makes a quick entrance to her child's aid. During ALMA's lines, the REVEREND helps MAMIE off stage.)

ALMA

Stop. Please! (The gospel tune ends) This is a mother's grief. That... man killed my grandson... my Bo. That man and his brother wrapped barbed-wire around his neck, like they wrapped a crown of thorns around Jesus' head. They threw his beaten body into the Tallahatchie River. They even weighed him down with a cotton gin fan. All because they *said* he whistled at some white woman... Whistled!

Then that man got off scott-free. A jury his of peers, men just like *him*, let him go.

Just let him go.

I'm a tired old woman.

ALMA	GOSPEL QUARTET
Let me tell you something: you focus on the death and you ain't never gonna find your way back.	OH. OH, LORD. OH. OH, LORD
Remember the life... That's how they live forever!	

ACT I

SCENE I – Church basement

GOSPEL QUARTET

WHEN A LITTLE CHILD LEADS THEM
LORD, LORD, LORD
WHEN A LITTLE CHILD LEADS THEM
LEAD ME, LORD.
WHEN A LITTLE CHILD LEADS THEM
AND THE LION LAYS DOWN WITH THE LAMB
THAT'S THE DAY HIS LOVE WILL FIND ME
NO MATTER WHERE I AM.

A LITTLE CHILD
A LITTLE CHILD
A LITTLE CHILD, O LORD.

AND WHEN GABRIEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET
BLOW, GABRIEL BLOW.
AND WHEN GABRIEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET
BLOW THAT TRUMPET, BLOW.
AND WHEN GABRIEL BLOWS HIS TRUMPET
THE TOMB IS GONNA CRACK.
THAT'S THE TIME FOR JUBILATION
GLORY. HAL-LEH-LOO.
THAT'S THE DAY WHEN HE COMES BACK

GONNA BE THE DAY
GLORY, HAL-LEH-LOO.
A PRECIOUS DAY.
WE HE COMES BACK.

(EMMETT runs onto the stage, laughing. Off stage, chasing after him, we hear an angry woman)

MAMIE

Emmett Till, get your tail back here NOW!

EMMETT

Mama, the look on her face!

MAMIE

Child, a switching won't be good enough. (She enters)

EMMETT

I'm too old for that, Mama!

MAMIE

What did you do, Bo?

EMMETT

Did you see her face when she bit into that cobbler? Like she sat on a bee's nest

MAMIE

Bo, I made that fruit cobbler for the church lunch! How could you?

EMMETT

I'm sorry, Momma. I guess I just got a little devil in me.

MAMIE

You and that devil gonna be the death of *me*, I swear. (Smiles) But now you're gonna have to tell Widow Stickey what you've done. AND promise me you won't never do that again.

EMMETT

You know it was funny.

MAMIE

Emmett...

EMMETT

Yes, Mama. I promise.

MAMIE

Why ain't I sure?

EMMETT

I do, Mama. I promise!

MAMIE

Mm Hmm... well, you better seal that promise with some sugar... and DON'T sneak in any salt.

(He goes to her and hugs her. She kisses his forehead and swats his behind, gently)

MAMIE

Oh, Bo. What am I gonna DO with you?

EMMETT

I promise!

MAMIE

I know, child. I'll forgive you, but Widow Stickey...

EMMETT

That old pucker-face.

MAMIE

Emmett! If Mamoo heard you say such things...

EMMETT

Mamoo loves me.

MAMIE

You may have your grandmother wrapped around your little finger, but Widow Stickey is gonna give her an ear full, and you know Mamoo does not suffer fools...

(Heard off stage)

ALMA

MAMIE! EMMETT!

MAMIE

Oh, Lord!

(ALMA enters with WOMAN and MAN. She is an imposing woman.)

ALMA

Why did you run out like that? The Widow nearly choked herself to death! What did you put in that cobbler, Mamie?

EMMETT

It was me, Mamoo. I switched Mama's sugar with the salt.

WOMAN

Salt?!

EMMETT

I was just fooling around.

MAN

Like last month when you put a mouse down my Danielle's choir robe!

EMMETT

It wasn't wild! I told her I was sorry.

WOMAN

I'm worried when I come to church. You never know what's gonna happen next with this boy!

ALMA

You trying to poison everyone, Emmett?

MAN

Poison!?

WOMAN

Lord have mercy. That boy...

MAMIE

This child did not mean to hurt anybody. I think everyone just needs to calm down and...

ALMA

And what else? (Pause) Emmett, what else?

EMMETT

I guess I snuck in some soap chips as well.

MAMIE

LORD! Emmett!

WOMAN

Mrs. Bradley, that broke the camel's back.

ALMA

(Breaking composure)

That's what did it! I KNEW IT! I know the look of soap in the mouth! Widow Sticky's tongue just about turned purple! (laughing) Lordie, Emmett, you can't *do* things like that.

EMMETT

I'm sorry, Mamoo.

ALMA

You and your jokes. Don't you think your mother has enough to worry about, raising you all by herself? What are we to do with a child like you?

EMMETT

I'm not a child, Mamoo.

ALMA

Well, you act like...

(Off stage a booming male voice)

REVEREND

ALMA! Where is that devil of a grandson?

ALMA

Oh, Lord, here it comes!

(REVEREND enters)

REVEREND

Young man, this time your hijinks have gone too far.

EMMETT

I'm really sorry, Reverend. Really.

MAMIE

Reverend Davis, the boy...

REVEREND

Boy!? He's turning 15 soon! Emmett is in need of male supervision. Discipline. You two women are not enough to raise...

ALMA

Excuse me?

WOMAN

He's an out-of-control child.

MAN

Little hooligan.

ALMA

HOOLIGAN?! My grandson...

REVEREND

Please!

(to WOMAN and MAN)

Go back into the sanctuary. I'll handle this.

(WOMAN and MAN exit, grumbling)

MAMIE

Reverend with all due respect, do not tell me how to raise...

REVEREND

He needs a man. As do you.

MAMIE
(shocked)

Reverend!

REVEREND

Gene Mobley was asking after you last Sunday...

MAMIE

THE BARBER!?

REVEREND

This... child needs a male influence!

MAMIE

I know what my boy needs. AND what I need, for that matter!

REVEREND

Well, I need to deal with the problem at hand! Widow Stickey is in the bathroom, getting sick.

ALMA

Cornelia Stickey never met a dessert she didn't like! Maybe Emmett was trying to help her. She could afford to lose some weight.

REVEREND

That's not funny. She almost choked on her false teeth, Alma.

ALMA

Oh, you know if she had to, she would have gummed that cobbler!

(The three adults break into laughter)

REVEREND

Alright...

(regaining composure)

Mamie, this... Emmett must make amends to the Widow. Come on, now.

EMMETT

Mama... She's gonna kill me.

ALMA

Reverend, I'll handle this. I'll smooth things over with the Widow.

(ALMA and REVEREND exit)

EMMETT

Why does everyone think I'm a child? I'm almost 15. I'm a man now. Almost.

MAMIE

Some days you are. Then you have days like today. But you have a good heart, Bo.

EMMETT

You always say that if you want people to respect you, you have to respect yourself first.

MAMIE

(Instructing her son)

Like Mr. Porter!

EMMETT

From the market? What about him?

MAMIE

He showed you how to respect yourself.

But... He has only one leg.

MAMIE

Remember that time you tried to help him with those potatoes and he got so angry?

EMMETT

What I remember most is the look on his face when he did it by himself.

MAMIE

Mr. Porter needed to show you that he could do anything he wants. And he was proud of that.

EMMETT

Self-respect!

MAMIE

If you have self-respect, people will always remember that. Remember you.

EMMETT

You're smarter than Reverend Davis.

MAMIE

I don't know about that, child. But thank you. Now give me a hug. You know I love you.

EMMETT

I love you, too, Momma. You know what? One day, I'm gonna build you a house. A house of your very own.

MAMIE

Really? All by yourself?

EMMETT

Yes, Ma'am. And you won't have to ever live in an apartment again.

MAMIE

Is that so? And how are you...

EMMETT (w/ Gospel Quartet)

I'M GONNA BUILD YOU A HOUSE
GREAT BIG HOUSE
GONNA HAVE CHIMNEYS AND WINDOWS EV'RYWHERE
I'LL SPARE NO EXPENSE
WITH A WHITE PICKET FENCE.
AND I'LL PAINT THAT HOUSE A BRIGHT SKY BLUE.

I'M GONNA GIVE YOU A YARD
WITH A GREAT BIG TREE
AND THERE'S A PORCH WHERE YOU CAN RELAX
YOU'LL DRINK LEMONADE
AND NEIGHBORS WILL WAVE
WISHIN' THEY ALL COULD BE LIKE YOU

EACH ROOM WILL HAVE CARPET
YOUR FEET WON'T GET COLD
A HUGE MARBLE STAIRCASE

EMMET (CONT)

WITH FLECKS OF GOLD!
THE FLOWERS IN YOUR GARDEN
ARE THE TALK OF THE TOWN.
YOU'LL LIVE JUST LIKE A QUEEN
I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOTTA CROWN.

EMMETT

Mama, it's gonna be the most beautiful house you've ever seen.

MAMIE

Bo, it sounds wonderful.

I HOPE YOU PLAN TO LIVE THERE TOO
THAT HOUSE SOUNDS WAY TOO BIG JUST FOR ME.

EMMETT

I'LL KEEP A ROOM FOR MYSELF
BUT THAT YARD NEEDS A DOG OR THREE.

MAMIE

Three?!

EMMETT

It's the perfect number, Mama!

I'M GONNA BUILD YOU A HOUSE

MAMIE

GONNA BUILD ME A HOUSE.

EMMETT

WHERE WE BOTH WILL LIVE

MAMIE

WHERE WE BOTH WILL LIVE.

EMMETT & MAMIE

A GREAT BIG HOUSE ALL WONDERFUL AND NEW

EMMETT

IT WILL BE OURS

JUST YOU AND ME?
MAMIE

YOU WAIT AND SEE.
EMMETT

OH, MERCY ME!
MAMIE

THERE'LL BE ROOMS FOR SITTIN'
AND ROOMS FOR EATIN'
AND ROOMS FOR SLEEPIN'
AND ROOMS FOR GREETIN'
EMMETT

THREE DOGS, A FAMILY
GARAGE AND A CAR
OUR OWN SWIMMIN' POOL
AND THERE YOU ARE

WHAT A HOUSE!
MAMIE

THAT'S THE HOUSE
EMMETT

EMMETT & MAMIE
I'M/YOU'RE GONNA BUILD FOR YOU/ME!

(ALMA and REVEREND enter)

ALMA
Well, Widow Stickey is out of the bathroom. Evelyn is fanning her and Jocelyn got her some water. It's like she's holding court. She's gonna be just fine. Now, Emmett, time for you to face the music.

(EMMETT goes to MAMIE and hugs her as if to hide from his penance)

MAMIE
Alright, you do this and after I'll take you to Maxwell Street to pick out a present for your birthday. But remember what I said.

REVEREND

Come on, son. Hold your head up! We'll go slay this dragon together. (As they exit) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil: For thou art with me."

EMMETT

Oh, boy...

(EMMETT and REVEREND exit)

ALMA

We're very lucky, the way the Reverend looks after Bo like that.

MAMIE

Sometimes it's all I can do to manage my own life, but I got Emmett, too.

ALMA

Now, Mamie, the Reverend might be right about Mr. Mobley. How much trouble can he be? He's just a barber.

MAMIE

Mama! Gene Mobley? No.

ALMA

He'd be more reliable than your first two husbands.

MAMIE

Bo's daddy was a piece of work, I know, but even so... When he died I thought, "How will I ever do this?" Then Pink Bradley came along. I thought he would be a good provider. But, Lord Jesus, the trouble that was Pink!

ALMA

You were right to throw him out. Two-timing beater. I told you he was no good.

MAMIE

Is it me, Mama? I mean... How can I be a good mother to Bo, when I make such mistakes in my own life?

ALMA

You're a wonderful mother, Mamie. I know a few things about raising children, having done it perfectly myself. Bo doesn't want for anything. You are always there. He knows that he is loved. There's nothing more important than that. Nothing in the world.

ALMA

THERE ISN'T A TROUBLE

ALMA (CONT)

YOU CAN'T GET PAST
YOU'VE PUT YOUR PRIORITIES
FROM FIRST TO LAST.
HE'S A FINE ILLUSTRATION
AND FOLKS ARE AMAZED
THE PERFECT EXAMPLE
OF HOW HE WAS RAISED

CHERISH THE CHILD
IN SO MANY WAYS
RAISE HIM IN KINDNESS
HE'LL BRING JOY TO YOUR DAYS

BE THE LIGHT ON HIS PATH
AND GUIDE HIM WITH CARE
THE LOVE THAT YOU GIVE HIM
IS LOVE THAT HE'LL SHARE.

AS HE GROWS HE WILL STRENGTHEN
IN COMPASSION AND GRACE
HIS RESOLVE MAY BE SHAKEN
BUT NEVER HIS FAITH.
HIS GAZE WILL HAVE KINDNESS
THERE'LL BE STRENGTH IN HIS HANDS;
AS FIRM AS A MOUNTAIN
WHEREVER HE STANDS

IT'S A GIFT TO RAISE A CHILD
WATCH HIM GROW IN WAYS
YOU COULD NOT KNOW.

IN STRUGGLES, YOU'RE BOUND TO SEE
E'VRY CHALLENGE HE'LL PURSUE
IS A LESSON LEARNED BY YOU.

MAMIE

That child has taught me so much.

ALMA

He only showed you the truth of who you are. You've always been strong, and you are an excellent mother.

MAMIE AND ALMA (W/ GOSPEL QUARTET)

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD
TO STAND ON HIS OWN
YOUR STRENGTH WILL BE WITH HIM
WHEN HE MUST WALK ALONE.
AS HE FACES THE NIGHT
YOU KNOW HE'LL TAKE CARE
HE'LL ALWAYS BE CERTAIN
THAT YOUR LOVE IS THERE

IT'S A GIFT TO RAISE A CHILD.
THEY ARE PROOF THAT GOD HAS SEEN AND SMILED
EACH DAY WILL BE A REWARD

WHEN YOU CHERISH,

MAMIE

CHERISH THE CHILD.

ALMA

CHERISH.

MAMIE

CHERISH THE CHILD.

ALMA

We better go rescue Bo from the Widow Stickey.

MAMIE

Oh, she's the one who needs the rescuing.

ALMA

(MAMIE and ALMA laugh and exit)

GOSPEL QUARTET

CHERISH THE CHILD
IN SO MANY WAYS
CHERISH.

SCENE II – Bryant's General Store

(CAROLYN BRYANT works in the store. JUANITA MILAM is there as well.)

JUANITA

She is so beautiful. Why would such a beautiful woman fall for such a plain guy?

CAROLYN

I thought he was handsome, even though the movie was a little racy.

JUANITA

Well it's all about New York. They do things differently there.

CAROLYN

Yankees!

JUANITA

I thought it was kind of fun!

CAROLYN

I just don't think it's right for a married man to even entertain those thoughts.

JUANITA

But it's Marilyn Monroe, Carolyn. And he's got that itch. Don't you ever get it?

JUANITA

WHEN A GIRL IS LEFT ALONE TOO LONG
SHE'S BOUND TO FEEL A TWITCH
THEN ANY PASSERBY
COULD GIVE THAT GIRL AN ITCH
JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES
BEFORE YOUR POPCORN'S GONE
SHE WILL BE LOST;
GONNA BE HIS PAWN.

CAROLYN

IF LOVE WERE LIKE IN THE MOVIES

JUANITA

BUT IT AIN'T. 'NUFF SAID

CAROLYN

HE SWEEPS YOU OFF YOUR FEET AND THEN YOU FAINT

JUANITA
AND CRACK YOUR HEAD

CAROLYN
HIS ATTENTIONS NEVER WANDER

JUANITA
UNLESS THERE'S SOMEONE BLONDER

CAROLYN
HE CARES FOR HIS APPEARANCE
ALWAYS WEARS CLEAN CLOTHES

JUANITA
BUT HE NEVER TRIMS THE NAILS ON HIS TOES.

CAROLYN
IF LOVE WAS LIKE IN THE MOVIES
HE'D BE HOME RIGHT NOW
PAYING ME ATTENTION
AS HE WRAPS ME IN HIS ARMS

JUANITA
IF LOVE WAS LIKE THE MOVIES
I'M LOST TO HIS CHARMS
WOULD NOT HAVE TO QUESTION "IF" OR "WHY"

CAROLYN
WOULD NOT WONDER IF IT'S ALL A LIE.

JUANITA
WHEN CARY GRANT OR WILLIAM HOLDEN
GRABS A HOLD AND WON'T LET GO

CAROLYN
YOU'LL THINK YOU'RE RITA HAYWORTH

JUANITA
OR MAYBE MISS MONROE.

CAROLYN
BUT LOOKING IN A MIRROR
WHAT LOOKS BACK COULD NOT BE CLEARER
I SEE THE TRUTH; THE REAL DEAL

JUANITA
AND WE AIN'T EVEN AT THE SECOND REEL.

JAUNITA
It ain't fair.

CAROLYN
It never is.

JAUNITA
WELL, IF THE MOVIES WERE LIKE REAL LIFE

CAROLYN
OH, PLEASE. WHAT THEN!

JAUNITA
YOU'D GO TO KISS AND THEN HE'D UP AND SNEEZE

CAROLYN
AMEN.

JAUNITA
HE'D TALK DOGS AND HUNTIN' DEER

CAROLYN
WHILE HE REEKS OF SWEAT AND BEER
HIS BED IS JUST FOR SLEEPIN'
LOVE SURE AIN'T HIS SPORT

JAUNITA
AND IF IT IS, YOU KNOW HE COMES UP SHORT

CAROLYN
IF LOVE WAS LIKE IN THE MOVIES

JUANITA
WELL THAT'S A MIGHTY BIG "IF"

CAROLYN & JUANITA
OH, WHAT'S THE USE PRETENDING
THERE AIN'T NO HAPPY ENDING.

(SAMUEL JOHNSON enters the store and waits at the door.)

SAMUEL

Mornin' Miss Bryant.

CAROLYN

Samuel.

SAMUEL

Miss Bryant, I know I'm behind on my tab but I would like to pay you half of it today, if that pleases you.

CAROLYN

Come on in, Samuel. I'm glad to hear you're gonna pay. (He places the money on the counter. She does not move to count it until he steps a couple of steps back from the counter.) When do you think you will have the rest?

SAMUEL

At the end of the month, ma'am, if you don't mind.

CAROLYN

If that's the way it has to be. But it would be better if you would keep it current.

SAMUEL

I understand ma'am. We had some doctor bills at our place and I got a little behind.

CAROLYN

We all have bills, Samuel.

(She has finished counting the money and he stands looking at her.)

CAROLYN

Are you expecting a receipt?

SAMUEL

No ma'am, of course not. I'll be going.

(SAMUEL exits)

JUANITA

Honestly, Carolyn, I don't see why you and Roy do business with those people. AND you let them run credit!

CAROLYN

Coloreds ARE our business. If it wasn't for them, we'd have no store. And Samuel is one of the good ones. I just can't let them think they can take advantage of me.

JUANITA

(Giggles) Imagine if one of them took "advantage" of you? Could you ever?

CAROLYN

What are you talking about?

JUANITA

I mean their women folk have all those children. They gotta be good at it.

CAROLYN

JUANITA MILAM! With a colored man?

JUANITA

Come on Carolyn. Women get the itch, too. (pause) Oh, I'm just pulling your leg.

CAROLYN

It's disgusting and against God's law.

JUANITA

But you have to admit, if he wasn't black, that Samuel would make a fine looking man, all muscled and what not.

CAROLYN

You are just evil. Got me thinking all sorts of crazy, wicked thoughts. (She smiles)

JUANITA

Me too! I'm just so antsy.

CAROLYN

I know. This time, Roy is hauling shrimp to San Antonio. He's gone so much.

JUANITA

He sure does leave you alone a lot.

CAROLYN

Didn't used to be that way. At least not when we first met.

JUANITA

He nabbed him the Beauty Queen. You could have had any guy in the county!

If I had a crystal ball...

CAROLYN

You and me both.

JUANITA

IF LOVE WAS LIKE IN THE MOVIES

JAUNITA

WELL THAT'S A MIGHTY BIG "IF"

CAROLYN

OH, WHAT'S THE USE PRETENDING
THERE AIN'T NO HAPPY ENDING.

CAROLYN & JUANITA

SCENE III – Maxwell Street

(During the song EMMETT pursued by MAMIE and ALMA enter Maxwell Street, a bustling busy street with push-cart vendors and shoppers. MOSE turns around and sees MAMIE and ALMA. WHEELER is with him.)

ENSEMBLE

MAXWELL STREET
HAS A BEAT
A THUMP
A BUMP
A GRINDING HEAT.
IT HITS YA RAW
AND PLAYS YA SWEET
FROM THE CONK IN YA HAIR
TO YA STEPPIN' FEET

GOSPEL QUARTET

MAXWELL! MAXWELL STREET!
THAT'S MAXWELL. WORKIN' MAXWELL STREET

MOSE

There you are.

ALMA

MOSE!

MAMIE

Uncle Mose! Wheeler!

WHEELER

I told you they'd find us!

ENSEMBLE

MAXWELL STREET
IT'S COMPLETE
DRUNKS!
SWELLS!
OR DEADBEAT!
SOUTHSIDE QUEEN
NORTHSIDE ELITE
WHERE THE HOI-POLLOI,

ENSEMBLE (CONT)

AND PRIVILEGED MEET

GOSPEL QUARTET

MAXWELL! MAXWELL STREET!
THAT'S MAXWELL! GET ME TO MAXWELL STREET

ALMA

Wheeler, you taking care of your guest?

WHEELER

Preacher is always welcome at our house.

ALMA

Good to see you, Preacher. How's Lizzy? Why'd you leave her back in Money?

MOSE

Now, Alma. Lizzy had to stay and watch after the children.

WHEELER

Where's Emmett?

MAMIE

He's over there. That boy and his hats!

(WHEELER runs off to join EMMETT)

ENSEMBLE

SEE THAT CAT
PAYED HIS DUES
STRUMMIN' AWAY ON
TWELVE BAR BLUES

MAXWELL STREET
PROVED HIS BREAK
NOW HE'S SWINGIN'
AT THE DRAKE!
VENDORS SELLING
FURNITURE TO CLOTHES
BEDROOM SUITE OR IMPORTED HOSE.

GOSPEL QUARTET

CHINA, LACE

GOSPEL (CONT)

NAILS, ROPE
END OF THE STREET
YOU CAN SCORE SOME DOPE.

MAXWELL!!!

MOSE

There's a lot more colored folk up here than I remember.

ALMA

More and more coming every year. Nobody likes living in Jim Crow!

MAMIE

When are you and Lizzy gonna move up here? Simeon would like the schools. He could play with Emmett and Wheeler. Thelma seems to like it here.

MOSE

So, what happened with you and Thelma?

MAMIE

What happened? I asked her to do chores!

ALMA

I guess she didn't like that, Preacher.

MOSE

My girl told me you were working her day and night.

ALMA

Please! If I can scrub a floor, and Emmett can scrub a floor, she can scrub a floor.

ENSEMBLE

MAXWELL STREET
AIN'T DISCREET
LOUD
RAUCOUS
CAN'T BE BEAT
ATTITUDES
OF SELF-CONCEIT
GONNA CATCH THE BUZZ
GONNA CATCH THE BUZZ
GONNA CATCH THE BUZZ
MAXWELL STREET!

(EMMETT runs up.)

EMMETT

Mama... Thel-moo is here!

MAMIE

I see that. Bo, this is your Uncle Mose; visiting from Money, Mississippi. He's staying with Wheeler.

EMMETT

Pleased to meet you, Sir.

ALMA

Everyone calls Mose, "Preacher".

EMMETT

Please to meet you, Preacher. Mama, aren't you gonna invite Thel-moo over?

MAMIE

If she's not afraid of me.

MOSE

(Calling out)

Girl, come over here and greet your Aunt.

(THELMA approaches, cautiously)

MAMIE

Thelma! It's so good to see you again. How are things over at Selma's?

THELMA

It's very nice. *She* doesn't work me to death.

MOSE

Thelma!

MAMIE

Oh, Preacher, it's alright. I suppose I had that coming. (to Thelma) How's your study going at the University?

THELMA

Going well. Thank you for asking, Aunt Mamie.

EMMETT

Mama, don't you miss Thel-moo?

MAMIE

Of course I do.

EMMETT

And isn't she the prettiest girl you've ever met?

MAMIE

Well! She is indeed.

EMMETT

And Thel-moo, don't you miss Mama's chicken dinners? And oatmeal cookies?

THELMA

No. I mean, well... I guess so. Cousin Selma ain't much of a cook.

ALMA

She is if you don't eat it! I just hold my nose and swallow when she ain't looking.

EMMETT

Thel-moo, that is a mighty pretty scarf.

THELMA

Why thank you, Emmett. It was a gift from your mother.

EMMETT

You don't say?

MAMIE

It looks lovely on you.

THELMA

It's kinda my favorite, Aunt Mamie.

EMMETT

You don't say!?

THELMA

Aunt Mamie, I feel bad about this whole mix-up.

MAMIE

So do I, child. I am so sorry.

THELMA

I'm sorry, too.

(There is some hugging)

EMMETT

See how it all worked out.

MOSE

"And a little child shall lead them."

MAMIE

Amen, Preacher. Bo, honey, you are like oil on troubled waters.

EMMETT

So what about my birthday? Can Thel-moo come too?

MAMIE

Certainly.

MOSE

Emmett, that was a nice bit of diplomacy there. You should be a preacher someday!

EMMETT

I don't think so! (Pause) You really think so?

MOSE

You know, you should come visit me and the family in Money!

EMMETT

All the way to Mississippi?

MOSE

That would be the place!

I GOTTA CRICK THAT'S FULL OF CATFISH
THAT'LL JUMP RIGHT ON YOUR HOOK.
I CAN SHOW YOU WHERE THERE'RE RABBITS
YOU CAN CATCH WITH JUST A LOOK
I GOTTA GARDEN GROWIN' MELON
WHERE THE BEANS CRAWL UP A STRING
A TREE THAT'S GOTTA ROPE THAT'S MORE THAN
PERFECT FOR A SWING
GOTTA LOAD 'A CATS AND DOGS

MOSE (CONT)

YES, I EVEN GOTTA HORSE!
AND YOU CAN TAKE HER FOR A RIDE
WHEN YOU VISIT US, OF COURSE

MOSE & GOSPEL QUARTET

DOWN IN MONEY.
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI.
MONEY
THAT'S JUST MONEY.
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI.
MONEY
SET YOUR SITES ON MONEY.
YOU SHOULD COME AND SEE
HOW MONEY, MISSISSIPPI IS ALRIGHT BY ME.

(MOSE does a dance break of 12 bars)

MOSE

WELL NOW ON SATURDAYS I LOVE TO TAKE
MY BABY OUT TO DANCE
WE WILL STOMP AND JIVE AND JITTERBUG
AND TWIST AT EV'RY CHANCE
LOTTA MOVES TO SHOW HER
AND SHE'S LOVIN' EV'RY ONE
AND WOW! HER DADDY TOLE ME,
"BOY, JUST GET HER HOME BEFORE THE SUN!"
TAKE THE EVENIN' SLOW
AS OUR FEELINGS KINDA CLIMB
WHEN THE SUN COMES UP
I KNOW I'VE HAD A GOOD TIME

MOSE & GOSPEL QUARTET

'CAUSE I GOT MONEY.
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI.
MONEY
I GOT MONEY.
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI.
MONEY
WHEN IN MONEY, MISSISSIPPI,
THAT'S THE WAY THINGS BE
'CAUSE MONEY, MISSISSIPPI DOES ALRIGHT BY ME.

(ALMA and MOSE trade off moves for a 12 bar break)

GOSPEL QUARTET

A BOY LIKE YOU
COULD HAVE SOME FUN
PLAYIN' AROUND
IN THAT SOUTHERN SUN
YOU'LL HAVE NO WORRIES
NOT A CARE
LIFE'S SO EASY
WHEN YOU'RE LIVIN' THERE.

MAMIE

Mose, hush, you're getting the child all excited.

MOSE

It's a wonderful place!

MOSE

WELL THE FOLKS YOU MEET IN MONEY
SURE DON'T TREAT YA LIKE YOU'RE NEW
WE CALL YA "CUZ" OR MAYBE "BROTHER"
JUST THE WAY YOUR FAMILY DO
IF YOU'RE EVER NEEDIN' HELP
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE WITH A HAND
YOU'LL THINK YA DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN
OR YOU'RE IN THE PROMISED LAND
LOOK AROUND FOR PLACES
THAT ARE NICER, NEAR AND FAR
BUT NO BETTER PLACE
NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE

MOSE & GOSPEL QUARTET

'CAUSE YOU'RE IN MONEY.
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI.
MONEY.
YOU'RE IN MONEY.
MONEY, MISSISSISSIPPI.
MONEY.
PACK YOUR BAGS FOR MONEY
YOU SHOULD COME ON DOWN
'CAUSE MONEY, MISSISSISSIPPI
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI
MONEY, MISSISSIPPI
IS THE NICEST TOWN.

EMMETT

Oh, Mama! I wanna go! Can I?

MAMIE

(ticking off reasons)

Oh, I don't know. It's so far. You'd be all by yourself, and...

MOSE

He won't be by himself, he's got family! We'll take good care of him.

MAMIE

But it's Jim Crow!

MOSE

We know all about that. We can handle it.

WHEELER

Yeah, Aunt Mamie, it'd be great if Emmett could come down with me when I visit Uncle Mose.

ALMA

And Mamie, just think. it would give you a little alone time to, you know, "pursue" things...

MAMIE

Pursue? Like what?

ALMA

You know what I mean! "Snip! Snip!"

MAMIE

Oh I just don't like this. Jim Crow is no place for an unsupervised black child!

EMMETT

Child?! Mama...

ALMA

He'd have Mose and Lizzy around, Honey.

EMMETT

Mama, I'm old enough to take care of myself! I oughta be able to go. I know all about Jim Crow. It doesn't frighten me.

MAMIE

Well it ought to! It frightens me! No. You're not going to Money. No.

THELMA

Aunt Mamie, I grew up down there, with all respect, we have to watch ourselves here too.

MOSE

Mamie, why do you do all your shopping on Maxwell? It's because those stores on State Street don't want black folk in there.

ALMA

That's right honey. Black folk aren't welcome north of Roosevelt Road.

MAMIE

But what if something happens?

MOSE

The worst that's gonna happen is he'll get a stomach ache from eating too much of Lizzy's Red Velvet Cake.

ALMA

Now that's a problem we should all have.

WHEELER

I'll be there. Uncle Mose will be there. Aunt Lizzy will be there. Maurice and Simeon will be there.

MAMIE

Alright! Just... I need time to think.

ALMA

Emmett, why don't you and Thelma show Mose and Wheeler around Maxwell Street? Your mother and I are gonna have a little talk.

EMMETT

But what about Money?!

ALMA

Shoo, you. Do what your Mamoo says. Go on now. (To Mamie) Child... let's you and I walk and talk.

(The others leave and the scene changes to just MAMIE and ALMA alone)

MAMIE

Mama, I just don't know. He's so young.

ALMA

And the young think they know everything. It's not true, old people know everything. So you listen to me. Let that boy go visit family and give yourself a little breather. You know I'm right. It will give you some time to... You know.

MAMIE

Are we back to the Barber again.

ALMA

When was the last time you went out on a date?

MAMIE

A date!? Mama, I'm not a 17 year-old girl.

ALMA

Child, you should not be playing "Hard To Get." Don't you want...?

MAMIE

Mama, I don't have time...

ALMA

YOU CAN'T BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE
YOU'RE ALWAYS STUCK ON CALL
YOU CAN MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE AT YOUR BEST.
BUT EVEN THE SUN NEEDS HER NIGHT OF REST.

YOU'RE DEVOTED TO ME; PROTECTIVE OF HIM;
A BREADWINNER TO ALL THREE.
BUT TAKE SOME TIME OFF
LET YOUR HAIR DOWN.
DANGLE SOME EAR RINGS
WITH A LOW-CUT GOWN

AND SET THAT WOMAN FREE.
GRAB THAT GIRL SOME HUGGIN' AND KISSIN'
LET THAT LADY SEE
THERE'S A WHOLE LOTTA LIFE THAT SHE BEEN MISSIN'

CAGED IN TIGHT. HUNGRY TO FEAST.
YOU GOT MORE TENSION THAN A CHAINED UP BEAST.
CUT THOSE ROPES.
POP THAT HATCH.
GRAB YOU A MAN
WITH A BACK YOU CAN SCRATCH.

MAMIE

Momma, have you lost your mind?

ALMA

LET THAT WOMAN OUT.
TEAR IT DOWN. START A FIRE.
GET THAT MAN TO SHOUT!
SCORCH HIM DEEP, LIKE A THOUSAND VOLT WIRE.

ALMA

It'll make you feel young again!

MAMIE

I'M A GROWN UP WOMAN
WITH A CHILD TO CARE FOR
I WON'T THROW MY MORALS IN A SPIN.
I'M IN CHURCH EV'RY SUNDAY
I'VE NO TIME FOR GAMES.

ALMA

EVERY SOUL NEEDS SAVING, BUT A BODY HAS GOT TO SIN!

I'm old, not dead!

LET YOUR WOMAN LIVE.
SHE BURNIN' UP AND NEEDS SOME COOLIN'
SOMETHIN'S GOTTA GIVE
DON'T HAVE TO CARE BECAUSE WHO YOU FOOLIN'?

GET OFF THE FENCE.
FOLLOW YOUR BEAT.
FIND YOU A MAN.
TURN UP HIS HEAT
CUT YOURSELF LOOSE.
TIME FOR YOU TO SET THAT WOMAN FREE.
SET THAT WOMAN FREE.
SET HER FREE!

SCENE IV – Church Basement

(The REVEREND and GENE MOBLEY are reviewing a seating diagram on a piece of paper.)

REVEREND

I appreciate your help. This is one of the things I like least about my position.

GENE

Of course, what are we...?

REVEREND

I need to put together the seating chart for the annual Board of Deacon's dinner.

GENE

Does it matter where people are seated?

REVEREND

To some. Status is important, even in church. Unfortunately, there are a limited number of seats at the head table. As our newest Deacon, I can't seat you there.

GENE

Of course, Reverend.

REVEREND

So I'm sitting you next to Widow Stickey.

(GENE looks at the REVEREND)

It's a joke. I have a better proposition for you. I'm placing you next to Mamie Till Bradley.

GENE

(Beaming) Mrs. Bradley is a very charming woman.

REVEREND

I'm glad you think so, Mr. Mobley.

GENE

I venture to say that I'll have the most desirable seat at the dinner.

REVEREND

You don't talk like a barber!

GENE

Sorry, when I get nervous my mind races. I suppose I try too hard sometimes.

REVEREND

No need for that. I'm hoping that you and she might hit it off.

GENE

I must say, Reverend Davis, it will be my pleasure to sit next to Mrs. Bradley. My pleasure indeed. But I can't imagine that she will view my company as any honor.

REVEREND

Nonsense, Mr. Mobley, you offer a lot.

GENE

I'm not sure I agree. As a conversationalist. I get tongue tied. My looks are plain. I...

REVEREND

Without getting too indiscrete, I was considered quite the lady's man in my youth.

GENE

Oh ho! Did the church tame you?

REVEREND

Mrs. Davis tamed me, Gene! Never underestimate the will power of a strong Black woman.

REVEREND

SHE'S A WOMAN WHO KNOWS HER MIND.
NEVER UNCERTAIN OR INSECURE
TREAT HER LIKE ONE OF A KIND.
AND THE LOVE SHE'LL GIVE YOU IS STRONG AND PURE.

SHE'S TWENTY FOUR CARAT.
BIRD IN THE HAND.
WHEN YOU'RE WITH HER YOU FEEL SO GRAND.
SHE'S A GENTLE BREEZE;
THE SWEETEST SONG.
BUT LORD HAVE MERCY IF YOU DO HER WRONG.

SHE'S A STRONG, BLACK WOMAN
AND IT'S MORE THAN JUST SOME HYPE.
THERE'S SHINY AND SLEEK
MILD AND MEEK,
BUT A STRONG, BLACK WOMAN IS MY FAVORITE TYPE.

STRONG, BLACK WOMAN
WILL SLAY YOU WITH HER WALK.
YOUR HEART WILL STOP.

REVEREND (CONT)

YOUR HEAD WILL POP.
AND THAT'S BEFORE YOU EVEN HEAR HER TALK.

GOSPEL QUARTET

STRONG, BLACK WOMAN!
STRONG, BLACK WOMAN!
STRONG, BLACK WOMAN, YEAH!

GENE

SHE'S GOT A LOT TO AROUSE AND INTRIGUE
BUT I'M AFRAID TO EVEN TRY
I KNOW I'M NOT IN HER LEAGUE.
CAN A GUY LIKE ME EVEN CATCH HER EYE?

SHE'S A CADILLAC
SHE'S THE TOP OF THE LINE!
I HOPE SHE DON'T SEE ME AS A WASTE OF TIME.
I'M THE FIRST TO ADMIT
I'M TAKING THE HIT
SHE MIGHT BE FATAL BUT HER ONLY CRIME IS SHE'S A

GENE, REVEREND & GOSPEL QUARTET

STRONG, BLACK WOMAN
THE BEST THAT YOU CAN GET
WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD
IS GOSPEL WORD
SHE THE TYPE OF WOMAN YOU DON'T FORGET.

STRONG, BLACK WOMAN
IS HOW THIS STORY READS
STRENGTH AND LOVE
FROM ABOVE
A STRONG BLACK WOMAN IS ALL A MAN NEEDS.

GOSPEL QUARTET

STRONG, BLACK WOMAN!
STRONG, BLACK WOMAN!
STRONG, BLACK WOMAN, YEAH!

REVEREND

TAKE YOUR PLACE
ENCOURAGE HER.
SUPPORT HER EV'RYWAY YOU CAN.

REVERAND – (CONT)

SHE CAN HOLD
THE WORLD TOGETHER
BUT A STRONG BLACK WOMAN
NEEDS HER STRONG BLACK MAN

REVEREND

Mr. Mobley, she will rely on you as much as you on her.

GENE

SHE'S A LIONESS
AND I MUST CONFESS
THAT I WANT TO BE IN HER PRIDE.
I'M A TOTAL FREAK
BECAUSE SHE MAKES ME WEAK
I'D MOVE A MILLION MOUNTAINS TO BE AT HER SIDE.

GENE, REVEREND, & GOSPEL QUARTET

SHE'S A STRONG BLACK WOMAN.
LIKE I'VE NEVER MET BEFORE.
DON'T BLOCK MY WAY
I'M IN THE FRAY.
'CAUSE I'LL FIGHT TO BE AROUND HER MORE AND MORE AND MORE AND MORE AND MORE
AND MORE AND MORE AND MORE.

SHE'S A STRONG, BLACK WOMAN
THIS IS HOW THIS STORY READS
YOU CAN HAVE THE REST
GIVE ME THE BEST!
A STRONG BLACK WOMAN IS ALL THIS MAN NEEDS.

SCENE V – Bryant Store

(ROY BRYANT and CAROLYN are in the store. ROY is cleaning a pistol while CAROLYN is taking care of stock items.)

ROY

It's awful, the way you treat this gun.

CAROLYN

I hate that thing. It makes me nervous.

ROY

I figured that by the way you just throw it under the car seat. You're supposed to keep it in your purse.

CAROLYN

No, Roy, the boys are always in my purse.

ROY

Honey, how is it gonna protect you if it's stuck in the car?! We've got coloreds coming in and out of here all day and night and I...

CAROLYN

ROY! I will not have it in my purse.

ROY

Well, I guess you know what's best, as usual. (He hands her the gun and moves to leave)

CAROLYN

Of course, that's why you married me.

ROY

That ain't the only reason! (He grabs and kisses her)

CAROLYN

Roy! Someone might come in!

ROY

It's our place, we can do whatever we like.

CAROLYN

What's got into you?! Are you up to something?

ROY

You're my wife, I can kiss you if I want to. (He kisses her again. A customer, Lizzy, enters,. Her eyes widen)

CAROLYN

ROY! (They break apart) Excuse me, Lizzy.

LIZZY

Su... Su... Sorry, Miz Bryant, I'll come back later. (Lizzy quickly exits. Roy laughs)

CAROLYN

(Smacking Roy's arm) Don't laugh! I'm so embarrassed.

ROY

It was just a colored girl, who cares?

CAROLYN

You're awful!

ROY

Well, if you weren't so pretty... C'mon, just one more.

CAROLYN

Roy, stop. (But she lets him)

ROY

That's better. Okay, I gotta get moving.

CAROLYN

Wait... Where are you going?

ROY

Mobile, we got another shipment of...

CAROLYN

Now? You just got back!

ROY

I gotta work Carolyn. (Off her look) For Pete's sake, it's just an overnight.

CAROLYN

That's all it takes.

ROY

What do you mean by that?

CAROLYN

Oh, come on Roy. I wash your shirts. There's always make-up on 'em.

ROY

That's just those truck-stop waitresses. They get friendly. Can you blame 'em?
(He smiles. She glares at him) Nothing to worry about.

CAROLYN

Well, maybe YOU should worry, Roy.

ROY

What're you getting at?

CAROLYN

You said it yourself, If I weren't so pretty...

ROY

That's not funny.

CAROLYN

Roy, just... go to Mobile. I really don't care!

ROY

Then I don't either. I'm leaving.

(He storms out)

CAROLYN

Dammit, Roy... You left a long time ago.

CAROLYN

THEY MADE ME BEAUTY QUEEN OF THE COUNTY
ADMIRER IN MANY WAYS
A FANCY GOWN
A SASH AND CROWN
LOVE AND PRAISE

I HAD THE PICK OF MANY MEN
BUT HE HAD A SPECIAL LOOK

CAROLYN (CONT)

HIS HANDSOME FACE
A SOUTHERN GRACE;
THAT WAS ALL IT TOOK.

BUT NOW HE STAYS OUT LATE, STUMBLES HOME.
WAKES UP WAY PAST NOON
IF HE FEELS LOVE, IT'S HARD TO TELL
HE NO LONGER SINGS THAT TUNE

AND HE'S STILL HUNTING FOR A BEAUTY QUEEN
THERE'S AT LEAST ONE EV'RY YEAR
PRETENDS TO CARE FOR THE ONE HE'S GOT
THOUGH HIS CHOICE IS PRETTY CLEAR.

HE SEEMS TO LOOK RIGHT THROUGH ME
AND HAS TO FAKE A GRIN
HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE
WHO THINKS THIS PAGEANT'S DONE
THERE AIN'T NOTHING LEFT TO WIN.

SCENE VII – Inside The Till Apartment

THELMA

You better watch yourself down South!

EMMETT

Jim Crow don't scare me. I'm gonna have fun!

ALMA

I'm serious, child.

EMMETT

Mamoo, I'm not a child! And you said we were going to play cards.

THELMA

I know, Bo. But before we do, I promised your mother that we would talk about...

EMMETT

You're just trying to scare me.

ALMA

Now, listen to Thelma. She's lived down there and she knows.

THELMA

Emmett, this is serious.

THERE ARE THINGS DOWN SOUTH
NO CHILD SHOULD FACE.
YOU WILL FEEL THE HATE
AGAINST OUR RACE.
SO DON'T ACT UP
BE POLITE
AND NEVER TALK BACK TO ANYONE WHITE

EMMETT

So I can't say anything?

ALMA

No sass!

ALMA

MIND YOUR MANNERS
AND LANGUAGE TOO
DON'T LET TROUBLE NOTICE YOU

ALMA (CONT)

KEEP YOUR STREET
SQUEAKY CLEAN
AND CHANCES ARE GOOD YOU'LL NEVER BE SEEN

EMMETT

Maybe I'll just turn invisible, like a ghost. (Imitating a ghost) OOOOOOOO!

ALMA

Watch your P's and Q's, young man.

THELMA

We can't do anything we like.

ALMA

When you're around white folk, you need to watch everything you say and do. There's a whole lot of rules.

EMMETT

Well, in case y'all haven't heard, slavery is over.

ALMA

Emmett, Jim Crow doesn't care.

ALMA

JIM CROW'S REAL
IT'S NOT PRETEND

THELMA

HE'LL ROB YOU OF FAMILY
AND HURT YOUR FRIEND

ALMA

THOUGH HE AIN'T A PERSON
HE'LL LEAVE YOU RAW

ALMA & THELMA

FOR YOU CAN'T ESCAPE.
HE'S THE RULE OF LAW

EMMETT

I'm smarter than them, anyway.

ALMA

JIM CROW DOESN'T CARE
HOW SMART YOU ARE

THELMA

HOW PRETTY OR HANDSOME,
IF YOU OWN A CAR.

ALMA

YOU CAN SWIM IN MONEY
AND HAVE WAITERS FUSS.

ALMA & THELMA

BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO RIDE
IN THE BACK OF THE BUS

EMMETT

In the back!

ALMA

Listen, Bo. You do as you're told!

EMETTT

But...

ALMA & THELMA

CHILD, YOU CAN NOT MESS WITH JIM CROW!

ALMA

Now, I told your mother that if Thelma and I didn't think you were serious about this, we would let her know. And there would be no trip to Money. So what's it going to be?

EMMETT

Mamoo, I heard ya the first time. I really want to go. Please? I promise to be safe and pay attention to whatever Uncle Mose says. Cross my heart and hope to die. Now can we please play cards?

ALMA

(Stringing Emmett along)

I don't know. Thelma, what do you think?

THELMA

He seems pretty serious to me.

ALMA

Then it's settled. SO...What are we gonna play?

EMMETT

Poker!

THELMA

POKER!?

ALMA

Emmett Till, you are such a little devil!

(They all laugh)

Inter-Scene
GOSPEL QUARTET
(Singing as MAMIE and MR. MOBLEY enter)

IF YOU HAD THE POWER
TO CHANGE THE WORLD;
TO MAKE EV'RYTHING ALRIGHT
WOULD YOU TAKE YOUR TIME
BIT BY BIT
OR ATTEMPT CHANGE OVER NIGHT?

THERE'S NO WISHING WELL
OR MAGIC FROM A LAMP
NO STAR FALLING FROM THE SKY.
IF IT'S CHANGE YOU WANT
YOU HAVE TO ACT
IT'S YOU WHO HAS TO TRY.

DEEP DOWN INSIDE YOU
IS WHERE IT STARTS
YOU CAN FACE DOWN AN ARMY
WITH THE PUREST OF HEARTS

YOU ARE THE CHANNEL
A FORCE OF WILL
RISE UP
STAND TALL
GIVE THIS YOUR ALL

DON'T LIVE IN SILENCE
TRANSFORM THE WORLD
IT'S WHAT YOU'RE CALLED TO DO
BUT WILL YOU?

WILL YOU?

Scene VIII – Outside the Till Home

GENE

It's a beautiful night.

MAMIE
(distracted)

Hm? Oh. Yes...It's nice.

GENE

I guess the company isn't to your liking.

MAMIE

No, no, Mr. Mobley. I apologize. My mind is just someplace else.

GENE

You're worried about your son.

MAMIE

Jim Crow is just... frightening. And Emmett is so willful.

GENE

He has family all around him.

MAMIE

I know.

GENE

We may not be able to change the world. But we can face it.

MAMIE

I'm just not sure.

GENE

Well, considering your state of mind, I am grateful you allowed me to walk you home. If there's anything I can do to help, I sincerely hope you will ask.

MAMIE

Thank you, Mister Mobley. And you know what? It *is* a beautiful night. Would you like to hold my hand?

GENE

(Playful) Oh, my! I'd hate to be disrespectful.

MAMIE

(Playful back) Oh my! You are overly respectful!

GENE

Well, I'm told I'm old-fashioned in my ways.

MAMIE

Old fashioned would be a nice change.

GENE

That bad?

MAMIE

(Imitating a man saying pick up lines)

"Where have you been all my life?" "Heaven must be missing an angel," "Are you a parking ticket, 'cause you got FINE written all over you!"

GENE

(Laughing)

You have met some real winners, haven't you?

MAMIE

I suppose it's my own fault.

GENE

Certainly not. Nothing could ever be your fault, Mrs. Bradley.

IF I'M NOT YOUR TYPE
'CAUSE YOU LIKE 'EM STRONG;
IF MY WORDS JUST COME OUT WRONG;
WELL COURTING AND FLIRTING
ARE A YOUNG MAN'S GAME
AND I'M MUCH MORE TAME.

WHETHER FLOWERS OR CANDY OR
DRESSED LIKE A DANDY
AT MY AGE THAT'S REALLY MOOT.
IF YOU MUST REJECT THIS COOT,
THEN SAY, "SO LONG"
AND HIT THE GONG

I'M NOT IN PRACTICE.
AND LIKE A CACTUS,
I'VE BEEN STUCK OUT WHERE IT'S DRY.

GENE (CONT)

I DON'T GET BREAKS.
I MAKE MISTAKES.
BUT LORD KNOWS I STILL TRY.
I'M GENUINE, HUMBLE, COURTEOUS, KIND.
"LOYAL LIKE A DOG" COMES TO MIND.
WHAT YOU GET IS WHAT YOU SEE
WITH JUST PLAIN ME.

I CUT HAIR,
NOT RUGS.
I'M A BARBER BY TRADE.
NO FLASH!
NOT MUCH CASH!
AND I REEK OF POMADE!

MAMIE

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, MISTER MOBLEY
AND PERHAPS THERE IS A CLICK.
BUT MY MIND IS SOMEWHERE ELSE, MISTER MOBLEY
AND THIS ALL SEEMS JUST TOO QUICK.

Between Emmett and my luck with men, this is all moving so fast!

GENE

WELL YOU HAD TWO FLOPS.
TELL ME WHERE'S THE HARM
IN TRYING TO PROVE THAT THREE'S A CHARM.
IF YOU'RE UNSURE
THAT I'M THE CURE,
PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO LET THINGS BE
I CAN TELL YOU THINK I'M MOVING TOO FAST
BUT I KNOW THE PRESENT WON'T BE YOUR PAST.
'CAUSE THE GUY YOU'VE WANTED IS HERE AT LAST
IT'S JUST PLAIN ME.

MAMIE

I... It's not you, Mr. Mobley. I just have so much on my mind right now. I'm sorry.

GENE

Well, your son is going to have quite an adventure. Try to be happy for him.

MAMIE

But Jim Crow!

GENE

Don't dwell on that. Come on, this is a lovely night. We should enjoy it.

MAMIE

I'll do my best, Mr. Mobley.

GENE

That's all I can ask, Mrs. Bradley.

(Mamie kisses him. Surprised, he kisses her back)

Scene IX – Inside the Till Apartment

EMMETT

(Thelma, Alma and Emmett all sit, quietly staring at their cards and each other... Finally...) Go fish! (laughing)

ALMA

Child, do you have any cards at all?

EMMETT

You just have to ask for the right ones.

THELMA

Alright then, do you have any eights?

EMMETT

GO FISH! (laughing)

ALMA

Now, I know you got some eights!

EMMETT

How do...?

ALMA

'Cause you is showing me your hand, you little sneak!

THELMA

EMMETT!

EMMETT

(laughing)

(at ALMA) That's cheating!

ALMA

Who's cheating who!? (She goes to give him a reprovng pinch on his arm, but he jumps away to the window.)

EMMETT

Hey! Look, It's Mama and Mr. Mobley.

ALMA

They must be done with their date.

THELMA
(going and looking out the window)

Oh, they ain't done, yet!

EMMETT

He's kissing her!

ALMA
(Looking out the window as well.)

No child, I believe they're kissing each other.

EMMETT

Quick! She's coming up the stairs!

(The three run back to the table and hurriedly pick up their cards as MAMIE enters. She stops and surveys the "show" they are putting on.)

ALMA

You got any... threes?

EMMETT

Go KISS!

THELMA and ALMA

What!?

(EMMETT erupts into laughter!)

MAMIE

Alright you three... peeping toms. I saw you spying on me.

EMMETT

(Makes kissing noises and laughs)

ALMA

Did you have a nice time, Mamie?

MAMIE

Yes, Mama, I did. But tomorrow is a big day and it's late. We should all get some rest. And I still need to get you packed, young man.

THELMA

I suppose I'll head home. Have a wonderful time, Emmett. You'll have so much fun in Money.

MAMIE

Good night, sweetheart.

ALMA

See you Sunday in church.

(THELMA exits)

ALMA

I best be going to bed, too.

MAMIE

Why don't you just stay? I made the guest room up for you. Emmett has an early train, you can come with us to the station.

ALMA

I will. Sweet dreams, child. (kisses Mamie) and you, you rascal. (She gives him a strong hug.)

EMMETT

'Night Mamoo.

(ALMA exits)

MAMIE

So, young man, you are off on your own tomorrow.

EMMETT

Mama, I'll be fine, I'll be with Wheeler and Uncle Mose.

MAMIE

But you won't be with me.

EMMETT

It's just two weeks. And then I'll be able to tell you all about riding a horse and going fishing and maybe I'll catch a rabbit!

MAMIE

I can't wait to hear all your stories. And you know I'll be right here waiting for you to come back.

EMMETT

I know, Mama. Thank you for letting me go.

MAMIE

Alright. Now let's get you packed. The sooner you leave, the sooner you'll be back.

Inter-Scene

GOSPEL QUARTET

THE DAYS KEEP COMING
END TO END
IT'S HARD TO TELL
IF THEY'RE FOE OR FRIEND
I'M WAITING HERE
IT'S YOU I HOPE TO SEE,
WILL THE WORLD TURN ROUND
TO BRING YOU BACK TO ME.?

THAT BRAND NEW DAY
OPENS UP MY EYES
THERE'S CHANGE IN ALL I SEE
A BRIGHTER PLACE
YOUR SHINING FACE
GAZING BACK AT ME.

I HOLD TO MEM'RIES;
WISH THEY'D LAST
OUR TIME TOGETHER
HAS FADED FAST
YOU'RE MOVING ON
AND THAT'S SO HARD TO SEE
I PRAY THE WORLD TURNS ROUND
TO BRING YOU BACK TO ME.

SCENE X – Train Station

ALMA

How we got here without being stopped for speeding I'll never know!

MAMIE

The train will be leaving any minute. We gotta get you on that train with Mose and Wheeler.

EMMETT

Mama, where's my new hat?

ALMA

I've got it. (She puts it on him.) There you go.

MAMIE

Oh Lord, my little boy is looking more and more like my little man.

EMMETT

Mama, quit fussing.

MAMIE

Bo, I want you to have this. This is a ring your Daddy wore. He left it for you before he went off to the war. (She puts it on his finger, looks at him, then smothers him with a hug.) My little man.

EMMETT

You're gonna smother me.

ALMA

Mamie, that train isn't going to wait. We gotta get him on board.

MAMIE

Remember everything I told you. Please. And stay close to Preacher.

EMMETT

I'll be fine, Mama. It's gonna be fun.

EMMETT

I'M HEADED OFF TO GREET THE WORLD
SO MANY PLACES THAT I HAVE TO SEE
I'LL MEET STRANGERS I'LL CALL "FRIEND"
AND THEN BEFORE I REACH THE FIRST DAY'S END
I'LL HAVE MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB
TO THE VERY TOP
AND JOURNEYS TO TAKE THAT WILL NEVER STOP

EMMETT (CONT)

I WILL DO A MILLION THINGS BEFORE YOU EVEN KNOW I'M GONE
BUT I PROMISE YOU THAT WHEN I AM THROUGH
I'M COMING HOME TO YOU.

EMMETT

I better go. Bye Mamoo. Bye Mama. I love you.

ALMA

Be good, child.

MAMIE

I love you, baby! Bye. I love you!

ALMA

HARD TO LET YOUR CHILD GO
HARD TO SAY GOOD-BYE
THERE COMES A DAY, HE'S ON HIS WAY
TIME TO LET HIM FLY.
HE HAS MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB TO THE VERY TOP
AND JOURNEYS TO TAKE THAT WILL NEVER STOP
HE WILL DO A MILLION THINGS BEFORE YOU EVEN KNOW HE'S GONE
AND YOU KNOW THAT WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE
HE'S COMING HOME TO YOU.

MAMIE

Oh Sweet, Jesus, this is Mamie. Please, look after my boy. Keep him close.

ALMA

In Your name we pray.

MAMIE & ALMA

Amen.

MAMIE

HE'S ALWAYS BEEN MY BABY BOY
FROM THAT DAY HIS LIFE BEGAN
BUT HIS CHILDHOOD IS IN MY PAST
TODAY MY BOY'S A MAN
THERE ARE DOORS I'M KEEPING OPEN AND WILL NEVER SHUT
BUT TODAY BECAME THE DAY I FELT THE TIES GET CUT
NOW I WISH THERE WAS A WAY THAT I COULD SLOW THE WORLD DOWN
HE'S COMING HOME, I KNOW
BUT IT'S HARD TO LET HIM GO

MAMIE & ALMA

IT'S THE OLDEST RULE;
NEVER VARIES
THEY ALWAYS LEAVE THE NEST
GIVE A HUG
YOUR HEART WILL TUG
BUT IT ENDS UP FOR THE BEST.

EMMETT, MAMIE, ALMA, QUARTET, (CHORUS)

THERE ARE MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB TO THE VERY TOP
AND JOURNEYS TO TAKE THAT WILL NEVER STOP
THERE'S A MILLION DIFFERENT THINGS I MUST EXPLORE AND SEE AND DO.

EMMETT

THERE'S A BIG WORLD WAITING

ENSEMBLE

BIG WORLD WAITING.

EMMETT

EV'RY INCH IS NEW

ENSEMBLE

EV'RY INCH IS NEW

EMMETT

BUT I'M COMING HOME

ENSEMBLE

COMING HOME

ALL

COMING HOME TO YOU

- END OF ACT I -

ACT II

SCENE XI – Emmett’s Funeral

CAST

THERE’S A KINGDOM WAITING
AND IT’S ALL BRAND NEW
SO I’M COMING HOME, COMING HOME
COMING HOME, MY LORD, TO YOU

REVEREND
(Addressing the Audience.)

Amen. Amen! Lord, bless this fine choir! They sing truth! Because indeed I will be coming home to you, Sweet Jesus. Yes, I will!

CAST MEMBER

That’s right.

REVEREND

But now, now it’s time for me, as Reverend of this church, to bring solace to the family of Emmett Till. And to his loving mother, Mamie. To try to ease her suffering.

I have never had a more difficult task. Never in all my years.

But then when the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, they suffered.

CAST MEMBER

That’s right.

REVEREND

And when Jesus was beaten and taken to Calvary and hung on that cross, He suffered.

CAST MEMBER

That’s the word.

REVEREND

But you know that Moses led his people out of Israel, and you know they found the Promised Land.

CAST MEMBER

Preach!

REVEREND

You know that Jesus died and was resurrected. And you know, you KNOW Heaven was opened for all who are worthy to enter.

CAST MEMBER

Hallelujah!

REVEREND

"But the God of all grace, after that ye have suffered but a while, makes you perfect,

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE

(Joyous Affirmation)

REVEREND

"...establishes you, "

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE

(Joyous Affirmation)

REVEREND

"...strengthens you,"

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE

(Joyous Affirmation)

REVEREND

"...settles you."

"For the heavens are higher than the earth, my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are more than your thoughts." Let the church say, "Amen"

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE

Amen!

REVEREND

Say Amen!

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE

Amen!

REVERAND

YES! AMEN!

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE

AMEN!

REVEREND

Now, let us sing our joy!

GOSPEL QUARTET

THE GATES ARE OPEN
THE WAIT IS DONE
HALLELUJAH, BROTHER
HIS ARMS EMBRACE YOU
THE WAR IS WON
HALLELUJAH, SISTER!

WALKIN' INTO THE HEAVENLY CITY
GONNA WALK RIGHT IN!
STEPPIN' LIGHT
FEELIN' BRIGHT
GONNA WALK RIGHT IN

GOING HOME WHERE I BELONG
SINGING HIS PRAISE WITH HEART AND SONG
WALKIN' INTO THE HEAVENLY CITY
GONNA WALK RIGHT IN.
GONNA WALK RIGHT IN.
GONNA WALK RIGHT IN!

SCENE XII – The Wheeler home, the bedroom of Simeon

(EMMETT is meticulously folding his clothes, cleaning or fussing with his hat, and getting into his pajamas for bed. SIMEON is the younger of the two and a little in awe of his Big City "Cousin." He is already in his pajamas and sitting up in his side of the single bed.)

SIMEON

I'm glad you're here. How long you gonna stay with us?

EMMETT

Just a couple of weeks.

SIMEON

Why you fuss with your clothes like that?

EMMETT

You take care of your clothes, they take care of you.

SIMEON

You don't' always dress that fancy, do you?

EMMETT

I don't think there's anything wrong with looking good.

SIMEON

Mama won't let me do anything in my church clothes except sit in church. She says I have to make them last. Papa says God doesn't like messy children in his pews.

EMMETT

Well, your papa's the preacher. So I guess he would know.

SIMEON

Mama told me before you came down that you lost your daddy. How'd you lose him?

EMMETT

He died in the war.

SIMEON

Oh.

EMMETT

That makes him a hero. I was only four when it happened. My mama told me though.

SIMEON

So you don't have a daddy now?

EMMETT

No. (Pause) I don't really remember him.

SIMEON

Papa says it's hard not to have a father. A boy needs a man to show him how to fish and grow things and... stuff like that.

EMMETT

Things are different in the city. Mama and I do pretty good.

SIMEON

Papa told me that you was a man and that I could learn from you.

EMMETT

He's right.

SIMEON

Tomorrow we should go into Money and play checkers at the store.

EMMETT

Checkers!?

SIMEON

Maurice says we could have a competition. Winner take all!

EMMETT

All of what?

SIMEON

Uh... I don't know. You know how to play checkers?

EMMETT

Any fool can play that game! (seeing his words have stung Simeon) But I hope you'll help me.

SIMEON

Maurice thinks he can never lose, but I beat him... sometimes.

EMMETT

Then you'll need to show me some pointers.

SIMEON
(Pleased)

Hey...do you think your Daddy's in heaven looking down on you right now? Papa says people in heaven watch us.

MOSE
(offstage)

Boys! Enough gabbing! Even dead people need sleep. Go to bed.

EMMETT
(putting his finger up to his lips)

Shhhh. I guess we better.

SIMEON

Okay. G'night Emmett.

EMMETT

'Night, Simeon.

(EMMETT finishes putting on his pajamas and turns down his side of the bed. He looks at the ring on his finger.)

IF I LOOK LIKE A MAN
IT'S THE WAY THAT I STAND.
OR PERHAPS IT IS MY HAT
HATS ARE LIKE THAT.

PEOPLE HAVE DOUBTS
AND CALL ME A CHILD
BUT MY AGE IS A FACT
AND I KNOW HOW TO ACT:

ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL
BE SURE TO SAY, "PLEASE"
DON'T SCOLD OR TEASE
CARE FOR THE NEEDY
SHARE WHAT YOU GOT
TO THEM YOU HAVE A LOT.

BE KIND TO YOUR ELDERS
SHOW THEM RESPECT
THOSE WEAKER THAN YOU, PROTECT
HELP YOUNGER KIDS

EMMET (CONT)

LEARN AND GROW
SHARE THE THINGS YOU KNOW.

WHEN TROUBLE COMES;
AND BLOCKS MY PATH
IF GIANTS DISTURB MY SLEEP
I WON'T BACK DOWN
I HAVE NO FEAR
OF THOSE MONSTERS FROM THE DEEP!

WHEN DOES A MAN
BECOME A MAN
WITH HIS ACTIONS, HIS WORDS, HIS HEART?
POPPA LOOK DOWN
WHO DO YOU SEE?
IS THIS A MAN? PLEASE, TELL ME.

SCENE XIII – Bryant's Store

JAUNITA

Hey, Roy! Carolyn around?

ROY

She's down in Greenwood, getting her hair done.

JUANITA

Oooh! Who she's getting all pretty for?

ROY

(Glowers. Stares at her)

JUANITA

(Beat) Well, I wanted to see what she was going to do this weekend.

ROY

I don't know. I'm out of town on a run.

JUANITA

You should stay home more, Roy.

ROY

And why is that?

JUANITA

Well, you know, Carolyn is alone here an awful lot. People talk.

ROY

Who's talking? About what?

JUANITA

It ain't right for a woman to be left all alone so much.

ROY

It's not like she's gonna miss me!

JUANITA

She might.

ROY

Sure.

JUANITA

(Pause) Then again, she might not.

ROY

What are you getting at?

JUANITA

Oh, nothing to worry about... (pause) How are the dogs?

ROY

Juanita, you enjoy sticking your nose in other people's business?

JUANITA

I'm not sure I like your tone, Roy.

ROY

I'm not sure I like your nose, Juanita!

(LIZZY enters)

LIZZY

Morning, Mister Bryant. Mind if I do a little shopping?

ROY

You paying cash or running credit, Lizzy?

LIZZY

Cash, Mr. Bryant.

ROY

Good, come right in.

JUANITA

Look at you, Roy. Being all polite to the coloreds. Who knew you had it in you?

ROY

This isn't your usual day, Lizzy.

LIZZY

Yes, Mr. Bryant. My nephew is visiting from Chicago. I want to make him a real Southern dinner.

ROY

Well, you make sure those boys know that they can play checkers and spend their money on pop and ice cream.

LIZZY

Oh yes, Mr. Bryant, they know. In fact, that's all the young one's been talking about.

JUANITA

(Huffs) Tell Carolyn to call me when she gets back from getting herself all beautiful for who knows who.

ROY

Watch that door on the way out, Juanita. It's got an awful kick to it!

(Juanita exits)

ROY

Damn it.

SCENE XIV – The front porch of the TILL home, Chicago

REVEREND

Mrs. Bradley that was delicious. Thank you so much for having me.

MAMIE

Well Reverend, it's my pleasure. It's nice to cook for a man again.

REVEREND

Everything was so good I had to have two helpings.

ALMA

Well I had three!

MAMIE

I noticed!

ALMA

I just can't get enough of your chicken, Mamie.

REVEREND

Alma, why don't you join me in the parlor?

ALMA

Oh, thank you Reverend, but I don't know if I can even move!

REVEREND

But... I really need your help... with the seating chart for the Deacon's dinner.

ALMA

Now, Reverend, you worry too much. It will work itself out. Like it says in the good Book, "The Lord works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform."

REVEREND

That isn't in the Bible, Alma.

ALMA

Well it should be!

REVEREND

Well, Alma, the Bible does say, "Don't overstay your welcome."

ALMA

Where does it say that?

REVEREND

I'll show you in the parlor! (Giving her the high sign) Come on, Alma!

(ALMA & REVEREND leave)

GENE

She is quite the character!

MAMIE

Mama, just doesn't know when to stop. If it wasn't for her, I'd be so lost.

GENE

I look forward to getting to know your son.

MAMIE

He's the reason I breathe, Mr. Mobley.

GENE

It must be a challenge raising him by yourself.

MAMIE

The older he gets, the more challenges there are.

GENE

I... Mamie... Oh...

MAMIE

What?

(Quickly dropping to his knee)

MAMIE

Oh, my...

GENE

Please let me speak... Mamie, I know you to be the most wonderful woman, the most wonderful woman I've met in my life. The most beautiful, the most intelligent, the... I'm sorry, what I'm trying to say is... It would be such a blessing and I would be the happiest man, if you would consent to be my wife.

MAMIE

Mr. Mobley! This is... You have taken me by surprise.

GENE

THIS BRAND NEW LIFE
THAT I CAN BRING
IS MORE THAN JUST
A VOW AND RING.
YOU WON'T HAVE DOUBTS
OR HAVE TO GUESS.
AND PLEASE FORGIVE ME
IF I PUSH OR PRESS.
BUT I WILL LOVE YOU ALWAYS
JUST SAY, "YES."

THIS BRAND NEW LIFE
IS WHAT I VOW.
IT'S YOURS AND MINE AND HIS.

WE WILL KNOW EACH OTHER
LIKE A WELL WORN BOOK.
BE IT INSIDE JOKE
OR TELLING LOOK.
WHEN YOU'RE DOWN
AND FEEL DISTRESS
ANY CARE AND SORROW
I WILL MAKE LESS.

AND I WILL LOVE YOU ALWAYS
JUST SAY, "YES."

A BRAND NEW LIFE
YOU KNOW THE WORD TO SAY
I'M BEGGING YOU
LET ME START TODAY.
THIS BRAND NEW LIFE
IS WHAT I WANT TO GIVE.
JUST SAY THE WORD
SO WE ALL CAN LIVE TOGETHER,
TOGETHER
IN A BRAND NEW LIFE.

MAMIE

Mr. Mobley, I just don't know what...

ALMA
(From inside the house)

Say "Yes!" child.

REVEREND

ALMA!

MAMIE

Well... It seems the heavens have spoken. Now I don't mean to be difficult, but I need to wait until Emmett returns. This is a big decision for both of us and I really need to include him. I hope you understand.

GENE

And that is how it should be, Mrs. Bradley. Of course I can wait until your son returns. I can wait as long as it takes. As long as you say yes in the end.

SCENE XII – Split scene: Interior and Exterior porch of Bryant Store.

(The boys are playing a raucous game of checkers, laughing and carrying on!)

GOSPEL QUARTET

IF YOU SLIDE YOUR PIECE
RIGHT UP NEXT TO ME
GONNA JUMP YA (GONNA JUMP YA)

EMMETT

He's got you now!

MAURICE

I ain't down yet, Yankee!

GOSPEL QUARTET

RED OR BLACK
NO MATTER WHAT YOUR TACK
GONNA JUMP YA (GONNA JUMP YA)

WHEELER

Loser has to shovel out the barn!

MAURICE

I ain't shoveling shit!

(Kids laugh, phone rings in the store)

GOSPEL QUARTET

BLACK IS FIRST
FAST OR SLOW
THEN TIME FOR RED
AND AWAY YOU GO

CAROLYN

(Answering the phone)

Bryant's!

ROY

Carolyn, it's me. I'm gonna be an extra day.

CAROLYN

Roy, you can't.

ROY

I got no choice. The truck burst a hose and there's no replacement until tomorrow. What's all that noise?

SIMEON

(To Maurice) You already done lost.

CAROLYN

Just some colored children playing checkers.

EMMETT

You're as good as dead.

ROY

Where's the gun, Carolyn?

MAURICE

It ain't over yet!

EMMETT

Yeah, right. (Bored, he leaves and enters store alone)

<p>MAURICE (Noticing Emmett's absence) He went in there by himself!? Simeon, go get him!</p>	<p>GOSPEL QUARTET MAKE YOUR MOVE AS FAR AS YOU CAN IT'S WHAT YOU BRING THAT MAKES YOU KING.</p>
--	---

(EMMETT is in the store)

ROY

Where is it!?

CAROLYN

It's in the car, Roy.

ROY

Go get it! NOW.

(She slams down the phone)

EMMETT

Can I get me another soda, Ma'am?

CAROLYN

Do you people ever learn manners?!

SIMEON
(Running in)

Don't be bothering Miss Bryant, Emmett.

(He pulls Emmett back onto the porch. While, CAROLYN, exasperated goes out the store, across the porch, and out to the car to retrieve the gun. As she leaves the porch, we hear and see the following which all needs to happen quite quickly.)

GOSPEL QUARTET

IF YOU DON'T WATCH OUT
I'M GONNA MAKE YOU CRY
GONNA JUMP YA (GONNA JUMP YA)

(MAURICE MAKES A DOUBLE-JUMP)

EMMETT

What a move! OOOOH-WHEE!

(Carolyn is bent over in the car to fetch the gun from under the seat, as Emmett lets out a wolf-whistle. Unsure of his focus for the whistle, SIMEON tenses and goes rigid as a board. MAURICE then picks up on it.)

GOSPEL QUARTET

PIECE BY PIECE
YOU SLOWLY DIE
WHEN I JUMP YA (WHEN I JUMP YA)

MAURICE
(MAURICE sees CAROLYN retrieve the gun.)

(Whispered) Holy hell, she's gotta pistol.

WHEELER

Emmett, we gotta go. Get into the car. Go. NOW.

(The boys exhibit panic. MAURICE and SIMEON move with determination, while EMMETT and WHEELER are just responding to the panic and run.)

GOSPEL QUARTET

YOU MIGHT THINK THIS IS ALL A GAME
BUT IT JUST GOT SERIOUS. WHO'S TO BLAME
RED OR BLACK
THERE'S NO GOING BACK
WHEN I JUMP YA.

(The boys exit as we see CAROLYN putting the pistol in her purse and watching them go.)

Inter-scene

GOSPEL QUARTET

YOU FOUND TROUBLE
DIDN'T HAVE TO LOOK
YOU WALKED RIGHT IN
SAID "HELLO"
THAT WAS ALL IT TOOK

MISSISSIPPI HEARTACHE
DRESSED UP IN A SKIRT
MISSISSIPPI NIGHTS
SUFFOCATE AND DROWN
MISSISSIPPI TROUBLE
ALWAYS BRINGS YOU DOWN.

NOTHIN' BUT BAD NEWS
FROM THE VERY START
DON'T ASK QUESTIONS
ANSWERS ONLY
BREAK YOUR HEART

MISSISSIPPI MADNESS
IN LIPSTICK AND HIGH HEELS
MISSISSIPPI NIGHTS
SUFFOCATE AND DROWN
MISSISSIPPI TROUBLE
ALWAYS BRINGS YOU DOWN.

RUN, BROTHER RUN!
RUN, BROTHER RUN!
RUN, BROTHER RUN!
RUN, BROTHER RUN!

MISSISSIPPI WOMAN
WILL GRIND YOU INTO DUST
MISSISSIPPI NIGHTS
SUFFOCATE AND DROWN
MISSISSIPPI TROUBLE
ALWAYS BRINGS YOU DOWN.

SCENE XIII

MAURICE

Quiet! I don't want Papa to hear us.

EMMETT

You're making too much 'a this.

MAURICE

You whistled at a white woman, Emmett!

EMMETT

I did not, I whistled at the game. Besides, what does it matter? What if I did whistle at her? She never been whistled at?

MAURICE

Not by a colored boy! It matters down here, Emmett. Nobody cares what you meant. If she thinks you whistled at her, then you did. She had a gun. Jesus Christ... What are we going to do?

MAMIE

Oh Mama, I can feel it again.

ALMA

You got it bad?

MAMIE

I do. He's so sweet and smart and... plain. But I do.

ALMA

Like grits with no cheese.

MAMIE

What does your heart tell you, Mama?

ALMA

My heart isn't the one feeling it, child! What does your heart tell you?

EMMETT

Preacher will just worry. Nothing's gonna happen.

MAMIE

I don't know. I just wish Emmett were here. Things are changing so fast.

MAURICE

We have to tell him.

EMMETT

Let it go, Maurice.

ALMA

Let it go, child.

MAMIE	ALMA	EMMETT	MAURICE
I CAN FEEL IT		GET A GRIP! STAY TOGETHER!	
DO I DARE?	FOR THE THIRD TIME	WHY BOTHER? WHAT'S THE DEAL?	HE'S GOTTA KNOW.
	IT'S IN THE AIR.	LIGHTEN UP. LET IT GO. JUST STAY CALM COUNT TO TEN. RIDE IT OUT LIKE MEN.	BUT WHAT WE GONNA DO?
CAN I LETGO?	BABY, LET THIS GO.	WELL, BROTHER JUST PRETEND. IT'S TIME TO LET THIS GO.	
LET IT GO. DON'T HOLD ON TO TROUBLE. STEP BACK A BIT. LET'S SEE HOW THINGS FIT. LET IT GO. THIS CAN WAIT TILL MORNING. WE NEED DAYLIGHT TO SEE.	LET IT GO. DON'T HOLD ON TO TROUBLE. STEP BACK A BIT. LET'S SEE HOW THINGS FIT. LET IT GO. THIS CAN WAIT TILL MORNING. WE NEED DAYLIGHT TO SEE.	LET IT GO. DON'T HOLD ON TO TROUBLE. STEP BACK A BIT. LET'S SEE HOW THINGS FIT. LET IT GO. THIS CAN WAIT TILL MORNING. WE NEED DAYLIGHT TO SEE.	LET IT GO. DON'T HOLD ON TO TROUBLE. STEP BACK A BIT. LET'S SEE HOW THINGS FIT. LET IT GO. THIS CAN WAIT TILL MORNING. WE NEED DAYLIGHT TO SEE.

SCENE XIV – Bryant Store

(CAROLYN is behind the counter. JUANITA is hanging out. ROY is looking at the books.)

ROY

These numbers are terrible. You're giving credit to too many of the coloreds, Carolyn.

CAROLYN

Well, what am I supposed to do?

ROY

Tell them to go shop somewhere else.

CAROLYN

We're the only store this side of the county that will sell to those people. They ARE our business.

ROY

Then they'll just have to pay. No more credit.

CAROLYN

Roy, not all of 'em...

JUANITA

(To ROY) Why don't you, me, Carolyn, and J.W. load up the car and head to the coast for a few days. We can cookout on the beach. You boys can go fishing. It'll be fun.

ROY

Usually I'd say that we can't afford to close down. But the way things are being run around here, it might save us money.

(Carolyn glares at him as SAMUEL JOHNSON enters)

SAMUEL

Excuse me, Ms. Bryant. Hello Mr. Bryant, Miss Juanita. Ms. Bryant, Do you mind if I pay you the rest of my bill?

ROY

Finally, a negro who wants to give us money!

CAROLYN

Roy... Samuel pays regular. Don't be vulgar.

ROY

What's vulgar about expecting to be paid for your merchandise?

SAMUEL

I'm sorry, Mr. Bryant. My family had some doctor bills and we're just now catching...

ROY

Yeah, there's always a good reason, isn't there?

CAROLYN

Samuel, just put your money on the counter and I'll count it out.

(He puts the money on the counter. She stares at him. He very self-consciously takes a couple of steps back away from the counter. She is obviously more comfortable reaching for the money which she begins to count.)

JUANITA	SAMUEL
So what do you say, Roy? How about a little fishing trip down to the coast? I'll make a 7-up cake for the picnic!	(In a bit of a whisper, but not soft enough that it can't be heard by Roy) I heard what happened over here the other day. I'm really sorry, Ms. Bryant. That boy ain't from these parts and doesn't know how to behave properly around fine white folk. He should have never whistled the way he did.

(CAROLYN freezes. ROY takes notice. JUANITA moves uncomfortably)

ROY

What you say, boy?! Some nigger whistled at my wife?!

CAROLYN

No, Roy, it was nothing, he was...

ROY

I want to hear it from him!

SAMUEL

The boy's not from these parts. He's a Yankee and all and...

ROY

But he whistled? At my wife?

CAROYLN

Roy, stop. They were playing checkers. It wasn't at me.

ROY

NO! He said it. He said so... (To Juanita) Did you know about this?

JUANITA

No.

ROY

You're lying... Everyone knows a colored boy whistled at my wife.

JUANITA

You need to let up on her, Roy.

ROY

Juanita, keep your fat ass out of other people's business!

JUANITA
(Retaliating)

You know, Roy, those colored boys mature awfully young. They start making babies early, ain't that right Carolyn?

CAROLYN

JUANITA!

ROY

You saying something else went on?!

CAROLYN

NO! Nothing, Roy! Juanita, stop it.

JUANITA

If you weren't gallivanting all over the South, maybe the colored men wouldn't come around sniffing at your wife.

(ROY storms out of the store.)

CAROLYN

Juanita! What have you done?

JUANITA

He deserved it.

GOSPEL QUARTET

NOBODY'S SAFE
IF THE DEVIL GETS OUT
AND MAKES THE WORLD HIS HELL
HOPE WILL VANISH
LOVE CAN'T SURVIVE
THERE AIN'T NO WOMAN OR MAN ALIVE
THAT CAN STAND IN HIS WAY
WHEN HE GRABS YOUR SOUL
AND DRAGS YOU DOWN
TO HIS FIERY HOLE.

DEVIL ON A RAMPAGE
LORD HAVE MERCY
HELL TO PAY
HELL TO PAY
DEVIL ON A RAMPAGE
HAVING HIS DAY
NO ONE'S SAFE
WHEN THERE'S HELL TO PAY

AH!

HEAD FOR THE HILLS
DON'T DRAG YOUR FEET
KEEP RUNNING AND DON'T LOOK BACK
TAKE YOUR CHANCES
ROLL THE DICE
DEVIL NABS YOU, YOU PAY THE PRICE
BEST MAKE TRACKS
'CAUSE THE WORDS ON THE SIGN
READ, "DEVIL FINDS YOU
IT'S THE END OF THE LINE"

DEVIL ON A RAMPAGE
LORD HAVE MERCY
HELL TO PAY
HELL TO PAY
DEVIL ON A RAMPAGE
THIS AIN'T PLAY
NO ONE'S SAFE
WHEN THERE'S HELL TO PAY

WHO'S GONNA HEAR YOU CRY?

WHO'S GONNA ANSWER YOUR PRAYER?
WHO'S GONNA SAVE YOUR NECK?
THE DEVIL DOESN'T HAVE TO CARE

DEVIL ON A RAMPAGE
LORD HAVE MERCY
HELL TO PAY
HELL TO PAY
DEVIL ON A RAMPAGE
COMIN' YOUR WAY
NO ONE'S SAFE
WHEN THERE'S HELL TO PAY

SCENE XV – Wright Home

(MOSE and LIZZY sit in their living room.)

LIZZY

You hear that?

MOSE

I don't hear anything. What...?

LIZZY

That's right. Nothing more restful than the sound of children asleep in their beds.

MOSE

Ha! Well, a couple of more days, those boys will be on their way back to Chicago.

LIZZY

I'm gonna miss having a full house.

MOSE

It sure has been nice, the boys all getting' along so well. Except for when they came back from Money that day,

LIZZY

Did you find out why they were so short with each other?

MOSE

Maurice said they hit a dog on the road. Really upset them.

LIZZY

Oh, my dear.

MOSE

They stopped but couldn't find it.

LIZZY

Probably some mongrel from a sharecropper. People need to keep them dogs tied up, especially at night.

MOSE

Simeon seemed the most upset. But Maurice talked to him, calmed the boy down.

LIZZY

Simeon does love dogs. He wants one so bad! And thank the Lord they weren't hurt. They coulda run off the road!

MOSE

They're fine, back here safe and sound.

MOSE

OH GOD, PLEASE BLESS THIS HOUSE
AND ALL WHO ARE UNDER ITS ROOF.
KEEP FROM HARM
AND SHARE YOUR GRACE
ON ALL WITHIN THIS PLACE
FAVOR OUR HUMBLE HOME.
FROM YOU ALL BLESSINGS PROCEED.
YOUR BOUNTY SUSTAINS,
LOVE REMAINS
STEADY US WITH YOUR LEAD.

BLESS THIS HOUSE
AND KEEP US SAFE
LORD, PLEASE BLESS THIS HOUSE.

MOSE, LIZZY, GOSPEL QUARTET

GOD, PLEASE BLESS THIS HOUSE
GUIDE US IN THOUGHT AND DEED.
YOUR STRENGTH IS OUR STAY
AND SHOULD WE STRAY
HELP US IN OUR TIME OF NEED
OUR TIME OF, TIME OF NEED.

(At the height of the song, there is a shatteringly loud knock on the door.)

ROY

PREACHER! OPEN UP!

LIZZY

Dear, God!

MOSE

Now calm down. Don't think the worst. You stay over there.

(He opens the door. In the door frame stands ROY BRYANT with a pistol in his hand.)

ROY

Preacher. I want the boy from Chicago.

MOSE

Emmett? Why? What did...?

ROY

NOW!

MOSE

(Hands in the air) Mr. Bryant, Sir, I don't know what these boys could have done...

ROY

Preacher!

MOSE

Please, Sir... What did he...?

ROY

I want that boy, Preacher. The Dandy! The one with the hat!

LIZZY

He's just a child. He couldn'ta done nothing wrong.

(ROY enters the house. SIMEON appears in the bedroom door looking terrified.)

ROY

Where is he?

(LIZZY shakes her head. ROY sees Simeon and storms past him and enters the bedroom.)

MOSE

I don't know what the child did, Sir. But, please let me handle it. I'll whip him! I'll punish him but good.

(ROY emerges with EMMETT. He holds EMMETT's wrist in a vice of a grip with the pistol at the ready aimed at EMMETT)

LIZZY

Please, Mr. Bryant. Please! We'll pay you, anything you want, PLEASE.

EMMETT

OW! Let go a'me!

ROY

Hell, you are an uppity one! You ain't no child.

MOSE

Where are you taking him?

(ROY snaps around at MOSE's questions. MAURICE, WHEELER, and SIMEON appear in their bedroom doors.)

ROY

Now all of you, listen . Listen good. Do you know me?

MOSE

What?

ROY

DO. YOU. KNOW. ME?

MOSE

(Pause. understanding)

No, Sir.

ROY

How old are you, Preacher?

MOSE

I'm sixty-four, Sir.

ROY

Well, if any of you know me tomorrow, ANY of you... you won't live to be sixty-five.

(He exits with EMMETT)

EMMETT

Let me go! Please!

LIZZY

(collapsing on the floor. The children rush to her)

Oh, dear Jesus. Oh, dear Jesus!

GOSPEL QUARTET

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD
I SHALL NOT WANT

GOSPEL QUARTET (CONT)

HE BRINGS ME TO PASTURE,
REFRESHES MY SOUL.
I WALK THROUGH THE SHADOWS.
I DON'T FEAR DEATH
HE IS ALWAYS WITH ME
HE'S MY LIFE AND BREATH.

I FEAR NO EVIL
HE'S MY ROD AND MY STAFF
MY FOOT WILL NOT FALTER
HE'S GUIDING MY PATH.
HE SETS ME A BANQUET
WHERE MY CUP OVERFLOWS
THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD
I FOLLOW WHEREVER HE GOES
THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD
I FOLLOW WHEREVER HE GOES

SCENE XVI – The Chicago Home of Mamie and Emmett

(MAMIE, ALMA, REVEREND, and GENE sit in the living room. REVEREND is reading aloud from a Bible.)

REVEREND

"Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD, forever.

GENE

Amen, Reverend.

ALMA

That one's nice, but I don't like all that "valley of death" talk. Can't we have something a bit more cheery, Reverend?

REVEREND

It's God's word, Alma.

ALMA

Well, God could be a little peppier! (Everyone chuckles but Mamie, distracted) Mamie? Are you alright?

MAMIE

Three days and no word! (getting up) I should call them again.

ALMA

They'll call when they know something.

MAMIE

Mama, my baby is out there somewhere and I can't do anything!

REVEREND

It's in God's hands. We have to wait.

ALMA

You just gotta stay strong, child.

MAMIE

I should have gone down there the minute I got that call from Mose.

ALMA

And do what?

GENE

Mamie, your mother is right. I know it's hard, I do, but we are all here for you. You just have to wait. If you'd like I could go down there. I could leave tomorrow.

MAMIE

I couldn't ask you to do that.

GENE

If we don't hear anything by tomorrow...

MAMIE

Thank you. You're so good to me.

REVEREND

Ladies, Mister Mobley, it's late and I need to prepare my sermon for tomorrow.

MAMIE

Reverend, I am taking so much of your time. Thank you for your company and kindness.

(The phone rings.)

MAMIE

Mama?

(The phone rings a second time)

ALMA

Answer it.

(The phone rings a third time)

ALMA

Baby... I know you're scared.

MAMIE

(Picks up the phone)

Mose?!

MOSE

(In another spot)

Mamie. (pause) They found Emmett.

MAMIE

Oh thank you, Jesus. Thank you...

MOSE

Mamie... (Beat.)

MAMIE

Oh God, no.

MOSE

They found him in the river, Mamie. He was... He was beaten. I'm so sorry.

MAMIE

(begins to emit a cry which begins low in her being. A cry no mother should ever have to experience.)

WHY!? Why did they do this?!

MOSE

They said he whistled at a white woman. They said...

MAMIE

(she doesn't let him finish)

A CHILD! That is no reason to kill a child. There is NEVER a reason to kill a child! My son!

MOSE

Mamie.. I'm sorry... but you're gonna have to sign the papers so they can bury...

MAMIE

NO! NO!

(During the following, the GOSPEL QUARTET and all other ENSEMBLE members enter the stage one by one wear choiring robes. The begin back-up singing and the swaying characteristic of Black church choirs)

CHORUS

OH! OH, LORD.

MAMIE

Send my baby back to me!

MOSE

But his body is... Mamie, you don't want...

CHORUS

OH! OH, LORD.

MAMIE

Send him back! I want the whole world to see what they did to my boy.

I WANT YOU BACK
I WANT YOU BACK.
I CANNOT CARRY ON
WHEN I KNOW YOU'RE GONE

I GOTTA HAVE YOU BACK
SO, COME TO ME.
I'M THE ONE WHO KNOWS WHAT'S TRUE
NO ONE KNOWS YOU LIKE I DO

I'VE WATCHED YOU WHILE YOU SLEEP
HELD YOU WHEN YOU'RE SCARED
LAUGHED AT EV'RY JOKE
LOVE'S NOT BEEN SPARED.

DAY OR NIGHT, I WON'T PRETEND
LOVE FOR YOU CAN NEVER BEND
YOU'RE MY EV'RYWHERE
ANYTIME, ALWAYS, MY
WORLD WITHOUT END

I WANT YOU BACK
RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW
SHOW UP AT MY DOOR
I WON'T ASK FOR ANY MORE
A BIRD DOESN'T SING WITHOUT ME HEARING YOUR NAME
THE SUN DOESN'T RISE WITHOUT ME THINKING OF YOU
I CAN'T LIVE ALONE. IT WON'T BE THE SAME.
AND I FEEL YOU IN ALL THAT I DO

I...WANT....YOU...BACK
GOD, YOU LISTEN TO ME, LISTEN TO ME
DO THEY THINK THAT I WILL STOP?
THEY HAVE HANDED ME MY FATE.
THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU, BABY.
MY LOVE'S STRONGER THAN THEIR HATE.

THERE'S NO GOING BACK

MAMIE (CONT)

TIME TO SCREAM AND YELL.
I'M NOT GONNA STOP
TILL IT'S FREEZING IN HELL.

I'M GONNA BREAK THAT WALL,
AND CROSS THAT TRACK.
THIS IS MAMIE, LORD, LISTEN
YOU GIVE MY BABY BACK!

ALMA

You don't have time to cry, child. You'll cry later. Right now, we need to remember. Remember the life...that's how they live forever.

MAMIE

Mama, the world is gonna remember...because I will MAKE them remember.

CHORUS

OH. OH, LORD.
OH. OH, LORD.

END OF SHOW