

UNTIL THE LION HAS HIS HISTORIAN,  
THE HUNTER WILL ALWAYS BE THE  
HERO.

---PROVERB OF THE IGBO, AFRICA'S  
FIRST HEALERS

### THE STORYTELLERS

CELIA GRACE GRAHAM IS A CHOCOLATE BROWN GEECHIE WOMAN OF PETITE STATURE, LITTLE HIPS TO SPEAK OF AND A SET OF BOSOMS THAT COME AROUND THE CORNER BEFORE SHE DOES. ARRAYED IN VARYING SHADES OF YELLOW AND GOLD, SENSUALLY CONNECTED TO THE EARTH; MEN SMELL, TASTE AND FEAR HER HEAT. AN EVER-DANGLING CIGARETTE FROM THE CORNER OF HER MOUTH AND AN OVERT SENSUALITY ARE HER DEFENSES. A CIGAR IS REQUIRED WHEN THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE IN THE AIR. SLOW TO SPEAK, QUICK OF TEMPER, SHE CALCULATES YOUR WORTH AND HOW DEEP YOUR TRUTH RUNS BEFORE YOUR FEET HAVE DUSTED HER DOORSTEP. CROWNED BY OCHUN, SHE IS POWER WALKING. SHE SPEAKS GULLAH GEECHIE, LUKUMI AND AFRO-CUBAN SPANISH.

CILO DEL MONTE Y SANTIESTEBAN IS THE COLOR OF BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE. A COMPACT, AFRO-CUBAN MAN WITH A SOFT STEP AND QUIET RIVERS OF UNDERSTANDING. A BABALAWO FROM ORIENTE WRAPPED IN WHITE GUAYABERAS, A WHITE KOFI WOVEN WITH CARE AND A THICK ROPE OF ELEKES ADORNING HIS NECK; HE IS A CARPENTER BY TRADE AND SPEAKS WITH A LYRICAL AFRO CUBAN ACCENT. GENTLE BEYOND KNOWING, WISE BEYOND UNDERSTANDING; CROWNED BY CHANGÓ, HE FIGHTS NO BATTLES HE CANNOT WIN. HE SPEAKS LUKUMI AND ENGLISH UNDER DURESS.

BEATRIZ DE LOS REYES Y SANTIESTEBAN IS CROWNED BY YEMAYA AND HER SKIN IS THE COLOR OF CHOCOLATE-RED CLAY. WEARING A BRILLANT BLUE SHEATH OF A DRESS WITH A THICK AFRO CUBAN ACCENT; BEATRIZ IS THE KIND OF WOMAN WHO DIES WITH HER PUMPS ON AND HER LIPSTICK FRESH. SHE IS A GENTLE, BUT PERSISTENT FIRE; CAPABLE OF HEALING BROKEN HEARTS, QUIETING SHATTERED SPIRITS AND WOOING THE WATERS TO SING HER SONG. SHE MAKES THE PALM TREES WISH THEY WERE MEN. SHE SPEAKS AFRO-CUBAN SPANISH, LUKUMI AND HEAVILY ACCENTED ENGLISH WITH THE RELISH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DADDY BUSTER - CELIA'S NEW HUSBAND, A MAHOGANY-SMOOTH ALTO SAX OF A MAN FOREVER ON A WELL-INTENTIONED QUEST FOR A LIFE, BETTER THAN THE ONE PROMISED. WORN THIN BY WANDERING DREAMS AND FANCIES; HE IS A CITIFIED PRINCE CHARMER WHO SCALED THE WALLS OF THE CASTLE ONLY TO FIND THAT THE PRINCESS HAD LEFT WITH THE WHITE GUY IN THE PONTIAC. HE IS A FAST-TALKING, FAST-LIVING GEECHIE WHO HAS STOLEN CELIA'S HEART, BUT NOT HER GOOD SENSE. CROWNED BY ELEGUÁ, HIS LOVE IS FLAMBOYANT LAUGHTER AND HEART-STOPPING ROMANCE. HE FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE MAGIC THAT HE SEES IN EVERYONE BUT CANNOT FIND WITHIN. HE SPEAKS IN MACHINE-GUN BULLETS. HIS CITIFIED GEECHIE ENGLISH IS REMINISCENT OF LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS AT THE "CROSSROADS."

PERCIVAL DIONYSIUS DEL RIOS ALBURY IS THE COLOR OF A HERSHEY BAR MELTING IN THE SUN. THE PRODUCT OF AN AFRO-CUBAN MOTHER AND A CAT ISLAND BAHAMIAN FATHER OR WAS HE HAITIAN FROM PORT AU PRINCE? PAPA WAS A ROLLING STONE AND MOMMY WAS NOT ALWAYS FORTHCOMING. PERCIVAL IS THE CALYPSO CLUB HEADLINER WHERE FOLKS PAY THEIR WEEKEND DOLLAR TO WATCH THE MIRACLE OF GENDER TRANSFORMATION WHICH HE HAS ELEVATED TO PERFORMANCE ART: HE DOES NOT LIP SYNC, HE ACTUALLY SINGS LA BOHÉME AS PRINCESS CARLOTTA. SPEAKING IN A RICH, BAHAMIAN OR HAITIAN DIALECT, HE IS THE WRY, INTELLECTUAL PULSE OF GOOD BREAD ALLEY. CROWNED BY OCHOSI, THE HUNTER OF JUSTICE; HIS IS A LIFE INSISTENT UPON FREEDOM. A LOVER OF MEN AND WOMEN, AT CELIA'S PROMPTING, A RHODES SCHOLAR- HE IS THE TRUTH.

DAY GRAHAM - CELIA'S OLDER SISTER IS A PRETTY, PECAN-BROWN, DOUBLE-WIDE-BOTTOMED, BUBBLY-SHAKE OF A WOMAN. AT THE GROUNDBREAKING OF THE FIRST BLACK CHURCH SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, SHE KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT EVERY THING. FROM A LONG LINE OF GEECHIES WHO SCRATCHED AND MACHETTED THEIR WAY OUT OF THE GULLAH SEA ISLANDS, SHE HAS ACQUIRED A BIT OF EDUCATION AND A FEARSOME DESIRE FOR "MIDDLE-CLASSNESS". PROUD OF THE LINEAGE, YET FURIOUSLY GAZING BEYOND THE HORIZON FOR A LIFE, FREE OF GHOSTS AND SHACKLES; SHE SPEAKS A THICK GEECHIE ACCENT INFORMED BY THE RHYTHMS OF THE AME CHURCH. SHE IMAGINES HERSELF A LONG SUFFERING JOB STILL AWAITING GOD'S GRACE AND CONTENT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE DELAY.

EL CORO - THE GHOSTS OF SLAVES DANCING THEIR STORIES ON THE DECKS OF SLAVES SHIPS. THEY ARE THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF THE ORISHAS WHO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS: WATER, WIND, EARTH, FIRE, RAIN, AIR, SEA AND ALL. WHEN THEY WHISPER, WE KNOW THAT LA MÁGICA DIARIA HAS BEGUN. THEY ARE THE HARBINGERS OF THE MAGIC, BUT THEY DO NOT CONTROL IT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CELIA'S MAGIC IS THE GREATEST BECAUSE SHE IS A CHANGE AGENT, UNA CURANDERA (HEALER) WHO HAS FORGOTTEN HOW TO HEAL HERSELF. EACH WHISPER, EACH SONG IS A LESSON TEACHING THE ALLEY'S INHABITANTS TO DANCE WITH THE SHACKLES AROUND THEIR ANKLES AND EVENTUALLY RID THEMSELVES OF THE DEAD WEIGHT ONCE THE LESSON IS LEARNED OR TRANSFORMED. THEY SING UNDER THE ACTION OF THE PLAY AND THEIR UNIFIED VOICE INDICATES THE START OF LA MÁGICA DIARIA. ALL CAST MEMBERS JOIN THEM WHEN OFF-STAGE. THEY ARE ALSO THE CHURCH CONGREGATION, THE STREET PEDDLERS, LA COMPARSA, 8TH GAMBLING JUNK JOINT CROWD. IN SHORT, THEY ARE ALL THE PEOPLE IN AND AROUND CELIA'S HOME AND REPRESENT THE WORLD OF GOOD BREAD ALLEY. THE IDEAL IS TWO WOMEN AND TWO MEN ACCOMPANIED BY A QUINTET OF PERCUSSIONISTS. THEY SING TRADITIONAL AFRO CUBAN & GULLAH MUSIC AND BLEND THE TWO TRADITIONS AS THE PLAY PROGRESSES TAKING THE BEST FROM EACH AND MAKING SOMETHING BRIGHT AND "SHINY IN THE NEW WORLD." THEY WHISPER IN CELIA'S EAR, BUT SHE DOESN'T ALWAYS HEAR. IN KEEPING WITH THE FOLKLORE OF SLAVE SPIRITS THAT COULD FLY AWAY TO SAFETY, IT WOULD BE MAGICAL TO SEE EL CORO AS SILHOUETTES SITTING IN THE BRANCHES OF THE GREAT MANGO TREE IN CELIA'S BACKYARD. WE ONLY SEE THEM IN FULL LIGHT IN THE FINAL SCENE AS THEY BECOME REAL FORCES FOR GOOD IN CELIA'S LIFE BRINGING ON THE CLEANSING WATERS OF CHANGE. THEY SPEAK ENGLISH, SPANISH AND GULLAH-GEECHIE.

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM - CELIA'S DAUGHTER, DAY'S NIECE. IS A SKINNY, PRECOCIOUS, SWEET- SPIRITED CINNAMON-BROWN CHILD AND THE NEW GRAHAM LINE. TWELVE YEARS OLD WITH A BOOKISH DISPOSITION AND A FAIRY-LIKE DREAMINESS, HER SMARTS AND GOOD MANNERS ARE A TESTAMENT TO THE GRAHAM TENACITY. BUT WHERE HER MOTHER AND AUNT ARE EARTH AND FIRE, SHE IS THE WHIMSICAL WEIGHT OF WIND AND AIR. CROWNED BY OYA, THE ORISHA OF WIND, SHE FACILITATES DRASTIC CHANGE IN THE WORLD AROUND HER. BUT JUST LIKE AN UNRULY WIND, SHE NEEDS DIRECTION OTHERWISE, HER ACTIONS WREAK HAVOC UPON THE WORLD. EASILY SWAYED BY VISIONS AND HAUNTED BY BOOKS AS IMAGES JUMP OFF THE PAGE AND MARCH IN GREAT BATTLES OR DANCE EPIC STORIES IN THE PERIPHERY OF HER VISION; SHE IS AN OBEDIENT CHILD TO A FAULT. LITTLE MIRIAM IS DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE TO DO WELL AND TO EARN HER MOTHER'S LOVE WHICH IN CELIA'S ABSENCE HAS BECOME HAZY. SHE SPEAKS AFRICAN AMERICAN 19TH CENTURY STANDARD. COMPARSAS - ORIGINALLY AN AFRICAN TRADITION TO HONOR A PARTICULAR SAINT OR DEITY, IN CUBA AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MIAMI; IT BECAME A PROCESSION OF DANCERS (OFTEN YOUR NEIGHBORS) IN FRONT OF A CARRIAGE CARRYING MUSCIANS & SINGERSTHAT WOULD TRAVEL THROUGH TOWN TO CELEBRATE VARIOUS CARNIVALS.

REVEREND FG HILTON - "THAT-LIGHT-SKINNED-ADAM-CLAYTON-POWELL-LOOKING- MOTHERFUCKER" IS A TALL, REFINED MOREHOUSE COLLEGE CREATION DESCENDED FROM A LONG LINE OF FREE MULATTOES WHO CALLED MASTER, DADDY. A FIERCE INTELLECTUAL AND STRATEGIST, HE IS THE EPIC BLACK PREACHER WHO STOPS HANGINS AND BRINGS JUSTICE TO THE JIM CROW SOUTH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HE IS GRACIOUS, CONFLICTED AND VICIOUS IN HIS LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE. HE FOUNDED AND LEADS THE MOST PROGRESSIVE AME CONGREGATION IN , AS WELL AS THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEAGUE OF MINISTERS ACCORDING HIM A PULPIT IN EVERY BLACK CHURCH IN THE SOUTH. A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH, HIS PIMPO STRIDE IS THOUGHT TO BE THE FINAL WORD IN THIS PARTICULAR GAME. HE SPEAK AFRICAN AMERICAN 19TH CENTURY STANDARD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SETTING, TIME & SCENES

The Great Miami Hurricane hit Miami on September 19, 1926. Good Bread Alley is the story of the eight days that lead up to the storm.

Prologue Good Bread Alley, September 11, 1926, Midnight. Act I, Scene One

September 11, 1926. Morning. Same Day.

Act I, Scene Two September 11, 1926 Afternoon. Same Day.

Act I, Scene Three September 11, 1926.. Early Evening. Same Day

Act I, Scene Four September 12, 1926. Mid-night. Same day.

Act I, Scene Five September 13, 1926. Afternoon. Next day.

Act I, Scene Six September 15, 1926. Afternoon. Next day.

Act I, Scene Seven September 16, 1926. Mid-day. Next day.

Act I, Scene Eight September 16, 1926. Sunset. Same day.

Act II, Scene One September 17, 1926. Morning. Next Day.

Act II, Scene Two September 17, 1926. Mid-Morning. Same day.

Act II, Scene Three September 17, 1926. Later. Same day

Act II, Scene Four September 17, 1926. Evening. Same day. A

Act II, Scene Five September 18, 1926. 2am. Next day.

Act II, Scene Six September 18, 1926. 3am. Same day.

Act II, Scene Seven September 18, 1926. Mid-Morning. Same day.

Act II Scene Eight September 19, 1926. Midnight. Next day.

## SKIN COLOR, PRIVILEGE & POWER IN THE WORLD OF GOOD BREAD ALLEY

Good Bread Alley is a notorious Miami neighborhood founded and inhabited by Bahamian, Gullah, Cuban and Haitian peoples at the turn of the century. By 1926, the year this play is set, Miami had become a vacation home for wealthy whites from the Northeast, Miami was extremely segregated, and whites were Miami's ruling class. Miami received great numbers of immigrants from all over the Caribbean; upon arrival at the Port of Miami, white immigration officials would send brown and black peoples to "Colored Town" (where Good Bread Alley is located) and light-skinned folks to live amongst whites, often separating families.

Having light skin as well as loving light skin is directly related to privilege and power in this world, then and now. The practice of blanqueamiento (or "the whitening of the race") started with miscegenation laws in the United States, which prevented plantation owners' half-black children from legally inheriting. Despite their inability to inherit property, light-skinned African-Americans, by virtue of their relation to the plantation owner became an elite class within the African-American community. Plantation owners founded historically black colleges to educate them. They were often free and fair skinned enough to pass for white. While the laws of this period have been changed, the caste system still carries tremendous cultural and economic power. They are the old money in the African American world and FG is of this powerful class.

Several characters in Good Bread Alley hail from Cuba, and the play reflects some specifically Cuban relations around skin color. Cuba was the second-to-last country in the Western Hemisphere to outlaw slavery, and abolition of Cuban slavery was tied to Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain. During this struggle, Cuban slaves were offered freedom in exchange for joining ranks with white Cubans to push the Spanish out. The condition of that freedom was that after independence, they would agree to become Cubans--not Afro-Cubans, but Cubans--and to select "white" as their legal identity on their birth certificates, erasing their African origins. The slaves were such a huge majority on the island that Cuba was essentially a Black country, but the ruling class were of lighter skin color and mulattos advanced through schooling and jobs much faster. At one point early in the 20th century, Cuba imported white Europeans to "whiten up" the country.

Further, at this time in Cuba, many of the Afro-Cuban religious practices in this play were outlawed. Social clubs organized around a particular African tribal identity were harassed, closed or destroyed, and folks practiced Africa religions in secret, upon pain of death.

The specifications regarding skin tone in the character descriptions are a crucial part of the story and must be adhered to in casting. Light skinned privilege works very much in the same white skin privilege works in our country. Lighter skin and white skin allow access to places of power, while as far back as Shakespeare, our culture has associated darkness with violence, lust, crime, and danger--and these associations have had very real results.

( CONTINUED )

## CONTINUED :

There is power in a name, as we learn in this play. Celia's desire to be called Black and to live amongst, love, serve and create family with people who call themselves black but are mixed with other colonial identities is a revolutionary act. Loving dark skin or even claiming Brown or Black skin was and is singular—almost incendiary—in this world, then and now. Dark by design, no one in Celia's Good Bread Alley is lighter than the brown paper bag. And within the darkness is the secret to love, softness, and the power of remembering each person's "once-was self" before the world's hardness set in.

## MAGICAL REALISM &amp; THE ORISHAS

Celia's Good Bread Alley holds bright magic, myth and common human yearnings. A feast of color lives everywhere and time is on a repeat cycle. Sometimes stories begin in the middle and circle back. The people, places and things stand apart from Jim Crow because the gods or Orishas are real and affect the immediate environment. The ability to alter one's fate with a word, a prayer, a song is a given for each person in this world. This world of third culture people is fueled by the magic of its gods. Its gods are not remote entities, but ancestors who whisper across centuries reminding us not to repeat the past. Each person is present and deeply connected to their song, their dance, their love

and are in sync with their Orishas who in turn, respond instantly to prayers, offerings, invocations. The bright colors of this world are unexpected and are related to the Orishas favorite colors. A red parasol against a grey sky, bright blue bottles hanging from a ripe mango tree, a red shutter against a periwinkle blue house. Celia is the catalyst and vessel for this magic. She follows no one particular tradition, but picks and chooses what best serves her and her people.

## LANGUAGE

In this world, language is woven from the emotional fabric of the poetry. Characters listen for the emotional imperative in whatever language is spoken to them and understanding is a given. In the playing of the text, the actor must know or learn all of the languages that their character speaks. Because the Yoruba, Ibo, Dahomey and Congolese peoples were the primary tribes brought to this part of the new world, the colonial New World languages: Arawak, English, Spanish, French are spoken through the filter of these African tongues. As a result, if the storytellers capture the cadence, placement, sounds and attack that the dialects share, the listener will feel a common thread or symphony of feeling.

## MUSIC & RITUAL

There was no television, radio, phonographs in Good Bread Alley and no public schooling in Miami until the late 1950's. Education was a private in-home affair or things were taught orally through story. This is especially true of music. The town baker was also the choir's best tenor and piano teacher. The Dress Man, the Ice Man and the grocer with his cart walked the dirt-paved streets announcing their wares, the weather and any signs of danger in the alley in song. Everyday people sang while working or running errands. Late at night, grandmothers would sing Gullah ghost stories to the children. Life lessons were often sung in the call of the Rumba with the Palo drum or told in the poetry of the Pataki (Moral fables about the Orishas used to return a person to their true path). People sang the arias of their lives. If poetry is the dress of this world, then singing is the corset holding it all together.

Both the songs and arrangements of the traditional music come directly from the oral tradition that slaves practiced. As a result, the music feels elemental and specific to the group of singers. None of the music is written, but like the life of an enslaved person, it changes with the fates of the singers. Actors should be taught the music orally first, recorded and notes transcribed if necessary to retain the immediacy of the sound and honor the traditions. Actors who can carry a tune are ideal. There are times when the song should be talk-sung to make a point. The goal is to use song to tell story, to express emotions or paint myths that are too big for the spoken word. Songs should be acted because much of the action of the play happens in song. These songs are not about the legit sound or a perfect note, they are about the soul rising up from the feet and bursting from the heart's desire to breathe, to live. Everyone sings their story, but Celia's song has the power to make dreams come true.

The clave and the Palo are ritual instruments used on plantations in Cuba and America to call people to dinner, but also to send secret messages to runaway slaves hiding in the mountains to organize well-orchestrated revolts and most importantly to call the Orishas for help and guidance. The Orishas are living saints in this culture, but unlike the Greek pantheon, these Orishas are alive and well. They live in each of us and as we evolve and grow, so do they. Each person is crowned by a particular Orisha meaning: that Orisha's personality traits and stories are this person's true north. These stories have been told for centuries to help humans avoid similar mistakes or find new ways to address ancient hurts. For example, since Celia is crowned by Ochún, the story of Ochún not being able to love her child is an old one that inspired Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Just as there are songs from slavery about not loving a slave-child too much because they don't belong to you in this world; there are ancient Patakis in the Afro Cuban and Yoruba traditions that tell of the woman who loves hard, but never enough and her name is Ochún. She eventually marries Changó (the god of war and change) who is Cilo's Orisha or crown. Ochún and Changó have ancient dances that chronicle their major life lessons and stumbling blocks. If I am creating a world in which humans imitate their goddesses or gods, I begin to

(CONTINUED)



## CONTINUED :

create archetypes that are universal. They are universal because these struggles are as old as time itself.

## LA MÁGICA DIARIA

The convention of La Mágica Diaria or Daily Magic indicates that someone has invoked magic in the alley. When the magic begins, El Coro will begin a gentle rumba or spiritual under the action of the scene in honor of Elegúa (the Orisha who opens doors especially to ritual and magic). Blocking will indicate how the actors endow this moment.

Magic in Good Bread Alley manifests as an abrupt, but subtle climate change or a character's physical gesture or a dead object is found. Once one of these conventions is established, we will return to the same sound or gesture again and again each time with more intensity until the last scene where all of Good Bread Alley's magic culminates at Celia's behest.

CONTINUED :

THE STORY OF GOOD BREAD ALLEY

*As the houselights, go down, the following super title appears above the stage perhaps in the Miami skyline:*

*September 19, 1926. The Great Miami Hurricane.*

*Without warning, 145 mph winds whip across Biscayne Bay sending 15 foot surges into Good Bread Alley. The Alley, a two block walk from the bay, is at the storm's center. It is a category 4 hurricane.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

## PROLOGUE

Super Title

Miami, Good Bread Alley. 8 Days before the storm.

Midnight. Good Bread Alley, the notorious center of Colored Town. We hear crickets, sounds of a steamy Miami night, drums calling to Elegúa. El Coro sits in the branches of the ancient mango tree in Celia's backyard. They bear witness, they are the elements, the Orishas, the ancestors. In the distance, El Coro dressed in white sing a call to Elegúa, the trickster, the one who opens and closes all doors between heaven and earth. The one who brings the magic. In the darkness, El Coro sings as they move quietly through the aisles of the theatre crossing to the stage and up the stairs until they are sitting in the branches of the great mango tree. The trees blue bottle earrings sway and go still.

LEAD SINGER I

Obara su wayo eke echu odara, omoñala wana  
Ko mama keña irawo e

EL CORO

Bara su wayo omoñala wana ko mama keña irwo e  
Bara su wayo omoñala wana ko mama keña irwo e

El Coro places Elegúa's clay dish of water with his stone head and cowrie shell eyes behind the doorway of Celia's home. Suddenly we hear a man's laughter in the distance and Celia's front door and windows magically slam shut. Elegua' is in the house and the magic is on.

LEAD SINGER I

Obara su wayo eke echu odara omoñala wana  
Ko mama keña irawo e

Under a fat new moon that shines so bright, the truth has to testify, we hear gunshot fire and the strains of "Jane Crow"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

LEAD SINGER II (JANE CROW)

Crow Janie, Crow Jane, don't you hold your head high  
 Someday, baby, you know you got to die  
 You got to lay down and...  
 You got to die, you got to...  
 And I wanna buy me a pistol, want me forty rounds of ball  
 Shoot Crow Jane, just to see her fall

*(The following continues under "Jane Crow")*

Lights up on Celia's mango tree that grows a "strange fruit" as a black man is lifted towards the highest branch with a noose around his neck.

LEAD SINGER (JANE CROW)

She got to fall, she got to...  
 She got to fall, she got to...

We hear Knight riders in Celia's backyard taunting the black man in the noose. The black man coughs, chokes struggling to free his hands. This fruit has ripened and wants to fall to freedom. A dozen or so Knight Riders gather in Celia's backyard, they are never seen, only heard. Their presence incites Celia's magic, but they cannot hold it.

KNIGHT RIDER I

What's that you say, Nigger? You thought we was out for a picnic?

KNIGHT RIDER II (DOC GRIFFIN)

Well, we did PICK a NIGGER!

Laughter. The black man unties his hands and tears at the noose around his neck.

KNIGHT RIDER III

Tie his goddamn hands.

KNIGHT RIDER V

Doc Griffin---I mean---Knight Hawk--

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

KNIGHT RIDER II (DOC GRIFFIN)

Great Day in the god damned morning! What the hell is the sheet for, if you announce to the whole god damned world who the fuck I am?

Celia's pistol cocks her pistol and crosses to the Knight Riders. Her shadow dwarfs the shadows of the men. She is epic.

CELIA

Doc Griffin. I know my customer voice. I see you. Who in God's good name you trying to lynch in my backyard? Cut that man down--

EL CORO

Yes,yes. Make it so.

KNIGHT RIDER I

One nigger is as good as another to learn you a lesson. When you step in a white man's shoes, well, you're like to get shit all over yourself. This here buck is yo' shit--

CELIA

Cut him loose or this forty-five gone start talking.

KNIGHT RIDER II (DOC GRIFFIN)

You can't shoot no white man and keep breathing, witch--

CELIA

Ain't yall holding empty mason jars with my special homebrew? It's gone twist your insides quick quick. Doc Griffin. I see you.

El Coro whispers water and wind. Knight Riders moan and retch..

KNIGHT RIDER I

You filthy black bi--

CELIA

My customers always get a potion to clear they stomach. So what yall gone be tonight, Knight Riders or customers?

The whispering of El Coro grows and the bottles begin to swing as the spirits dance.

KNIGHT RIDER II (DOC GRIFFIN)

Where's the damn potion?

CELIA

On the front seat of your Ford, Doc Griffin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KNIGHT RIDER II (DOC GRIFFIN)

God damn you, Celia. You gone try me one time too many.

The rope gives way dropping the man to the ground.  
Knight Riders are throwing up as they run for their cars.  
Celia runs to the man cradling him in her arms.

CELIA

Black man, take my breath.

CELIA & EL CORO

Aché

Celia blows the breath of life into the man. He remains  
limp in her arms. Beatriz runs to Cilo falling at his feet.  
She leans in looking for breath. There is none. She  
frantically removes his sandals and starts rubbing the  
balls of his feet looking for pressure points. Celia notices  
that she knows something of healing.

BEATRIZ

Papa! Papa! Por favor, ayudame. No se' como para curarte'---Papa, abre los ojos--

CELIA

Hush. This your Daddy? Tu papa?

BEATRIZ

Sí . They chase us as soon as we get off the boat from Cuba. Papa tell me to run, to hide. I don't want this, but he make me. So, they take him. They would have hurt me, but I would have lived. I cause this bad thing.

CELIA

Hush. Feel the warmth in the balls of his feet. You know what that mean.

BEATRIZ

Sí , Sí ! His ache' sings inside him.

CELIA

That's right. He ein decide to cross over. Let's sing him to the river and see what he wont. Keep working them feet, so he can remember his way back. Might not be here, but he gone somewhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CELIA (CONT'D)

Ein my time of dying  
 I don't want nobody to moan  
 All I want my friends to do  
 is to close my dying eyes

*Percival and Daddy Buster enter from the house singing, guns at their sides. They bring Celia's herbs. Daddy Buster pours a libation from his flask. Percival rests his hands on Celia lending her his spirit. They answer Celia in the song. Celia rubs the man down as if preparing him for burial.*

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
 BUSTER

Well, well , well

BEATRIZ

He is not dead yet, why you do this?

CELIA

He got to decide 'fore day clean. He in the between-tween. I'ma step in up in there and remind him. See if he ready to be buried fa' true.

*She goes still. Placing her hand on his chest and his crown, she sings across the waters. This is La Mágica Diaria. She sees his spirit hovering there surprised by what she sees.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

He got a world of lonely. Buster, Percival, dig.

*She sings. They dig.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

So let me die easy

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
 BUSTER

Well, well, well

CELIA

Lawd let me die easy

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
BUSTER

Well, well, well

CELIA

So I can die easy

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
BUSTER

Jesus gwonna make up muh dying day

CELIA

Now my time here is hard  
Ain't a care to leave  
Gods good angel up in heaven  
They done right by meEL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
BUSTER

Well, well, well

CELIA

So I can die easy

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
BUSTER

Well, well, well

CELIA

Gawd lemme me die easy

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
BUSTER

Well, well, well

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
BUSTER (CONT'D)

Jesus gwonna make up muh dyin' day

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (6)

CELIA

Meet me Jesus, meet me  
 Gwonna pitch my sword in the ground  
 All my troubles over now  
 I gwanna meet you in the promised land.

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
 BUSTER

Well, well, well

CELIA

Lawd help me cross over

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
 BUSTER

Well, well, well

CELIA

God, let me cross over

EL CORO, PERCIVAL & DADDY  
 BUSTER

Well, Well, Well

CELIA

If my time binnyuh come  
 Gwonna meet you in the promised land.

Celia anoints his head, his feet, his chest with oil.  
Whispers in his ear. Takes a breath of life sends it into  
Cilo's mouth singing

CELIA (CONT'D)

Are' are' O

Cilo opens his eyes as if hearing her for the first time as  
he inhales her breath. He slowly returns to the earth full  
of wonder.

EL CORO

Ache'

Lights fade El Coro sends waters splashing against the  
rocks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

*We hear a waterfall as a great wind whistles through the trees shaking the mangos that fall to the ground like raindrops. This is La Mágica Diaria.*

## ACT I, SCENE ONE

Day clean. Same Day. Lights up on Celia's two-story Dade County Pine house, Live & Let Live. A full service establishment where folks board long-term or short-term, sample a taste of homebrew, get a poultice for a wound or buy a penny plate of pigeon peas & rice. It is morning on the Sabbath. Daddy Buster and rowdy patrons can be heard playing the Bolita game in the backyard.

## LEAD SINGER

No I ain't no miller, no miller's son,  
I can do your grindin' 'til the miller man comes  
'Cause I'm a all-around man, oh I'm a all-around man,  
I'm a all-around man, I can do most anything that comes to hand

Now I ain't no spring-man, no spring-man's son,  
I can bounce your springs 'til the spring-man comes  
'Cause I'm a all-around man, oh I'm a all-around man,

## LEAD SINGER &amp; DADDY BUSTER

I'm a all-around man, I can do most anything that comes to hand

## DADDY BUSTER

Now I ain't no milkman, no milkman's son, I can pull your ti--

## CELIA

That's enough that now! Percival I want fa' you to bring the rest of them mason jars fa' fill-up.

## PERCIVAL

And here I was under the delusion that I was home on vacation.

## CELIA

So I got to pay for schooling and vacation? Black man, please. Gone do like I say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

PERCIVAL

I love you like a mother, Celia.

CELIA

Yes. It's that "like" part got me chasing change now.

*Daddy Buster is in a scuffle in the backyard.*

DADDY BUSTER

Man you better back up 'fore I put a hurting on you!

*Celia crosses to the backdoor, pistol held high.*

CELIA

I know ein nobody kick no dust on my husband?

*Enter Daddy Buster with his gun raised, grabbing Celia like the last piece of bread on a gravy-wiped plate.*

DADDY BUSTER

It ain't nothing but a bunch niggas hollering 'cause the dice did me good... They love to gesticulate 'cause they can't appreciate—

CELIA

I got something for them to appreciate!

*His hands retrace the lines of last night's loving on her body.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

What you do?

DADDY BUSTER

Remembering you. I like it when you pull it out for me.

CELIA

Gone.

*They kiss.*

PERCIVAL

If I'm not mistaken, Celia, you have an entire floor of unoccupied rooms above--

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

Percival crosses to the door to retrieve the day's paper .  
A Beatriz enters in a faded blue dress that has seen better  
days, but holds on to the memory all the same. She  
carries a basket of groceries. They collide into one  
another. A moment. They stare at each other frozen  
while Celia and Buster need to find a room. Silence and  
awe.

BEATRIZ

Aye, lo siento. Te hice dano? Esperate, un momento. Me llamo Beatriz de los Reyes y Santiesteban y anoche

PERCIVAL

No, uh... no. No estoy bien, no te preocupes. Dejeme ayudarte.

BEATRIZ

¡Aye, tu hablas Espanol!

PERCIVAL

What? Oh, sometimes my mother's Spanish comes to me cuando yo sueño. She was also an Afro-Cubana. You call her to mind.

BEATRIZ

My English is not so good, pero I only know you this moment and already you talk about your mother? Tu eres un hombre Cubano de verdad.

*She smiles all his wounds away. Percival is outdone.*

PERCIVAL

Yes.

CELIA

Buenos dias, Señorita. Me llamo Celia Grace Graham.

BEATRIZ

Buenos dias, Señora Graham. I am so very grateful to you for helping me and my father.

CELIA

Girl child, you and your daddy are welcome. Anybody tangle with the Klan is a friend of the spirit. Percival, quit gawking and get the woman some breakfast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PERCIVAL

I would be delighted to serve Señorita Beatriz.

*Percival begins breakfast. It is does not go well. Buster eyes Celia's money, crosses to shake Beatriz' hand a little longer than necessary.*

DADDY BUSTER

Pleased to meet your pretty self, Miss Beatriz. I hope that little welcoming committee didn't scare yall too much. Time was Cel had them crackers in line. They would have never done something like that in our backyard. Cel, what you did to make them people so ornery.

*Cilo enters unseen until he wishes to be seen.*

CELIA

Business is good. White man ain't never need no real reason to hang nobody.

PERCIVAL

Yes, but they usually take someone out in the cut to do that. Lynching a total stranger in your backyard is personal.

CELIA

Shouldn't never bought them damn Sherlock Homes books for you. They was drunk and the man was black. Leave it alone, hear?

*Daddy Buster eyes crosses to Celia's money on the table.*

DADDY BUSTER

Cel, you need you some help with the Bolita count?

CELIA

I got it, Buster.

DADDY BUSTER

I know you do!

CELIA

Don't start!

DADDY BUSTER

It's your business, Cel. Not our business.

*Looking Celia dead in the eye, Daddy Buster sings-*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

I'm a all-around man, I can do most anything that comes to hand-

*Buster exits to the backyard. Behind the bar is a full kitchen Beatriz makes Cuban coffee as Percival watches.*

*Cilo makes his presence known to Celia. He wears a bandage with a red scarf over it and a thick rope of elekes.*

CELIA

I ein expect you to rise for day clean. What's that round your neck? Take off the scarf so the wound can breathe. Let me put some more ointment on it. Then back to bed for you.

*She rushes to him as if he is another day's task to be expedited.*

CILO

Señora, puedo saber tu nombre?

CELIA

Gawd be good, he don't speak no English. Me llamo Celia!

CILO

Señora, sí usted habla Español, why should I speak English?

CELIA

Now looka here. I ein got time for all of that there. You need to rest for that wound go septic. Now let me see it, then I'm a have Percival bring you some breakfast in the bed. I stitched you up good, but there might still be some fever 'til the wound close.

CILO

I will do as you ask, if you allow me to earn my way for as long as I am under your generous care. I insist. I will heal and rest and then Cilo del Monte y Santeisteban will earn his keep. For a man does not let a woman give him things for free.

CELIA

What can you do for me that I can't do for my damn self?

*Cilo smiles. Thunder, then lightening. Celia feels his magic and sits down wary of him. Beatriz crosses to them with two coffees. Kisses her father and places the coffee on the table.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BEATRIZ

Chango' is dancing, Papa.

CILO

But not by himself, mi querida.

CELIA

What you know about Chango'?

*Unaccustomed to resistance, Cilo treads lightly.*

CILO

Yo se que Chango' es de Africa y soy un Africano. We are all Africans. You, me and Chango'.

CELIA

Goodness and light, you one of them revolution Cubans. I need that coffee bad as Jesus need a day off. I don't feel right this morning.

BEATRIZ

You should rest. I can help with the day's chores, just tell me. I have no other way to thank you for what you do for me and my father--

CELIA

Chile, I ein done nothing no other reasonable human being wouldna done.

CILO

Señora, no one could do what you did.

*He removes the handkerchief and his neck is completely healed as if by magic.*

BEATRIZ

Papa, you are healed! As if nothing ever happened. Oh...

EL CORO

Ache'

*El Coro sends the waters against the shore. Cilo incites Celia's magic. She flushes and goes still. Percival crosses to examine Cilo's wound. Beatriz begins wiping down countertops and whispering a prayer.*

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (6)

CILO

Señora, I am in your debt. How you know to do such things with a song?

CELIA

I heal. That's what I do cuz only thing white doctors know how to do is get you dead. That's who I am.

PERCIVAL

Cel, all the years I lived with you, I have never seen what I saw last night. You didn't heal him, you--

CILO

You bring me back from the dead.

*A moment. El Coro sends the waters pouring down the sides of mountains into rivers and streams. Everyone hears it except Celia.*

CELIA

What madness yall talking? The man was passed out and the ointment sealed the wound. That's all. Ein no different from when I heal the fevers, tapeworm and Florida sore.

*The waters intensify. El Coro Elegua's mischievous giggles. Everyone hears except Celia or did she?*

PERCIVAL

But this was different Cel. He was gone and his neck was shredded. Don't you heart that? Don't you feel that?

CELIA

I ein hear nothing cuz wasn't nothing to hear. Mr. Cilo, this is my little runaway man-child, Percival. His mama'em went back to Cuba and left me a bundle of chocolate trouble so I guess I claim him.

PERCIVAL

Me llamo Percival Dionysius Del Rios Albury. Encantado, Señor Santiesteban.

CILO

Egualmente. Pero me llamo Cilo. Señora, there is a word for what you do where I come from. Though I have never seen a woman called this name before.

CELIA

Damm it all to hell! Stop this nonsense. Ein nothing special about what I done! I ain't special!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

El Coro sends the rivers away with a loud thud. The magic is gone. In her hardness, Celia has pushed away La Mágica Diaria, her birthright. She grabs the coffee, stands, adjusts her gun in its holster. She storms off to the counter top with her slips of paper and starts counting money. Cilo helps Beatriz wipe down countertops. They finish preparing the breakfast abandoned by Percival.

PERCIVAL

So, what you're saying is that you're not inclined to discuss this at the moment? When does dear Sister Day grace us with her shining countenance? It's been almost a year since you've seen Little Miriam? I so long for the banter, the epic piety—

The bell on the front door rings. Day enters dragging Little Miriam.

DAY

Laawwwd, that dust done ruint my church shoes! When the last time it rain? The alley so dry? Cel, how-you? Gwon, Little Miss Miriam. Why you dragging behind? Gwon hug your Mother Dear.

CELIA

Morning. Day, you early. I wasn't expecting you 'til this evening. What time yall left Tampa?

DAY

Well, R'vrend Hilton decide to preach his sermon from the front of the bus so we could get an early start. You ca' try and look like you happy to see me.

CELIA

You look fine, real fine, sister. I was just wondering why you ein let my child travel to see her mother by her lonesome. She old enough now.

DAY

Like I said, you ca' try and look like you happy to see me.

Little Miriam enters carrying her books and bags; she slowly approaches her Mother.

CELIA

My...baby...is...so pretty.

A moment. Celia slowly crosses to Miriam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

CELIA (CONT'D)

That hair. It grow like wildfire all chocolate and red in the sun. Your hair too big for your little body.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Blessed morning, Mother-Dear.

EL CORO

Stay, Stay.

Hugging Miriam like her life depends on it, Celia abruptly pulls away. She feels dizzy, faint. She sits, winded from the hug?

CELIA

I feel so tired today. This week been long. Gone and sit down now, Miriam

DAY

That was entirely too dramatic for me! Child need to see her mother more often stead of once a twice a year. Ain't no crime in hugging the child, par-ticully since you don't see her enough as it is.

CELIA

She don't need to be down here in the Alley too long. All these niggas gone be right here, she ain't. She need to be up there with them bougie niggas ' learning.

*Percival crosses to Miriam taking her bags and swinging her madly. His little sister is home at last.*

PERCIVAL

But today, your heart is here and she longs for your softness, your sunlight. Look at you, Little Miriam looking better than sunshine.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I miss you so much, Percival, I can't stop smiling.

CELIA

I'm the rainmaker. I bring down the paper, baby. The bankman know my name. I ain't never gone feel like a slave woman on an auction block crying over a child some man bought away. I got a gun and money in the bank, that's something a slave woman couldn't dream about. I do the hard thing so she can do the soft--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

PERCIVAL

Ah, Celia. Your softness is like like a warm summer rain. It lives in the rainbow, even when you try to hide behind clouds. Come Little Miss Miriam. I have a plate of boiled fish and grits with your name on it.

*Percival sets a place for her at the counter and gets her a plate of food. Cilo takes over the cooking and Beatriz prepares plates. They are invisible, yet present.*

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM

Thank you Percival. You look beautiful.

PERCIVAL

Little girl, I remember the day you were born. You gave my smile joy.

*Percival crosses to Celia's chair placing a plate of grits, eggs, fried grouper for her. Celia bends her lip to fuss. Percival eases her Celia. He crosses to Day.*

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

Celia, don't fight the truth. Day, darling, allow me to take your coat.

DAY

Ain't you the cat's meow! What's that around your neck and what call this here fancy coat? You wore that to church?

PERCIVAL

Evening last, The Princess performed three sets "in sequence." Hence, I met Jesus over a bowl of grits this morning. However, I donned my morning coat and cravat in honor of you arrival.

*He gives her a courtly bow, hugs her and calms her. Strolling around the room, Day takes inventory.*

DAY

I see you got the gas lamps. You got the E-lectric? Miriam need the E-lectric for her music lessons. The congregation light up when she play piana and R'verend Hilton looooooove to hear her play--

CELIA

She need the electric for her studies. Playing them ivories ain't gone get her far as them books will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

DAY

Ain't no book more precious than The Good Book! That's what the Right R'verend Hilton say and he ought to know. He is a graduate of Morehouse College.

CELIA

Yiddle so! I know the man pedigree. Yall binyuh have me up in his church playing that piana from the time I could walk! Why he on the bus from Tampa with yall? Ain't he got to tend to his church up there?

DAY

As the new head of the Southern Christian League of Ministers, he got a pulpit in every city. He gone be visiting churches to unify our fight against Jim Crow. He gone preach in your church home come Sunday. Do you remember Big Bethel AME?

*Was it a sermon or sex?*

DAY (CONT'D)

On the bus, he preach the Sunday Service right up front. Folk could hardly take they eyes off him. Talking 'bout how "We as a people got to come together and knock down the walls of ignorance"--

CELIA

Yeah. That's how he do it.

DAY

Why you got to make it sound like something filthy? He say he done forgot how you look 'til he see Lil' Miriam. I do believe she his favorite. He fa'ever pulling her to the side after service giving her books and whatnot. That's why she done jump a grade—

*(To Little Miriam)*

CELIA

You did? When was this? How come ain't no body telegram me?

DAY

You always gwan on 'bout how I waste your month-ly check, so I was E-cono-mizing.

CELIA

Now Day, you know I take care of my baby, you and Mother Sylvia 'till the Day she left this earth. I ain't never deny you nery a damn thing. You know good and god damn well, you coulda sent me a telegram—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

DAY

I don't know any of them things, Cel! I figure... you find out all you need to know when she get here---

CELIA

That what you figure, Day?

DAY

Now looka here—

CELIA

That's wonderful, Baby Bird!

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes mam. Reverend Hilton helped me with all of the tests and books – I have almost completed The Iliad.

DAY

Cel, please ask your help to bring me some fresh orange juice.

CELIA

Day, have you ever known me to hire black people to serve me?

DAY

I was just asking for what look like already happening.

CELIA

They ain't the help. They my company. Mr. Uh, uh--

Cilo steps from behind the counter. Takes Day's hand, kisses it and gives her a courtly bow.

CILO

Cilo del Monte y Santiesteban at your service, Señora.

DAY

Well, I ain't no Señora...yet. Pleased to meet you, Mr. Cilo. I'm Celia's sister, Day Graham. This here chile way too young to be your wife, so I know she must be a relation.

CILO

May I present my daughter, Beatriz de los Reyes y Santiesteban.

BEATRIZ

Con mucho gusto, Señora. Would you like a cafecito?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

*Beatriz crosses kitchen to prepare a coffee.*

DAY

Oh, yes, sweet Miss. Thank you. I ein nery been received like this in Good Bread Alley. I hope you got your notes, Cel. May I present Little Miss Miriam, my niece. Celia's only living child. We reside in Tampa, not here in the Alley for obvious reasons. But we always look forward to our colorful visits with Sister Celia.

CILO

Señorita Miriam. Encantado a conocerle.

*He gives her a courtly bow.*

LITTLE MIRIAM

Señor Del Monte y Santiesteban, encontado a conecerle.

CILO

Usted habla Español perfectamente. Desde usted ha aprendido del los dioses Griegos, Did you know that the many of the great African civilizations have a pantheon of beings similar to the Greeks, but pre-date them by centuries?

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM

I did not know that, Señor Cilo. That's wonderful.

CILO

I am sure that your mother can tell you all about them and I am happy share my knowledge as well.

*Celia gives Cilo a look of death.*

DAY

Everything she need to learn R'vrend Hilton done already seen to. We ain't hardly going nowhere near no A-frica. So she can stick with them Greeks. Well, the place look nice, Cel, real nice. I hear tell you sell dinners and can-dy and got an ice-box, too. You, too modern for me with your Henry Ford in the car park. Too, too modern. Mother Sylvia--

*Offstage*

DADDY BUSTER

Now I ain't no milkman, no milkman's son.

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

I can pull your titties--

DAY

Gaaawd rest her soul--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

Great day in the morning! You still a pretty brown woman Day! I ain't know yall was up in chere. Cel, why you ein call me?

*Sliding his gun in its holster, he grabs Day in a bear hug.*

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

You look good enough to eat—

*He feigns lifting her off the ground, struggles, grunts, gives up.*

DAY

Buster, if you don't gone somewhere.

DADDY BUSTER

Lil' Miss Miriam, you better come on over here and give me some sugar.

*He hugs the life out of Little Miriam*

DAY

So we all gone act likkuh Buster ain't drinkin', gamblin', and talkin' 'bout titties on the Laawd's day? I know this here is YO-ami, but, er' uhh--

CELIA

MY-ami, Day! MY-ami. I done told your Geechie self time and time again. It don't change!

DAY

Oh! Now, I'm the only Gullah Geechie up in chere?

CELIA

So what, I run a sideline out the back. The Sheriff and all the pastors drop by for a plate, a sip and the Bolita game-- if the spirits say the breeze blowing they way.

*A pregnant silence*

DAY

What spirits? You been doing the roots up in dis house?

CELIA

My house is a refuge from the pain of being black all day long, under a white sun. The Veil ain't no damn roots! It a gift that provide for me and mine from before and before.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (14)

Celia, Cilo, Beatriz and El Coro knock three times.. The room gets noticeably warmer. Day, Percival, Buster fan themselves as Cilo wipes down counters with Florida Water.

DAY

I can always go back into service, par-ticully, if I know, you making money from the Veil--

CELIA

So you rather get down on your knees and clean up after Miz Anne than own your own business? See-see-see-see-see---That's the gawd-damn problem right there—

DAY

Don't you take the Lord's name in vain!

CELIA

Me and JC is copathestic!

DAY

The Veil and talking to spirits ain't Christian--

CILO

I believe the veil is in the Bible, Señora Day.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Señor Cilo? What is the Veil?

DAY

Hush Child!

CELIA

Watch how you talk to my baby?

DAY

Your baby? What is all this here non-sense? Papa would get up out his coffin and---

CELIA

Our Papa, Prince Dahomey Graham, was the one told it. When your memory get so selective? He tell us how the veil fell away from my eyes.

She lifts her hands over her eyes and head as if removing a literal veil. The winds pick up outside as El Coro whispers a spiritual that moves across the waters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

CELIA (CONT'D)

After three days of Mother Sylvia singing them Africa songs to me. My eyes clear and I cried for the teat. Papa say, "Sylvia this girl-child have the sight. She the one you gone teach the ways."

*The act of remembering brings on La Mágica Diaria to it's fullness...heat and wind..heat and wind. Day is panicked by the magic. The sounds of waves slapping the shore and waterfalling from cliffs sweeps through the room. Cilo listens as Celia is mounted by her unknown powers.*

DAY

He just gwan on drylongso like Gullah do.

CELIA

I sit and breathe drylongso just like our Mother ca' see the future—

*Rain pelting the roofstops yet the sun is still shining.*

DAY

I ain't gwan sit here and let evil enter into our mist!

*Day prays frantically , rocking and fanning. Percival and Daddy Buster wipe sweat from their brows. The room has grown uncomfortably hot and muggy. Beatriz mops water off the floor as the walls cry juicy tears of joy.*

CELIA

There ain't never been nothing but good intentions in this house!

*Ferocious winds, roaring waters. All the doors slam shut. Silence. Celia sits, lights a cigar, inhales and slowly exhales smoke in synchronicity with El Coro.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Well...least not until today.

EL CORO

Ahhhhhhhche'

*Blackout.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

## ACT I, SCENE TWO

*Afternoon. Same day. Cilo prepares dinner. Beatriz enters with groceries. Day unpacks them. Percival descends the stairs a la Norma Desmond in his new costume, full hair and make-up. Cilo is speechless. Beatriz is in awe.*

BEATRIZ

¿Señor Percival?

PERCIVAL

In performance, I prefer Princess Carlotta. I'm trying a new costume. Thoughts?

BEATRIZ

Princessa Carlotta, te luces maravillosa. ¿Papa, el parece como una mujer linda de verdad, no?

*Cilo takes a moment of silence. Beatriz sighs crossing to Princess Carlotta.*

PERCIVAL

That is indeed the point my dear. I believe it is the artist's journey to transform oneself. Otherwise, I could stand behind a lecturn speaking ad nauseum on some boring subject as myself. But true performance is the ability to step into the delicacy, fragility of a creature such as Mimi and ....

*Singing as he clears the table for dinner, he slowly becomes Princess Carlotta inhabiting Mimi..*

Donde lieta uscì  
al tuo grido d'amore,  
torna sola Mimi  
al solitario nido.  
Ritorna un'altra volta  
a intesser finti fior.  
Addio, senza rancor.  
Ascolta, ascolta.  
Le poche robe aduna  
che lasciai sparse.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

PERCIVAL (CONT ' D)

Nel mio cassetto  
 stan chiusi quel cerchietto d'or  
 e il libro di preghiere.  
 Involgi tutto quanto in un grembiale  
 e manderò il portiere...  
 Bada, sotto il guanciaie  
 c'è la cuffietta rosa.

*A moment. Percival places the last vase of flowers on the  
 table and rests. Beat.*

CILO

So, you must wear a dress to sing La Boheme?

*Percival turns to Cilo with a breathless condescension.*

PERCIVAL

I saw Nellie Melba in the role at Covent Garden this season. She was luminous. You know it?

CILO

Una mujer, she does not want to marry, so she lives in a room sewing flowers; meeting men who make paintings no one will buy. Then she dies.

DAY

Percival, just what kind of show is it you doing?

PERCIVAL

Dearest Day, I am the Lyric Theatre's headliner, "Princess Carlotta Sings Selections from Puccini's La Boheme"

DAY

Ain't there some men who sing the opera? Why you can't dress like them?

*PERCIVAL*

Because everyone who dresses like a man is not always the best man for the job.

*Beatriz crosses to Percival and reaches to adjust his  
 blouse all eagerness and fire.*

BEATRIZ

Eres un...un poema, Señor Percival. Ven, Ven! Permiteme' arreglar tu vestido.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Beatriz  
PERCIVAL

Si, mi querido...  
BEATRIZ

I will attend to it momentarily—  
PERCIVAL

Aye, que locura es tu blusa—  
BEATRIZ

*The epic battle of the blouse ensues.*

I still appear to be lucid, despite my disshelved blouse---  
PERCIVAL

Pero—  
BEATRIZ

Senorita Beatriz. Leave off!  
PERCIVAL

CUIDATE, Señor Percival. That's my daughter. Beatriz, limpie el cuarto de habitación. Do your work, it will make you less hateful.  
CILO

*A long suck of teeth, Beatriz gathers cleaning supplies.  
Cilo locks eyes with Percival.*

Lo siento, Cilo. Disrespect was not my intent. Beatriz, lo siento. I meant no roughness, but your attention is...so...much.  
PERCIVAL

*Beatriz sashays past Percival.*

Papa! ¿Donde estan los pasteles?  
BEATRIZ

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

*Without looking up from the pan of yucca, Cilo places a box of Cuban pasteles de guayaba con queso on the countertop*

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

¡Pastelitos de Guayaba con Queso! ¡Te adoro, Papa!

CILO

Ya. Por el momento.

*Cilo sits behind the counter unseen peeling potatoes. Percival crosses to Celia's altar room. Beatriz & Day exits upstairs. Little Miriam sits at the top of the stairs. Celia enters weary and sits at the piano.*

CELIA

You don't know how it feels can't love your own  
 You don't know how it feels can't love your own  
 Sarah she reeled and she rocked  
 Her child is on the auction block  
 You don't know --

*Sees Miriam's book, on the dining room table.*

CELIA

Miriam? Come get your book?

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes, Mother-Dear.

*Miriam descends the stairs two at a time.*

CELIA

What's your lesson book doing down here on the table?

LITTLE MIRIAM

I must have misplaced it.

CELIA

Girl, don't you never misplace the keys to the kingdom!

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes, mam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CELIA

Jumping grades and R'vrend Hilton got you reading the Greeks---

LITTLE MIRIAM

Mother-dear?

CELIA

Yes.

*Miriam takes her mother's hands and places them on her cheeks. Both of them shudder and step away from the touch.*

EL CORO

Stay...breathe...stay....

LITTLE MIRIAM

I feel strangely cold even though it's hot. Will you teach me about the veil and the African Gods that Señor Cilo was talking about?

CELIA

All that from the slavery. Folk hold onto to that 'cause that's all we had. But you got learning and that's freedom.

LITTLE MIRIAM

But Tio Cilo says we need to remember--

*El Coro whispers.*

CELIA

All you need to remember is what's in them dead white men's books. So you can take a piece of this world and shape it to fit your dreams. Cuz if you don't shape it, it'll mis-shape you. I ein have a mama working fourteen jobs to buy me schooling. You do. I work 'til I can't breathe--

EL CORO

Soooooooooft

*Celia can't catch her breath. El Coro sucks away the angry air*

LITTLE MIRIAM (CONT'D)

But Mother-Dear, I want to be like you--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CELIA

No!

LITTLE MIRIAM

But--

CELIA

No! Ein no air. I can't catch my breath.

*Miriam reaches to touch her mother who reaches for a chair to lean against;*

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM

Mother Dear, you sick? Let me help you.

CELIA

I'm fine. Gone now.

*She pushes Miriam away.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'm roughness and you the smooth pearl in my choppy waters. I fight so you don't have to--

LITTLE MIRIAM

But—

CELIA

That's enough! I'm teaching you how to win. Ein no time for all that coddling and petting.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes, mam.

CELIA

Now take this book and carry your little self upstairs. Let Percival check your homework. I got him schooling, too. He what they call a Rhodes scholar. That mean he went to Londontown to study with some rich white men and wasn't carrying nobody bags. That's what a book could do.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes, Mother-Dear.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (6)

Little Miriam grabs her book, as her mother turns to walk away. Miriam reaches around her waist and hugs her mother for dear life. Celia melts into the hug and then abruptly pulls away.

CELIA

Gone now.

Little Miriam exits. Celia finds her gun and starts cleaning it. But she stops, feeling faint she collapses in a chair.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Something don't feel right. My head don't work today?

She crosses to the sink, fills a glass and pours water across the back of her neck and splashes her face. Relief, cool. She crosses to the piano.

CELIA (CONT'D)

You know, I can feel you, Mr. Cilo. Even if I can't see you.

Cilo steps out of the shadows into the light.

CILO

That is what it means to have the sight. It is both vision and blindness.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I been walking blind most of my life. Its the only way I know to keep breathing.

CILO

No diga mentira. Te veo.

El Coro sends lightening. Celia shivers.

CELIA

Stop seeing me. I don't like it.

CILO

I cannot stop a mirror from looking like me, can I?

A moment. Cilo exits up the stairs sitting on the landing. Celia crosses to the piano. Tries to rub the shivers away. She sings. But it doesn't come easily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

CELIA

You got to take your freedom at any cost,  
Listen, now, you got to take your freedom at any cost  
Your children ein yourn, dont know why they was even born  
You got to take your freedom at any cost

*FG is unseen and watches over Celia.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Cuz, you don't know how it feel can't love your own  
I been crying all these years,  
but my man can't dry my tears  
You don't know how it feel can't love your own  
Nobody can tell me,  
Cuz you don't know

*She plays the notes on the piano, trying to catch her  
breath. She hums reaching for a note, but it never  
happens. FG is surprised. Breathless, Celia speaks the  
last line.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Can't love your own.

FG

I came all the way to Good Bread Alley just to hear that voice. So perfectly, imperfect.

CELIA

I don't sing no more.

FG

But you have every reason to make a joyful noise unto the lord.

CELIA

My baby visit me and my heart is full.

FG

Yes. She is very special.

CELIA

I made her didn't I?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

FG

Yes, indeed. "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

CELIA

Psalm 139:14.

FG

I rest. It certainly would be lovely to hear Celia 'The Rainmaker' Graham play Sunday service after all these years.

CELIA

FG, you come here to get a sip, play the number or get a plate? 'Cause, you best stick to them goals.

FG

Yes mam.

*She crosses to the kitchen sensing Cilo.*

CELIA

Cilo, please figure out why the still ain't working proper?

*Cilo descends the stairs.*

CILO

Por supuesto, Señora.

CELIA

This here my guest, Mr. Cilo. Mr. Cilo, this FG, the pastor.

CILO

Cilo del Monte y Santiestaban. Encantado.

*Cilo gives him a courtly bow of the head, but does not cross to him. FG crosses to Cilo to shake hands.*

FG

Reverend FG Hilton. Please to meet you, Mr. Cilo del--pardon me, my Spanish is nothing to write home about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

*FG takes his hand but draws back suddenly as if he was elotrocuted. He shakes it off and clears his throat. Cilo smiles, exits to backyard.*

CILO (CONT'D)

Señora Celia. Why did you stop singing? Your singing is your softness.

CELIA

I'M SOFT AS A GAWD DAMN SUMMER MORNING!

*She stares at FG.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

You got something to say?

FG

I wouldn't say "no" to one of your plates.

*Celia makes a dinner plate.*

FG (CONT'D)

Those Cubans make me nervous. How they manage to stay so black is beyond me? That man smells like Africa.

CELIA

He show do. Likkuh sweet dark wisdom.

*She crosses to kitchen to fill a bowl.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'll make you a bowl of stewed conch. That's a little further away from Africa.

FG

You are a wonderful woman, Miss Celia, but you know you ain't right.

CELIA

Ain't? Don't be trying to put it on me, FG. What you want?

FG

Miss Celia, I want to talk to you about what we know to be good: your work with the sick. Even Dr. Griffin says your herbs have antibacterial properties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

CELIA

I feel so much better now that the Buckrah done give me his endorsement.

FG

Celia. I know that you are the only one in Coloured Town treating our people. If you didn't do it, the thing would not get done.

CELIA

And?

FG

Celia, right now the church is negotiating with the Drought Relief to hire Coloured men to rebuild the city. For the first time since slavery, they are paying us---

CELIA

Us? What you know about slavery? Master ain't never let his half black babies be no slave. You must a learned about the slavery in school? They taught you how hard it was for all us darkies.

FG

My grandfather sold his plantation and paid his debt to society by educating his offspring so that we could lead our people--

CELIA

How you gone lead somebody you ain't never been?

FG

I have always been a Coloured man. Being born free doesn't change that nor does light skin. Does fighting for my people count for nothing?

CELIA

You want to fight for my people? You get my daughter into school. And I ein talking 'bout no god damn bible study school. I'm talking about letters behind her name, Reverend Doctor. That would have meaning, not you strolling up in my house trying to tell me how to earn a dime to get my child up out of here. Know what I was learning when I was Miriam age? My Maw, taught me how to cut my brother, Wilbur, out a noose. A noose I got there too late to undo. We ein have no choices. But, Miriam, finita have some of them choices you got.

FG

That is my full intention. Have faith in that promise. The big picture----

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

CELIA

The big picture is Buster getting masonry work, folk can't get enough of my brew and the bills is paid. What all that got to do with me and you and this bowl of conch? Something don't taste right, R'vrend.

FG

Whenever you call me R'vrend, Celia, I know we're in a war zone.

*He chuckles. Silence*

FG (CONT'D)

Well, Dr. Griffin is concerned about your practicing medicine without a license. He said his office was empty Saturday last, but there was a line of Coloured folks wrapped around the corner waiting for Celia "The Rainmaker" Graham.

CELIA

That white man took a "hypocritical" oath to save all lives except Black ones.

*La Mágica Diaria buzzes happily. Celia glows golden while we see the confused grey fog surrounding FG.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Yeah, I said it: Black. Ain't nothing to it, but to do it. He wont touch Black peoples, but he pro-scribe them medicine?

FG

He cannot defy social convention by treating Coloured people, he would lose his license. But he can still prescribe medicine. If you would just send cases past him first--

CELIA

I take Babalu Aye's oath to heal every single body that walk through my door—

FG

And no one is saying that you should stop--

CELIA

So I do the laying on of hands and that Knight Rider write the prescription? So, my people paying for medicine that might not work, from a man who won't touch 'em?

FG

Since you know how the world works, you must know that the "Citizens' Council" and the Sheriff will destroy you before they let you take money out of a white man's pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

CELIA

I know all about the man in the sheet that'll hang you on Friday and medicate you on Saturday. What's that I hear?

*Tilts her head to listen*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Cricketts!

FG

If I were in your position, I wouldn't go around accusing white men of being Knight Riders.

CELIA

FG, you ain't never been tall enough to be in my position.

FG

I can intervene and make your home safe again.

CELIA

When have we ever been safe from the Klan?

FG

You have god-fearing church people coming here so you can summon God knows what kind of spirits--

CELIA

Now, we getting to it . My healing may be Doc Griffin's problem, but my life is your problem.

FG

Drinking and gambling, when they should be at church tithing and moving our people's mission forward--

FG (CONT'D)

You could use your gifts for the glory of god,

CELIA

I see one more black child with open Florida sores 'cause Doc Griffin turn them away--

FG

Instead of dragging us down into some slavery hocus-pocus--

CELIA

I'm supporting a black girl-child—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

FG

Yes, a girl-child that you took out of a stable, God-fearing home to vacation in Good Bread Alley! So when those Knight Riders come knocking on your door for taking money out of Doctor Griffin's pockets, how will you protect Miriam then?

*Little Miriam & Percival enter.*

FG (CONT'D)

Little Miss Miriam, how are you this fine evening?

LITTLE MIRIAM

Fine, FG--Reverend Hilton, Sir.

PERCIVAL

My, how grown up you've become, Miriam! Evening Reverend.

FG

Miss Miriam, your visit to the Alley does not preclude you from bringing your homework to me --

CELIA

Percival can teach her, FG--

FG

Why Miss Celia, it's no trouble at all. I don't want her visit with her mother to interrupt her studies. Miss Miriam, shall we attempt "The Souls of Black Folk?"

LITTLE MIRIAM

Oh, Reverend Hilton, yes please!

CELIA

My baby-bird going to Spellman on the honor roll--

FG

Well, one step at a time. We've already put into motion the plan Sister Day and I --

CELIA

Day?

FG

Discussed. Miriam is to finish eighth grade, come out and attend finishing school in preparation to be a wife, a mother and perhaps a Bible study teacher one day. The church can provide all of that. Miss Miriam, please come by my office and drop off your notes. 'Evening Ladies.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (14)

FG exits. Cilo enters with a bunch of yellow sunflowers and sweeps away FG's spirit. Miriam has followed FG to the door watching him walk away. Celia looks at Miriam. Percival leads Miriam upstairs.

CILO

Señora, I believe your daughter needs you. She needs your touch.

CELIA

She need that preachers' good will to get her into college. Ain't no school in Miami. And if you ain't lighter than the brown paper bag, you can't get into nobody black college. That's why I have Miriam up in Tampa with tutors and whatnot. I know 'bout guns, liquor and African spirits. What she need to know about that?

CILO

Everything! Your love is more than a war waged against the world to protect your child. It is your power. Señorita Miriam is hungry and you hold all the sustenance. If you do not love on her, you will lose your power.

CELIA

I ain't got no power. I give that child all I have worth giving. Now when I hold her, I feel something ein right. I feel tired and my heart start a pitter patter and I have to sit down. I can't hold my own child. I ein been able to hold her since she been home. You seen that, I know you have. Your eyes follow me everywhere I go judging me. Now spirit telling me, I got to let her go so she ca' be what I never was.

CILO

But you are everything. That is what I see, what I learn. I learn all that you are and all that you would like to be. I learn that your ferocity is like water in the desert. But your love is greater. It is difficult to sing, no? The words, the melody, the breath are leaving you? Your song is your love. When it is gone, you will know for there will be no air.

Cilo continues wiping down the countertops. Celia crosses to piano looking for a melody and gives up. El Cora sends the waters away as the lights fade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

## ACT I, SCENE THREE

*Day clean. Next Day. El Coro Afro Cuban street vendors advertising their wares as they push their carts along Good Bread Alley's dusty unpaved streets. Each member of the family steps outside to bargain for their goods.*

ALL VENDORS

Oyelo Oyelo oyelo oyleo bien

CELIA

I need some cigars. Dame una caja de cigarillos.

ALL VENDORS

Comprame que yo que vengo barato, que yo que vengo barato

*Daddy Buster sticks his head through the backdoor.*

DADDY BUSTER

Make that a big fat cigar.

CELIA

Gone, Buster. Dos dolares?

*Celia raises two fingers. Vendor I raises three fingers.*

VENDOR I

Negra, Como voy a darle comer a mis hijos? Tres dolares.

CELIA

One dollar.

*Vendor hands Celia cigars*

VENDOR I

Ok, ok, dos dolares.

ALL VENDORS

Comprame

CILO

You have white sweet potatoe? Quiero cinco boniatos por cinco centavos.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

VENDOR II

Cinco boniatos por cinco centavos.

*Vendor gives potatoes to Cilo who crosses to kitchen.*

ALL VENDORS

Comprame

BEATRIZ

Quiero una yarda de seda. I want to make  
a dress for my boyfriend, Percival .

CILO

No! My daughter has no boyfriend!

BEATRIZ

But that is Percival's favorite color--

CILO

Jajajaja...Enough!

*Celia returns to her altar room and Cilo heads to the  
backyard. Day sits in a rocker pretending to read her  
bible. Percival is composing at the piano. Beatriz enters  
in a brand new blue dress carrying the fabric with great  
stealth. Hot, sweaty, she does a liquid walk across the  
room that could burn down houses. At the sink, she wets  
her handkerchief. She wets the dress as it sticks to some  
interesting parts of her body. Percival is hypnotized.*

BEATRIZ

I want to see this silk against your chocolate skin.

*Crossing to Percival, she drapes a brilliant blue fabric  
across his shoulders.*

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

Stand up--

PERCIVAL

Beatriz, I want my solitude.

BEATRIZ

De veras?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PERCIVAL

You are relentless.

BEATRIZ

Like a summer breeze: Sudden, but so very sweet .

DAY

You need to give that man a rest. Don't he go the other way? Like a bitch after a skunk thinking she can make it smell sweet.

*Percival & Beatriz stare at Day. Deciding to scandalize Day, they pretend to kiss. . Just when the kiss gets too real, Daddy Buster slides through the front door with a fistful of yellow roses. He and Celia dance a two-step that was born beneath the sheets. Percival disentangles himself from Beatriz and exits. She follows.*

DADDY BUSTER

BabyGirlBabyGirlBabyGirlBabyGirl, I'm back. Took me hell of long, but I made the bank deposit

CELIA

I was worried when you ein come home last night. Curfew 'bout to come down.

DADDY BUSTER

Well, uh. I missed the curfew, so I stayed in Deland for the night. Can't have no crackers running me down in the middle of the night.

DAY

They got a colored rooming house in Deland? When that happen?

DADDY BUSTER

Donchu worry that, Day. Cause I'm back now, looking at My Always.

CELIA

I like it when you call me that.

DADDY BUSTER

Good 'cause your face make me cry happy.

CELIA

Thank you for my petals. You never forget.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

*They kiss.*

DADDY BUSTER

Sorry I took so long. Show would be quicker if your husband was on the account--

CELIA

You know I love me some Daddy Buster?

DADDY BUSTER

I know-

CELIA

But Live & Let Live--

DADDY BUSTER

Is yours, since always. But we becoming one now, baby love. All I got is yours.

CELIA

I know....

DADDY BUSTER

You know, I walk 'cross water for you.

CELIA

Hush your self.

DADDY BUSTER

If you asked, I'd crack open the heavens with my bare hands for you.

CELIA

I ein know all that.

DADDY BUSTER

Open that door. Let me grab one of them clouds.

CELIA

Gone.

DADDY BUSTER

Naw. I ain't going no where, Cel. We one, baby. Donchu know that yet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CELIA

I had to pry the deed from that white man dead fist 'fore they let a Black woman own some thing and you wont me to just hand that over?

DADDY BUSTER

Naw, now. I'm asking you to let me share the burden and your trust—

CELIA

Did you remember the receipt?

DADDY BUSTER

Damn! I'll go back tomorrow.

CELIA

You wont to manage the account, but you don't never remember the receipt? What's that I hear?

*Tilts her head to listen.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Cricketts! Why you look at me Dry-long-so?

DADDY BUSTER

Why you always got to talk to me like I'm a child?

CELIA

Do what you say you gone do--

DADDY BUSTER

I said, I'd see the bank man 'bout your money and I did! I just didn't do it like you want me to!

CELIA

Fine then. Where the keys?

*Daddy Buster eyes the bolita slips. Does not relinquish the keys.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Day, don't you have someplace to be?

DAY

I'm comfortable just where I am. 'Course, if you uncomfortable--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CELIA

I need some time with my husband.

DAY

Course . I would to. If I had one.

Day exists as if she's been picking cotton for the last one  
fifty. She is many things.

DADDY BUSTER

If I was your general manager, official-like, I could draw up a line a credit---

CELIA

Credit mean I owe. Every slave child know Debt will kill you dead. They put people underneath the jail for spending money they ain't got. That's why black peoples bury they money in the backyard. We done been through this a thousand and one times, Buster.

DADDY BUSTER

All I'm saying is that you scraping by with all your bills for Miriam, Day and this here place. I do all the accounting and carrying as it is. That credit could help me start my business proper and eventually turn a profit---

CELIA

Man, that ain't helping us right now!

DADDY BUSTER

I'm just putting my dreams in the air, Baby. Can I do that? Can I share what makes me get up in the morning with my woman? Can you hear that?

CELIA

What I hear is the drippety drip drip of all these holes in my roof and the sound of customers walking out the door.

DADDY BUSTER

Woman! That dirt road dry enough to cook a chicken! Why you worried 'bout rain we ain't seen since Jesus was a baby---

CELIA

I'm ready for the storm to come. I don't have time to dream and I don't beg, borrow or steal cause We Grahams--

DADDY BUSTER

We don't OWE, We OWN!

CELIA

We don't OWE, We OWN!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

CELIA (CONT'D)

You know what.....

DADDY BUSTER

Naw, baby, I don't know nothing. Tell me what you know good.

*Packing up the numbers slips.*

CELIA

Papa pay rent a week early every month for twenty years. The minute Papa got sick, that white man put Mama and all us little ones outside in the cold while Papa up there dying. When you rent from some body, it ain't nothing but slavery in a bucket. I'll sit with ten buckets 'round me watching the roof drip drip dripety drip for I rent from no body or borrow no money.

DADDY BUSTER

Well then, pass the Bolita game on to me, I can double your profit.

CELIA

We done walked that road and the well was dry.\*

DADDY BUSTER

So, I'm good enough to marry, but I'm not good enough to entrust with our livelihood?

CELIA

A man can get things from other men faster and take a woman livelihood--

DADDY BUSTER

What that got to do with me, woman? I ain't a man, I'm your man. All we been through and you still think you got to do this all alone? I ain't run out on you and Miriam. I'm standing right here ready to figure out a way, outta no way----

CELIA

If you love me, you don't need my money! My Bolita game is blessed--

DADDY BUSTER

Them fine church peoples ain't playing your game 'cause it's blessed. They playing to hit the number and get a new Schwinn to ride up and down Second Avenue, woman!

CELIA

The profit from the Bolita game is what I'm going pass onto my girl-child-

DADDY BUSTER

Lil' Miriam don't need no store, she need her mama to teach her how to be a good wife and mother---

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (7)

CELIA

Donchu tell me what my child need! You just got on the scene--- You don't know what I been through to keep that child safe. You always see the dark and never the light. When that happen?

DADDY BUSTER

Same day I realize you never trust me! Same day I want to make something with you, but you reject me. You live with me, but you breathe and laugh a million miles away.

*He exits as Celia sits, depleted. Cilo enters as the Comparsa approaches singing Que Viva Chango.*

EL CORO

Que Viva Chango, que viva Chango  
Que viva Chango, Que viva Chango

CILO

The comparsa calls you, Negra. Canta. Me gusta cuando tu cantas.

CELIA

I don't dance. I don't sing and I don't talk no Spanish.

CILO

Then how you know I ask you to sing? I cannot sing very good, but I am not afraid to try. Cuando tu sueñas, tu cantas. Cierre los ojos y sueña conmigo.

*His voice is ice cream melting too fast on a sunny day, imperfectly perfect. Cilo echoes the comparsa as they pass them by at sunset. They dance*

CILO (CONT'D)

Santa Barbara bendita  
Para ti surge mi lira  
Santa Barbara bendita  
Para ti surge mi lira  
Y con emocion se inspira  
Antes tu imagen bonita

CILO (CONT'D)

Que Viva Chango, que viva Chango  
Que viva Chango, Que viva Chango  
Señores

EL CORO

Que Viva Chango, que viva Chango  
Que viva Chango, Que viva Chango

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

*Music dies away as they sit in a companionable silence.*

CILO (CONT'D)

Sing your heart's softness.

CELIA

I can't be soft. The world make hardness everywhere it go.

*Placing his hand on Celia's heart*

CILO

¿A quien eres adentro, en tu corazon? Who would you be if the world were not hard?

CELIA

But it is—

CILO

!Otra vez! Who would you be without your gun?

CELIA

Dead.

CILO

Who would you be if, there were no Knight Riders, no lynching, no little girls without fathers? Who would you be if these things were no more?

CELIA

I don't know!

CILO

No! You are afraid to know. To know all your power. It is not the gun in your hand that makes you shine, Negra. Esta aqui! (*places his hand on her heart*) And you have forgotten her and that is why she is pulling away. She cannot breathe under the hardness! Hold your daughter! Hold her through the pain, the fear and you will see all that you need to know! Hold her so you can sing!

CELIA

Why are you here? To take notes on my life? Who got your notes? So, you got a note from Chango say, "leave your wife and come to Good Bread Alley" to fuck with me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

CILO

No! Mi esposa... My wife grew hard. So I know what it is to live with a woman who has forgotten her softness. She fed her anger until it ate away her insides and then she bled all over me and my baby. I run with Beatriz in my arms to breathe again . I want my daughter to have a chance to dance in the sunlight. To see every sunrise become new. Es posible ahora. I send my wife money for her drink and sometimes food, but I cannot share family with her. It is forever my sadness to have abandoned her. Pero, when I choose mi Beatriz, I choose... una soledad. A loneliness that cannot find a place to hide.

CELIA

I am heart-sorry, Cilo. I been beating your bush for answers and all I did was end up cutting you.

CILO

No te preocupes, Negra. Estoy contento. I feel I have made family here. I have.... everything.

CELIA

This family with turmoil and consternation at every door? I hardly know my own child. And I'm walking blind until I learn how to keep that man close without giving all my self away.

CILO

Which man, mi querida?

*Celia looks at Cilo, picks up her pistol, oil and cleaning cloth and exits to her altar room. Cilo leaves a flower in her chair as lights fade.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

## ACT I, SCENE FOUR

*Midnight. Same day. Lights up on Celia's altar room of comfy couches, an antique French provincial desk, a divan, Asian throw rugs and pillows cover every bit of spare floor; a golden sheer canopy houses a wooden altar with a sopera, candles to Ochún and various articles of worship. Celia prepares a healing ritual for Percival who sits regally in full drag; hair, make-up and wig askew with a vicious machete wound across his chest. Little Miriam watches unseen from behind the beaded curtains as Celia examines the wound.*

CELIA

Look to me like whoever did this meant it.

PERCIVAL

Men fearful of their own manhood often do.

CELIA

Princess Carlotta, getting cut up, don't make you a man. You ain't got to fight.

PERCIVAL

What am I to do, Celia? Allow them to brutalize me? I simply want to be left alone.

CELIA

Don't nobody really want to be alone!

*Calling to Beatriz in the other room.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Miss Beatriz, come in here.

*Beatriz enters timidly. She lays an offering on Celia's altar.*

BEATRIZ

Si, Señora?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

CELIA

Child, I never been a Señora when I was one. I'm Celia. Now sing for me, Beatriz. I know you know how. I seen you teach your Daddy's feet where to go!

*Celia nods to Beatriz to sing Bima Ochún giving thanks for the goddesses' grace and blessing. El Coro gives us the Ochún's bells. her laughter. Celia crosses to the four corners of the room and dusts them with her energy.*

BEATRIZ

Bima Ochún bailele--

*Celia lights more candles, humming as she goes to the altar filled with seven glasses of water and touches each glass. She walks to the bureau covered with Listerine bottles filled with colorful powders. In between bottles, sit las muñecas negras in yellow and gold ball gowns and elekes around their necks. There is a wooden Indian with a metal axe, coconuts tied in yellow ribbon, a gold leaf bust of Nefertiti, a large conch shell, a wooden Buddha and a small wrought iron Chinese urn. Yellow candles, glass jars overflowing with honey, copper pennies, citrine stones, oranges, squash, cinnamon sticks, ases of fat yellow sunflowers with chocolate faces and yellow rose petals cover the altar like snow. Beatriz hands Celia an orange. Celia cuts a hole in the top of the orange, sucks out its juices and places it in a dish with honey.*

CELIA

Omi tuto, ana tuto, modupe iya-

*La Mágica Diaria responds in elemental sounds: water splashing across the sand, throwing up chunks of earth, wind calming the waters and the room glows with an lovely lavender light. Celia chants. Ochún's bells.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Bima Ochún bailele osuo ache bole ure--

*Miriam accidentally kicks over a healing bowl.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Miriam, what you do? Lord, you done broke Ochún bowl?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIRIAM

Oh, Mother Dear. I'm so sorry. Your voice so pretty. I want to learn it. I'll fix it. I promise.

Celia and Miriam reach for the broken pieces together. As they touch, Celia grows faint. Miriam cries out as if in pain. They fall to the ground. Beatriz and Percival runs to steady them.

BEATRIZ

Mi Celia! Mi Celia

PERCIVAL

Cel, you alright. I have you Miriam.

CELIA

Miriam, you alright.

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM

I don't know. One moment I was fine, then I got dizzy and got a pain in my side. But I'm alright now. It wasn't anything. I can fix this Mother Dear. Please let me do it. Then you can rest.

CELIA

I'm fine. I'm just a little light-headed. Miriam, I'm sorry for hollering on you. Gone upstairs, I'll clean this up.

MIRIAM

Yes, Mother-Dear...I'm sorry Mother-Dear.

She kisses her mother lightly on the cheek then scurries upstairs. Miriam's kiss drops Celia to her knees.

CELIA

Something ein right. Why can't I touch my child? Guide me, Mama. Guide me Prince Dahomey, guide me. I'm listening.

Celia drinks some water, paces the room looking for spirit and then settles in stillness. Percival and Beatriz close their eyes and wait.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Bima Ochún bailele osuo ache--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

And her voice disappears. She feels a great heaving of tears. Celia rubs her heart and then her throat, nothing comes out. La Mágica Diaria responds as El Coro brings the waters, but lacking her voice, we hear the water recede.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Ein no air in the room. Where the air? I can't catch my breath. Beatriz, sing for me.

BEATRIZ

Bima Ochún bailele osuo ache bole ure-

Cilo & El Coro join her with the clave. They are offstage, in the in between-tween, but they are here.

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

Mi Celia. Ochún needs your song. I do not know the words of healing.

*Celia breathes deeply, a deep moan is all that comes as tears threaten.*

CELIA

Bima Ochún -- I can't sing. It caught in my throat. Ain't no air. Just shame running down my face.

BEATRIZ

Pero Mi Celia, without the tears there is no rain...no water. If you do not sing to Ochún all of the healing waters will leave us.

CELIA

We done cried so many tears, when we jump, we was already water. We ownt need no more. Just sing fa' me.

Celia mixes a paste and applies it to Percival's chest.

CELIA (CONT'D)

For this poultice to work, you got to come clean to get clean.

*A moment.*

PERCIVAL

I returned to my dressing room after the show and found a theatre patron reclining there imbibing my costly spirits. He said he was fond of a boy in a dress. He grabbed me and placed his filthy hands around my neck enjoying the choking he was giving me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

Pressed up against me, I could feel him... growing hard in his pants. A thing. Something deep welled up inside of me. Something hot and dirty, but forced and wrong. I pushed it down, but it grew wings. I pulled away from him and ran out of the stage door to the alley. Racing behind me, he reached for my manhood with a switchblade. He forced my face against the wall, lifted Princess Carlotta's dress and tried to take her. When I fought him, he opened up my chest with that blade. So I cut him down.

CELIA

He still breathing?

PERCIVAL

Unfortunately.

CELIA

You got something to offer the spirits?

PERCIVAL

I have my mother's watch.

CELIA

She gave you that to count the minutes of your life.

PERCIVAL

What about her lullabyes?

CELIA

Gone.

*Percival sings. Celia stitches his wound.*

PERCIVAL (DRUME NEGRITA)

En su cuna  
ya no puede dormir  
La negrita lukumi

Gracious God, I cannot remember the words—

CELIA

Go still. Spirit'll find the cup and fill it. Remember what you already know.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (5)

PERCIVAL

Sí no drume yo le voy a compra  
Una cuna colora

As Celia takes the blue and yellow powders in her hands, rubbing them together, she and El Coro blow the life dust into Percival's face. Percival closes his eyes and when he opens them, he sees his mother in his mind's eye. He never faces Celia who has been mounted by Percival's mother. They look only forward, never back.

CELIA (AS PERCIVAL'S MOTHER)

Mama la negrita  
se le salen los pies de la cunita y la negra merce  
ya no sabe que hacer

PERCIVAL &amp; MOTHER

Tu drume, negrita que yo va compra nueva cunita  
Que tenga capite y también cascabel  
Sí no tu drume --

Suddenly all breath leaves Celia and she cannot sing, cannot catch her breath. She gasps and falls to the floor.

PERCIVAL

Mama? Mama!

CELIA

What yall doing here? Who ripped your dress, Percival?

*The spirit is gone.*

PERCIVAL

You were dressing my wound--

BEATRIZ

You lose your voice and you ask me to sing. Remember?

CELIA

No. I didn't sing. I need to sing to heal, to breathe new life into forgotten things. How can I do that if I can't sing?

Celia rushes to dining room and sits at the piano looking for her song.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Beatriz crosses to finish dressing his wound. He allows her to clean him up and tend to the dressing.

BEATRIZ

She could not remember her song.

PERCIVAL

That has never happened. My Celia has always healed everything with a song.

Celia sits alone at the piano. She looks to the heavens, opens her mouth to sing. Nothing but tears.

CELIA

I need my song. Lord, please don't let Miriam take my song. She got to have a new one. Please, father. Please.

She opens her mouth and all we hear is El Coro wailing, the sound growing fainter as Celia loses her power to love, to heal, to sing. Slow fade to black as Cilo observes her from the shadows of the staircase.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

## ACT I, SCENE FIVE

*Afternoon. Next day. Right before the dinner crowd. The dining room of Live & Let Live. Celia is counting the slips of papers, tallying winners and bundling money. Beatriz is cleaning and cooking at the speed of life as Cilo washes down the still and bottles of liquor for tonight's crowd. Enter Day dragging Little Miriam by the ear.*

DAY

Celia, you done had a ceremony up in this house since we been here?

CELIA

Day, why you in the mess?

DAY

Miriam saw you catch a spirit treating that man-woman after some fight. Now, I respect you as the Rainmaker of this house, but I can't be up in here with no malevolent spirits.

CELIA

Percival ain't no man-woman. He just is. And that better good enough for me.

DAY

Ain't there a colored doctor? Why you using them old slave potions--

CELIA

Them old slave potions is what kept you breathing through scarlet fever, measles---

DAY

Why it always got to come down to what you do for me? "Day don't know nothing! Day don't work! Day just sit on her good nature waiting to get took care of--

CELIA

Ain't no body say—

DAY

It's my job to watch this child and make sure she don't go the road we went. She can be some body wife and mother with standing in the community. But if every body know her mama gamble and work the roots... Ain't we got enough shadows and shame?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

CELIA

Ain't no shame in who I am! I do the best I can with what I got. I'm mighty sorry I shame you. But what you want from me?

DAY

Great Day in the morning! You shoulda been done ask my opinion! Miriam, gwan upstairs and get me that hot comb.

*Miriam exits. Day crosses to Celia and sets up her impromptu salon table.*

DAY (CONT'D)

You look tired-as the day is long. Let me touch up them edges. Cilo, let that flame catch a light, hear!

*Miriam re-enters with hot comb. Day wraps Celia's apron around her shoulders. Cilo and Miriam exit.*

CILO

Ven conmigo Miriam. Las gardenias estan alcanzando por la luz.

*Day heats the comb as she sings.*

DAY (COTTON EYED JOE)

Where do you come from? And where do you go?  
Where do you come from my Cotton-Eyed Joe?

CELIA

Oooooooh, I don't recall his name being Joe--

*Day parts and greases Celia hair as she sings.*

DAY

Well I come for to see you and I come for to say-

Your hair always been so baby soft, it don't need nothing, but a warm comb and it lay down like sweet cotton.

CELIA

You the only one know, how not to burn it out.

DAY

And I come for to show you my diamond ring-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

I do Miriam own 'fore every social just like I did youn when you was little. Even then, you was trying to run me.

*Day crosses to get hot comb, gives Celia a quick press.*

DAY (CONT'D)

If it hadn't been for  
If it hadn't a been for Old Cotton-Eyed Joe  
Well, I'd a been married a long time ago?

DAY (CONT'D)

I know you hustle to get us more. I'm reaching for that more, Sister—

CELIA

I know, but I can't talk out two sides of my mouth. I got to follow the gift and pay the bill man so you and Miriam can breathe easy.

DAY

I know, in Tampa, I do like you say. All she see is tea socials, knitting circles and whatnot. But, how I'm supposed to explain this to her? It's all out in the open. Can't we turn down the light?

CELIA

I can do that, but I can't stumble around in the dark. Take her out somewhere when I tend to my business, hear?

DAY

I can manage that. What if she do see some thing?

CELIA

Then I'll explain it to her simple-like. Truth always come out easy when it's simple.

DAY

Alright, Rainmaker.

CELIA

So, you remember my name when it serve?

DAY (COTTON EYED JOE)

Where do you come from? And where do you go?--

*Percival enters in pain and Beatriz crosses to him.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PERCIVAL

Celia, when you get a chance, I need you to take a look at the dressing.

*Cilo and Miriam enter from backyard with flowers.*

CELIA

What happened?

BEATRIZ

I can do it, Mi Celia--

CILO

Mi amor, let Mi Celia do her work. Ven conmigo a la comparsa. Come dancing with your father for a change.

BEATRIZ

Papa, I cannot go dancing and singing. Did you not hear me say I want to help Percival?

CILO

Go where the love is deep, hija. Do not wander in the shallow waters of indifference.

BEATRIZ

Would I be lying if I said the same thing to you, Papa?

CILO

Tranquilate hija. I am still your Papá.

BEATRIZ

And while I am still your daughter, I am also a woman now.

*She turns her back on her father and returns to Percival.*

CELIA

Beatriz, gone do what your Papa say. You ain't ready yet.

BEATRIZ

Never ready, never ready. I am ready for everything, but no one is ready for me.

PERCIVAL

The pain is wearing me thin.

*Celia uncovers the dressing.*

CELIA

That's cause it done gone septic. You put the poultice on each time like I show you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PERCIVAL

Yes, mam.

BEATRIZ

You didn't finish your song, Mi Celia,

CELIA

I know, but I thought my hands would remember what my mouth forgot. They ain't just songs, they convey power. They recipes for healing. Oh, Percival, I'm sorry. The spirits done turn they face from me.

*Celia exits. Beatriz crosses to Percival.*

BEATRIZ

Percival, let me help you--

PERCIVAL

No! Just stop, Beatriz! Stop, stop, stop! Please!

BEATRIZ

OK

PERCIVAL

OK?

BEATRIZ

OK.

*She turns to leave, he reaches for her. She removes his dressing, heals him. He lets her. Cilo watches them and storms out the front door slamming it shut behind him.*

*Lights fade.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

## ACT I, SCENE SIX

*Next Day. Little Miriam sits in the dining room with her books as Cilo helps with homework.*

CILO

Imagénate que tu eres una dama y una escritora—

LITTLE MIRIAM

Senor Cilo, I'm mostly a woman already and I have been writing since I could walk. I used to dream of going out into the world and having a grand adventure. But, Grandma Sylvia was already promised to Grandpa by the time she was my age. And Reverend Hilton says that raising a black man-child is the highest honor a woman can have.

CILO

Sí. Es un honor. But one of many. But first, you must see the world and write about the places you will leave changed in your wake.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Those are only story tales I write. I don't matter—

CILO

¿Como?

LITTLE MIRIAM

I mean, the stories don't matter. The only thing that matters are the things I have right now. Reverend Hilton says being a mother of great men is the greatest gift a woman can have.

CILO

Lo que exista y lo que haces son muy diferentes. Why you read books and speak of faraway places, Mi Vida? To see them! The way I float away from Cuba in a little boat. I never dream of a world large enough, a language deep enough to hold the Black ladies I meet in this new world. Las morenas of business and property who tell people what to do and the people listen as if their hearts would stop if they did not. He tenido que ver por mí mismo. Tu tendrás que ver para ti misma.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I can see all that I need to see right in Tampa. I will teach my baby boys to read and they can have adventures. I don't have to do it for my self.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED :

CILO

Pero Miriam, don't you know any brown ladies who have done this for themselves.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I don't know any brown ladies who went away. They never came back.

*Celia enters.*

CELIA

Now I know that homework best be finished 'fore we start playing house.

CILO

Mi Negra, we are taking a rest before we return to the heavy lifting of study. Would you like to break the day's pace por un momento con tu hija?

CELIA

Well, I got so much to do.

*Cilo pulls out a chair for Celia.*

CILO

Voy a empezar el espumita. Siéntese, Mi Negra.

*He crosses to kitchen leaving mother & daughter alone .  
They sit close to each other, but not close enough to touch.*

LITTLE MIRIAM

Mother dear, I have to figure all these numbers and I'm not as good with the numbers as I am with the words. They look like little worms all over the page that I can't catch.

CELIA

Well, they simple enough if you just treat them like they words. Look at them and put them all together so they say the one thing that make sense. You can hold on to them in a way that you can't hold onto words 'cause the numbers mean what they say. Words sometimes mean a lot of different things.

LITTLE MIRIAM

For true, Mother-Dear? I never thought of it that way.

CELIA

I'm glad if that make sense to you. When I was little, words never made sense to me, but I can always catch a number.

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

LITTLE MIRIAM

You catch numbers like you catch the chickens in Grandma Sylvia's yard! I was never good at catching anything until Reverend Hilton taught me the secret to the words.

CELIA

What he taught you?

LITTLE MIRIAM

That they just lonely. Just like people. And if you sit with them for a while and let them be, then they start to make sense to you.

CELIA

I can see that.

*A moment. Celia gets up from her chair, pulling a pearl-handled pistol from a thigh holster, a 22 from the small of her back.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Well, I ain't clean my peace in a week, and niggers gone be ready to fight when they lose they money come Friday. Cilo, you picked up that cleaning fluid for me?

CILO

No, but there are flowers and fruit para tu altar. When your altar is clean, the spirit is calm.

CELIA

What I need with a clean altar and a dirty gun? Miriam, get ready for dinner.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes, mam.

*Miriam exits.*

CELIA

I can't bring myself to hold her close. She so much smarter than I ever was. Folk love to be around long as you heal them, make them laugh, give them some money, but the minute you need: they gone. So I make sure I never need nothing from nobody. That's what I want for Miriam.

CILO

You are not a bank where she needs your deposits. She needs you to show her how to dream out loud, to love things into being.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CELIA

I ain't no dreamweaver. I'm just a gangsta who got lucky.

CILO

You make your self less than you are. And Miriam does the same. She writes stories about faraway places...los sueños pintado con la miel de Ochún. But, she dreams of being a church lady with a yard full of children. De donde viene este pequenez? How could she imagine so little when she comes from so much?

CELIA

So much of what? Me? If I hold her too long, I'll never be able to let her go and then she'll become just like me--

CILO

And what are you? When you sing, I see all the imperfect places in you and they are beautiful.

CELIA

What happen if I show my self and don't nobody care.? My self would just twist up and die from shame.

CILO

No! She will die from neglect. She will die from loneliness. When you hold your daughter, you hold yourself, Negra. Sing. We are listening.

*Celia crosses to the bar*

CELIA

Why your daughter sniffing behind Percival?

CILO

Because it is very difficult to make a woman do what she will not. Pero Percival, voy a hablar con el, hombre a hombre. Percival should leave and make his way in the world—

CELIA

Percival ain't going no where! That's my heart.

*Frustrated beyond belief.*

CILO

You tell him? You tell him your heart?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CELIA

You ain't got to tell no body when they close to your heart—they should feel it in they bones and if they don't, then it's best to get a move on.

*Bitter, sad, laughter.*

CILO

De veras?

## ACT II, SCENE ONE

Midday. Next day. The family is gathered doing chores.

DADDY BUSTER

Miss Miriam, let me see you Ring Shout.

They stomp Ring Shout with Little Miriam in the middle.  
Celia conducts, but does not sing.

DADDY BUSTER ((CONT'D))

Move, Daniel, move, Daniel, Move, Daniel, move, Daniel,  
Move, Daniel, move, Daniel, Move, Daniel, move, Daniel.

ALL (MOVE DANIEL)

Oh, Lord, pray, sinner, come, Oh, Lord, sinner gone to hell. Move, Daniel, move, Daniel,  
Move, Daniel, move, Daniel. Go the other way, Daniel,  
Go the other way, Daniel.

Rock, Daniel, rock, Daniel, Rock, Daniel, rock, Daniel. Shout, Daniel, shout, Daniel,  
Shout, Daniel, shout, Daniel.

*(add clave)* Oh, Lord, pray, sinner, come, Oh, Lord, sinner gone to hell. Move, Daniel,  
move, Daniel, Move, Daniel, move, Daniel. Go the other way, Daniel,  
Go the other way, Daniel.

DADDY BUSTER

Come on Miriam, Let me see your two left feet!

Miriam does the traditional stepping into the ring shout,  
but she does indeed have two left feet. Everyone falls out  
laughing.

DAY

That was something, wasn't it? Y'all so musical.

LITTLE MIRIAM

No, Aunt Day. We just hear the same song at the same time.

PERCIVAL

That 's family. Miriam, why don't you read us the paper?

Little Miriam dashes across the room grabbing the paper.  
As Daddy Buster exits to backyard..

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

BEATRIZ

Por favor, read the gossip column.

DAY

Gossip is not Christian--

PERCIVAL

It can usually be found on page three.

LITTLE MIRIAM

“Your Man-About-Town was at the no-to-rious White House holding ballroom dance classes--

DAY

What White House? I know he ain’t talking about Calvin Coolidge house--

PERCIVAL

No, dear lady. Good Bread Alley's White House has Black women so fair as to pass for white. And the "No White Men Allowed" policy allows Black men to work out those "mandingo" fantasies.

DAY

You talking about a house of ill-repute?

PERCIVAL

I’m talking about a profit-making business owned by a shrewd Black woman.

DAY

We ein Black. Noah cursed Blackness in the bible. We colored.

CELIA

Wasn’t nery a Geechie cursed ‘till we was dragged here on a ship to wait on some lost-minded people. Colored? Ain’t no body color me with no pencil. We Black. Every body trying to be every thing but. Our mother was the color of a hershey bar melting in the sun and she had he finest face I done seen in this lifetime. That’s why we crazy now: too busy running from every thing that make us special. Carry that colored foolishness out my house, hyear!

PERCIVAL

Now that we are clear that this is indeed, “The Black House”, Miss Miriam please enlighten us about “The White House.”

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM

"There was a Coloured damsel employed at the White house who was so light that if she crossed the Mason Dixon Line, Marlena Dietrich would be out of a job. Apparently, she was being courted by a fine Geechie gentleman in a smart suit and a fancy Ford. This Geechie slickster was very married to a woman residing in Good Bread Alley. But can you blame this fair damsel for picking someone else's fruit? I mean, a Geechie in a Ford is just a little bit of heaven's candy."

*Daddy Buster enters again with the tub of water. As he hears this, he drops the tub of water and everyone jumps to protect their clothes. Water covers the floor.*

DAY

Watch out! Buster, you got two left feet. Beatriz, hand me them cleaning rags behind the counter. Miriam, gone get the mop.

*Everyone jumps in to clean up. Buster is still desperately clinging to the bathtub. Cilo crosses in between Celia and Buster. Buster looks away as Cilo gently attempts to take the empty bathtub out of his hands. They speak nose to nose, no one else hears them.*

CILO

I have done my best to respect you, but your stepping out on Celia makes that impossible.

DADDY BUSTER

Shit is all over the floor now and I ain't got no napkin. Your move, Black man.

CILO

I will finish cleaning this. You must go and make the path smooth. Or I will.

*Cilo takes the tub from his hands. Buster crosses to Celia. Celia turns her back on him, lights a cigar. Buster sits.*

LITTLE MIRIAM

Do they live here?

PERCIVAL

Rolling stones never wander too far from home.

DAY

Hush, Child

*An uncomfortable quiet.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEATRIZ

Little Miriam, you want to see your doll now, her dress is finished?

*Miriam crosses to Cilo and Beatriz*

CILO

Ven aca, mi niña.

*He presents the doll in a yellow dress to Miriam.*

CILO (CONT'D)

Ella es la Orisha Ochún.

DAY

You finta start that San-tria mess?

PERCIVAL

She just finished The Iliad! White people go on about their Greek gods and goddesses. Why can't we go on about ours?

*El Coro hums Bima Ochún underneath the story.*

CILO

For many years Ochún was cast out,  
Because she is the defender of women and children  
who have been abused.  
She grew wise from wandering in poverty  
eating from the trash  
wearing the same white dress for so long  
washing it over and over again  
until it turned yellow.  
The yellow that is Ochún.

*To Celia*

She loves unconditionally,  
but not always wisely.  
She dances, sings, flirts.  
She eats life in one full swallow  
and then she weeps  
Because no one can love her enough  
and the world is not as beautiful  
as she tastes it to be.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (4)

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM

Ohhhhhh. She wear yellow just like you, Mother Dear. Can you teach me her song?

*Miriam runs to put the doll in her mothers hands. Her touch sends Celia to her knees.*

LITTLE MISS MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Mother-Dea!

CELIA

I can't teach you what I don't remember.

*Slow fade on Celia as she weeps dry tears. El Coro's mournful melody stumbles in the dark looking for the light.*

## ACT II, SCENE ONE

Sunset. Same day. El Coro is a troubador we hear on the street singing Veinte Años.

EL CORO Y BEATRIZ

Qué te importa que te ame  
Sí tú no me quieres ya.

Lights up on the dining room of Live & Let Live where Percival is being fitted for a dress. Beatriz hums and El Coro sings underneath this scene.

EL CORO Y BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

El amor que ya ha pasado  
no se debe recordar

PERCIVAL

My mother sang Veinte Años when she sewed. *(Beat)* Why did she return only to abandon me again?

*Singing she pins.*

BEATRIZ

Fui la ilusión de tu vida  
un día lejano ya.

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

When it is time for you to know, you will know. The longer you fight it, the longer it will elude you.

PERCIVAL

Like you, I keep banging on the doors of empty houses.

BEATRIZ

No, mi amor, I never go anywhere where there is no love.

*She hums.*

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

Hoy represento el pasado,  
no me puedo conformar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

PERCIVAL

The present is brutal. And the past is chaos.

BEATRIZ

!Carajo! Your mother had a problem. She couldn't raise her baby. So, she let a better woman do it—

PERCIVAL

Perhaps I was too broken for her to keep me--

BEATRIZ

Not all stories have the same ending and not all women have the same fears. Pero, if you expect less, how will you get more?

PERCIVAL

You overwhelm me. I like it.

BEATRIZ

What will your desire cost you, Percival?

PERCIVAL

I don't know.

*She hums adding pins to the fabric as she moves along Percival's body. . Every now and then the potential that he could get stuck with a pin rears its head*

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

I love the flesh and I love the power of being a man. When I touch a man, I am eating man-ness. With a woman, it is the chasing down and catching something soft. Her yielding that gives under my weight. It feels good, but different and I need them both.

BEATRIZ

You are greedy.

PERCIVAL

No. I am afraid of not being enough, not believing enough in the power of a love that makes you....stay. Just stay. Even if you are disappointed or confused.

BEATRIZ

Do you want me?

PERCIVAL

Yes.

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

BEATRIZ

Finalmente. If you must have a man, all that I ask is that you share with me how it was: what you wanted, how it felt. And that will not crack us apart because you come back to me when it is over.

PERCIVAL

You want me to tell you about tipping out with some man?

BEATRIZ

Yes, princess.

PERCIVAL

My love will hurt.

BEATRIZ

De puta madre, It's not like swimming from Cuba!

*She walks upstairs.*

PERCIVAL

Will you slow down so I can catch up?

BEATRIZ

No.

PERCIVAL

Good.

*As she sashays up the stairs. Percival gives chase, but is interrupted by a door bell. Daddy Buster creeps in.*

DADDY BUSTER

How you Princess Carlotta? Cel home?

PERCIVAL

She is upstairs, Buster.

DADDY BUSTER

That's quite an ensemble. You know you can wear a dress! Make a man wish for things he shouldn't.

PERCIVAL

That is what they tell me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DADDY BUSTER

How you do it all and keep a man? You do that everyday in every way, and it's beyond me how you hold it together.

PERCIVAL

I don't do anything. I simply am a man. A human being trying to do all that is right and let my word be my bond.

DADDY BUSTER

It ain't that simple. You got to prove it; even in a dress.

PERCIVAL

All you got to do is be, my good man. Just be.

*Daddy Buster offers him his flask. They drink, the doorbell rings and FG enters. FG ignores Percival.*

FG

Good evening, Buster. Is Cel around?

PERCIVAL

Evening, FG. Anything I can help you with?

FG

Buster, please let her know that I'm here.

BEATRIZ (OFF STAGE)

Percival? Where are you my love?

*Percival dashes up the stairs. Daddy Buster crosses bar.*

DADDY BUSTER

A mason jar for the road, Pastor?

FG

Not an entirely bad suggestion, Buster. Thank you kindly.

DADDY BUSTER

You want something from the lady of the house? Her favor don't come easy and you'll be waiting on the wind to say your name 'fore you gain her trust.

*As he slides the homebrew across the bar, Celia enters. Fully drunk, Daddy Buster pours a libation into Elegua's bowl behind the front door entreating him.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

Come on Legba, I need you to protect me from the storm to come. Gentle the storm.  
Gentle the storm.

*Buster exits swiftly. Celia enters.*

FG

Evening Cel. Our last discussion failed to move us forward, so I come with an open heart to begin anew.

*The room grows uncomfortably hot.*

FG (CONT'D)

Let's focus on the future, Miriam's in particular. I've always admired your fortitude. It has manifested in great financial success for you. And allowed you to provide Miriam with a stable home. But now the time to raise the bar is upon us. She can go far, but she needs finishing school and if college is to happen, well, we both know that cannot happen here.

CELIA

She gone go to Spelman. She might not be lighter than the brown paper bag, but she smart enough to send the competition running.

FG

Well, light skin is about family legacy and Miriam does not have that nor can it be purchased with ill-gotten wealth. However, a church scholarship; a recommendation from the Hiltons, as well as our Morehouse Legacy can change the colour of the game.

CELIA

And what's the going rate for light-skin these days?

FG

Cel, we are two steps from the master's door. Every time Miriam utters a line of poetry, they become lashes across the white man's back. The battle of the mind is a battle I can win. I cannot wage war with the Klan, but I can walk Miriam through the gates of Spelman College.

CELIA

FG, while you was reciting poetry, I was cutting Cilo down from my mango tree and holding Doc Griffin and the rest of them crackers at gun point, so that battle is Black history. Lord, what's all them crickets doing in my house again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FG

So you knew the stakes were this high and you continued to ignore the problem?

CELIA

The stakes always been this high, Black man! You ever seen me without my pistol? You ever seen me live on anybody's land other than my own? I am a force for good, as well as evil in the Alley. I hold the secrets to life and death, pleasure and pain. Who gone heal something happen to me? Who ca' provide an unlimited supply of liquid courage in the middle of prohibition. Nigger, I ain't never been that crazy.

FG

I will provide the means for Miriam to advance, the scholarship. You will back off of Dr. Griffin. I will run interference, but you will stop treating coloured people. Once you do that, Miriam will have the sky.

CELIA

And if I don't?

FG

They are coming to shut you down. Liquor, practicing medicine without a license. Choose your poison. But come Saturday, if that white man's waiting room is empty again, Live & Let Live won't be standing on Monday.

CELIA

I ain't scared of the Klan and I ain't never been scared of you.

*He crosses to door.*

FG

Winner take all, Cel. Only niggers and witches lose. Until I met you, I'd only read about them in books. Now I know exactly what they look like.

*He exits through the front door bumping into Cilo. Cilo steps aside to let him pass. Suddenly, we hear Beatriz' & Percivals screams of laughter from upstairs*

BEATRIZ

Mi Percival, ques haces mi amor?

PERCIVAL

You will be apprised of my activities shortly.

*Mad heated giggling.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

CILO

Beatriz, ven aca ahorrita!

Beatriz descends the stairs disshelved in a sad attempt at normalcy. Cilo calls up the stairs.

CILO (CONT'D)

Muchacho, a word!

We hear a window shut from upstairs.

CILO (CONT'D)

Percival, I will not ask again.

Percival innocently enters from the backyard

PERCIVAL

Señor Cilo, me llamo y estoy aqui. What do you want of me?

CILO

Más de lo que puedes dar.

PERCIVAL

You don't know how much I have to give.

CILO

Not enough to keep you still when the waters grow choppy and the outcome is unsure.

PERCIVAL

My word is my wealth. When and if I give it, I honor it.

CILO

It would make me very happy to teach you how to keep your word because there is no "if" when my daughter wants something. Even when that something is beneath her.

PERCIVAL

I am more than you have ever dreamed of being.

Cilo grabs Percival by the shirt collar and pushes him up against the backdoor.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (7)

CILO

Nothing about you convinces me that you are worthy of my daughter's heart. Once you realize that, you will leave this place because I did not carry her across the ocean only to be dragged behind your skirts.

*Cilo grabs his machete from behind the door and exits to the backyard where we hear him cutting up the garden with his machete. We hear lightening and a hard dry wind. Black out.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

## ACT II, SCENE TWO

*Morning. Next Day. Lights up on the pulpit of Big Bethel Baptist Church. Today it is Celia's plays piano at the foot of FG's pulpit. Little Miriam sings.*

LITTLE MIRIAM

Why should I feel discouraged?  
 Why should the shadows come?  
 Why should my heart feel lonely  
 And long for heaven and home?  
 When Jesus is my portion

DAY

Take your time now.

LITTLE MIRIAM

A constant friend is he.  
 His eye is on the Sparrow  
 And I know he watches over me  
 His eye is on the sparrow  
 And I know he watches me.

LITTLE MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I sing because I'm happy,  
 I sing because I'm free

DAY

Father, be good.

LITTLE MIRIAM

His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me.  
 Make the heavens hear your plea.  
 His eye is on the sparrow and I know  
 he watches me.

*As Miriam finishes, Celia notices that every phrase of the song has been given to FG. Celia & Miriam step down from the piano seat as lights up on FG's pulpit.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

FG

Our Graham sparrows have finally returned to God's safehouse. Sister Celia has found her precious rest at the keyboard. Sister Miriam has found her song. A song, a respite from the storms of Good Bread Alley. The book of Matthew : "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? ...ye are of more value than many sparrows." Because god's eye is on the sparrow at all times. He knows the story of your sick mother, your child's new shoes; he keeps it all on his roster. The good, the bad, the grateful and the spiteful. Matthew continues: "Fear them not: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed." Vigilant in his care of the righteous, Christ says: "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Remember that, my sparrows. God's sword will protect you as long as you protect God's house.

*Lights up on Celia, Day, Beatriz & Miriam on the steps of the church. Buster enters.*

DAY

That man was preaching from the bottom of his feet for true. Buster, I ain't never seen you in church.

DADDY BUSTER

Cel, why ain't you sing?

CELIA

My voice in that soft place and I forgot how to get there.

DADDY BUSTER

Your playing sound like something out a fairytale, Cel.

CELIA

I spent a lot time in fairytales lately.

DADDY BUSTER

I love you, Cel.

CELIA

Buster, I got too much on me, right now.

DADDY BUSTER

I figure this the best time, since you can't shoot me in God's house.

CELIA

You want to break me, but that ain't gone happen.

DADDY BUSTER

Ima do right by you, Cel. Believe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CELIA

Maybe. Time'll tell if I have to shoot you or love you. Time'll tell.

*Celia crosses to FG.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

FG, I want to talk to you--

FG

Miss Miriam, that was a stellar rendition. Celia, you weren't playing around on those ivories. God is good.

DAY

R'verend Hilton. You are the rock in the storm guiding us to safety.

FG

Yes, well the Lord works through me, Sister Day. So I am not worthy of such praise, but you, Miss Miriam exceeded all expectations—

CELIA

Whose expectations FG? You got something to tell me?

FG

Celia, I always tell you the truth. My heart is always in the right place.

CELIA

I'm not talking about where your heart been, FG—

DAY

Celia, catch yourself now, your tone. The R'verend--

CELIA

Close your mouth, Day. FG, I'll see you at Live & Let Live this evening--

FG

Looking forward to it. Good afternoon, ladies.

*FG exits.*

CELIA

Day, what you know about the Reverend and his sparrows?

*Beatriz briskly drags Little Miriam away.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAY

Cel. This the Lord's Day--

CELIA

Why was FG looking at my child like that?

DAY

Little Miriam gone be just fine. What you need to concern your self with is what's going on in your own house, not God's house. Your own child staying in a house a sin: fornicating, gambling, the devils brew. What lesson you think Miriam taking when she leave here? You can't keep your own man satisfied, so you got to mess with a man of God. Why don't you find out what that woman from the white house got, to make your man stay away from your door?

CELIA

What you chirping? Little church sparrow just chirping away saying a whole lot of nothing.

*Popping out her silver lighter, rubbing her thigh holster and lighting a cigar.*

DAY

Well, this sparrow ain't never been betrayed by her church home. That's so sad. Every body in the Alley know, but you? Woman living right under your nose, feeding your husband—Where he done gone now for Sunday dinner? (tilts her head to listen). Cricketts. So you can raise the dead, but you can't see the living?

CELIA

Where?

DAY

I gwine pack up Miriam things. At the end of this week we gwan back to Tampa, to a respectable, god-fearing home. I don't want my child----I don't want Miriam to see this life you done made.

CELIA

I said, where?

DAY

The only other free-standing house in Good Bread Alley. You can see it from your bedroom window, I wager. 'Least that's what I hear—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

*Celia holds up her hand to silence her and turns her back on her. She steps away and then goes still, she turns her head to the side and says to the wind, but for Day's ears.*

CELIA

It's not good to win at the expense of others. It hurt the world...

*As lights fade, Celia starts walking. We hear her drive in her Ford.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ACT II, SCENE THREE

*Mid-morning. Same day. Beatriz is fitting Miriam's cotillion dress.*

BEATRIZ

Turn, Mi Querida. We must find the side seam and let it out more. You grow so fast since our first fitting.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I feel like a grown-up lady already. When you wear your coming out dress, you get to wear a heel, right?

*Struggling to find enough room in the dress; she notices how tight the dress is over Miriam's mid-drift,*

BEATRIZ

And silk stockings. Aye, I need to add a new panel now. The dress is too tight over your belly the seam is tearing.

DAY

Why you rushing to get grown so? A woman's lot is a painful one.

BEATRIZ

Sí, Señora, pero there is glory in freedom. The freedom to choose. Mi Celia teach me about the herbs and how to run a good business so you answer to no one.

DAY

Celia know how to teach everybody else how to handle they affairs, but when it come to her own, she just as blind.

BEATRIZ

This dress does not seem to fit no more.

LITTLE MIRIAM

But cotillion is only two weeks away. I have to have a dress!

BEATRIZ

I can see if I can find an extra piece of lining to give you more room. We can fix it, Mi Amor, no te preocupes—

LITTLE MIRIAM

No, it's going to be too late!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

*She runs out of the room in despair.*

DAY

Lord, what done got into that child?

BEATRIZ

Sí, what has gotten into her, Miz Day? She is changing.

DAY

Well, she need her mother near by and attentive, not running hither, thither and you worrying spirits and mixing in men's business.

BEATRIZ

And then who would feed this family?

DAY

The lord will provide.

BEATRIZ

He has provided Mi Celia and you are the helpmeet in this family. Mi Celia works to the bone to make the ends meet and you are the other half taking care of the home and the girl-child. She depends on you pero, you question every way she has found to provide and you make her small in front of her daughter. If she were a man, you would not challenge her. You take her money, but you speak from the other side of your mouth.

*A moment.*

DAY

You know so much. You know how I give up my whole life to run behind Celia and her schemes? I had someone wont to marry me when I was a girl, just past Miriam age. A young pastor love me and ask for my hand. First Papa sick and then Mama fell from earth not too long after. Then, one week before my wedding, Celia come up pregnant and saddle me with a baby of shame. How could I leave? I give up all I have to keep this family together, and in return, I'm forever picking up Celia pieces. Celia got the gift, Celia make the money, Celia, Celia, Celia. What about what Day want?

BEATRIZ

We all make decisions, Miz Day. We sacrifice or we do not, but once the decision is made, we should honor our choice. You move forward and then step back and make it Mi Celia's fault.

( CONTINUED )



CONTINUED: (2)

DAY

You don't know me. You don't know where I been and what I hope for. So don't come in here, picking up the scraps of my life and try and paint a picture cause you ain't got enough paint to finish.

BEATRIZ

I ask you again. What has gotten into Little Miriam? Why her dress no fit?

DAY

'Cause she too damn grown for it!

*Day exits. Beatriz makes coffee. Miriam enters.*

BEATRIZ

I knew a cafe con leche would get you downstairs.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I apologize, Miss Beatriz. I just want to walk the cotillion all in white so I can be a fully grown-up woman. Reverend Hilton says that I am almost a woman.

*Beatriz slides the coffee to Miriam and sits.*

LITTLE MIRIAM (CONT'D)

You made me a coffee just like Mother-Dear....how she like it.

BEATRIZ

You are a grown up lady, now. What else did Reverend Hilton say?

LITTLE MIRIAM

He say, that all fine girls have a cotillion where they come-out into the world and become a lady. Then the men know they can come calling for marriage. Reverend Hilton say you can't be married without coming out cause you ain't a woman 'til then.

BEATRIZ

This cotillion. This make you a woman, that's what he say?

LITTLE MIRIAM

Yes. Then, you are worthy and a man can choose you to court.

BEATRIZ

So you are worth nothing until the man chooses you? Pero, what about the school you want to go to become a woman of letters?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LITTLE MIRIAM

Well, I don't need all that if I got a husband and I already know who I'm gone marry. But it's a special secret and if you tell, it might not come true.

BEATRIZ

It is your secret, Miriam. You hold it or give it away as you choose. Pero, once you give it to the air, it goes and makes truth everywhere.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I am going to marry Reverend Hilton, soon as I come out at cotillion. That's why my dress has to be right, so everybody can know that I'm a woman.

BEATRIZ

Reverend Hilton tell you he will marry you?

LITTLE MIRIAM

That is why my dress got to be ready fast fast.

BEATRIZ

Miriam, he has a wife and children in Tampa. You know this.

LITTLE MIRIAM

They will go away after we are married. He said that we will start something new. So I never have to be alone or work by myself like Mother-Dear to take care of everybody. He say I'm his sparrow. So see, everything gone be just fine. I just got to have my white dress ready.

*Beatriz nods and tears out the seam of the dress, cutting a much larger piece of fabric to widen the dress. El Coro sighs in pain as the lights dim.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

## ACT II, SCENE FOUR

*Later. Same day. Percival & Cilo talk quietly at a table pretending to play dominos.*

PERCIVAL

Well, I guess this has been a long time in the wind.

*Silence.*

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

I always thought I was meant to be a lone soul. But instead I find that I was just an afraid soul. Your Beatriz taught me that...the hardest way imaginable.

*Percival's uncomfortable chuckle. Silence.*

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

She cut a deal with me over a damn dress. And I thought this is a magical creature. Fire and water all mixed up with a fearless joy. She said I could do what I want as long as I tell her about it. Where do they make women like that?

*Silence.*

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

I love her, Cilo. I was afraid of it at first, but then, I loved her. (Beat) For Gods sake, Cilo. Meet me halfway, man. I'm trying to ask your permission to court your daughter.

CILO

I am waiting for you to say something that is unknown to me. Something that will keep my machete behind the front door instead of in my lap facing you.

*A moment.*

PERCIVAL

I watched her eyes as I told her things I have never shared with another living soul. The stillness of her, the open heart, the clear seeing that does not judge. Beatriz shook the wind through my branches and made everything bright and new and brave. I love Beatriz so much, it made me stop wanting to tip out. I wanted no other women and no other men once I found her. I want the fire and the stillness that is Beatriz. I want the opportunity to show you that I am worthy of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

CILO

When I see you with my daughter, you make her heart sing. Her love is tough, but also sweet. She learn the English to make her way in a strange place as she weave magic into her life. So when she say to me, "I love this man. He wears a dress, Papá, pero I love him." I say, "Okay." Even Chango had to wear a dress to escape his enemies. This thing is not new. I come from a magic place, Cuba, where daughters are cherished and men find their manhood at the feet of their women. Where the man has a wife, a girlfriend y a veces, a boyfriend.

PERCIVAL

Yes, Sir. I know that I am not new-- Sir.

CILO

That is why we give the sweet boys difficulty. Why you have to do that, when you can have all three, pero we need the family to make more boys, tu sabes? No es personal, simplemente práctico.

PERCIVAL

I see. So....

CILO

Sí ?

PERCIVAL

I am simply trying to establish how well these peace talks are going.

*Pause.*

CILO

I will not cut you today. That is the best I can do for now. Tomorrow is another day.

PERCIVAL

But all I have is today.

CILO

Ah, no mi amigo. Tu tienes todo: Today, tomorrow, una eternidad. Por favor. Do not fuck yourself....

*Lights down.*

## ACT II, SCENE FIVE

*Evening. Same day. The entire family is preparing for the dinner rush. Cilo is showing Percival how to make pastelitos de guayaba y queso.*

BEATRIZ

What is happening here?

CILO

De que habla, mi Vida?

BEATRIZ

What are you doing?

PERCIVAL

We are baking. Yes! That is what we are doing.

BEATRIZ

Where are the pasteles--

*Percival hands her a box of pastelitos*

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

Te adoro, Papa.

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

I love you, Percival. I love you.

*They kiss. Celia enters, no one has seen her since church.*

CELIA

Miriam, gone upstairs and study.

LITTLE MIRIAM

But I have my dress fitting—

*Miriam turns a little green and runs to the back yard to throw up.*

CELIA

What that child ate she throwing up like that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

DAY

She had fish yesterday and it probably wasn't no good.

BEATRIZ

She have fish every morning this week, Miz Day?

CELIA

How come ain't nobody told me the child been sick all week?

DAY

Well, Cel ---maybe you should pay more attention to your child 'stead of waiting for the local paper to tell you what's going on—

*Miriam returns slowly and sets table.. Daddy Buster enters from the backyard with mason jars.*

CELIA

Beatriz, turn off that flame, we closing early. Miriam, gone upstairs and lie down, you sick.

LITTLE MIRIAM

I'm okay, Mother-Dear. I can help.

BEATRIZ

But Miss Celia, we hardly even get the doors open and Sunday is the busiest—

CELIA

I said we closing early!

DADDY BUSTER

Cel, we got all this home brew---

CELIA

You know, I heard me a funny story this evening and it was so good, I like to crack my side. I took me a little drive to the bank man in Deland to check my bank roster. And when I look at it, I see a thousand dollar shortage. So I ask the bank man, what happened? He laughed, "Celia Rainmaker Graham, you know your husband made a withdrawal for his new business venture. 'Cause he showed me your signature signing it over to him."

*Celia sweeps across Buster's feet.*

CILO

Mi Negra, when you sweep a man's feet you curse him!

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

CELIA

Oh. I ain't curse nobody. Yet.

DADDY BUSTER

Now Celia, I was gone surprise you, but you done spoilt my surprise. I made an investment and I knew it was risky--

CELIA

Then I took me another Sunday drive, to the other side of Good Bread Alley looking for a free standing house and when I found it, I walk up on that porch and rattle the screen door.

*Celia crosses up behind bar, returns with a gasoline can. As she crosses towards front door, she sprinkles gasoloin on Buster's feet, legs and groin. Daddy Buster jumps up from the stool.*

DADDY BUSTER

WHAT THE FUCK WRONG WITH YOU?

DAY

Now Celia, you don't want to do this in front of your girl-child

*Celia ignores Day, crosses back to Buster with her gun out.*

CELIA

Now I want you to be still while I finish telling you my little story. A little child creep up to the door crying and I look down into Daddy Buster's three-year-old face looking back at me. But this face white as the day is long.

*Celia crosses to the bar looking for something, deliberately placing the gun on the countertop with the barrel facing Buster just out of his reach.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Let's see just how bad you is, Buster. Where was I? Oh, then a black woman's voice come to the screen door asking can I help you? And I think I done seen a ghost cause she white in the face, but she sound black through and through. She look at me and I look at her. And we know all we need to know.

DADDY BUSTER

Now Celia--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CELIA

So I turn 'round and cuss myself for wasting the gas to drive round there. 'Cause my husband bought this high yellow hussy a house with my hard-earned money, a five minute walk from my doorstep,

*She lifts her hands above counter and we see she has a tinderbox of matches.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Motherfuck. I want to light you up from bottom to top, but I done got all this gasoline on my hands, so I can't light a match without burning my god damn self.

*Buster dashes for the door. Celia follows, gun in-hand fires a shot, misses. Goes into her firing stance again, gets him in her sight. Then realizes the whole family is watching. And for the first time in her life, stops dead in her tracks.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Ain't that a bitch!

*Lights out.*

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (4)

## ACT II, SCENE SIX

*Later that night. 3AM. Daddy Buster, drunk-as-a-skunk, sings Blue Skies outside Live & Let Live. His version is a sad revelation, a bit of moonlight on a stormy night. He is the Blues.*

DADDY BUSTER

Blue skies  
Smiling at me  
Nothing but blue skies  
Do I see

Come on now Cel. Open the door. *I loves me some Celia Grace Graham.* You remember how I brought you a dress from the corner store? *That blue was something out a dream.*

Bluebirds  
Singing a song  
Nothing but bluebirds  
All day long

Never saw the sun shining so bright  
Never saw things going so right  
Noticing the days hurrying by  
When you're in love, my how they fly

Blue days  
All of them gone  
Nothing but blue skies  
From now on

You remember that. How we run off and it was gone be me and you and the little one always. Remember that? I never woulda left you, heart of mine. You was always the one, always with a strong word of love for me. I won't amount to much without you.

*Celia crosses to her window and listens.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

DADDY BUSTER

True, that woman give me a son and I can't ignore that. That don't mean there can't be no us. You got so much on you, I didn't want to burden you. I was going to return that money soon as the masonry work come through. You know that...I just...I just want some thing of my own, some one to need me. That don't mean I don't love you. I know you hear me. Damn near all the Alley done heard me, don't that count for nothing?

CELIA

Hush.

DADDY BUSTER

All I ever wanted was you.

*They sit in quiet for a long while. Celia crosses to stand in the doorway. El Coro picks up Daddy's Buster song.*

CELIA

That dress tore up in the wash I wore it so much. We ain't have a pot to piss in or a place to dry the mess.

DADDY BUSTER

Show was hard when we was on the move. But we leaned on each other and made a dime together. Remember that card game where you said you could feel the man was lying 'cause you could see his hand in your mind's eye? 'Cause of you, I won us enough money for that little house in Okeechobee. Little Miriam just start wobbling around and she love that little back yard. We made that happen, Cel.

CELIA

But then life come marching in and the rent man came a calling. We couldn't go on that little bit of money forever. Something had to give.

DADDY BUSTER

Yes, I know that and I was working on it, but you jump ahead without asking me what I think. You sold your mama jewelry and bought this place in the blink of an eye. I wouldn't stopped you, but I wanted to weigh in. But once the Celia decision-making start, ain't no stopping that. You act faster than I can speak and you left me behind.

CELIA

So now it's my fault you stepped out on me and stole from me?

DADDY BUSTER

Now Cel. You know I ain't say that. I ain't mean to get that woman with child. I was lonely and she was looking for a way out of that life.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

You know them kind of women only get pregnant when they want to. They come see you to stop that from happening. This woman cast her net and I got caught—

CELIA

You wouldn't got caught if you wasn't fishing.

DADDY BUSTER

I love you. I'm trying to be enough for you.

CELIA

Love don't step out and blame somebody else.

DADDY BUSTER

Love bears all things, believes all things--

CELIA

It show do. Biggest, blackest, strongest man I knew was my everything. I love my Daddy like he ice water in the desert. Wasn't nothing could separate us. Wasn't nothing could stop him from building chandeliers from sand and fairytales castles from milk crates. He taught me how to dream my own way in the world. But when that cancer took hold of him, I thought my love would be enuf to see him through. I went to all the white peoples he did business with, told them the white hospital won't take my Daddy. And if they send him to the insane asylum where they send all the sick black people, he won't last a minute. All them fine white people turn they back on my love. I walk up the hill to that asylum every afternoon to feed my Daddy enough love to keep breathing. I'd stand in that doorway, and read my homework to him cause I was too small to be up in there. His swollen eyes look at me 'til he say, "Don't bring that child in here to breathe all this sadness." My Daddy died from sadness just like my brother died from Blackness. Love wasn't enough 'cause real life push it down into the ground. Love run out quick and you can't eat it and it can't protect you. Taking care of your self and not needing any body – that what sustain you.

DADDY BUSTER

Do it Cel? 'Cause it look like you starving to death from not needing no body.

CELIA

Buster, I love you, but it wasn't enough. I love my Daddy, it wasn't enough. I love my brother and it sho wasn't enough. I can't cry over no more black men that my love can't save.

*Cilo limps up to the door, he is injured and blood is everywhere. Daddy Buster runs to help him.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CILO

Apurrate, appurate. Cierren la puerta. Ya. They come. They come for us.

DADDY BUSTER

Who, man?

CILO

The Knight Riders give us one day to get out of Good Bread Alley or we are dead.

Quick fade to black as we hear thunder and the sky glows with lightening, but still there is no rain.

## ACT II, SCENE SEVEN

*Super Title*

*Two days before the Great Miami Hurricane. Same Day. Candles are lit and Celia is dressing Cilo's wounds and Miriam helps. The family is dressed and on alert. Percival is packing food while Beatriz packs clothing. Day paces. Buster is boarding up windows.*

CELIA

Some broken ribs, but I think I got everything.

CILO

Tenemos que preparar a salir. We cannot remain here, Negra.

CELIA

Yall can gone upstate. I can't leave my business, my home. How we gone eat?

CILO

You start again. You come to Cuba---

DAY

Man, what you talking 'bout? We from America. Celia, them Knight Riders want something from you and you need to give it to them.

DADDY BUSTER

Generally, Knight Riders want black people dead.

CELIA

I know what they want.

DADDY BUSTER

Cel, you know what this about and you ain't told us? You know they like to burn us out and ask questions later.

CELIA

FG told me my healing black people is messing with the white man's business.

DADDY BUSTER

How that "Adam-Clayton-Powell-looking-motherfucker" know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

DAY

That ain't your business. You mean to tell me you letting these roots get us killed up in here when you coulda just done what FG said? I know that's not what you standing here telling me. That you brought this danger on us, on your girl-child---

CELIA

Day, why don't you tell me about my girl-child.

*Little Miriam goes still.*

CELIA (CONT'D)

Why don't you tell me what kind of danger she really in?

DAY

What I mean is that we two steps ahead of the problem, if R'vrend Hilton already know and Cilo's wounds ain't mortal, it mean they just sending a warning. We can call the R'vrend--

CELIA

I don't want to call the R'vrend, Day. I want you to answer my question.

DAY

This is not the time—

CELIA

When is the time to tell me my child been tampered with? When is the time to tell me that I trust you to protect her like she gold and you fell down on the job? When is the time, I give you my heart and you throw it in the street like so much trash? I work behind that counter selling dinners 'til I like to drop. Mixing potions, washing clothes, cleaning rooms, cooking whatever it take to make the ends meet and send you something to wrap my child in safety. I ain't never ask for nothing, never ask you to get a job. Your only job is to take the money, keep her safe, buy her books and go to church! That's all you got to do. And you can't even do that. You let them church people get at her. You believe everything come out they mouth and you leave my child there alone. I want to hear from your mouth who got at my child, Day?

DAY

Celia, the church protect us. FG keep the Klan from stealing our first crop and our last. He talk them Knight Riders down so they don't come through Colored Town raping, killing and burning. The church is the last hope for our people, we protect the R'vrend and the R'vrend protect us--

CELIA

But who gone protect our girls from the god damn Reverend? We cursed.

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

Cilo, Beatriz and El Coro start a low, painful wailing.  
The sky falls just a little. The sea roars.

BEATRIZ

Mi Celia. Never bring that down. Never.

CILO

Words have power, Mi Negra. If you say it, you make it so.

DADDY BUSTER

Oh, good god, Day, please say it ain't so, please.

CELIA

Day let FG...Miriam, did FG touch you?

LITTLE MIRIAM

He love me, Mama. He is the greatest colored man in the world and he want to marry me and make me his wife. People listen to him and he always make everything all right. He got the Lord's ear. So I'm blessed, Mother Dear. Don't worry about me, I'm a child of God and Reverend Hilton gone take care of me.

CELIA

I can't breathe...all the air done left the room.

DADDY BUSTER

Miriam, gone to your room and wait there while grown folks is talking.

CELIA

Naw. You stay right there, Miriam. You making decisions for your life that I ain't know nothing 'bout. So you grown now.

Celia looks at Cilo. Then crosses to Miriam and take her hand. It hurts. She starts trembling, but she does not let go; it does not go easy.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Baby-bird--oh...it hurts....

EL CORO

*Shhhhhh.....stay...stay....*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LITTLE MIRIAM

Mother-Dear. It hurts to touch you. That's my fault. You went away cause I made you ashamed, so I fixed it. I will have a good husband and make you proud of me. That's all I wanted and FG is the smartest man in town. I wanted to make you proud of me so you would come back and not be so ashamed that you send me away again.

*Cilo whispers love. Celia does not let go, though it is a struggle.*

CILO

Hold, breathe ...hold...the pain will pass...the fear will die on the wind...ache'

CELIA

Baby-bird. You are my bright light. I ain't never done nothing right 'cept you. You smarter than I ever could imagine. You make my time on this earth worth living 'cause you the best thing I ever done. I didn't send you away 'cause I was shame of you. I was 'shame of me. 'Shame I couldn't do it right. 'Shame I would mess you up. 'Shame that you would see your mama wasn't good enough. So I protected you and sent you to a world of books and lace doilies on tabletops, not like the dust of Good Bread Alley. I wanted you to have more.

LITTLE MIRIAM

Mother-Dear. You are the most-est lady I ever met. You know how to do everything right. That's how I know to be better. I want to be with you. That's all I ever wanted.

CELIA

Sweet baby, that's where you should have been all along...with me.

*She holds Miriam close, it hurts. But it's right. She looks at Day.*

DAY

Now Celia. FG is a man of God. Now Miriam 'bout the same age our Mama was when she carry you—

CELIA

Mama was a slave, Miriam is free. She only twelve years old, twelve! She was supposed to be protected. Wewas supposed to give her a childhood so she could do better. Not repeat our mistakes. Baby-Bird, you know FG married —

LITTLE MIRIAM

But he said, in the bible men of god had more than one wife —

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (4)

CELIA

Baby Bird, that man ain't gone marry you. That's what men do—

DADDY BUSTER

Not all men.

CILO

But some weak men.

CELIA

Some men take what they should not have, what they don't deserve 'cause some women is so busy protecting a "Man of God" that they forgot how to protect they own.

LITTLE MIRIAM

No. But he said I was his sparrow...he said....*(singing) I know he watches me...*

*She runs up the stairs.*

BEATRIZ

No te preocupes, I will go love on her now.

*Beatriz rushes after Little Miriam.*

DAY

Cel—we can fix this. You getting all up in arms, but we can fix this. FG will set aside a little something each month for Little Miriam and we can send her to Philly to stay with Cousin Sadie 'til the baby born—

CELIA

Sweet, baby Jesus! You done planned it all out, sold her up the river! You knew. You ain't have the courage to even tell me the truth. You sold my child.

DADDY BUSTER

Cel, I know you like to hold it all, but let me handle this. I can talk to FG man to man.

CELIA

Buster, he ain't a man. He a parasite. An eater of children. He swallow up all the good and spit you out like a man do--

DADDY BUSTER

Look at me, Cel. Come back from the dark place. We all here in front of you, loving on you Cel. I know I done wrong, but we family. Just tell me what you want me to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CELIA

Buster, I love you since I could breathe. I couldn't see my self 'till I see you. I cannot imagine what living in your absence would be like. But our hearts hold a world of reservation and regret---

DADDY BUSTER

That love just can't fix.

CELIA

You got a household where you needed now.

DADDY BUSTER

Can I hold you?

Celia is spent. All the bluster is gone, there is nothing left, but a gentle breeze. She reaches for him, he slowly wraps her in all his strength and his love for a long while.

CELIA

You should gone and see 'bout yours while I see 'bout mine. We both been neglectful.

DADDY BUSTER

Celia, you just take all my breath away.

He walks to the door, turns around to look at Live & Let Live, the family and then at Celia

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

I don't say goodbye, I don't think I even know how to say that to you...to our life...to our once was.

Daddy Buster puts his hat on. Looks at Celia. Looks at the wide expanse of blue sky through the open door. Takes out his silver flask, pours a libation into Eleguá's bowl and leaves his flask next to the bowl.

DADDY BUSTER (CONT'D)

I'm leaving the door open because if you ever need me, I'll crack open the heavens with my bare hands. I'll snatch up some of that lightening and give you all the magic you need.

A moment. Celia crosses sweeping the floor. She gets to Day's feet and pauses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

CELIA

Day, gwan now and get packed.

DAY

Cel? We sisters, Cel. You all the family I got in the world. You can't push me out.

CELIA

You put my baby up on the auction block.

DAY

No, Celia. All I ever did, I did for you, for us, for Mama, for Papa. I give up my life so we could have a life. I did the best I could with what I had...I gave my all.

CELIA

Naw. When a body give they all, they give 'til their last breath. You still breathing. So we done. Percival, soon as Day is packed, kindly take her to the train station.

*Celia turns her back on her and sweeps*

DAY

Cel. Now, Celia. It's gone be alright. It's gone be alright. Cilo, tell her! Tell her, Percival. I'll make it all right. Tell her! Don't leave me out. Please, don't leave me out on my lonesome. Please.

*Day is left alone as each member of the family gives her their backs as they return to their chores. Lights fade as El Coro brings the waters back to the shore.*

## ACT II, SCENE SEVEN

*Midmorning. Same Day. The birds are chirping and the sun is bright. Beatriz and Percival make coffee humming Veinte Anos. They kiss. FG enters.*

FG

Good morning.

*They ignore him as Celia enters from her altar room in a radiant yellow ball gown, feet bare, sipping a strong coffee, smoking a cigar with a newly shaved bald head. Celia sits directly across from him feet planted on the floor, regal.*

FG (CONT'D)

A woman's hair is her glory. How you gone waltz without your dancing shoes?

*Silence.*

CELIA

They beat Cilo until they punctured his ribs. If he hadn't crawled here, he would have bled to death. But they made sure he lived so he could pass on they warning.

FG

I did not know. You know I would never condone violence. I am a man of God trying to keep the peace. This changes things.

CELIA

Do it? Do it change my baby girl's life? Do I give her some potion to kill the shame you left in her belly? Do it change that? Do I leave my peoples to a white doctor? We did that with my Daddy and I believe you did his eulogy. So we see how that went.

FG

I think it would be better for everyone if we didn't handle our business in the street.

CELIA

What broke inside you? What you want with a little girl?

FG

Miriam is different. She is a woman--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

CELIA

She is a baby. My baby.

FG

Are you positive that she is with child?

CELIA

As sure as the day is long.

*FG collapses into a chair.*

FG

Miriam is just like you, loaded with that Graham courage. Brimming with promise and dreams... words like stories falling from her mouth. I wanted some of that magic to take me away from the truth of my life. I wanted to eat some of the fairy dust she was spreading... To hold it in my hands, if only for an hour. It was so much more than lust. It was a clinging to something fresh and new... to give me a reason to keep fighting... to keep breathing. I didn't mean for it to become what it did.

CELIA

You told her you would marry her?

FG

And why not? Maybe one day... my life is changing. I'm moving my church down here and my wife and I have an arrangement where she'll be going to her family in Atlanta. I figured after Miriam finished teacher's college, she would come back here and there would be time for things to settle down and I would always support her. I figure in time, there would be a new life... I just didn't –

CELIA

What you think was gone happen? You rape a twelve year old child, she ain't gone get pregnant?

FG

I love her. I wasn't thinking. I was loving her. I would never hurt her. I am always going to take care of her.

CELIA

You tell the Doc Griffin and his sheets to back off of me and mine. I will send those I cannot treat Griffin, but the rest I will treat with no interference. You will provide Miriam and my grandbaby a monthly allowance. Long as you breathing, you will never lay eyes on Miriam or I will take that light-skinned baby to every church function for the whole world to see--

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

FG

How that is of use to either of us, Celia? I know Griffin will not accept half of what is required. They mean to make all the money there is to be made in Good Bread Alley not share the takings with a "Colored Witchdoctor". Now, I will set Miriam up at school away from here after the baby is born and the baby can be raised by a nice church going family in Tampa--

CELIA

Get out!

FG

If I walk out that door, you are completely and irrevocably on your own. I will come back for Miriam before sunset. Have her packed and ready.

CELIA

You cross that doorstep and I'll bring down the heavens on your head.

FG

And here I thought you were a woman... a force to be reckoned with. You are still a little barefoot, ignorant, Geechie girl spouting fairytales. They are coming Celia and you better have more than fairy dust to meet them. Have Miriam packed and ready at sunset.

*He exits. Celia grabs her stomach, wails and falls to the floor. Cilo takes a handkerchief, dips it in Florida water and wipes her face. Then her arms, her hands and her feet. She lets him.*

CELIA

What you still doing here?

CILO

Where you are is where I am. Where you fall is where I lie. I am here.

*He kisses her, then holds her. As, lights fade, we hear distant thunder and the waves slapping the shore.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

## ACT II, SCENE SEVEN

Midnight. Next Day. The windows are boarded up in preparation for a siege. The house is alive with yellow candles. The family is dressed for a ritual ceremony. They each engage in tasks sacred and required of their orisha. Celia finds Daddy Buster's flask, smiles and pours an offering to Elegúa.

PERCIVAL

Cel, the upstairs is all boarded up. I brought in the still from the back yard and sealed up the back of the house.

CELIA

Good. Where Miriam?

BEATRIZ

She was sleeping.

CELIA

Wake her up and get her dressed.

CILO

Estas lista, Mi Cielo?

CELIA

That mean my heaven, don't it?

CILO

Sí, Mi Cielo.

CELIA

I'm starting to remember my dreams. But it ain't coming easy.

A fierce banging on the front door. Percival retrieves a baseball bat from behind the bar. Beatriz grabs a knife as Cilo sits resting a machete across his knees. Celia pulls out her pistol. The banging stops and we hear the Knight riders driving through the Alley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED :

PERCIVAL

The Knight Riders are clearing out Good Bread Alley. They are going to ride up in here and run down our women and children like...

CELIA

Like.... Rosewood?

CILO

No. We are here and this is where we will stay! Because you can change all of this. Mi Cielo, sueña. Dream us another dream.

CELIA

There ain't shit I can do.

BEATRIZ

Tu sabes, Mi Celia. Just remember your song.

*Beatriz sings Veinte Anos and Percival echoes her as they place sawed off shotguns in windows. Celia crosses to Cilo*

CILO

Mi Negra, you once sang the songs of the ancestors. They are angry that you remember this white god and not the ones that look like you.

PERCIVAL

Go still and let the cup fill up.

CELIA

They ain't nothing but slave songs. They sang them and they still got sold.

CILO

How you know that? Because we return again and again to tell our story.

BEATRIZ

Elegúa stood at the crossroads protecting the family, destroying all who threatened them.

*Beatriz sings Bima Ochun*

PERCIVAL

Ochoosi let loose one thousand arrows against the enemy to protect his family

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

Percival sings Drume Negrita full voice. His remembering brings the magic of his Orisha, Ochoosi.

MIRIAM

Oya's proud wind gave them a sky full of courage

Miriam sings Eye on the Sparrow and brings the magical winds of Oya, her Orisha.

CILO

Chango gave them the fire that strikes with lightening.

*Cilo sings Que Viva Chango bringing Chango's magic*

BEATRIZ

Yemaya sent the oceans crashing against the shoreline

ALL

Ochún danced turning shackles into adornment

*A gentle drumming as El Coro begins Bima Ochún*

BEATRIZ

Ochún danced to teach them to lift their faces to the sky

*El Coro brings the waters.*

CILO

Ochún danced to keep them from reaching for the shark in the water.

She danced until the rage grew soft

She danced for a

love stronger than death.

A love that washed over them

Splashing across the decks of ships into the faces of new born babies

Teaching them to weave their pain into light.

BEATRIZ

Just like Ochún the peacock flying the prayers of a dying world to God.

As she dashed past the sun towards heaven,

her hair singed from her head,

delivering prayers to Olodumare

Bald,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEATRIZ (CONT'D)

Broken,  
But glorious.

PERCIVAL

Sing Ochún's song. She will hear you, she will answer the prayers of your people.

CILO

You must remember your love. Your love is your magic and we need your magic to finish this song.

CILO (CONT'D)

Miriam, bring your butterflies. Set them in the circle. Lend your mother Oya's wind so she can remember.

*Miriam enters the circle. Wraps her arms around her mother and Celia holds on.*

MIRIAM

I love you, Mommy.

CELIA

I love you, Miriam. You, my everything good.

CILO

Recuerda, Negra...Cierra los ojos y recuerda ...Love and remember.

*El Coro begins the call to Chango, the god of thunder as the drums take over.*

KNIGHT RIDER I

Come out with your hands up.

KNIGHT RIDER II (DOC GRIFFIN)

If we have to come in and get you Celia,  
we're coming with the rope.

KNIGHT RIDER III

One for you, witch and one that little girl.

*The Sheriff and the Knight Riders have arrived en masse.  
FG bangs on the back door.*

FG

Celia, send Miriam out the back with her things! I pulled the car around.

CELIA

A love so strong it can call down the heavens.... until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Amos 5:24  
 CILO

Celia!  
 FG

*He is cut off by gunfire.*

FG's shot. He's down.  
 PERCIVAL

CELIA  
 Miriam, if we open that door, they coming in here. But if you want me to open it, I will.

MIRIAM  
 I'm alright, Mommy. He's gone. This is my family now. I'm ready.

CILO  
 No more guns. No more fury. Sing, Celia, Sing! Llama a Ochún.

*El Coro brings percussion, wind, rain, prayers.*

CILO (CONT'D)  
 Canta, Negra, Canta!

BEATRIZ  
 Love your dance

PERCIVAL  
 Love your song

MIRIAM  
 I'll help you Mommy

*As the drums call Chango, we see the shadow of a  
 burning cross in Celia's front yard.*

CELIA  
 Sweet Father, they gone burn us out!

CILO  
 Canta, Mi Cielo!....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

El Coro sings. More gunfire and then, the roof of Live & Let Live bursts into flames. Suddenly all grows absolutely quiet. No singing, no drums. And then Celia releases a heavenly call. She hits a discordant note, but this note holds power that calls across the fresh waters to Ochún.

CELIA

Oba Ibo Sí Aré O  
Oba Ibo Sí Aré O  
Aré Aré O

ALL

Oba Ibo Sí Aré O  
Oba Ibo Sí Aré O

EL CORO

Euramal Ibo, erao  
Oba Koso, iru awa aye

They sing from the balls of their feet. And then they dance a song that is wind, rain, sea, angry gods, brown babies taking their first steps on rich West African soil. It is our beginnings, proud, unapologetically human; made where the cradle of humanity began.

*This dance mirrors the heartbeat and sings our heart's desire. It is an old song or at least it feels as if it has been riding the waves of the transatlantic passage at new moons and in times of great peril as Ochún's children ran behind Sojourner looking forward and never looking back. As el Coro sings, this family makes new answers. They are ones the soul's feet know by heart; but, the message has gotten tangled in the daily wear & tear of struggle and peril. The family chants the refrain calling on Changó and Oya to bring the thunder, the lightening and the wind. Ochún answers with fresh waters and Yemaya stirs the sea bringing the waves to shore. Celia guides Miriam feet until they are moving as one, feet tapping a message to the Orishas: "See we have not forgotten." As the elekes make a joyous noise, the song bursts from Celia as if it's too big for her little body.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

As Celia slowly remembers the phrases, she remembers all the lost love for her child. The way a slave loves her girl-child, afraid to show concern for fear of her being taken away, but Celia decides to break the cycle. As the two sing in unison, the family and El Coro answers the call in song. We hear the rain on the roof become hail and then a torrential rainstorm. We hear the waves becoming tidal waves washing the evil men away, crushing their cars but leaving the homes and people of Good Bread Alley safe and unharmed.

We hear the rain on the roof become hail and then a torrential rainstorm. This is The Great Miami Hurricane of 1926. Slow fade to black as the family looks heavenward, as the rain drip drip dripety drips through the holes in the roof onto Celia's floor.

*End of play.*

## GLOSSARY

**Aché** is the Lukumi word for primal life force that exists in all things made by Oludamare, the creator of all living, breathing and growing things.

**Babalawo** (Bah-buh-ALLOW-woe) meaning 'father or master of the mysticism' in Yoruba is a priest of Santéria or Ifa. His primary role is to identify an initiate's spiritual destiny or Ori and to develop a spiritual road map that can be used to cultivate the strength of character necessary to fulfill one's destiny.

**Blanqueamiento**, or whitening, is a social, political, and economic practice used to improve the race (mejorar la raza) towards whiteness.[1] The term blanqueamiento is rooted in Latin America and is used more or less synonymous with racial whitening. However, blanqueamiento can be considered in both the symbolic and biological sense [2] Symbolically, blanqueamiento represents an ideology that emerged out of legacies of European Colonialism, described by Anibal Quijano's theory of Coloniality of power, which caters to white dominance in social hierarchies [3] Biologically, blanqueamiento is the process of whitening by marrying a lighter skinned individual in order to produce lighter- skinned offspring.[3] Wikipedia.

**Bolita** (Bow-LEE-tuh) Spanish for Little Ball is a lottery popular in Cuba and Miami amongst working class Blacks and Cubans at the turn of the century. One hundred balls are mixed in a bag and bets are taken on what number will be drawn. Bets were usually small and the game was often rigged, so a honest Bolita game was a sought-after commodity.

**Buckhrah** - Word used during slavery to refer to a racist white person or the man that put slaves in the buck position (a form of torture involving a metal cross bar that folded the slaves body for days at a time)

**Calling someone out of their name** disappears them in the Gullah tradition. Names hold power, so calling someone or something by it's full name gives him or her or it power which is why slaves felt powerless because they held their master's names and not their own; thus many choose X as a last name.

**Chango'** is Orisha of lightening, war and change. He is the penultimate Leo, the one you love to obey even if it means you will not get any sleep. He makes you feel like your obedience to him is a gift. His love for you makes you better, more regal. He initiates much needed change in your world whether you are ready for it or not.

**Comparsa** was originally an African tradition to honor a particular Saint or Deity, in Cuba and early 20th Century Miami; it became a procession of dancers (often your neighbors) in front of a carriage carrying musicians & singer sthat would travel through

CONTINUED :

town to celebrate various carnivals, holidays or rites of passage (a birth, a marriage, etc).

**Day clean** is a Gullah term for daybreak.

**Drylongso** - a Gullah phrase meaning “just like that” or “so it goes” or dullness or fate.

**Elekes** (eh-LAY-kays) are ritual necklaces worn by priests and initiates of Santéria. An eleke is basically a string of beads. It can be in the form of a necklace, a bracelet, an anklet, a kneelet, an armllet, waist beads or breast beads. It represents the spirit or Orisha that you follow or an ancestor. They are akin to delicate tendrils of the spirits that an artist consecrates and endows with power in the making of the eleke.

**Espumita** - (es-poo-MEE-tuh) foam, lather, froth that comes from the spout of a traditional espresso maker; the ideal cup of Cuban coffee has sugar pressed into the “espumita” as it bubbles up and out of the spout.

**"Even a stunted tree reaches for the light."** From Jacqueline Carey's Kushiel's Dart

**Gullah or Geechie** are African Americans who live in the low country and coastal islands of South Carolina and Georgia. The Grahams are from Coombe Island (also know as Lady's Island) near Salacatchuie, South Carolina. The family story was that enslaved Africans hopped off of slave ships, swam to the shore and stayed in the swampy islands that were rife with mosquitos and malaria. Since Malaria was common in many parts of West Africa where the slaves originated, they were often immune and white slave catchers were not. Hence, nature became the great equalizer and funnel to freedom. The Gullah were composed of runaway slaves from both plantations and slave ships. They came from various West African tribes, but their language is closely related to the Krio Language of Sierra Leone, West Africa. Due to the geographical isolation from slavery and mainstream American culture, as well as their ability to survive and thrive in the swampy coastal lands; Gullah culture, food, language, music, storytelling, beliefs, agriculture and crafts have a strong resemblance to West African cultures as if they were a separate African America.

**"I saw Jesus over a bowl of grits...."** From Playwright Marcus Gardley's Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi

**Knight Riders or 'Night Riders** - Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were the men who arrived on horseback and white hoods to escort unwilling Black men and women to “picnics” where the main attraction was to “pick a nigger” for a hanging and burning. These were gruesome events where children and wives of the Knights attended encased in sheets prepared to eat a meal and watch the event.

**La India** is colloquial term used to describe someone of African or Indian descent who, instead of kinky hair, has dark wavy or curly hair, thus making them more Indian than

( CONTINUED )

CONTINUED: (2)

Black which is “favorable.” The term is often used to compliment a person of African descent: “Thank god, you're not all black because you got that good Indian hair!” Akin to the way African Americans refer to “good hair:” “She got a wide black nose, but that's alright, (all is not lost) cause she got good hair, cause her mama was half Cherokee.” When in reality, very few African Americans actually have Native American ancestors.

**Lukumi** is the ritual language of Santería formally known as Ifa'.

**Mulatta(o)** is the Spanish word for a person of Black and White ancestry (which in reality is pretty much everyone in Cuba, Haiti, the Gullah Islands and South Florida). The history of slavery is written in our skin no matter how many terms we dig up to link our color to whiteness. Most folks in these worlds are of Black and white ancestry even the ones who appear to be only white. This is why in many Cuban families you see children who range from black, to the café con leche, to blue eyed and blonde to chocolate. Cuba, unlike the rest of the Americas, was a place where miscegenation was not illegal during slavery and plantation owners often married the slave wife and allowed his half slave children to inherit. Of course, the first step was to create birth certificates that named the entire family white, regardless of the chocolate faces in the family photograph. Cuba was also unique in that slaves could buy their freedom, change their birth certificates to white, buy a plantation and slaves and become a slave-owning black person. Michael Jackson and many other used-to-be-brown singers and actors would have been pleased to enter this world where, with the stroke of a pen, you could become a white person without all the trouble of skin bleaching. This decision to become legally white is still possible in many Afro-Latino countries.

**Negra or Negrita** (NAY-gruh or Nay-GREE-tuh) - Black woman or little black woman; when used amongst loved ones, it is a term of deep love and attachment.

**Ochún or Oshún or La Virgen Caridad del Cobre** (Oh-SHOON or Ka-REE-dahd Dell CO-bray) is the Orisha of fresh waters and is the protector of women and children who have been abused. She has always been Changó's favorite wife because of her fearless tenacity, but also because her life purpose is to teach the world the delicious agony and the ecstasy of sensuality and love.

In Lukumi, Ochún is the Orisha of harmony, love, maternity and marriage and fresh waters. When she has left us, all of the earth's clean drinkable water is gone. That is how she reminds us to care for the earth, for we are nothing without her waters. In Cuba slaves had to hide their West African Gods so she is syncretized in La Virgen Caridad del Cobre (Lady of Charity), the Patron Saint of Cuba. She is associated with gold, yellow roses, citrine stones, peacock feathers, honey, oranges, pumpkins and her sacred day is Saturday and her sacred number is five. In the Yoruba tradition, she is the force of water, attraction and rain and the harmony between these forces creates and celebrates beauty which is Ochún's r'aison d'etre. She creates cosmological balance that we experience as love, see as

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

beauty and feel as ecstasy. Equal parts loving and fiery, she is known for her healing, love of children and ability to provide the poor with what they need. She can fight for others, but not always herself.

**Palo** is A box that serves as a drum. The laws against drumming required that Mr. Slave Man (not sure of his real name, but I'd like to give him props for ingenuity) come up with an alternative instrument to awaken the spirits as well as a sound loud enough to reach the ears of the slaves in the mountains when the revolt should begin.

**Pastelitos de Guava y Queso** (Pah-stay-LEE-toes day GWA-vuh Eee KAY-sew) - Cuban baked puff pastries filled with guava and sweetened cheese sold on street corners and store fronts in Miami and Cuba.

**Rumba** was brought to Cuba by enslaved Africans merging the drums and the clave. Using the clave as the principal meter, the drumming responds to the meter set by the clave. The three main forms of Rumba: yambó, guaguancó and Columbia. The soloist begins with a Diana (lyrical syllables announcing the start of the Rumba, i.e. La NaNaNa, Lo Oye, Lo Oye lo bien). Once the dancers and singers are gathered, the soloist will announce the purpose of the song and invite other instruments to join. The traditional rumba is often spiritual in nature and celebrates the higher parts of human existence. The Rumba is accompanied by slow dance steps often related to various Orishas. Traditional rumba bears no relationship to Ballroom or American Pop forms. "So you think you can dance and ballroom dancing competitions have watered down the African complexities of the dance, so that they bear little resemblance. El Grupo Folklorico Experimental's "Cuba Linda" or the version of "Caridad" by John Santos y El Coro Folklorico Kindembe are classic Rumbas. These are the songs Celia has forgotten. They are a call to remember. They live in the feet, the hands and the memories of shackles around our ankles. The Rumba is the gift enslaved Africans gave us. Each gesture is a lesson in learning to dance with the shackles around your ankles in this new world. Each step costs the spirit, it is slow, melodic, difficult, but beautiful.

**Trilleño** - A person with white or very light skin with the kinky hair that marks their African ancestry.

**Third culture** refers to people who are part of two, sometimes three different races, cultures and traditions

**Sopera** (SEW-Pey-rah) - porcelain or clay jar or tureen used to house the spirit of an ancestor or Orisha.

**Las Munecas Negras** - (Lahs MOON-yecas NEH-grahs) The black ritual dolls dressed in the colors and jewels that represent a particular Orisha. When I was a child, they were black Barbie dolls with elaborate ball gowns designed by Cuban seamstresses and many

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

people kept them on their beds or altars for luck or to honor their Orisha.

**Colada** (Co-LAH-duh) - in Cuba and Miami, a container with approximately one and a half cups of Cuban coffee sold in disposable take away cups and shared with a group.

Colador(CO-lah-door)- an old fashioned strainer/sieve with sock-like attachment used to make Cuban Coffee; in Good Bread Alley, it also refers to an old fashioned metal espresso maker placed on the stove over a flame.

**Dama or Doña** (DAH-muh or DOAN-yah)- A Spanish title for a woman of noble birth or social distinction or wealth.

Pema Chodron, *The Places That Scare Us*

**Miss Anne-** a pejorative term used by black folks that identifies “saddity” or uppity behavior with that of the white woman plantation mistress or Miss Anne.

### **La Boheme Lyrics in English**

Once happily leaving

to your cry of love,

Mimi returns only

to the solitary nest.

I return again

to make flowers and bouquets.

Goodbye, no hard feelings.

Listen, listen.

The few things I've accumulated

I've left behind.

In my drawer

is a small band of gold

and the prayer book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Wrap them in an apron

and I will send the concierge...

Look, under the pillow

there is a pink bonnet.

If you want to keep it in memory of our love, you may.

Goodbye, no hard feelings.

**Santeria** (Sahn-tey-REE-yah) Santéria is a syncretization of Yoruba traditions (brought to the New World by enslaved Africans) with Roman Catholic and Native American religious traditions. The enslaved Africans brought various religious practices with them including communication with ancestors through trance, animal sacrifice (in which they found correlation with the Christ's sacrifice for humankind in Catholicism) and sacred drumming. Since neither Yoruba or Santéria traditions are dualistic in the way that Western philosophies are, there is no Devil. There is no absolute right or wrong action. Morality is a more complex system where all actions have the potential to be right or wrong given the nature of the circumstances in which they arise. Santéria emphasizes

harmony; thus, "the good" exists when one's spiritual destiny or Ori is in harmony with one's actions. The ritual practices of Santéria, particularly communing with Oracles is designed to cultivate that harmony.

**I would crack open the heavens with my bare hands.** From Lee Colston, playwright/actor

**Celia's Bald Head.** In the tradition of Lukumi, when an initiate has decided to submit to the will of the Orishas, one of the first steps is to shave the head bald (or very low like a baby's birthhair), returning it to its natural state without chemicals for a full year. It is a part of recreating the self, to align oneself with one's true purpose; to let go of crutches and places where we hide; to revel in one's true beauty, the one you were born with. My mother said to me, "When you were born, you had this tiny little afro all over your soft little head. I thought you were the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. Why wouldn't you beautiful with an little afro now?" For these reasons and many more, the actress playing the role must be willing to shave her head and wear it in it's natural state without chemicals. Bald caps are not an option and she can be wigged prior to this moment.

**Final Ritual of the play.**

The men are in barefoot in ritual white with skull caps and thick ropes of elekes matching

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

their particular orisha adorning their collarbones. Elekes: Cilo wears the red and white of Chango; Percival, the blue and yellow of Ochosi; Miriam, the purple of Oya; Beatriz, the blue of Yemaya; Celia, the yellow of Ochún. Beatriz wears a blue dress, Miriam, a bright purple dress and Celia, a golden-orange gown. The family has been barefoot since the beginning of the previous scene preparing the ground for sacred service.

Celia places gourds of water at every entryway in the house. Rubs her hands to create friction and pounds the floor three times as if knocking. El Coro and the family join her. She finds Daddy Buster's flask next Elegua's bowl, smiles and pours an offering to Elegua calling him to open the doors to magic. Percival places an iron cauldron beside Elegua's clay bowl. Beatriz prepares straw boats full of flowers to send across the waters that Celia's magic will bring. Cilo prepares bowls of fire placed in a circle around the family. Celia lights yellow candles and adds them to Cilo's circle. Then she smokes the house with cigar smoke. Miriam brings her jars of butterflies of many colors and places them within the circle.

**Olodumare** (OH-LOO-duh-mah-ray) - In Santéria, the eternal creator of the universe (and all things including humanity and the Orishas) is known as Olodumare. Said to be made up of aché (primal force), Olodumare created the universe from the chaos of aché. It is said that eventually Olodumare became disenchanted with the world he had created, and was disappointed with the actions of humanity. Though still acknowledged as creator and the controller of aché, Olodumare is now separate from the world. Those who practice Santéria continue to revere Olodumare and include him in their prayers and sacrifices, but only out of respect and not in hopes of petitioning him, as he is uninterested in the affairs of humanity. In his absence, he has left the earth to the Orishas.

**We walked that road and the well was dry.** From Marcus Gardley's *The Road Weeps, The Well Runs Dry*

**Yemaya** is the Orisha of the oceans and mother love. She soothes and protects her children and loved ones with her peace, equanimity and grace. Her sensuality comes from her strong nesting tendencies. She knows how to make family, but also to bring the oceans wrath if her loved ones are hurt. She taught her children how to ride the waves of the Middle Passage and protecting them if they decided to make the journey.