

Richard Danielpour

# MARGARET GARNER

A New American Opera in Two Acts

Libretto by Toni Morrison  
Based on a true story

First performance: Detroit Opera House, May 7, 2005  
Opera Carolina performances: April 20, 22 & 23, 2006  
North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

Stefan Lano, conductor  
Cynthia Stokes, stage director

The Opera Carolina Chorus  
The Charlotte Contemporary Ensemble  
The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra

## The Characters

Margaret Garner, *mezzo*  
Robert Garner, *bass baritone*  
Edward Gaines, *baritone*  
Cilla, *soprano*  
Casey, *tenor*  
Caroline, *soprano*  
George, *baritone*  
Auctioneer, *tenor*  
First Judge, *tenor*  
Second Judge, *baritone*  
Third Judge, *baritone*

slave on the Gaines plantation  
her husband  
owner of the plantation  
Margaret's mother  
foreman on the Gaines plantation  
Edward Gaines' daughter  
her fiancée

## Cast

Denyce Graves  
Eric Greene  
Michael Mayes  
Angela Renee Simpson  
Mark Pannuccio  
Inna Dukach  
Jonathan Boyd  
Dale Bryant  
Dale Bryant  
Daniel Boye  
Jeff Monette

Slaves on the Gaines plantation, Townspeople

The opera takes place in Kentucky and Ohio  
Between 1856 and 1861

# MARGARET GARNER

Act I, scene i:  
Kentucky, April 1856.

*The opera begins in total darkness, without any sense of location or time period. Out of the blackness, a large group of slaves gradually becomes visible. They are huddled together on an elevated platform in the center of the stage.*

**CHORUS:**  
"No More!"

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Margaret, Cilla, and Robert)*

NO, NO MORE.  
NO MORE, NOT MORE.  
PLEASE, GOD, NO MORE.  
NO, NOT MORE.  
DEAR GOD, NO MORE!

*(confidently, with a sense of defiance)*  
NO, NO! NO MORE!  
NO, NO! NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

ANKLES CIRCLED WITH A CHAIN...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

...NO, NO. NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO MORE!  
*(tenors and basses)* PLEASE, GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

SKIN BROKEN BY A CANE...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

...NO, NO! NO MORE!  
NO, NO. NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

BLOODY PILLOWS...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

...NO, NO. NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO, NO!  
*(basses)* PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

UNDER MY HEAD...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

... NO, NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO MORE.  
NO, NO, NO!  
*(basses)* DEAR GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

WISHING, PRAYING...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

... NO, NO! NO, NO MORE! ...  
*(basses)* DEAR GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

... I WAS DEAD.

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Cilla, and Robert)*

NO, NO. NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO. NO MORE!  
NO, NO, NO!  
DEAR GOD, PLEASE, NO MORE!

**SLAVE CHORUS**

*(without Cilla and Robert)*

DEAR GOD,  
NO MORE, NOT MORE.  
PLEASE, NO MORE.

**MARGARET**

BLOODY PILLOWS UNDER MY HEAD;  
WISHING, PRAYING I WAS DEAD.

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Cilla, and Robert)*

PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.

**MARGARET**

MASTER'S BRAND IS FOLLOWING ME;  
ROPE CAN SWING FROM ANY OLD TREE.

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Cilla, and Robert)*

*(pleading)*

PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.  
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.  
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.  
NO MORE!

\*\*\*\*

*The lights go up, and illuminate the entire stage. The "elevated platform" on which the slaves stood at the beginning of the opera is revealed now to be a trading block situated in the middle of a busy town square in Kentucky. It is April 1856. In preparation for a slave auction, members of slave families are being separated from one another, and grouped according to gender and age.*

*The local townspeople are gathering eagerly for the auction. They exhibit a small-town mentality: familiar with everyone else's daily life and business, they love to gossip and at times can be judgmental of others. Also in the crowd of onlookers is a handsome, genteel man named Edward Gaines, accompanied by his daughter Caroline.*

**AUCTIONEER**

*(freely chanted)*

BY THE POWERS INVESTED  
AND BY CUSTOMS INGESTED  
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW:

THE SALE OF ALL GOODS  
AND CATTLE AND WOODLAND,  
SLAVES AND PLANTING FIELDS  
DARK WITH LOAM.

I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW  
AN OLD ESTATE RICH IN HISTORY  
IS NOW ON THE MARKET  
FOR A GENTLEMAN'S POCKET;  
A PRIZE IN THE WHOLE COUNTY.

YOUR SHREWD EYES WILL LIGHT UP  
DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR,  
POUND FOR POUND,  
THE BESTEST VALUE FOR MILES AROUND.

*(A foreman approaches the slaves. He cracks a bullwhip, and the slaves immediately assume different positions for inspection: they bare their teeth, expose their backs, stretch out their necks, etc.)*

**THE TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(White Chorus)*

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?  
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS  
AND BUCKS?  
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?  
WHAT SAY? WHAT SAY?  
FOR MILKING AND PLOWING  
AND SPINNING AND CANNING AND SUCH.

O, WHAT A PROBLEM TO DECIDE.  
O, WHAT A BURDEN ON OUR SHOULDERS:  
FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOTHING,  
ARE NOTHING, DO NOTHING  
EXCEPT FOR WE WHO CLOTHE THEM AND  
FEED THEM  
AND LET THEM SLEEP WHEN THEY ARE ILL.  
WE TEACH THEM ALL THEY WILL EVER  
KNOW,  
ALL THEY WILL EVER KNOW  
OF GOD AND WORK AND HOME!

**AUCTIONEER**

BY THE POWERS INVESTED  
AND BY CUSTOMS INGESTED,  
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW  
THIS SALE TO BE NOW OPEN!

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

WHAT SAY? WHAT SAY?  
FOR MILKING AND PLOWING  
AND SPINNING AND CANNING AND SUCH.  
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?  
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS  
AND BUCKS,  
WHO KNOW NOTHING OF GOD AND HOME!

**AUCTIONEER**

*(bringing forth the first slave for sale)*

NOW THIS HERE IS CILLA.  
ABOUT FIFTY, SHE THINKS.  
A COOK, A CHILD NURSE, LAUNDRESS AND  
SEAMSTRESS.

THIS BID BEGINS AT TWO HUNDRED  
DOLLARS.  
DO I HEAR TWO FORTY, TWO FORTY, TWO  
FORTY, TWO FORTY?

*(A customer raises his hand, thereby upping the bid.)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(emphatically)*

TWO FORTY!

**AUCTIONEER**

YES!

TWO HUNDRED FORTY.  
DO I HEAR  
THREE HUNDRED, THREE HUNDRED, THREE  
HUNDRED?  
I NEED THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(enthusiastically)*

THREE HUNDRED!

**AUCTIONEER**

YES!

THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.  
DO I HEAR  
FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED,

FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS...

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(excitedly)*

...FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR  
HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED,  
FOUR HUNDRED!

**EDWARD GAINES**

*(impatient, forcefully)*

HOLD ON! HOLD ON!  
I'M TELLING YOU TO HOLD ON!

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(startled, a little nervously)*

WHO IS IT? WHAT IS IT?  
WHO IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

**AUCTIONEER**

*(polite, but annoyed)*

EXCUSE ME, SIR.  
LEGAL BUSINESS IS IN PROGRESS HERE.

BY THE POWERS INVESTED,  
AND BY CUSTOMS INGESTED...

**EDWARD**

*(interrupting the Auctioneer)*

...I BEG YOUR PARDON!

THIS FARM BELONGED TO MY BROTHER.  
IT CAN'T BE SOLD TO ANOTHER.

**AUCTIONEER**

IT IS TRUE.  
IF A FAMILY MEMBER CALLS THE CLAIM,  
NO SALE CAN TAKE PLACE HERE AND NOW.

**EDWARD**

I AM A GAINES.  
EDWARD GAINES, BROTHER OF THE  
DECEASED.

*(incredulously)*  
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?

**TOWNSPEOPLE**  
*(their curiosity aroused)*

EDWARD GAINES? WHO IS HE?  
DID OLD GAINES HAVE A BROTHER?  
WHO IS HE? EDWARD GAINES?

**EDWARD**

I WAS BORN AMONG YOU  
AND NOW I'VE RETURNED.  
DOESN'T ANYONE REMEMBER ME?

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

NO. NO. NO.  
WAS IT A LONG TIME AGO?

**EDWARD**

YOU THOUGHT I WAS LOST, DIDN'T YOU,  
IN A ROUGH LIFE OF THE GAME.  
YOU WERE WRONG.  
(WELL, NO, YOU WEREN'T ...)  
WELL, YES, YOU WERE!

**ARIA:**  
**"I Was Just a Boy"**

**EDWARD**

I WAS JUST A BOY  
WHEN ANY OF YOU LAST SAW ME.  
BUT I'VE BEEN HAPPILY MARRIED  
WITH A DAUGHTER WE BOTH ADORED.  
NOW I'M A WIDOWER, A MAN OF MEANS,  
A FATHER WITH A CHILD TO RAISE.

WHAT MY BROTHER OWNED  
I HAVE RIGHT OF FIRST OFFER TO BUY.  
WHICH I DO NOW, FRIENDS.  
WHICH I DO NOW.

**AUCTIONEER**

IT IS TRUE.  
IT IS THE LAW.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**  
*(echoing the Auctioneer)*

IT IS TRUE. IT IS TRUE.  
IT IS TRUE, IT IS THE LAW.

**AUCTIONEER**

WE MUST ENTERTAIN HIS RIGHT UNDER THE  
LAW.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

UNDER THE LAW. UNDER THE LAW.

**AUCTIONEER**

WHAT IS YOUR PLEASURE,  
MISTER GAINES, SIR?

*(solicitously)*  
WHAT PARTS INTEREST YOU?

**EDWARD**

I WANT IT ALL.  
I'LL HAVE IT ALL.  
EVERY BOX OF CHINA TEA BELONGS TO ME.  
EVERY BODY, EVERY BROOM,  
EVERY MULE AND EVERY LOOM.

*(pointing at the slaves)*

KEEP ALL THE GOODS AND PROPERTY  
TOGETHER.  
I'LL HAVE IT ALL.

*(The auctioneer and Edward shake hands after agreeing on terms for the sale of Maplewood Plantation. As Edward examines the legal paperwork, the townspeople begin to disperse. Several prominent businessmen remain to witness the transaction, as does Edward's daughter Caroline, who will inherit Maplewood one day.)*

\* \* \* \*

*(The slave families, now allowed to stay together  
thanks to Edward's generosity,  
celebrate in dance and song.)*

**CHORUS:**  
"A Little More Time"

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, MARGARET, and  
ROBERT**  
*(clapping as they sing)*

*A LITTLE MORE TIME  
A LITTLE MORE TIME  
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...*

*(tenors)*  
*...TIME WITH OUR BROTHERS.*

*(all)*

*WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD  
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.*

**CILLA and MARGARET**

ANOTHER SEASON OF FRIENDSHIP  
TELLING STORIES, SHARING SECRETS BY THE  
FIRE.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

*WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD  
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.*

**MARGARET**

MORE NIGHTS TO CURL LIKE A VINE  
IN OUR HUSBAND'S ARMS.

**ROBERT**

MORE DAYS TO BASK IN THE LIGHT  
OF OUR LOVER'S EYES.

**CILLA and MARGARET**

OUR FATHERS' GRAVES

WE CAN STILL ATTEND WITH  
SWEET WILLIAM AND COLUMBINE.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

SWEET WILLIAM AND COLUMBINE.

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, and ROBERT**

*LITTLE MORE TIME  
A LITTLE MORE TIME  
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...*

*(altos)*  
*...TIME WITH OUR MOTHERS.*

*(all)*

*WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD  
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.*

*(Gaines nods in assent to the contract's terms, then  
turns to the businessman standing next to him and asks  
for a pen with which to sign the contract.)*

**ARIOSO:**

"I Made a Little Play Doll"

**MARGARET**

*(tenderly)*

I MADE A LITTLE PLAY DOLL FOR MY BABY,  
WITH BUTTON EYES AND HAIR OF YARN;  
THE LIPS ARE MADE OF ROSE-COLORED  
THREAD.

*(Distracted, Edward looks up from his paperwork; he  
turns around and notices Margaret, who is wearing a  
red scarf. He is intrigued, and grateful for his good  
fortune to have just purchased her.)*

ONE DAY SHE WILL LOVE IT;  
I AM WAITING FOR HER TO LOVE IT

*(Edward turns around again, and finishes signing the  
contract. The businessmen extend handshakes of  
congratulations to him on the acquisition of  
Maplewood.)*

WHEN SHE IS OLD ENOUGH TO HOLD IT.

*(Margaret unties her red scarf. When one of the slaves brings in Margaret's infant daughter, wrapped in a white cloth, she drops her scarf on the ground in order to cradle the baby tenderly in her arms.)*

I'M WATCHING THIS MYSTERY CALLED  
CHILD.

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, and ROBERT**

*A LITTLE MORE TIME  
A LITTLE MORE TIME  
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...*

*(altos)  
...TIME WITH OUR MOTHERS.*

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, and ROBERT**

*WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD  
WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.*

**SLAVE CHORUS**

*WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD.*

**CILLA, MARGARET, and ROBERT**

*WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD.*

**SLAVE CHORUS**

*WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.*

*(The slaves exit slowly; Margaret is the last of the slaves to leave.)*

*(Having completed the legal transaction with Edward, the auctioneer departs with the businessmen. Caroline remains, however, cheerfully conversing with their wives.)*

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*(Edward watches the last townspeople leave.)*

**EDWARD**

*(disappointed, somewhat disgusted)*

LOOK AT THEM.  
THEY WERE MY NEIGHBORS ONCE.  
THEY PRETEND THEY DON'T REMEMBER ME.

**CASEY**

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, SIR.  
YOU'VE BEEN AWAY FOR TWENTY YEARS...

**EDWARD**

*(turning back around, facing Casey)*

...TWENTY YEARS. *(to himself)*

THEY PRETEND.  
THEY LIE, AND THEY SAY THEY DON'T  
REMEMBER ME.

*(Margaret's scarf, still lying on the ground, catches Edward's attention; he starts walking over towards it.)*

**CASEY**

*(looking in the other direction from Gaines)*

SOMETHING IN THE PAST, SIR?  
SOMETHING BEST FORGOTTEN?

*(Edward picks up Margaret's scarf, and mindlessly puts it in his pocket.)*

**EDWARD**

I WAS JUST A BOY.  
THE TROUBLE I CAUSED WAS INESCAPABLE.  
FOR A BOY WITH AN APPETITE.

**CASEY**

BUT EVERY BOY HAS AN APPETITE, SIR.

**EDWARD**

I LEFT UNDER A CLOUD OF SUSPICION.

IT WAS NOTHING, NOTHING TO RAISE  
EYEBROWS.

THE GIRL WAS SO YOUNG,  
AND FROM SUCH A FINE FAMILY;  
THINGS GOT A LITTLE OUT OF HAND.

*(sotto voce)*

SO NOW THEY PRETEND  
NEITHER I NOR IT EVER HAPPENED.

WHAT A SHAME.  
I REMEMBER!  
I REMEMBER EVERYTHING.

**ARIA:**  
“I Remember”

**EDWARD**  
*(wistful, yet still optimistic)*

I REMEMBER THE CURVE OF EVERY HILL  
THE SWANS IN THE POND;  
I REMEMBER THEM STILL.

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE:  
MAPLE, BIRCH, WILLOWS AND PINE.

I CAN SEE THEM NOW  
SHADING THE DRIVE,  
SHELT’RING ME FROM THE HEAT.  
MAPLE, BIRCH AND THE ODOR OF PINE.

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE  
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME.

THE WELL, THE CREEK,  
FISHING BY THE LAKE.  
EVENINGS OF LAUGHTER  
WITH GIRLS WHO WANTED TO PLAY.

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE  
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME.

*(Edward catches Caroline’s glance, and motions for  
her to join him.)*

**EDWARD**  
*(sotto voce)*

THEY WON’T FORGET ME AGAIN!

*(Edward exits, with Caroline at his side. Casey follows  
them.)*

**End of Act One, Scene One**

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**Act I, scene ii:**  
**Harvest time, about six months later.**

*The slaves -- some of whom are children, barely 10 or  
12 years old -- return to their quarters after a day of  
working in the fields. In time with the percussion’s  
strong, syncopated beat, they perform a series of  
domestic chores: chopping wood, pumping water,  
beating rags, etc.*

**CHORUS:**  
“O Mother, O Father, Don’t Abandon Me!”

**ROBERT**

TURN MY FACE TO THE DYING SUN

**SLAVE CHORUS**

TURN MY FACE TO THE DYING SUN

**ROBERT**

CAN’T STRAIGHTEN MY BACK  
TIL THE WORK IS DONE.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

CAN’T STRAIGHTEN MY BACK  
TIL THE WORK IS DONE.

**ROBERT**

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

**SLAVE CHORUS**

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY



**ALL**

*O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY BLOOD FLOODS THE VELVET DIRT  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.*

**ROBERT**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

*O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY SWEAT STILL SWEETS THE RICH  
BROWN SOIL  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.*

**ALL**

*O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY SWEAT STILL SWEETS THE RICH  
BROWN SOIL  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.*

*O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME.*

*CRACK UH BACK*

*CUT UH CANE*

*PULL UH MULE*

*CHOP UH COTTON*

*SPLIT UH WOOD*

**MARGARET**

BOSS IS HAPPY AT HIS PLATE

**SLAVE CHORUS**

LONG AS HE GETS HIS FOWL;

**MARGARET**

IF I STAND AT HIS COOKING STOVE,

**SLAVE CHORUS**

HIS SUPPER WILL BE FOUL!

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(shouted like gospel singers)*

BELIEVE IT!

*CRACK UH BACK*

*CUT UH CANE*

*PULL UH MULE*

*CHOP UH COTTON*

*SPLIT UH WOOD*

*CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT;*

*CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT;*

*CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT!*

**FEMALE CHORISTERS**

*(soprano soloist)*

BOSS IS HAPPY IN HIS BED

*(all)*

LONG AS HIS PILLOW'S DOWNEY;

*(soprano soloist)*

IF I STOOD BY HIS SLEEPY HEAD

*(all)*  
HIS FACE WOULD BE AS FLUFFY.

*CUT UH CANE*

**MALE CHORISTERS**  
*(like gospel singers)*

*PULL UH MULE*

*CHOP UH COTTON*

TELL IT TO ME!

*SPLIT UH WOOD*

**ROBERT**

*CRACK UH BACK*

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

*CUT UH CANE*

**CHORUS**

*PULL UH MULE*

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

*CHOP UH COTTON*

*SPLIT UH WOOD*

**ROBERT**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

*CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT;*

**SLAVE CHORUS**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

*CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT;*

*CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT!*

*(Upon hearing the dinner bell, the workers wash up for  
supper. Cilla is waiting at Margaret and Robert's  
cabin to welcome them home.)*

**ALL**

*O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY TEARS MUDDY THE RICH BROWN  
SOIL  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.*

**CILLA**

YOU LEFT THE LIGHT BEHIND YOU.  
DID YOU HAVE A WORRISOME DAY?

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(shouted like gospel singers)*

*(Cilla, Robert, and Margaret go inside the cabin, and  
begin preparing dinner.)*

SING IT TO ME!

**ROBERT**

**ALL**

*O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY BLOOD FLOODS THE VELVET DIRT  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY. (sarcastically)*

EVERY NEW DAY IS LIKE YESTERDAY.  
WORK THE CROPS,  
FORGET ABOUT PAY.

*CRACK UH BACK*

END EACH DAY  
LIKE THE ONE BEFORE.  
DON'T LEAVE THE FIELD  
TIL THE LIGHT'S TOO POOR.

**CILLA**

THIS GAINES IS NOT LIKE THE LAST ONE.  
A MEAN STREAK RIDES HIS BROW.  
THE OTHER ONE HAD A HEART --  
SOMETIMES! (*jokingly*)

**MARGARET**

NO SUCH THING AS A BOSS'S HEART.  
HE CAN'T WASTE THE SPACE.

**ROBERT**

IF HE COULD HARVEST CORN IN HIS CHEST,

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
(*laughing heartily*)

HE WOULD LEASE OUT HIS OWN HEART'S  
PLACE!

(*Cilla beckons for Robert and Margaret to sit down at  
the dinner table.*)

**CILLA**

EASE YOURSELVES, EASE YOURSELVES.  
THE TABLE IS LAID.  
THE SUPPER IS PLAIN BUT WARM.

**MARGARET**

... YOU'VE GOT MILK AND STRAWBERRIES  
TOO.

(*All three sit down to dinner.*)

**"Cilla's Prayer"**  
**CILLA**

DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN,

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
(*interjecting, like a Responsorial*)

[Blessed Lord...]

**CILLA**

MAKE US GRATEFUL FOR OUR FOOD.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[Sweet Jesus...]

**CILLA**

KEEP US WELL AND IN YOUR SIGHT.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[mmm...]

**CILLA**

PROTECT THOSE IN DANGER,

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[Take my hand...]

**CILLA**

AND LET US BE GUIDED BY YOUR HEAVENLY  
LIGHT.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[Precious Lord... mmm]

**CILLA**

AMEN.

\* \* \* \* \*

**ROBERT**  
(*exuberantly*)

YOU ARE A HUNDRED POUND BLESSING,  
MAMA.

**MARGARET**  
(*to Cilla*)

HOW'S MY BABY?  
NOT CRYING FOR ME?  
HOW'S MY SWEETNESS?  
NOT MISSING ME?

**CILLA**

SHE'S SLEEPING, MARGARET,  
SLEEPING.  
NOT A FROWN ON HER SUGAR BUTTER FACE.

**ROBERT**  
*(laughing)*

DID YOU EVER SEE A MOTHER LIKE THAT?  
THE CHILD SUPPOSED TO NEED THE MOTHER;  
NOW HERE THE MOTHER NEEDS THE CHILD  
MORE.

**MARGARET**

I NEED TO SMELL HER BREATH.

**CILLA**

THE BABY NEEDS HER REST.

**MARGARET**

I NEED TO SEE HER EYES, HER SMILE.

**CILLA**  
*(emphatically)*

IT'S DANGEROUS, DAUGHTER,  
TO LOVE TOO MUCH.  
THE LORD GIVETH  
AND THE LORD TAKETH AWAY.  
COME TO YOUR SUPPER BEFORE YOU WAKE  
HER.

**MARGARET**

SHE IS MY SUPPER,  
THE FOOD OF MY HEART.

**ROBERT**

AND WHAT AM I?  
THE LEAVINGS?

**MARGARET**

*(smiling, reaching out to Robert)*

OH NO. OH NO.  
YOU ARE THE PULSE.  
WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO HEART.

**ROBERT**

AND WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO PULSE TO  
GIVE.

*(They embrace.)*

**CILLA**  
*(interrupting)*

ENOUGH SAID.  
GO GET YOUR HEART  
BEFORE YOU BREAK MINE.

*(Margaret goes to get the baby. As Cilla and Robert  
eat dinner, Margaret sings tenderly to the child.)*

**"Margaret's Lullaby"**

**MARGARET**

SAD THINGS, FAR AWAY  
SOFT THINGS, COME AND PLAY

LOVELY BABY ...

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW,  
SLEEP IN THE HAY  
BABY'S GOT A DREAMIN' ON THE WAY.

BAD THINGS, FAR AWAY  
PRETTY THINGS, HERE TO STAY

SWEET BABY, SMILE AT ME  
LOVELY BABY, GO TO SLEEP.

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW,  
SLEEP IN THE HAY  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY.

LOVELY BABY, PRETTY BABY  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY.

*(Casey approaches the cabin, armed with a double-barreled shotgun and carrying a satchel. He loiters for a few minutes, passing the time by cleaning his gun.)*

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW,  
SLEEP IN THE HAY  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM ...  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM ... *(softer)*  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM ... *(softer still)*

**CASEY**  
*(quietly, standing in the cabin doorway)*

NOT TONIGHT.  
NOBODY DREAMS TONIGHT.

**ROBERT**

WHAT D'YOU SAY?  
WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY?

*(Casey enters the cabin abruptly, and confronts Robert.)*

**CASEY**  
*(sarcastically)*

WHAT'S THAT I SAY?  
WHAT'S THAT *YOU* SAY?

*(Casey points his gun at Robert.)*

**ROBERT**

EXCUSE ME, SIR.  
YES, SIR.  
WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY, SIR?

**CASEY**

BETTER. MUCH BETTER.  
WHAT I SAY IS  
NO HAPPY DARKY DREAMIN' T'NIGHT.  
MISTER GAINES HAS OTHER PLANS... OTHER  
PLANS.

**CILLA**

WHAT PLANS, MISTER CASEY?

**CASEY**

I'M TALKIN' TO YOUR BOY, CILLA.  
*NOT YOU.*

**CASEY**  
*(to Robert)*

YOU HAVE BEEN RENTED OUT, BOY.  
MISTER GAINES WANTS YOU ON YOUR WAY  
T'NIGHT  
*(aggressively)* SO YOU'LL BE READY FOR WORK  
AT SUNRISE.

**ROBERT**

WHERE, SIR?  
WHERE IS HE SENDING ME?

**CASEY**

NOT YOUR BUSINESS TO KNOW.  
ONLY YOUR BUSINESS TO GO.

*(pointing to the door)*

THE WAGON IS ON THE ROAD.  
HOP TO IT, BOY!

**MARGARET**

I'LL GET READY.  
HOLD THE BABY, MAMA.

**CASEY**

HOLD ON, GIRL.

YOU'LL GET READY ALL RIGHT.  
BUT YOU WON'T NEED THE WAGON.

*(quietly, with innuendo)*

MISTER GAINES WANTS YOU IN THE HOUSE,  
*HIS HOUSE.*

AIN'T THAT NICE?  
NO MORE FIELD WORK.  
AIN'T THAT NICE?

YOU CAN PUT YOUR FEET UP  
IN HIS HOUSE ALL DAY,

ALL NIGHT, TOO.

AIN'T THAT NICE?  
AIN'T THAT NICE?

*(Casey pulls a stylish housedress out of his satchel. He waves the dress, like a red flag, in Robert's face, then tosses it at Margaret.)*

AIN'T THAT NICE?

*(Casey leaves.)*

*(Robert and Margaret exchange troubled glances; Cilla rocks the baby.)*

*(As he walks away, Casey sings a parody of Margaret's "Lullaby".)*

**CASEY**

LA-DA-DA-DA-DA  
LA-DA-DA-DAY.

*(He laughs derisively.)*

**ROBERT**

*(sotto voce; trying to contain his emotions)*

SKUNK! SNAKE!

*(erupting in rage)*  
SON OF A WHORE!

*(Robert paces the room, his anger at the boiling point.)*

**CILLA**

PLEASE! DON'T WAKE THE BABY.

**ROBERT**

YELLOWBELLY!  
THAT SON OF A DOG!!

**MARGARET**

COOL DOWN, ROBERT!  
HE WILL HEAR YOU.

**ROBERT**

*(angrily)*

I AM A MAN!  
AIN'T I?

AIN'T I A MAN?  
AIN'T I?  
AIN'T I?

**MARGARET**

YES!  
YOU ARE TO ME.  
AND TO US.

**ROBERT**

*(almost stuttering in frustration)*

...I KNOW... I KNOW... I KNOW...  
WHAT IS ON HIS MIND.  
BASTARD!

**MARGARET**

*(lovingly)*

IT WON'T HAPPEN.  
IT WON'T HAPPEN, BELIEVE ME.  
BELIEVE ME!

**ROBERT**

HOW CAN YOU KNOW?  
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?  
YOU CAN'T CONTROL A SNAKE IN HIS OWN  
NEST.

**MARGARET**

HIS DAUGHTER LIVES THERE TOO.  
HE WILL BEHAVE.

**CILLA**

BELIEVE HER, SON.  
IT CAN'T BE FOR TOO LONG.

**MARGARET**

WE WILL FIND A WAY.  
STAY STRONG.

*(moving closer to Robert)*  
HE IS NOT THE MASTER OF ME.

Standing downstage center, Robert and Margaret are holding hands. As they sing, they gradually move apart; by the end of the duet, they are standing at opposite ends of the stage.

**DUET:**  
**“Love is the Only Master”**

**MARGARET**

HOLD ME.

**ROBERT**

HOLD ON.

**MARGARET**

STAY, SWEET.

**ROBERT**

STAY STRONG.

**MARGARET**

BE MY MOONRISE.

**ROBERT**

BE MY DAWN.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

YOU ARE MY SHOULDER.

**ROBERT**  
YOU ARE MY SPINE.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

YOU ARE MY COURAGE.

**MARGARET**

AND YOU ARE THE SIGN

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

THAT LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER  
THE HEART OBEYS;  
LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER  
THAT MY HEART OBEYS.

*(Evening falls as Robert leaves.)*

*(Fade to black.)*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Act I, scene iii:**  
**Maplewood Plantation, in the early summer of**  
**1858.**

In the candlelit parlor at Maplewood Plantation, a wedding reception is being held to celebrate the marriage of Caroline Gaines, Edward's daughter, to George Hancock. The guests – the local townspeople whom Edward is very eager to impress – waltz to the gentle accompaniment of a parlor piano, and enjoy generous amounts of freely flowing champagne.

**EDWARD**  
*(to the guests)*

PLEASE, MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

**THE GUESTS**  
*(gathering around)*

MISTER GAINES WANTS TO SPEAK.  
GATHER 'ROUND OUR GRACIOUS HOST.  
THERE IS NOTHING SO FINE AS SEEING A  
COUPLE IN LOVE!

**(Arioso)**

**EDWARD**

I PROMISED CAROLINE'S MOTHER  
TWO THINGS.  
ONE, THAT I WOULD STAY  
A WIDOWER;  
TWO, THAT I WOULD SEE  
TO OUR DAUGHTER'S FUTURE CARE.  
CAROLINE HAS PROVEN  
THE RIGHTNESS OF THOSE PROMISES.  
SHE WILL INHERIT A SOUND ESTATE --  
WHICH, I MIGHT ADD,  
HAS GROWN FROM MODEST TO GRAND.  
AND HER CHOICE OF HUSBAND  
IS EVERYTHING  
HER MOTHER WOULD HAVE WISHED FOR...

**THE GUESTS**

...BEAUTIFUL WORDS  
FROM OUR GENEROUS HOST!

**EDWARD**

A MAN OF STATURE AND LEARNING.

*(The pompous guests blatantly examine the room's  
furnishings to judge their quality.)*

**THE GUESTS**

AND HER CHOICE OF HUSBAND  
IS EVERYTHING HER MOTHER WISHED FOR.

**CAROLINE**

AND YOU, FATHER?  
IS HE WHAT YOU HAVE WISHED FOR ME?

**EDWARD**

EXACTLY SO, PRECISELY SO.  
AM I RIGHT, GEORGE?

**GEORGE**

I'M NOT SURE  
THAT I DESERVE HER,  
BUT I WILL SPEND MY LIFE  
TRYING TO SERVE HER  
AND EARN THE DEVOTION  
SHE SQUANDERS ON ME.

**THE GUESTS**

THERE IS NOTHING SO WONDEROUS  
AS BEING IN LOVE.

**GUESTS**

THERE IS NOTHING SO WONDEROUS  
AS SEEING A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

THERE IS NOTHING SO WONDEROUS  
AS BEING IN A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE!

**FEMALE GUESTS**

A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE...

**MALE GUESTS**

...A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE.

**EDWARD**

CAROLINE, MY ADORABLE CAROLINE.  
GIVE YOUR FATHER  
A DAUGHTER'S EMBRACE.

*(Caroline walks across the room to her father, who is  
waiting with open arms. He embraces her too tightly,  
however.)*



**CAROLINE**  
*(lightheartedly)*

OH, FATHER, I CANNOT BREATHE.

*(Caroline makes light of the situation, then goes to  
mingle with the guests.)*

**EDWARD**  
*(warmly)*

FORGIVE ME, CAROLINE;

*(Upon hearing her name, Caroline turns towards her  
father.)*

MY ARMS ARE LIKE MY LOVE.  
STRONG AND ALL EMBRACING.

**CAROLINE**  
*(reassuringly, taking her father's hands in hers)*

NEVER MIND, FATHER.  
I HAVE PROSPERED  
SO MUCH IN YOUR ARMS,  
I CAN NOW EMBRACE ANOTHER.

*(Caroline suddenly lets go of her father's hands, and  
turns away from him to walk towards George, who is  
downstage, on the other side of the room. George  
embraces Caroline tenderly.)*

**GEORGE**  
*(sensing that Edward feels somewhat rejected)*

THERE IS NO RIVAL HERE.  
LOVE DOES NOT CONQUER OR DISPOSE;  
IT DOUBLES AND TRIPLES WITH USE.

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE IS ALWAYS  
CONFUSING.  
IT CAN NEVER BE AS CLEAR  
AS THE EMOTION IT TRIES TO CONVEY.

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE...

*(Edward puts up his hand to interrupt George in mid-  
sentence.)*

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN IMPOSTER,  
HIDING IN DRESSES OF VERSE.

**GEORGE**  
*(emphatically)*

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A MAGICIAN,  
TURNING ROSES INTO DOVES ON THE WING.

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN INFANT'S HAND IN A FATHER'S GLOVE.

**GEORGE**

A RAFT IN A STORMY SEA,  
OFFERING RESCUE.

**THE GUESTS**  
*(eagerly joining in the fray)*

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS OFTEN HARD TO EXPLAIN.  
IT MAY OFFER TRUE JOY,  
BUT IT CAN END IN SUCH PAIN!

**GEORGE**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A LIGHTHOUSE  
TO GUIDE US OVER HEAVY WAVES.

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A THIEF RESPECTING NO HOUSEHOLD,  
STEALING THE LOVED ONES AWAY.

**THE GUESTS**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS TOO COMPLEX TO BE KNOWN.  
WHAT IS BOUGHT WITHOUT PRICE,  
CAN NEVER BE OWNED!

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN IMPOSTER...

**GEORGE**

...IS A MAGICIAN...

**EDWARD**

...IS AN INFANT'S HAND IN A FATHER'S  
GLOVE.

**GEORGE**

...TURNING ROSES INTO DOVES ON THE  
WING!

**THE GUESTS**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A DANGEROUS ART.  
IT CAN OPEN YOUR EYES  
OR IT WILL TEAR OUT YOUR HEART!

*(Embarrassed by the argument that has broken out  
between her father and her new husband, Caroline  
walks away. She goes over to the side table and picks  
up a crystal champagne glass.)*

**EDWARD**

*(getting angry)*

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN IMPOSTER.

**GEORGE**

IS A MAGICIAN.

**EDWARD**

IT'S AN INFANT'S HAND IN A FATHER'S  
GLOVE...

**GEORGE**

...IT'S A LIGHTHOUSE TO GUIDE US ...

**EDWARD**

*(definitively, ending the discussion)*

...IT'S A THIEF RESPECTING NO HOUSEHOLD,  
*STEALING THE LOVED ONES AWAY!*

*(Caroline returns and makes a "grand entrance,"  
holding her champagne glass up high.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(in a celebratory mood)*

IT'S A CLIPPER SHIP  
WITH ROOM AFTER ROOM  
FOR DANCING  
AND CAKES AND TEA AND CHAMPAGNE!

*(The newlyweds Caroline and George begin the  
traditional "first dance;" the others join in the waltz  
one couple at a time. Ironically, only Gaines is without  
a partner; he is forced to watch the festivities.)*

*(Margaret enters the room to bring in another tray of  
glasses. Although she is dressed more nicely now, in  
the uniform befitting a house servant, she acts in a  
more subjugated manner. Gaines, standing alone,  
quietly takes notice of her arrival.)*

*(The guests gradually conclude dancing. Gaines once  
again plays the gracious host; he toasts the newlyweds  
as Margaret serves the guests.)*

**EDWARD**

WELL, THAT IS OUR ANSWER THEN.  
CHAMPAGNE HEALS ALL WOUNDS  
AND PUTS ALL ARGUMENTS TO BED.  
CONGRATULATIONS, SON.  
BLESSINGS, DAUGHTER.

*(Margaret starts to leave the room.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(warmly)*

MARGARET, WAIT A MOMENT.  
COME TO ME.  
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**MARGARET**

*(somewhat surprised)*

EXCUSE ME, MA'AM?

**CAROLINE**

WHAT DO YOU THINK  
ABOUT LOVE?  
WE WERE DISCUSSING  
THE WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT.

**EDWARD**

CHILD! DEAR CHILD!

**CAROLINE**

*(to Margaret)*

DO THEY HELP US TO LOVE?  
OR HURT US BEYOND REPAIR?

*(to her father)*

I WANT TO KNOW -- I *WANT* TO KNOW -- WHAT  
SHE THINKS.

**EDWARD**

*(insistent)*

CHILD! PLEASE, CHILD, NO MORE!

**THE GUESTS**

*(whispering)*

WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT,  
TALK ABOUT?  
WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT?

OH DEAR. OH DEAR.  
WE THOUGHT HE WAS QUALITY.

OH DEAR. OH DEAR.  
THIS IS A MISTAKE  
QUALITY FOLK WOULD NEVER MAKE!

OH DEAR. OH DEAR.  
THIS IS A PROFOUND INSULT.  
THIS IS A MISTAKE  
QUALITY FOLK WOULD NEVER MAKE!

**EDWARD**

CAROLINE,  
YOU ARE TOO WILLFUL.  
SHE CAN'T ANSWER YOU.  
SHE WON'T ANSWER YOU.

**CAROLINE**

WHY NOT?

**(Arioso)**

SHE HAS LOVED ME  
SERVED ME, TAUGHT ME  
IN THESE TWO YEARS;  
WATCHED OVER MY SLEEP.  
WHO KNOWS BETTER THAN SHE  
HOW TO SAY WHAT LOVE IS?

CAN WORDS DO IT JUSTICE, MARGARET?  
ENCOURAGE ITS SUCCESS?  
OR, AS MY FATHER SAYS,  
IS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
AN IMPOSTER?  
A THIEF IN THE NIGHT?

**MARGARET**

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MISS CAROLINE.  
MISTER GAINES IS THE EXPERT HERE.

**CAROLINE**

...HIS LOVE IS ROUGH,  
WHILE YOURS IS TENDER.

**EDWARD**

*(emphatically)*

YOU SEE?  
SHE HAS NOTHING TO SAY  
ON THE MATTER.  
LOVE IS NOT IN HER VOCABULARY.

**MARGARET**

*(thoughtfully)*

WORDS OF LOVE ARE MOTHS;  
EASY FOOD FOR FLAME.

ACTIONS ALONE  
SAY WHAT LOVE MAY BE.

**EDWARD**  
*(agitated, wild)*

ENOUGH! ENOUGH!

*(angrily)*  
WE HAVE ALL HAD ENOUGH OF THIS  
NONSENSE.  
I REFUSE TO HEAR A SLAVE COMMENT  
ON THINGS OUTSIDE HER SCOPE.  
OUR GUESTS ARE RIGHT.  
HER VIEWS ARE WORTHLESS.

*(to Margaret)*  
YOU ARE EXCUSED.  
LEAVE US.

*(Margaret exits.)*

**CAROLINE**

FATHER, YOU SHAME ME.  
SHE IS AS COMPLETE A HUMAN AS YOU ARE.

**GEORGE**

IF SHE IS A MOTHER,  
MAYBE MORE SO.

*(The parlor clock strikes 10 o'clock. A few of the  
guests realize that the late hour now gives them an  
alibi to leave the party.)*

**EDWARD**  
*(to Caroline)*

YOU DISAPPOINT ME.  
HOW COULD LOVE EXIST IN A SLAVE?  
PASSION, PERHAPS.  
BUT HOW WOULD SHE KNOW THE  
DIFFERENCE?

**CAROLINE**  
*(pleading with him to be reasonable)*  
THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF LOVE, FATHER.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**  
*(looking into each other's eyes)*

AND MANY KINDS OF LOVERS.

**THE GUESTS**

THIS IS TOO SUBTLE FOR ME.  
*... and me, and you...*

PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO SAY GOOD NIGHT.  
*... good night, good night, and good night ...*

ARGUMENT CHILLS A PARTY.  
*... good night, good night, and good night...*

... GOOD NIGHT!

*(The guests leave, bowing stiffly; they disapprove of  
Gaines's behavior and act coolly towards him. He is  
angered and annoyed by their early departure.)*

**EDWARD**

FOOLS, IDIOTS.  
WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT "QUALITY"  
FOLK?

*(to Caroline and George, with regret)*

THIS WAS TO BE A PROUD MOMENT.  
NOW YOU HAVE GIVEN MY NEIGHBORS  
MORE REASON TO GOSSIP AND DESPISE ME.

**CAROLINE**

I AM SORRY, FATHER,  
IF I UPSET YOU.

**GEORGE**

DON'T THINK US UNGRATEFUL  
FOR THIS CELEBRATION.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**  
*(together)*

WE DID NOT MEAN TO BE RUDE,  
ONLY TO SAY WHAT WE BELIEVE.  
HONESTY SHOULD NOT OFFEND YOU.

**EDWARD**  
*(agitated)*

I AM NOT SO WEAK  
AS TO BE OFFENDED BY INNOCENCE.  
BUT I HAVE A REPUTATION TO MAINTAIN.

**CAROLINE**

FATHER, PLEASE TRY ...

**EDWARD**

...MY SWEET CAROLINE,  
IT DOESN'T MATTER.  
ALL IS WELL.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES.

*(tenderly kissing his daughter)*  
GOODBYE.

*(shaking George's hand)*  
TAKE CARE.

*(Caroline and George leave, eager to depart on their  
honeymoon. Gaines pauses, and somewhat wistfully  
watches them walk away.)*

**EDWARD**

*(regaining his inner strength)*

IT DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL.  
I HAVE SUCCEEDED  
JUST AS I SAID I WOULD.

ENVY IS THE TRUE PRICE OF WEALTH...  
WHICH I EASILY, HAPPILY PAY.

A RICH MAN HAS MANY REMEDIES.

*(Edward begins to leave, but when he notices  
Margaret returning to clear the champagne glasses, he  
lingers in a hiding place.)*

*(Margaret picks up a glass and holds it to the light,  
peering into it  
as if it were a crystal ball.)*

**MARGARET**  
*(looking at the glass)*

ARE THERE MANY KINDS OF LOVE?  
SHOW ME EACH AND EVERY ONE.  
YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU?  
FOR THERE IS JUST ONE KIND.

**ARIA:**  
"A Quality Love"  
**MARGARET**

ONLY UNHARNESSED HEARTS  
CAN SURVIVE A LOCKED-DOWN LIFE.

LIKE A RIVER RUSHING FROM THE GRIP OF  
ITS BANKS,  
AS LIGHT ESCAPES THE COLDEST STAR;  
A QUALITY LOVE -- THE LOVE OF ALL LOVES -  
- WILL BREAK AWAY.

WHEN SORROW CLOUDS THE MIND,  
THE SPINE GROWS STRONG;  
NO PRETTY WORDS CAN SOOTHE OR CURE  
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN BREAK.

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP,  
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS  
ITS WEAPON OF CHOICE: THE LOVE OF ALL  
LOVES.

NO PRETTY WORDS CAN EASE OR CURE  
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN DO.  
WHEN SORROW IS DEEP,  
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS ITS QUALITY LOVE.

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP,  
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS  
ITS WEAPON OF CHOICE: THE LOVE OF ALL  
LOVES!

*(Edward slowly emerges from his hiding place and  
walks towards Margaret, looking her over with  
unmistakable intent. She is momentarily unaware of  
his presence, however, as she is looking down at the  
glass in her hand.)*

**EDWARD**

*(coolly; unintentionally startling Margaret)*

SUCH FINE SENTIMENTS.  
TOO FINE, I THINK  
FOR A SLAVE.

*(He gently takes the glass from her hand. Assuming an air of gentility, Edward then pulls Margaret's red scarf out of his pocket and slowly ties it around her neck.)*

BUT I HAVE MY REMEDIES.  
A MAN HAS MANY REMEDIES.

*(Margaret resists his advances.)*

**MARGARET**  
*(agitated)*

THEY CAN NOT TOUCH  
THE SECRET SOUL.

**EDWARD**  
*(losing control)*

... YOUR SOUL  
IS NOT ON MY MIND.

*(Margaret begins to struggle vehemently. But Edward overpowers her, and drags her forcibly out of the parlor.)*

*(The curtain falls slowly.)*

**End of Act One**

\*\*\*\*\*

**INTERMISSION**

**MARGARET GARNER**

**Act II, scene i: Maplewood Plantation.**  
**Sunday, February 24, 1861, in the early evening.**

Anticipating a visit from Robert, who has been meeting her secretly on Sunday nights, Margaret goes to Cilla's cabin. She is disturbed to find Casey lurking nearby.

**MARGARET**  
HAS HE COME?

**CILLA**

NOT YET.

**MARGARET**

IS HE HERE?  
HAS HE COME?

**CILLA**

NOT YET.  
BUT SOON.

*(Margaret suddenly notices that Cilla is packing a carpetbag.)*

**MARGARET**  
*(unsettled)*

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?  
WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

**CILLA**  
*(with assurance)*

ROBERT IS MY SON  
AND HIS WORD IS GOLD.  
CALM YOURSELF.  
YOUR DAUGHTER IS WITH KATE.  
SO IS THE LITTLE ONE.

*(Margaret begins to search the room for signs of the children. She becomes increasingly anxious when she realizes they are not there.)*

**MARGARET**  
*(agitated)*

WHY ARE YOU FOLDING THEIR CLOTHES?  
YOU'RE PACKING THEM AWAY!  
WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING ME?  
HAS CASEY BEEN HERE?  
IS HE TAKING THEM AWAY?

**CILLA**

MARGARET, YOU HAVE CHANGED SO.  
EACH TIME YOU VISIT  
I SEE LESS OF YOU

AND MORE OF A WET HEN.

DON'T CUT UP SO.  
THE NEWS IS GOOD.

**MARGARET**

WHAT NEWS?  
PLEASE, CILLA.  
WHAT IS HAPPENING?

**(Arioso)**

**CILLA**  
IT'S TIME, DARLING GIRL.  
AT LAST,  
THE TIME HAS COME.  
THE PLAN IS SET.  
THAT'S WHY YOUR HUSBAND IS LATE.  
HE IS MAKING SURE  
THAT ALL IS IN PLACE.  
YOU'RE LEAVING TONIGHT!

**MARGARET**

SWEET JESUS!

**CILLA**

SWEETER THAN SYRUP  
AND RIGHT ON TIME.

**MARGARET**

SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE MEADOW  
SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE HAY;  
MY BABIES GOT SOME DREAMING TO DO  
CAUSE FREEDOM'S ON THE WAY.

**MARGARET and CILLA**

*(together, with joyful exuberance)*

SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE MEADOW  
SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE HAY;  
MY BABIES GOT SOME DREAMING TO DO  
CAUSE FREEDOM'S ON THE WAY.

*(Robert arrives, and immediately embraces Margaret.)*

**MARGARET**

*(feigning anger at Robert)*

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD LAST SUNDAY.

**ROBERT**

*(taking her seriously)*

I COULDN'T.  
I HAD TO BE SURE.

**MARGARET**

*(teasing)*

YOU OUGHT TO TELL ME  
WHAT YOU'RE DOING ... SOMETIMES!

**ROBERT**

YOU NEED TO KEEP IT QUIET IN HERE.

**MARGARET**

ALRIGHT.  
WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

**ROBERT**

THREE HOURS FROM NOW.

**MARGARET**

OH LORD.  
I AM GONNA CRY.

**ROBERT**

YOU? NOT YOU!  
MY SOLDIER GIRL'S GOING TO CRY?

*(Robert tries to embrace Margaret, but she pulls away, embarrassed to show her tears.)*

IT'S ALRIGHT.  
IT'S ALRIGHT.

**ARIETTA:**  
**“Go Cry, Girl”**

**ROBERT**  
*(tenderly)*

GO CRY, GIRL  
YOU HAVE WON YOUR TEARS;  
GO CRY, GIRL  
OBEY YOUR TENDER YEARS.  
THE STRING IS CUT  
THE TALE IS TOLD, I KNOW.  
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW.

THE GATE IS OPEN  
THE WAY IS CLEAR;  
THE WORK IS DONE  
AND THE TIME HAS COME, I KNOW.  
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW.

GO CRY, GIRL  
GIRL, GO CRY.

*(Margaret feels overwhelmed with love for Robert)*

**MARGARET**  
*(recovering her composure, but still anxious)*

WHERE WILL WE GO?

**ROBERT**

*(reassuringly)* IT'S ALRIGHT.

**MARGARET**

ARE THERE OTHERS?

**ROBERT**

IT'S ALRIGHT.

**MARGARET**

DO WE HAVE MONEY?  
WHERE WILL WE HIDE?

**ROBERT**

IT'S ALRIGHT.

*(emphatically)*

I AM IN CHARGE NOW.  
EVERYTHING IS READY --  
*(teasing)* EXCEPT YOU.  
NOW YOU HELP MAMA FINISH PACKING.  
I'M GOING FOR THE CHILDREN.

*(He leaves.)*

*(Cilla looks around the room one more time, to make sure that all of Robert and Margaret's belongings are packed.)*

**CILLA**  
*(locking the last bag)*

ALL DONE.  
I'M THROUGH.

**MARGARET**

WHERE ARE YOUR THINGS?  
I DON'T SEE YOUR THINGS, MAMA.

**CILLA**

DARLING GIRL,  
I AM TOO OLD TO TREAD NEW WATERS.  
I AM BOUND TO STAY HERE.

**MARGARET**

MAMA!  
YOU HAVE TO COME WITH US.

**CILLA**

NO, I DON'T.  
YOU KNOW I WON'T.

*(Briefly overcome by painful emotions, Cilla looks away from Margaret, who is attempting to make direct eye contact with her mother-in-law.)*

**(Accompanied Recitative)**

SEEING YOU,



MY SON AND MY GRANDCHILDREN  
GONE FROM THIS PLACE,  
AWAY FROM SATAN'S BREATH  
IS MY BLESSING.

DON'T MOURN ME.  
WHEN MY FAMILY IS SAFE,  
I WILL BE ONLY *NEAR* THE CROSS --  
NOT ON IT.

**ARIA:**  
**“He is By”**  
**CILLA**

HE IS BY,  
FOREVER BY ME.  
IN HIS SHADOW  
I WILL LINGER ON A WHILE  
TIL HE CALLS ME.

HE IS BY,  
FOREVER BY ME.  
NO TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD  
HE WILL COME IN SILENCE  
AND GATHER ME IN HIS ARMS.

HE IS BY,  
FOREVER BY ME.  
NO TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD  
HE WILL COME IN SILENCE  
AND GATHER ME IN HIS ARMS.

**MARGARET**

PLEASE DON'T CONFINE US  
TO THE EDGE OF YOUR MIND IN SHADOW.  
WE DON'T WANT TRUMPETS  
OR STREETS OF GOLD.  
AS WE LEAVE IN SILENCE,  
GIVE US YOUR ARMS.

**CILLA and MARGARET**  
*(together)*

AMEN.

**MARGARET**

IT'LL BREAK MY HEART  
KNOWING THAT YOU ARE STILL HERE.  
WE CAN'T BE FREE  
WITHOUT YOU.

ROBERT WILL INSIST.

**CILLA**

HUSH, CHILD.  
HEAR ME NOW:  
DON'T WASTE MUSCLE WHERE NONE IS  
WANTED.  
YOU WILL NEED EVERY BONE AND SINEW  
PLUS YOUR MIND  
TO GET AWAY FROM HERE.  
FOLLOW YOUR HUSBAND.  
SAVE YOUR CHILDREN, MOTHER!

REAR UP, NOW.  
HELP ROBERT WITH THE CHILDREN.

*(They hear footsteps approaching the cabin.)*

HERE HE COMES.

*(Margaret and Cilla are shocked when Casey, not Robert, storms into the cabin. Casey glances around the cabin, then picks up one of their carpetbags and throws it across the room.)*

**CASEY**

PLANNING A LITTLE TRIP?  
OR JUST CLEANIN' OUT THE STY?

**ROBERT**

*(calling from outside)*

THE CHILDREN ARE COMING!  
THE CHILDREN ARE ...

*(Upon entering the cabin, Robert halts abruptly when he sees Casey.)*

**CASEY**

WELL, I'LL BE. [WELL, I'LL BE.]  
LOOK WHAT CRAWLED OUT OF THE WOODS.  
PAPPY BEAR.  
COMIN' TO GET MAMMY BEAR  
AND ALL THE LITTLE CUBS?

*(to Cilla)*

I GUESS YOU MUST BE GOLDBLOCKS.  
SEEMS THE PORRIDGE IS ALL EATEN UP.  
LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN OFFER YOU.

*(pulling a pistol out of his coat)*

GUN POWDER MIGHT BE A LITTLE DRY  
BUT GOLDBLOCKS GOT TO EAT,  
DON'T SHE?

*(Pointing the pistol at Cilla's mouth, Casey motions to  
Robert and Margaret with his free hand.)*

LET'S JUST LINE UP OVER THERE.

*(Impulsively, Robert attacks Casey. A violent struggle  
ensues, during which Robert manages to wrest away  
Casey's pistol. He grabs Casey from behind, yet  
hesitates to shoot him.)*

**CASEY**

YOU KILL ME,  
BOTH OF US IS DEAD.  
YOUR FAMILY TOO.

**ROBERT**

*(livid, filled with rage)*

AND IF YOU LIVE, WILL THEY?

**MARGARET**

DON'T KILL HIM.  
HE'S ALREADY DEAD.

**CASEY** *(to Margaret)*

YOU BLACK SLUT!  
DON'T YA BEG FOR ME!

**ROBERT**

DOG WITHOUT TEETH!  
REMEMBER HELL?  
GO HOME TO IT NOW!

*(Robert strangles Casey to death)*

**CILLA**

LAP OF GOD, ROBERT.  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

**ROBERT**

PROVED MY WORTH  
AS A MAN AND YOUR SON.

**CILLA**

*(clasping her hands)*

FORGIVE HIM, FATHER.  
THIS MAY BE THE END.

**MARGARET**

NO!  
NO, WE CAN'T CHANGE WHAT IS DONE.  
QUICK! ROBERT,  
YOU HAVE TO RUN!

**ROBERT**

I CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALL HERE!

**MARGARET**

TELL ME WHERE TO MEET YOU.  
THEN GO!

**ROBERT**

*(agitated)*

THE BOTTOM...  
BY THE MIMOSA.  
THE GRASS IS TALL THERE.  
WHEN THE MOON HITS  
THE TOP OF THE PINES,  
THE WAGON WILL BE THERE.

**CILLA**

HURRY, SON!  
MAKE TRACKS, NOW!  
WE'LL HANDLE GOD'S OUTCAST.

*(She covers Casey's body.)*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET.  
OH, MY SWEET, LOVING WOMAN!

**MARGARET**

THE BOTTOM...  
TALL GRASS...  
MIMOSA...

**ROBERT**

BE THERE.  
WHEN THE MOONLIGHT...

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
*(together)*

...TOUCHES PINE.

**ROBERT**  
*(a bit more anxious)*

LISTEN FOR THE ...

**ROBERT and MARGARET**

...WAGON WHEELS.

**ROBERT**

WATCH FOR THE...

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
... MOONLIGHT,  
WE'LL MEET YOU IN THE MOONLIGHT.

*(Robert kisses her.)*

**MARGARET**

*GO!*

*(Robert runs away)*

**End of Act Two, Scene One**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Act II, scene ii:**  
**In the Free State of Ohio, three weeks later.**

At twilight, on an evening in late March 1861. Three weeks have passed since Robert and Margaret successfully escaped from Maplewood, and crossed the frozen Ohio River on the Kentucky border to reach Cincinnati, a city in the "Free State" of Ohio.

Robert is standing underneath a huge elm tree, near the entrance to an underground shed where he and Margaret, now both outlaws, are hiding with their children in an attempt to avoid being recaptured and returned to their masters. Glimmering hot coals can be seen in a hole in the shed's earthen floor.

**MARGARET**

*(emerging from the shed)*

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?  
WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT HIM?

**ROBERT**

THEY SAY THIS NEW PRESIDENT  
DOESN'T HISS LIKE A SNAKE;  
THAT HE TALKS LIKE A MAN.

**MARGARET**

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?  
WHAT HAS HE SAID?

**ROBERT**

THAT A HOUSE DIVIDED  
CANNOT STAND.  
AND THAT THE UNION IS SACRED.

**MARGARET**

THAT MEANS WAR...  
YOU BETTER MAKE YOUR SPIRIT READY,  
DARLING.

OH ROBERT,  
THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED.  
THEY CRY IN THEIR SLEEP.

**ROBERT**

I KNOW, I KNOW...  
BUT FREEDOM IS IN OUR TEETH.

**MARGARET**

*(with hope)*

TELL ME AGAIN.  
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS PLACE?

**ROBERT**

OHIO.  
IT MEANS 'BEAUTIFUL.'

**MARGARET**

IS IT?  
IS IT BEAUTIFUL?

**ROBERT**

SO I HEAR.  
A BEAUTIFUL PLACE FOR A FUTURE.

**MARGARET**

TELL ME.  
TELL ME WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BE LIKE.

**ROBERT**

IT WILL BE YOU AS MY WIFE  
NO OTHER MAN CAN TOUCH OR CLAIM.  
IT WILL BE THE CHILDREN  
SEATED, NOT BENT.  
SEATED IN SCHOOL ROOMS,  
NOT BENDING THROUGH ROWS OF CORN.  
IT WILL BE ME PAID FOR MY LABOR  
WITH COIN OF THE REALM.

**MARGARET**

WILL I PLANT A GARDEN?  
MEND YOUR SHIRTS BY LAMPLIGHT?

**ROBERT**

IT WILL BE JUST SO.

**MARGARET**

WILL I WATCH FROM A WINDOW  
OUR CHILDREN TUMBLING IN CLOVER AND  
ROSEMARY?

**ROBERT**

TRUST ME, MARGARET.  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.

**MARGARET**

WILL THEY SWIM IN CLEAR WATER  
UNTIL THEIR SKIN GLITTERS LIKE BRASS?  
TELL ME... TELL ME.

**ROBERT**

THEY WILL.  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.

LOOK! DO YOU SEE THIS TREE?  
HOW ITS LOWERING BRANCHES TO  
PROTECT YOU  
NO MATTER WHAT THE WEATHER BRINGS.  
IMAGINE...

**MARGARET**

...THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE...

**ROBERT**

...THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**

*(together)*

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

**ROBERT**

*(suddenly coming to his senses)*

COME INSIDE.  
IT'S DANGEROUS OUT HERE.  
SOMEONE MIGHT SEE US.

*(As they walk back to the shed, Robert puts his arm protectively around Margaret.)*

*(Once inside the shed, Robert thinks he hears a group of men approaching, and grabs his pistol. Margaret runs to protect her children, sleeping in the corner behind a blanket. Accompanied by a group of slave catchers, Edward Gaines – who appears to be somewhat intoxicated -- pounds on the shed door.)*

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

OPEN UP! OPEN UP!

*(No sound is heard from inside the shed.)*

**EDWARD**

IF BLOODSHED IS ON YOUR MIND,  
DON'T WORRY.  
I JUST WANT WHAT IS MINE.

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

OPEN UP! OPEN UP!

**EDWARD**

NO HARM.

**SLAVE CATCHERS**

NO HARM.

**EDWARD**

COME SOFTLY.

**SLAVE CATCHERS**

OPEN UP! OPEN UP!

**EDWARD**

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

*(Gaines breaks down the shed door and fires his pistol in the air. Robert shoots at Gaines, but misses his target. Overpowered, Robert is knocked to the ground and tie him up. Margaret emerges from behind the childrens' blanket. Emotionally spent, she falls to her knees)*

**MARGARET**  
*(grief-stricken)*

NO! NO MORE!  
NO! NO MORE!

*(getting up from the floor)*  
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US BE?  
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US ALONE?

**EDWARD**

LEAVE MURDERERS BE?  
I OWN HIM!  
I OWN YOUR CHILDREN!  
I OWN YOU!

**MARGARET**  
*(pleading)*

SOMEBODY HELP US!  
PLEASE, SOMEBODY!  
PLEASE, NO MORE!

*(Margaret weeps silently as Edward removes his hat, overcoat, and gloves.)*

**EDWARD**

MY BED IS COLD, GIRL.  
IT WANTS WARMING.  
REMEMBER... REMEMBER?

*(with increasing vigor and excitement)*

REMEMBER THE BED WARMER YOU RAN  
OVER MY SHEETS?  
FIRST YOU FILLED IT WITH HOT COALS AS I  
RECALL...

**MARGARET**

*(wildly)*

HERE THEY ARE!  
TAKE THEM! TAKE THEM!

*(With her bare hands, Margaret grabs some coal out of the smoldering fire and lunges at Gaines, attempting to burn him. He manages to grasp her wrists, and forces her to drop the coals. He notices that her hands have been scorched.)*

**EDWARD**

PRETEND TO BE CRAZY AS MUCH AS YOU  
LIKE.

*(derisively)*

MANGLE YOURSELF, I DON'T CARE.

**EDWARD**

CASEY WAS NOT ENOUGH?  
WILL YOU KILL ME TOO?  
OH NO, MY LITTLE CROW.

*(A slave catcher returns to the shed.)*

**SLAVE CATCHER**

HE'S BOUND AND READY, SIR.

**MARGARET**

DAMN YOUR MARBLE EYES,  
DAMN YOUR SLITHERING SOUL!  
YOUR MISERABLE, PUTRID HEART.

**EDWARD**

*(to the slave catcher)*

TAKE THE YOUNG ONES TO THE WAGON.  
THEN LIGHT THE FIRE.  
THE NIGHT IS COLD  
AND PROMISES TO BE LONG.

*(In the dim light, Robert can be seen standing outside on a tall box underneath the tree; a noose is hanging around his neck. One by one, the slave catchers plant their torches in the ground, surrounding the condemned man with fire.)*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET! MARGARET!  
I LOVE YOU!  
I LOVE . . .

*(The box on which Robert is standing is kicked away; he dies instantly.)*

**MARGARET**

NEVER TO BE BORN AGAIN INTO SLAVERY!

*(Margaret violently attacks and murders her two children: first slitting the throat of her daughter, then stabbing the younger one.)*

*(Horried, Gaines and his men surround Margaret, who has collapsed.)*

**End of Act Two, Scene Two**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Act II**

INTERMEZZO

Total darkness envelops the stage. Gradually, the image of Margaret, alone, becomes visible. Her state of mind is changing; the intense isolation she feels in this moment "out of time" is mirrored by the dislocating blackness that surrounds her.

**MARGARET**

*(consoling herself)*

AH . . .

LIKE A RIVER RUSHING  
FROM THE GRIP OF ITS BANKS.

*(With defiant grandeur, Margaret embraces her life's circumstances.)*

DARKNESS, I SALUTE YOU.  
REASON HAS NO POWER HERE,  
OVER THE DISCONSOLATE.  
GRIEF IS MY PLEASURE;  
THEIF OF LIFE, MY LOVER NOW.

*(with quite acceptance)*

DARKNESS, I SALUTE YOU.

*(fade to black)*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Act II, scene iii:**  
**In a courtroom, in early April 1861.**

**ACT II, scene iv:**  
**in a Courtroom, the next day.**

*Having followed the trial of Margaret Garner with great interest and curiosity, the townspeople fill the local courtroom in eager anticipation of her sentencing by the three presiding judges. Margaret sits in court surrounded by militia officers; Caroline, George, and Edward deliver final testimony.*

**JUDGES**

WHAT IS THE CHARGE?

**EDWARD**

THEFT, YOUR HONORS.

**JUDGES**

AND THE VALUE OF THE THEFT?

**EDWARD**

HUNDREDS, YOUR HONORS.  
HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS LOST.

**JUDGES**

HAVE THE STOLEN GOODS BEEN FOUND?

**EDWARD**

THEY HAVE, SIR.

**JUDGES**

AND WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF THESE  
GOODS?

**EDWARD**

*(looking at Margaret)*

RUINED. USELESS.

**JUDGES**

HOW DID THEY COME TO BE RUINED?

**EDWARD**

THE ACCUSED DESTROYED THEM, YOUR  
HONORS.

**JUDGES**

BY ACCIDENT OR DELIBERATELY?

**EDWARD**

DELIBERATELY.

**JUDGES**

DESCRIBE, PLEASE, THE DESTROYED GOODS.

**EDWARD**

CHILDREN, SIR.  
TWO CHILDREN, BOTH MINE.  
I MEAN, BOTH MY *PROPERTY*.

**CAROLINE**

*(in an aside to Gaines)*

FATHER, THIS IS MADNESS.

**EDWARD**

*(retorting loudly, embarrassing Caroline)*

MADNESS, YES –  
HERS, NOT MINE.

**CAROLINE AND GEORGE**

*(pleading)*

ALL THE MORE REASON TO SPARE HER.

**CAROLINE**

YOUR HONORS, MAY I SPEAK?

*(The judges nod their consent.)*

THE CHARGE IS FALSE.  
NOT THEFT, BUT MURDER  
IT SHOULD BE.

**JUDGES**

THAT IS A VERY DIFFERENT MATTER,  
YET IT COMES TO THE SAME THING.

THE ISSUE BEFORE US  
IS OF PROPERTY...  
A FINANCIAL LOSS ...  
NOT A DEBATE ABOUT THE HUMAN SOUL.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

*(together)*

RESPECTFULLY, WE BEG TO DIFFER.  
A MOTHER WHO *KILLS* HER CHILDREN  
CANNOT BE SAID TO *STEAL* THEM.

**EDWARD**

*(interrupting angrily)*

THEY DID NOT BELONG TO HER.  
SHE HAS NO RIGHT TO THEM,  
LIVING OR DEAD . . .  
LIVING OR DEAD.

IT IS CLEAR IN OUR SYSTEM  
SHE OWNS *NOTHING* --  
LEAST OF ALL MY SLAVES.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(assertively)*

YES! YES!  
LISTEN TO HIM.  
HE IS RIGHT!  
HE HAS THE RIGHT IDEA.

**JUDGE I**

*(with authority)*

ORDER IN THE COURT! . . .

**JUDGE II**

ORDER IN THE COURT! . . .

**JUDGE III**

*(emphatically)*

. . . ORDER IN THE COURT!  
ORDER IN THE NAME OF THE LAW OF THIS  
COUNTRY!

*(Silence suddenly fills the courtroom.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(quietly, with respect but also conviction)*

SHE BORE THEM, YOUR HONORS.  
THEY ARE HERS UNTIL THEY COME OF AGE.  
SHE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR LIVES.

**JUDGES**

*(sarcastically)*

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, MADAM?  
ON AN ISLAND IN THE SEA?  
YOU ARE SPEAKING OF A SLAVE,  
NOT SOMEONE LIKE YOU OR ME.

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE.  
SLAVERY IS NOT A MATTER  
FOR A SLAVE TO JUDGE.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

SLAVERY IS NOT A MATTER  
FOR A SLAVE TO JUDGE.

**CAROLINE**

FATHER,  
MARGARET IS OF NO VALUE TO YOU,  
*(looking at Margaret)* OR ANYONE.

SHE WAS MORE THAN A MOTHER TO ME.  
NOW HER SILENCE SCREAMS A GRIEF  
WE DARE NOT KNOW.

**EDWARD**

*(to himself)*

I HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME.



**CAROLINE**

BUT YOU CAN HELP CHANGE THE DEBATE  
RAGING THE LAND.

**JUDGES**

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE.

**EDWARD**

*(to Caroline and George)*

I HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME.

**CAROLINE**

LET THE CHARGE REFLECT  
OUR CRIMES AS WELL AS HERS.

**EDWARD**

I HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME.

**JUDGES**

HE HAS COMMITTED NO CRIME.

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE.

WE DO NOT MAKE LAWS  
OR FORSAKE LAWS,  
WE FOLLOW THEM PRECISELY.

THE CHARGE IS THEFT,  
THE SENTENCE IS JUST:  
THIS ONE WILL BE  
MADE READY FOR EXECUTION.

*(While the judges confer with one another, Caroline  
pleads with her father to intervene and have the verdict  
overturned)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(relieved)*

BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND READY FOR EXECUTION.

SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME!  
AND SHE IS NOT ...LIKE YOU ...OR ME!

BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND READY FOR EXECUTION.

**MARGARET**

*(quietly, to herself)*

I AM NOT LIKE YOU.  
I AM ME.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(to one another)*

SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME . . .

*(Margaret suddenly rises from her chair, and glances  
around the courtroom, glaring at the onlookers.)*

**MARGARET**

*(emphatically)*

I AM NOT LIKE YOU.  
I AM ME!

**Judges**

*(to Margaret)*

SILENCE!  
YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY.

**MARGARET**

*(to the judges; refusing to sit down)*

YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY.  
I AM NOT LIKE YOU.

*(defiantly)* I AM ME!

I AM ME!

I AM!

*(the militia officers restrain Margaret)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY . . .

**JUDGE III**

*(pointedly, looking directly at Margaret)*

I ORDER YOU  
IN THE NAME OF THE LAW OF THIS LAND  
TO BE EXECUTED  
BY SUNRISE TOMORROW!

*(he bangs his gavel resolutely; the three judges  
immediately recess to their chambers)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(reassured)*

SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME  
SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME...

*(Margaret is led away; the townspeople file out of the  
courtroom)*

**CAROLINE**

*(dismayed by the verdict)*

FATHER,  
YOU MUST URGE CLEMENCY  
FROM THE COURT.  
THEY WILL HEAR YOU.  
THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOU.

**GEORGE**

DON'T LET HER DIE  
WITHOUT DIGNITY.  
DON'T LET HER HANG  
FOR THE WRONG REASON.

**Edward**

*(disturbed, but betraying no sign of emotion)*

SHE MUST SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES  
OF WHAT SHE HAS DONE.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

AND SO MUST YOU.

**EDWARD**

*(angrily)*

MEANING WHAT, EXACTLY?

**CAROLINE**

WE ARE SO AT ODDS  
IN THESE PAST FEW YEARS.  
OUR LAND WILL NOT SURVIVE  
THIS VIOLENT TEST.

**EDWARD**

DAUGHTER, ARE YOU THREATENING ME?

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

NO. NO.  
WE ARE BEGGING YOU.

**CAROLINE**

DON'T FAIL ME.  
IT IS ALL IN YOUR HANDS.

*(Edward turns away as George and Caroline start to  
leave the courtroom. Caroline looks back at her father,  
then impulsively runs to him. She takes his hands, and  
presses one against her cheek, kissing his palm.)*

*(Caroline and George exit.)*

*(alone in the courtroom, Edward contemplates the  
course of his life.)*

**Arioso**

**EDWARD**

*(examining his hands)*

NOTHING. I SEE NOTHING AT ALL.  
NO WOUND, NO RASH.  
YET THEY BURN.

WHAT LIGHTS THE FLAME?  
IS IT CAROLINE'S KISS,  
OR MARGARET'S COALS OF FIRE?

*(Edward steps forward a few feet – thereby 'leaving'  
the courtroom – and moves  
to a dimly-lit area of the stage)*

*(dismissing any such questions)*

DAMN IT TO HELL!  
I AM APPROVED.  
CLEARLY WHAT THE WORLD INSISTS  
I SHOULD BE.  
LAW AND CUSTOM ENDORSE ME.

*(reconsidering)*

YET MY ONLY CHILD  
LOOKS AT ME WITH STRANGE EYES;  
COLD APPRAISAL WHERE NAKED ADORATION  
USED TO LIVE.

*(aggressively)*

AM I NOT A LEGAL MAN?  
GOD'S BLUEPRINT,  
FLAWED IN MERELY ORDINARY WAYS?

*(assuming an aristocratic air)*

HATS STILL TIP,  
GENTLEWOMEN DIP THEIR HEADS  
COURTEOUSLY TO ME.

*(introspectively)*

AND YET. AND YET.  
THEY SEAR LIKE MOLTEN LEAD.

*(inwardly, glancing at his hands)*

LOOK AT THEM. LOOK AT THEM!

*(upon reflection)*

IF THE FLAW IS IN THE BLUEPRINT  
WHY MUST I CHOOSE?

IF THE FLAW IS IN THE BLUEPRINT --  
THEN I *MUST* CHOOSE.

*(the lights dim slowly)*

\* \* \* \* \*

**ACT II, Scene 4:**  
**In the town square of Richwood Station, Kentucky;**  
**The next morning, at dawn.**

*(A group of local citizens -- including the town  
authorities; Caroline and George; and Cilla, as well  
as some slaves from nearby plantations -- processes*

*somberly into the town square at Richwood Station.  
Great sorrow fills the air, for they are accompanying  
Margaret Garner to her execution. All are sobered by  
the imminence of death. Seemingly, the only person  
not in the crowded plaza is Edward Gaines.)*

*(The hangman brings forth the condemned prisoner.  
Margaret's hands, bandaged from the burns she  
received from the hot coals, have not yet been tied up  
in preparation for execution)*

*(Margaret is led up the scaffold steps. When she  
reaches the top of the platform, the hangman places a  
noose around her neck and positions her on the  
gallows' trap door. Scattered about are a number of  
ropes, which will be used to secure her limbs tightly.)*

*(Edward Gaines runs in, excitedly waving a document)*

**EDWARD**

HOLD ON! HOLD ON!  
I'M TELLING YOU TO HOLD ON.  
THE JUDGES HAVE GRANTED CLEMENCY...

*(in a pointed aside to George and Caroline)*

CLEMENCY.

*(looking around at the faces in the crowd, seeking  
some sign of approval or acknowledgement of his  
beneficence)*

AND IF THE GUILTY PARTY REPENTS  
HER MONSTROUS CRIME,  
SHE WILL BE REMANDED  
TO MY CUSTODY.

*(Upon hearing the stay of execution -- which eliminates  
the need for him to bind the prisoner's body -- the  
hangman leaves Margaret's side and walks over to the  
edge of the gallows platform to accept the legal  
document from Edward)*

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**  
*(together)*

THANK GOD. THANK YOU.

*(overjoyed and relieved, Caroline embraces her father.  
George shakes Edward's hand)*

**CILLA**  
*(stepping forward, thrilled)*

THANK YOU, SWEET JESUS.

*(to Margaret)*

DO YOU HEAR THAT?  
YOU WILL LIVE, DAUGHTER.  
PRAISE MY MAKER,  
YOU WILL LIVE, MY ANGEL.

**MARGARET**  
*(in a state of transcendence)*

OH YES. I WILL LIVE.  
I WILL LIVE.  
I WILL LIVE AMONG THE CHERISHED.  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.  
SIDE BY SIDE IN OUR GARDEN  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.  
RINGED BY A HARVEST OF LOVE.  
NO MORE BRUTAL DAYS OR NIGHTS.

*(making eye contact with Cilla in the crowd)*

GOODBYE, SORROW...  
DEATH IS DEAD FOREVER.  
I LIVE.  
OH YES, I LIVE!

*(While the crowd's attention is focused elsewhere, Margaret deliberately trips the trap door's lever and hangs herself. Startled by the onlooker's screams, the hangman quickly turns around and is shocked to see Margaret's limp body dangling just inches off the ground. He rushes over in a futile attempt to save her.)*

**CILLA**

MARGARET... NO!  
MARGARET!  
DEAR GOD, NO MORE.

*(Caroilne notices Margaret's scarf in her father's front pocket. She removes, it, silently ascends the scaffold, and reverently ties it around Margaret's waist.)*

**EDWARD**  
*(stunned; looking at his hands)*

NO BREEZE, NO COOL STREAM  
CALMS THESE PALMS.  
UNHEALED, THERE IS NO PEACE.  
*(He walks away.)*

\* \* \* \* \*

## EPILOGUE

*(The hangman unties the noose around Margaret's neck, and holds her in his arms before the townspeople and slaves. The light begins to dim; eventually, all that is visible is Margaret's body, which seems to float alone and above the crowd.)*

**ALL**

SWEET JESUS,  
HELP US BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT.

**THE TOWNSPEOPLE**  
*(white chorus, Caroline and George)*

CHASTENED BY THY HOLY MIGHT,

**THE SLAVES**  
*(including Cilla)*

GUIDED BY THY HOLY LIGHT  
INTO THY BLESSED SIGHT.

**ALL**  
*(but Cilla)*

HAVE MERCY. HAVE MERCY ON US.  
HELP US BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT.

**CILLA**

SOON, SOON MY BOLD-HEARTED GIRL  
I'LL BE THERE. I'LL BE THERE.

**THE SLAVES**  
*(without Cilla)*

BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT,  
BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT;  
LET HER LINGER A WHILE  
AND RIDE THE LIGHT,  
AND RIDE THE LIGHT.

*(the curtain descends slowly)*

\* \* \* \* \*  
**END OF OPERA**