

THE TWO ORPHANS

By Theresa Rebeck

Adapted from the 19th Century Melodrama

"The Two Orphans"

c July 2005 Theresa Rebeck

Lyrics by Theresa Rebeck and John Sheehy

Music by Kim D. Sherman

THE TWO ORPHANS
CHARACTERS

Henriette	The Two Orphans, sisters, ex-slaves
Louise	
The Marquis	An evil scalawag
Stone	His sidekick, ex-slave
La Frochard	A petty thief
Pierre	Her crippled son
Jake	Her brutish son
Marianne	His beaten mistress
Armand	An aristocrat
Bloodgood	His uncle
Diane	Bloodgood's mysterious wife

ENSEMBLE:
Republicans
Prostitutes
Madame
Angry Woman
Reginald Taylor
Blues singer
Street Woman

SET

A flexible area which will represent a seedy marketplace in the heart of New Orleans; a decadent apartment in the French quarter; a businessman's office; several squalid apartments; and several locations on the streets of New Orleans.

THE TWO ORPHANS

ACT I

A wild party is taking place on the streets of New Orleans. As it dies down, DIANE enters. She looks around, nervous, unsure of herself; she is lost. Some of the local denizens take note of her, as she is dressed with considerably greater elegance than is naturally found in the inhabitants of this quarter. As she cautiously moves across the stage, she suddenly finds herself face to face with STONE. She backs away, stunned, then flees. Above, the MARQUIS watches.

MADAM

LIFE ON THE STREETS
CAN GET A BIT STICKY
IN NEW ORLEANS

As Stone starts to slink away, the Marquis stops him.

MARQUIS

You know that lady, Stone?

STONE

Should I?

DENIZEN

SITUATIONS YOU FIND
TURN OUT TO BE TRICKY
IN THE STREETS
OF NEW ORLEANS?

MARQUIS

She's married to a rather wealthy banker, so it might be profitable if you did.

He peels some dollar bills off a roll and hands them to Stone.

PROSTITUTE

NEW ORLEANS
HAS ITS TWISTS AND ITS TURNS
ONE EASILY LOSES ONE'S WAY

MARQUIS

You give me a call if you think of anything.

Stone pockets the money impassively and starts to
go.

ANOTHER DENIZEN

BUT IF YOU BEND
AND FLOW WITH THE TIDE
THERE IS PLEASURE
IN GOING ASTRAY

MEN

CORRUPTION CAN BE FUN!

WOMEN

TRA LA

MEN

SO MUCH CAN BE DONE, WITH A KNIFE, OR A GUN!
BRIBERY HAS ITS CHARM

WOMEN

TRA LA

MEN

AND WARM WILLING FLESH NEVER DID ANY HARM.

WOMEN

CORRUPTION CAN BE NICE!

MEN

TRA LA

WOMEN

TO BE MORE PRECISE, AN ERUPTION OF VICE
BECKONS AND DRAWS YOU IN

MEN

COME ON!

WOMEN
LET GO YOUR DEFENSE AND COMMIT A NEW SIN

ALL
NEW ORLEANS HAS NO INDUSTRY,
NO CAUSE TO GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING,

JENNY PAUL
NO LAWS!

ALL
WELL, MAYBE A FEW LAWS
FOR THE FEW TIMES WHEN LAWS CAN BE BENT,
MONEY WELL SPENT,
JUDGES RELENT ...

MARLI
And we get away with murder!

MEN
NEW ORLEANS HAS WILD PARTIES
WHERE WILD WOMEN CAN SUCK ON JULEP ALL
NIGHT

WOMEN
TRA LA
WELL, THAT'S NOT THE ONLY THING
THEY'VE BEEN KNOWN TO SUCK ON

ALL
WHEN THINGS GET TOO HOT
TAKE WHAT THEY'VE GOT,
LIKE IT OR NOT ...

ABBY
You can only arrive a virgin!

Amid the chorus, Marquis grabs Stone

MARQUIS
Hold on.

Stone turns and looks at him. The Marquis grins.
Music continues, under.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

I'm having a little party down in the quarter tonight, and there's someone I'd like you to invite. (Presentational) Any minute now, there are two little girls gonna get off the afternoon train from Baton Rouge. I passed them in the station at Ponchatrain just a couple of hours ago, and by God I promise you will never see a prettier pair of colored girls if you live a million years.

(The chorus starts to recreate the train station as Louise and Henriette Enter)

While they're loadin' up the train, these two take a little stroll around the yard, and the taller one is sorta leading the other around by the arm, kinda awkward like, weird, you know,

(Louise almost bumps into Marquis)

You, Missy, what's wrong with your sister there? She blind or something?

(Henriette, turns to him with strength)

HENRIETTE

Yes. She is.

They continue on. The train scene fades

MARQUIS

None of this yassir, nawsir, beg pardon, massa shit, just "Yes. She is." A colored girl; she looks like she's about to spit. And she takes the blind girl by the arm and walks by me like a queen. I never seen anything like it. By God, I am gonna have that girl.

STONE

You want 'em both?

MARQUIS

No, you can do what you want with the blind one. I heard her tell one of the other passengers they got some farmer meeting them here, gonna take 'em in. Seems they're orphans. So you get rid of him and bring her by my place.

The music picks up as Marquis exits

ABBY

You can only arrive a virgin!

ALL

CORRUPTION CAN BE GREAT!

WOMEN

TRA LA

ALL
DON'T GET IN A STATE,
COME AND FILL UP YOUR PLATE.
ONLY A FOOL WOULD STARVE

MEN
TRA LA

ALL
SO TAKE OUT YOUR KNIFE
AND WE MIGHT LET YOU CARVE!

JUSTIN
THE ROAD TO HELL
TAKES A SHORT CUT
THROUGH NEW ORLEANS,
That's a fact.

JORDAN AND ANTHONY
TAKE A LEFT
ON BOURBON STREET,
AND DON'T LOOK BACK.

GWEN
NEW ORLEANS HAS SECRETS TO TELL
TO THOSE WHO SUCCOMB TO HER CHARMS.
SO ALLOW YOURSELF TO HEED OUR ADVICE
AND MELT IN HER WARM WILLING ARMS.

As the chorus fade into New Orleans, a prostitute
laughs and Louise and Henriette approach.

SCENE TWO

LOUISE
MY OLD GOLDEN SLIPPERS

HENRIETTE
I am not singing, Louise.

LOUISE
MY BETTER THAN SUNDAY SHOES.

HENRIETTE

So you can just get that out of your head right now.

LOUISE

I KEEP THEM HIDDEN SET AWAY

Come on, Henriette

SET AWAY FOR FREEDOM DAY

OUR CHAINS OF WOE AT LAST TO LOSE

FREEDOM DAY

She tugs at Henriette.

HENRIETTE

(unwilling)

FREEDOM DAY

LOUISE

OUR CHAINS OF WOE AT LAST TO LOSE.

Why won't you sing?

HENRIETTE

Because I can't sing! You do the singing for both of us.

LOUISE

Then dance.

HENRIETTE

I'm not gonna dance, neither.

LOUISE

Just for me, come on.

HENRIETTE

You're blind, Louise. What do you care if I'm dancing or not? You can't see.

LOUISE

MY OLD GOLDEN SLIPPERS

BEEN HIDDEN FOR SO LONG

THEY GLOW NOW, LIKE A BURNING SWORD

BURNING FOR OUR TRUE REWARD

THEY DANCE ME PAST THIS WORLD OF WRONG

DANCE ME PAST

HENRIETTE

DANCE ME PAST

HENRIETTE AND LOUISE
 DANCE ME PAST THIS WORLD OF WRONG.
 (Henriette does, finally, do a little dance.)
 MY OLD GOLDEN SLIPPERS
 DEAR TO ME AS ANYTHING
 I'LL WEAR 'EM ONCE AGAIN
 AND DANCE MY FREEDOM WHEN
 AT LAST MY SOUL CAN SING.

HENRIETTE

We're here. We're in New Orleans.

LOUISE

(Excited)

We're here?

HENRIETTE

Yeah, honey. We're almost home.

(Excited)

There's a big open square, and around it there's rows of buildings, two and three stories tall with little metal fences the windows--

LOUISE

Fences on windows!

HENRIETTE

Yeah, it don't make sense, but it looks pretty--and lots of trees hung all over with moss everywhere, and the river--the Mississippi's right there Louise, with the mist rising off it like something holy, like, oh my, it looks like--

LOUISE

(Laughing) What? What?

HENRIETTE

It looks like the future!

The two girls laugh and hug each other.

LOUISE

Do you see people? Are there people?

HENRIETTE

It's a city, Louise. Of course there's people.

LOUISE

Do you see Mama's cousin? Is anyone looking for us?

In fact, Stone is, but when Henriette turns, he turns away.

HENRIETTE

(Unsure)

No.

LOUISE

Henriette?

HENRIETTE

(suddenly wary)

Yeah, honey?

LOUISE

What's the matter? All a sudden, you sound different.

HENRIETTE

I just got a bad feeling. Like somebody stepped on my foot.

LOUISE

You always have a bad feeling.

HENRIETTE

Louise, we're a couple of colored girls with no friends in the world, we got no money, you're blind and we don't know nobody in this city except for a man I never seen who isn't here. Seems to me if I want to have a bad feeling, I should probably just go right ahead and have it.

STONE

(singing, to himself)

MY OLD GOLDEN SLIPPERS

MY BETTER THAN SUNDAY SHOES...

(Henriette and Louise stop, turn. He continues to himself.)

I KEEP THEM HIDDEN SET AWAY

SET AWAY, TILL FREEDOM DAY

HENRIETTE

What's that you're singing?

STONE

You talking to me? What can I do for you?

LOUISE

That song. That song seems kinda familiar.

STONE

That's my mama's song. She and her sister used to sing that song, when they was little girls.

FREEDOM DAY

FREEDOM DAY

LOUISE/STONE

OUR CHAINS AT LAST TO LOSE

STONE

Now how do you know that? Never heard anybody but my mama and her sister sing it.

HENRIETTE

Your mama's sister. Did she have two girls?

STONE

Yeah she did, though I never met 'em.

HENRIETTE

What are their names? (Pause) Those two girls. What were they called?

STONE

My relations? Henriette and Louise.

HENRIETTE

Louise, it's him, it's cousin Martin!

LOUISE

What?

HENRIETTE

It's a miracle--

STONE

Yeah, that's what it is, all right!

(He puts his arm around Henriette and
leads her away from Louise.)

Well, what do you know? I'm gonna take you home with me, meet my wife--

HENRIETTE

Your wife? I thought--mama said, she died, before the war--

STONE

Not her, my second wife--

HENRIETTE

That was your second wife.

STONE

Oh, man, I just lose track--

HENRIETTE

(Trying to pull away) Wait a minute--

STONE

I don't got time to argue about it, honey--

HENRIETTE

Let go of me--

LOUISE

Henriette--no, what are you doing--Henriette--

HENRIETTE

(Overlap, struggling wildly)

LET GO OF ME--LET ME GO--Louise--Let go of me, I tell you! She's blind!

She is carried off, leaving Louise completely alone on the stage. For a moment she stands, terrified, searching with her arms.

LOUISE

Henriette, where are you? Henriette?

(heartbroken and frightened)

HENRIETTE!

She circles, searching, alone. A prostitute appears, singing. As the scene changes, the denizens of the street appear, tormenting the lost Louise, until Stone reappears and drags her off. BLUES GUY enters, starts to sing LOST AND FOUND BLUES, as the orgy constructs itself around him.

BLUES GUY

NEVER DID LOSE NOTHIN'
 DIDN'T WORRY 'BOUT THE COST.
 NEVER DID LOSE NOTHIN'
 DIDN'T WORRY 'BOUT THE COST.
 NEVER FOUND A WOMAN
 WASN'T BETTER OFF LOST.
 GOIN' DOWN TO LOUISIANA,
 THEY GOT WOMEN EVERY BLOCK
 GOIN' DOWN TO LOUISIANA,
 THEY GOT WOMEN EVERY BLOCK.
 YOU DON'T LIKE YOUR WOMAN?
 FIND ANOTHER DOOR N' KNOCK.
 SO, GO ON DOWN DOWN DOWN,
 GO ON DOWN TO LOUISIANA.
 GO ON DOWN DOWN DOWN,
 SO, GO ON DOWN TO LOUISIANA.
 GO ON DOWN TO LOUISIANA.
 GOT TO FIND YOU A WOMAN!
 SOME WOMAN'S BEEN UNFAITHFUL
 HELL, THAT AIN'T NO NEWS.
 YOUR WOMAN'S BEEN UNFAITHFUL,
 TELL YA, THAT AIN'T NO NEWS.
 YOU MAY HAVE LOST YOUR WOMAN,
 BUT AT LEAST YOU FOUND THE BLUES.
 SO, GO ON DOWN DOWN DOWN,
 GO ON DOWN TO LOUISIANA.
 GO ON DOWN DOWN DOWN,
 SO, GO ON DOWN TO LOUISIANA.
 GO ON DOWN TO LOUISIANA.
 GOT TO FIND YOU A WOMAN!
 NEVER DID LOSE NOTHIN'
 DIDN'T WORRY 'BOUT THE COST.
 NEVER DID LOSE NOTHIN'
 DIDN'T WORRY 'BOUT THE COST.
 NEVER FOUND A WOMAN
 WASN'T BETTER OFF LOST.

All whoop and applaud.)

SCENE THREE

The scene transition completes itself and we find ourselves in a bordello in the French quarter. As the revelers applaud and the prostitute gathers her clothes, one of the Republicans reaches for her.

REPUBLICAN

Yeah, that's what I want. Gimme some of that.

She pushes by him, goes to get herself a drink,
Nearby the Marquis has a prostitute on his lap.
Although her skirt covers the specifics, they are
clearly in the act.

SECOND REPUBLICAN

But when the proper legislation makes Negro suffrage possible--

MARQUIS

Now, wait a minute. Freedom's one thing, voting's something else altogether.

PROSTITUTE

You need to concentrate, Marquis.

MARQUIS

Don't worry, honey, you got as much of my—attention—as you need. (Coming) Here's to the south, gentlemen. It ain't dead yet.

He climbs out from underneath the prostitute and reaches for a bottle of champagne while buttoning his fly. Armand gets the bottle before him and starts to guzzle it.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, that's champagne, you know how much that cost me?

ARMAND

(Casual disdain) More than her?

He pours it on the prostitute, who protests. Marquis grabs the bottle.

MARQUIS

A goddamn lot more than her. Give me that. Somebody get him some whiskey. He don't care what he drinks long as it knocks him out.

ARMAND

I am an aristocrat. Only the best is good enough for me.

PROSTITUTE

Only the best? Guess I'm the one the one you want, then.

She reaches for Armand. He strikes her.

PROSTITUTE (CONT'D)

Hey, I was just trying to be nice!

MARQUIS

Don't be nice to Armand. That's not the way he likes it.

JESS

I'm just saying, it don't hurt to be polite.

ARMAND

Oh my god, now she's gonna defend her honor. Listen: I been a member of the landed gentry and the confederate army. I know everything they is to know about southern honor, and it's worth just about as much as you are.

The Marquis laughs as they start to argue and get into a fight. The madam breaks it up.

MADAM

Marquis, let's not get too rough.

REPUBLICAN

So where's desert, Marquis? You promised something special.

MARQUIS

And like Armand, I'm a gentleman. I always keep my promises. Stone! Where the hell is he--STONE!

MADAM

Now you're collecting women, Marquis? I thought land was your heart's desire.

MARQUIS

I got a big heart.

SECOND REPUBLICAN

Pretty?

MARQUIS

Pretty ain't the half of it. I tell you, this girl makes you forget you ever wanted a white woman.

The prostitutes protest as Stone carries in Henriette and dumps her on the floor. She crouches, wary, as they study her.

REPUBLICAN

My my my.

PROSTITUTE

Well, I don't see what all the fuss is about. Doesn't even have any shoes on. And look at the size of them feet. Splayed. Looks like she been barefoot all her life.

HENRIETTE

Where am I?

MARQUIS

Just relax, honey. We're having a party.

They laugh. He closes in on her. She backs away.

HENRIETTE

Stay away from me. I have friends. My family is looking for me--

MARQUIS

That true, Stone?

STONE

Farmer was looking for 'em. We had a drink. He's dead.

HENRIETTE

Where is my sister? What did you do to my sister?

ABBY

Oh, God, let her go. If she's just gonna whine, I'd as soon listen to these two argue about the future of America.

ARMAND

(Laconic) She'll quiet down. Once she lets us know how shocking we are, she'll settle down and enjoy herself. Won't you, honey?

(She spits at him. Silence.)

Then again, maybe not.

He takes out a handkerchief and wipes off his face.

HENRIETTE

Let me out of here. I'm a free woman now! You got no right to hold me here against my will! I'm equal to any of you!

He nods to Stone, who comes up behind her and grabs her arms.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)

Let me go. Don't let him hurt me. Please. NO.

The marquis proceeds to approach with the clear intent to rape her.

ARMAND

What are you, crazy? C'mon honey. Get you out of here.

He reaches for her arm. The Marquis stops him.

MARQUIS

Armand, we're friends. I'll let you have her when I'm finished.

Suddenly, Armand slugs him. Armand takes Henriette by the arm. She tries to pull away, but he holds onto her firmly and takes her out of the apartment. The others watch.

PROSTITUTE

Oh, well. Out of the frying pan, into the fire.

MADAME

C'mere, Marquis. Poor baby...

He shrugs her off, furious. There is a short moment of real tension. Then he laughs. The others, relieved, laugh as well and go off. Across the stage, Louise enters, lost and alone.

SCENE FOUR

Louise cries. A trap opens and La Frochard enters.

LA FROCHARD

SHUT UP! My god, all this crying is making me sick.

PIERRE

(Climbing up, behind her)

You don't have to yell at her.

LA FROCHARD

You got any money? Pierre? How much you got?

PIERRE

I got a nickel from the butcher for sharpening his knives--

LA FROCHARD

A nickel.

(Exploding and hitting him)

Why won't you beg? A cripple like you could make a good living if you didn't want to work all the time.

JAKE

(Entering)

Oh, leave him alone. He can't help it.

LA FROCHARD

Jake! Hey, where you been? You got any money?

JAKE

Money? Let me see. I got...whiskey...

(she crows)

cigarettes... sausages ...and...a little something extra, on top of that

(waving money)

Marianne met an old friend, we got him drunk and relieved him of his property.

Marianne creeps into the loft and crouches in a corner, away from them, as La Frochard and Jake begin to feast.

LA FROCHARD

Now, this is something....

La Frochard starts to pour drinks. Jake notices Louise, in the corner.

JAKE

What's this?

LA FROCHARD

Oh nothing, some blind girl Stone gave me.

JAKE

She's pretty. You're pretty. You know that?

LOUISE

I have to find my sister.

JAKE

A sister?

He reaches out and fingers her hair. She pulls away.
Anxious, Pierre inserts himself.

PIERRE

Her sister's lost, and we're going to help find her.

JAKE

Is that so?

He crosses away, goes to the table, pours himself a
drink, watches her. Pierre tries to give her a piece of
sausage.

LA FROCHARD

I'm making Stone take her back. What good is she to us? Blind. Hey. Don't give her that.

She shoves Pierre away and starts to kick Louise.
Pierre tries to protect her.

PIERRE

Mama, stop it. You're upsetting her.

LA FROCHARD

Well, she's upsetting me. What am I supposed to do with some blind girl, she's
worthless—

Jake finally pulls her away.

JAKE

Mama! Just relax. She'll pull her weight. She's pretty. We'll figure out something to do
with her.

He considers Louise, then goes back to his food.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Yeah. We'll figure out something.

Lights shift.

SCENE FIVE

Lights up on Henriette. Armand enters. She looks at him, angry.

HENRIETTE

You let me go. LET ME GO!

She leaps at him, trying to push him aside. He grabs her.

ARMAND

My god, you little wild cat, would you just--OOWWW.

She hurts him. He lets her go but blocks her exit.

HENRIETTE

LET ME OUT OF HERE!

ARMAND

DON'T YELL AT ME, I'M TRYING TO THINK.

She stares at him as he thinks and rubs his leg where she kicked him.

HENRIETTE

What are you going to do to me?

ARMAND

I'm not planning to do anything. I just had to get you out of there, they were gonna hurt you--

HENRIETTE

Let me go. You let me go now.

ARMAND

I don't think I can.

HENRIETTE

LET GO!

She grabs the keys out of his hands, goes to the door and starts to open it. He watches, doesn't try to stop her.

ARMAND

Honey, it's the middle of the night! You ever been to New Orleans? You know where you're going? You got friends out there who can help you find that girl? I didn't think so. Look at you, you're about to drop over dead from exhaustion. Now, go on in there, wash your face and get some sleep. In the morning, I'll start asking around, see what people know.

Henriette turns, looks at this. She knows he's right but still doesn't trust him.

HENRIETTE

I don't believe you.

ARMAND

With all due respect, it don't matter if you believe me or not. You ain't got a lot of choices here.

(Pause)

Go on. I said I'd help you, and I will.

HENRIETTE

Why?

(beat)

What kind of man are you?

ARMAND

(Suddenly angry)

You know, I was right. You are too much trouble. Go on, go on out there, let the Marquis have his way with you. I don't care.

She stares at him.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

(now furious)

GO!

She continues to stare at him. Music comes up, under.

ARMAND (CONT'D)

You want to know what kind of man I am? I'll tell you something. You keep count, at the beginning.

(MORE)

ARMAND (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter who you are, the act of killing a man doesn't go down easy till you got a feel for it, so you count. My first one, I gutted a boy with a bayonet. Come at me from the side, waving his weapon like a lunatic, couldn't tell if he was crazy scared or just crazy, not that it mattered, 'cause I wasn't 'bout to die for fear of a Yankee. Before he could brain me I managed to get my spear point in the soft part of his midsection, 'fore I could even think about it, I just pulled up. Split him in two, you could see his heart stop beating, watch the light go out of his eyes. Had just enough time to know what I done before the next one came, and the next, some days it was like there was never gonna be an end to it. Land soaked through with blood and brains, we knew we were in hell, and that's a fact. You lose sight. You lose... Years. What kind of man am I? Why help you? I don't even know what that means.

They stare at each other. Lights fade on Armand as the scene shifts.

ENSEMBLE

THERE'S ONE THING ABOUT PEOPLE,
ONE THING THAT'S ALWAYS TRUE
JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU KNOW THEM
THEY TEACH YOU SOMETHING NEW
WE ALL HAVE CONTRADICTIONS
ONE FACE WE GLADLY SHOW
WHILE THE OTHER FACE IS TIMID
AND TAKES SOME TIME TO GET TO KNOW.

FEMALE DENIZEN

I MAY HAVE FOOLED AROUND
I'VE BEEN UNFAITHFUL, BEEN UNTRUE
HONESTLY NOW WHO HASN'T,
BE TRUTHFUL, HAVEN'T YOU?
SO ONCE I HAD A FLING,
A SWEET AND ILLICIT BRIEF LITTLE THING:
SO, ONCE I SLEPT WITH A PRIEST,
A CHOIRBOY, AND A NUN
BUT THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE.
I NEVER SAID I WAS PERFECT.
NOT A PERSON YET DON'T KEEP SOMETHING HID.
SO I MAY HAVE MY TRANSGRESSIONS.
BUT WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID?

REPUBLICAN

I'VE CAUSE A LITTLE TROUBLE
 I'VE BEEN IN A SCRAPE OR TWO
 HONESTLY NOW WHO HASN'T?
 BE TRUTHFUL, HAVEN'T YOU?
 SO ONCE I DRANK SOME GIN,
 GOT SOME ROPE AND THEN PITCHED IN
 SO, ONCE I HELPED A CROWD LYNCH SOMEONE
 BUT THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE.
 I NEVER SAID I WAS PERFECT
 NOT A PERSON YET AIN'T GOT SOME FLAW
 SO I MAY HAVE MY TRANSGRESSIONS,
 BUT SOMEONE HAD TO RECLAIM THE LAW.

WOMEN

(in fugue)

OH THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE.
 YES THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE
 WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
 WHAT'S THE WORST THING
 WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

MEN

(in fugue)

OH THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE.
 YES THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE
 WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
 WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
 YES, YOU'VE EVER DONE?

OTHER WOMEN

(in fugue)

WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
 WHAT'S THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

OTHER MEN

(in fugue)

WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?
 WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

MALE DENIZEN

I'VE PUT MY OWN NEEDS FIRST,
 IT'S MY SURVIVAL, IN MY VIEW
 HONESTLY NOW WHO HASN'T,
 BE TRUTHFUL HAVEN'T YOU?
 I DID WHAT I WAS TOLD, I FOLLOWED ORDERS
 BESIDES, IT WAS COLD--
 SO ONCE I BURNED A HOUSE-- WELL, A VILLAGE--
 OKAY, A STRING OF TOWNS KIND OF CUTTING
 ALL THE WAY ACROSS THE SOUTH,
 ATLANTA WAS UGLY ANYWAY.
 BUT THAT'S THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE.
 I NEVER SAID I WAS PERFECT
 NOT A PERSON YET WHO'S FREE OF SIN
 SO I MAY HAVE MY TRANSGRESSIONS
 BUT WHERE'S THE WORST PLACE YOU'VE EVER
 BEEN?

FEMALE DENIZEN

SO ONCE I STOLE SOME CANDY FROM A KID
 BUT THAT'S THE WORST THING I EVER DID.

ALL

WE ALL FACE OUR STRUGGLES,
 HOPING EXCUSES WILL PULL US THROUGH.
 THE TROUBLE WITH EXCUSES:
 WE FORGET WHICH ONE IS TRUE...
 WE'VE GLAMORIZED GREED, AND MYTHOLOGIZED
 WAR,
 WE'VE FORGOTTEN WHICH DEED TO APOLOGIZE
 FOR...
 WE'VE GLAMORIZED GREED, AND MYTHOLOGIZED
 WAR,
 WE'VE FORGOTTEN WHICH DEED TO APOLOGIZE
 FOR.

SCENE SIX

Bloodgood's office. The desk is covered with an enormous, outsized book. Diane stares at it. Bloodgood stands at one side, arguing with the two Republicans.

BLOODGOOD

The right to own property is the most fundamental of all.

REPUBLICAN

I don't give a damn! You Yankees come down here telling us how to live our lives, preaching at us how to treat our negroes, when you hate 'em just as much as we do--

BLOODGOOD

I'm just talking sense! Those coloreds are saying they won't work another man's land anymore! It makes 'em feel like slaves. And if we don't get those plantations back in business the whole south is going straight to hell. Over in Georgia, General Sherman promised them forty acres and a mule, and by god, they are going to have it, my friends. We don't have any choice. Now if we go through the records, ascertain where there are unpaid taxes, the land grants were improperly filed, or never filed, even, I think we'll find there's land available. We won't need to confiscate anyone's property; this is more a matter of redistribution.

SECOND REPUBLICAN

You are not giving our land to a bunch of coloreds!

They all start to argue again. Armand enters.

BLOODGOOD

Armand!

REPUBLICAN

Your northern uncle's gone stark ravin' mad, Armand.

ARMAND

So I hear.

REPUBLIUCANS

(Taking leave)

Good mornin', Mr. Bloodgood.

BLOODGOOD

(Likewise)

Good day. Help me put this away, Armand.

The Republicans go. Armand starts to pick it up.
Diane looks up from where she's been reading.

DIANE

It's all so complicated. What is it?

BLOOGOOD

That, my dear, is a true history of the south, a ledger recording every financial transaction which has taken place from here to St. Louis for the last thirty years. You see, in order to understand the south, you need to understand its money. Who had it. What they bought. What they sold.

DIANE

And this book will tell you that?

BLOODGOOD

This book tells me everything. For example, we can turn to Vicksburg... Here we are. Records of every business transaction your father completed.

DIANE

Well, that's not necessary.

(she closes it, puts it on the desk)

I just don't understand why we can't put it all behind us. Who owned this, who bought that. Who cares? It's better to start with a clean slate.

BLOODGOOD

Not everyone feels that way.

DIANE

Well, speaking of money, I was wondering if you could spare a few dollars so that I could do some shopping.

BLOODGOOD

You're going out, Diane? Is that wise? The heat is quite severe today.

DIANE

I just want to wander around a little, and buy something pretty. Surely I'm strong enough for that.

BLOODGOOD

I just worry. If anything should happen to you, I don't know how I would survive.

DIANE

I'm fine, Henry.

She holds out her hand. A little awkward, Bloodgood gives her several bills. As she puts them in her bag, the Marquis enters, takes her hand by way of introduction.

MARQUIS

(obsequious)

Morning, Mr. Bloodgood. Mrs. Bloodgood! I have not yet had the pleasure of making your acquaintance. Although now I think of it, I do think I saw you downtown several days ago, you were conversing with a friend of mine, a dark-skinned gentleman--

She pulls her hand away from him, rude, and goes.

The Marquis raises an eyebrow.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

I hope I have not somehow offended your wife, Mr. Bloodgood.

BLOODGOOD

No, no, you must forgive her abruptness. She lost her family in the war, and the south holds bitter memories for her. In fact, she opposed my plan to return for quite some time. But as President Johnson personally requested that I oversee the economic reconstruction of New Orleans, we could hardly refuse.

MARQUIS

Well, she is one good lookin' woman. You're a lucky man.

BLOODGOOD

Thank you, sir. I believe I am.

MARQUIS

How you doin', Armand? Haven't seen you in a few days.

ARMAND

(Off the Marquis's eye) Did I do that?

MARQUIS

You did, and I accept your apology. We'll drink on it another time, because today, my business is with your uncle.

BLOODGOOD

Oh?

MARQUIS

All this reconstruction has my blood pumping! And I read in the newspaper that the way to revive this sorry, broken land, is to get the economy back on it's feet! Now, in Louisiana, that means sugar. And I happen to know someone who actually owns a sugar plantation.

ARMAND

You think I'm going back to that plantation?

MARQUIS

I didn't say you'd actually have to work. I'm gonna come along! Be your business manager.

BLOODGOOD

It might be a good idea, Armand. It is crucial that the plantations start producing again, and if the Marquis can be of assistance—

ARMAND

Uncle, neither one of us knows one blessed thing about farming, and that's a cold fact. What do you want with a plantation?

MARQUIS

It's my patriotic duty to heal the south.

ARMAND

So what are you planning on, you gonna sell the place off for timber, or you just gonna move your whole operation, run a whorehouse out there?

MARQUIS

(laughing, covering) You'll have to forgive your nephew if he don't want to work these days. He's got himself a houseguest who seems to take up all his attention. Little colored girl he stole from me a couple nights ago. How is she, Armand? Tasty as she looks?

ARMAND

(beat, deflecting)

As I am a gentleman, I must decline to provide details.

MARQUIS

(laughing)

That's right. I forgot. Forgive me sir. But you remember: When you're finished, I want her back. Mr. Bloodgood, if you're at all interested in my proposal, you give me a call.

And he goes.

ARMAND

I'll be going, too.

BLOODGOOD

Armand. I don't care if you're keeping a colored girl.

ARMAND

It's not like that. I said I'd help her find her sister. That's all it is.

BLOODGOOD

(Ignoring this) I don't care if you're keeping a colored girl, as long as it doesn't interfere with business. As soon as it does I'll put a stop to it.

ARMAND

I have no business, Uncle.

BLOODGOOD

My business is your business. It's time you learned that the days when a southern gentleman could afford to do nothing at all are over. Now, sit down. We got work to do. We're having a rally this afternoon! And you're gonna be right here by my side.

Lights shift. Diane approaches Stone on a darkened street corner.

SCENE SEVEN

The Street Corner.

STONE

Well look who's here.

DIANE

I won't be staying.

She holds out the money which Bloodgood gave her in the previous scene. Stone looks at it for a moment, then reaches for it.

STONE

Why, thanks. That's mighty nice of you.

DIANE

You must never attempt to contact me.

STONE

You're the one came looking for me, honey.

DIANE

Only to tell you to keep your distance. As long as you do, I'll see to it that you never want for anything.

Beat. He studies her for a moment, considering this.

STONE

Well, that's quite an offer. See, I'm kind of a greedy guy. "Anything I want" might turn out to be an awful lot.

DIANE

I make the rules, Stone. If you push me, you'll get nothing.

Satisfied, she turns to go. He calls after her softly,
music coming up, under.

STONE

Yeah, I'll take your money and I'll let you treat me like the dirt on your little shoe there because the fact is, you ain't never gonna be safe again. Every time you see me on the street, your heart's gonna stop, you're gonna feel me in your bones for the rest of your life cause you don't know who I am anymore. What I'm capable of. I could turn on you in a second, and you gonna carry that inside you, like a poison, every day you live. You think you got power? You got nothing, lady. I'm the one.

She goes. After a moment, the Marquis enters, cool.

MARQUIS

Interesting visitors you're having these days, Mr. Stone.

STONE

You been watching me, Marquis?

MARQUIS

Not close enough. You ready to tell me about your acquaintanceship with that lady?

STONE

I don't think I am.

The Marquis reaches into his pocket, pulls out his
billfold, and throws several bills on the table.

STONE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Marquis. Not this time. I need to think about this one for a little while. I'll let you know when I'm ready.

(The Marquis drops several more bills on
the table.)

It's not a matter of money.

(MORE)

STONE (CONT'D)

(The Marquis drops several more bills on the table. Stone stares at him.)

You listening to me?

The Marquis continues to drop bills on the table. At some point, Stone becomes attracted to the growing size of the pile. At the moment Stone looks at the money, Marquis slows down and drops two final bills slowly. He stares at Stone, who finally, shrugs.

STONE (CONT'D)

What the hell.

Marquis watches as Stone collects the pile. Marianne enters, sings.

MARIANNE

IN THESE PARTS
NOT SO LONG AGO.
THERE WAS A BEAUTY, NAMED MEGAN MALONE.
SHE BROKE MANY HEARTS,
THIS FRAIL, PRETTY GIRL,
BUT SHE ENDED UP ALONE.

POOR MEGAN MALONE
COULD BE HEARD IN THE STREETS,
A SAD AND HAUNTING MOAN.
"THIS WORLD'S TOO HEAVY FOR ME TO TURN."
WAS THE CRY OF MEGAN MALONE.

SO HAVE A BEER,
OR HAVE SOME WINE.
DON'T FRET AS PROBLEMS AMASS.
IF THE WORLD'S TOO HEAVY FOR YOU ALONE,
A POOR AND WEAK LITTLE LASS,
REMEMBER THE TROUBLES OF MEGAN MALONE
AND RAISE YOURSELF A GLASS.

OUR MEGAN MALONE
WENT AROUND WITH A CAD,
A MAN OF LOW REPUTATION.

THOUGH IT NEVER WAS KNOWN
JUST EXACTLY HOW BAD
THINGS WERE IN HER SITUATION.

BUT LATE ONE NIGHT
THERE WAS HEARD SUCH A BRAWL,
YET NOBODY SEEMED TO CARE.
HER DRESS TORN TO RAGS
FROM THE ALLEY SHE CRAWLED
THEY ALL JUST LEFT HER THERE.

AND THEY HAD A BEER,
THEY HAD SOME WINE.
NO TIME FOR A POOR LITTLE LASS.
THEY HEARD THE TROUBLES OF MEGAN MALONE
BUT WOULD RATHER RAISE UP A GLASS.
I'VE MANY A PROBLEM OF MY OWN,
AND I CAN'T GET A ONE TO PASS.

POOR MEGAN MALONE
FROM THAT DAY SINCE
WAS A CHANGED AND SAD LITTLE GIRL
THIN AS A BONE,
FROM STRANGERS SHE'D WINCE,
HER MIND WAS ALL IN A WHIRL.

"NO MAN IS TRUE
AND NO WOMAN IS TRUSTED,
WHEN NEEDED, THERE'S NOBODY THERE.
MY HEART IS A BRUISE
AND MY DREAMS ALL ARE BUSTED,"
LAMENTED OUR POOR LADY FAIR.

SO HAVE A BEER,
OR HAVE SOME WINE.
DON'T FRET AS PROBLEMS AMASS.
OH, IF SOMETHING'S TOO HEAVY FOR YOU ALONE,
A POOR AND WEAK LITTLE LASS,
REMEMBER THE TROUBLES OF MEGAN MALONE
AND RAISE YOURSELF A GLASS.

YES I'LL HAVE A BEER,
I'LL HAVE SOME WINE.

NO TIME FOR A POOR LITTLE LASS.
 I'VE HEARD THE TROUBLES OF MEGAN MALONE
 BUT I'D RATHER RAISE UP A GLASS.
 I'VE MANY A PROBLEM OF MY OWN,
 AND I CAN'T GET A ONE TO PASS.

(There is a smattering of applause. Some people throw money. La Frocard races in and picks up the few coins, it's not a good showing. We are now in a large city square in front of a cathedral. After Marianne finishes, La Frochard stands center stage and speaks to the audience.)

SCENE EIGHT

LA FROCHARD

Okay, maybe we all think about money too much. But what else can we do? Even you who have it want more. How can you hate us for only wanting a little? Enough to live. Enough for a drink, a smoke, enough to take the sting off. A few coins, what is it to you? A hole in your pocket. Nothing. But for us, it keeps us from becoming animals. Look at this girl.

A crowd has gathered behind her. Louise is pushed forward from it's midst. La Frochard's tone changes; she becomes sad, thoughtful.

LA FROCHARD (CONT'D)

As you see, she is blind. We can look at her, but she cannot see us. Everything is dark for this girl. And poor! She has nothing. No one. She is an orphan, you see. This blind girl is alone in the world. Like you, like me. Alone. One step above an animal. Do you not see yourself here? Can you give her nothing? (To Pierre) Go on, help her! Tell them!

PIERRE

(Calling) Please have pity on the poor cripples.

Jake and La Frochard wander the crowd, picking people's pockets while Pierre and Louise beg. Pierre occasionally squeezes his concertina in a half-melody.

LOUISE

Do you see her, Pierre? She is taller than me, and her skin is darker--

PIERRE

If she were here, she'd see you, Louise. Believe me, we're very conspicuous.

LOUISE

HENRIETTE!

PIERRE

Louise, don't! You're going to get us both in trouble!

REPUBLICAN

HEY! What are you doing?

She has caught La Frochard with her hand in her pocket.

LA FROCHARD

Me? Nothing, I'm listening to the music. Hey, why aren't you singing? SING.

Reluctant, Pierre starts to sing.

PIERRE

LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
AT THOSE WHO ARE WANTING
LOOK WITH YOUR HEART.
AT PEOPLE IN NEED.
FORGOTTEN AND SMALL
WITH EYES OH SO HAUNTING
WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU
TO DO THIS GOOD DEED.

LOUISE

WE REACH OUT FOR KINDNESS,
NOT ASKING FOR MUCH.
WE ALL HAVE OUR BLINDNESS,
BUT HANDS HERE CAN TOUCH.
I MAY JUST BE STANDING
BESIDE OR BEFORE YOU.
FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW,
WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT TRUE.
BUT I'M HERE,
HENRIETTE,
I AM HERE...

In another spot, Henriette hears her and sings.

HENRIETTE
I AM HERE!

LOUISE
I AM HERE..

Pierre takes over the song again.

PIERRE
HERE WE ARE AND
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS
LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
AT THOSE WHO ARE FALLING.
LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
PLEASE LET US EXPLAIN.
WE'RE IN A PICKLE,
THAT'S WHY WE KEEP CALLING,
A DIME OR A NICKEL
FOR PEOPLE IN PAIN.

LOUISE
YOUR EYES MAY JUST TRICK YOU,
OUR LOOKS MAY DECEIVE.
IF YOUR HEART IS LESS QUICK YOU
MAY LEARN TO BELIEVE

PIERRE AND LOUISE
THAT THOUGH WE ARE DOWN,
FORGOTTEN SINCE BIRTH,
OUR SOULS STILL ARE HUMAN,
OUR MINDS STILL HAVE WORTH.

PIERRE
WE SEEK COMFORT.

LOUISE
HENRIETTE.

PIERRE
WE SEEK COMPASSION.

LOUISE
HENRIETTE!

PIERRE
WE SEEK A MOMENT OF PEACE

PIERRE/LOUISE
FOR TWO SUCH AS WE
PIERRE AND LOUISE.

PIERRE
LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
AT THOSE WHO ARE LONELY
LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
AT SOULS WHO ARE LOST
NEGLECTED BY ALL
REDEMPTION COMES ONLY
IF YOU'LL SPEND SOME TIME
WHAT MORE COULD IT COST?

PIERRE/LOUISE
BESEECHING YOUR PARDON / HENRIETTE!
WE DO NEED YOUR AID
WHEN TIMES ARE LESS HARD THEN / HENRIETTE!
YOU'LL BE RE-PAID.

LOUISE
I MAY JUST BE STANDING
BESIDE OR BEFORE YOU.

PIERRE AND LOUISE
FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW,
WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT TRUE.

They finish the song. All applaud and La Frochard
and Jake collect money.

LA FROCHARD
Thank you! Thank you for your kindness to the poor blind girl and her pathetic cripple
friend. It's very sad, very sad. Thank you.

(Aside)

Jake, get them out of here.

JAKE
Okay, Mama. Here we go...

Jake picks up Louise and carries her off.

LOUISE

No please--

Pierre hobbles after them.

PIERRE

Leave her alone, Jake. We told her we would help her. We have to at least look.

Jake shoves Pierre, who goes spinning.

JAKE

Mind your own business, cripple.

Jake exits, carrying Louise. At the last moment, Pierre grabs something off Louise's wrist, but Jake pushes him and he falls. Marianne helps Pierre up, dusts him off and hands him his crutch.

MARIANNE

You okay?

(Pierre nods.)

Go on. It's not good to leave him alone with her.

He waits until she's not looking, tosses something on the ground, then hobbles after them. Henriette runs on from the opposite side of the stage. Armand follows her, exhausted.

HENRIETTE

She's here! I heard her!

ARMAND

Are you sure?

Henriette immediately sees the object Pierre threw on the ground—a small, simple bracelet--and picks it up, excited.

HENRIETTE

She was here, she was here! This is hers—

Marianne lunges forward and snatches it from her.

MARIANNE

That's mine.

HENRIETTE

I gave it to her myself. Do you know where she is?

MARIANNE

What are you talking about? This is mine, I tell you--

Armand steps forward and stops Marianne from leaving.

ARMAND

Do you know something? Are you hiding this girl?

MARIANNE

What, you gonna try and beat it out of me?

ARMAND

Don't think I won't. I got no qualms about hitting a woman deserves to be hit.

MARIANNE

It won't matter. It won't get you nothin', no matter what you do. Go ahead, hit me.

She looks at Armand. Armand lets her go.

ARMAND

Get out of here.

Marianne exits quickly.

HENRIETTE

NO, no, don't let her go—

She starts after her. Armand holds onto her.

ARMAND

Henriette--

HENRIETTE

She knows where Louise is!

ARMAND

She said she don't, so there's nothing you can do about that—

HENRIETTE
(Struggling)

LET GO!

ARMAND
Well, you can't go running around screaming at people 'say they don't know you, would you—God above, would you hold still?

Somehow, they end up face to face, in an intimate clinch which, when they are aware of it, becomes somewhat charged with sexual tension. Armand lets her go.

ARMAND (CONT'D)
You can't force it out of her. Let her think about it, maybe she'll come back.

HENRIETTE
You don't understand. When she's in trouble, I feel it. It's something we've had since childhood. It's stronger than if we were blood sisters. She's in danger, I feel it--

ARMAND
Wait a minute. She's not your sister?

HENRIETTE
Of course she's my sister. (Pause) And she's not my sister.

ARMAND
Henriette, who is it we're looking for?

Music comes up, under, as she struggles to tell her story.

HENRIETTE
They couldn't afford me. Daddy wanted to run, and Mama wouldn't go without me, but I was an angry child and I could not be trusted. So he took me down to the water.

ARMAND
The water?

HENTRIETTE
Just outside Vicksburg, where the river bends by the blue willow. I don't blame him; he was only doing what he had to. I remember seeing the Mississippi pull away slow, like time, gentle, but like nothing was ever gonna stop it. And my daddy held me up to him, his eyes still, gone into themselves, blind. There was nothing gonna stop him. So he held me over that river and both of us, we didn't make a sound. It was so quiet.

(MORE)

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)

And then I heard just a whimper, the slightest whisper of a cry, and he looked down and there at his feet, in the mud, there was a face. Somebody watching us. A baby, watching us. It was my Louise. He picked her out of the mud and took her home, took us both home to mama. He stayed. We all stayed. And it wasn't until later we learned that she was blind.

ARMAND

(beat)

We'll just keep looking till we find her.

SCENE NINE

Bloodgood, with ralliers, enters. Henriette & Armand exit. As he speaks, they push the speaker's platform to the center of the stage and hang banners. He waves to Armand, who goes up to the platform to join him.

BLOODGOOD

What a day! A banner day for the south! Rising from the ashes of defeat like the phoenix! A new country, a new life!

DIANE

North and south, together again!

(Ralliers boo.)

BLOODGOOD

Reconstruction! What a word! What a world!

(Ralliers boo.)

My friends! We are gathered today to consider our future! To build a new world where black and white can live and work together as equals!

(There is some dissention in the crowd at this.)

No one's saying it's gonna be easy. Many things about your old way of life are gonna have to change, and change is hard!

RALLIER

Stop talking and tell us what you're up to, Bloodgood! You givin' land to them coloreds? That what you think you're doing?

More dissent.

BLOODGOOD

Now, we all got a lot of ideas, and there's a lot of rumors flying around about how this reconstruction is gonna work. But before I explain the particulars, I have a special introduction. A world famous singer is here, this gentleman has been all over America singing with Miss Jenny Lind, and today he's come here to New Orleans to lead us in a hymn, so we can build our new world on a strong foundation of harmony and prayer. Ladies and gentlemen— Mr. Reginald Taylor!

The specialty singer steps up to the front of the dais
and sings.

REGINALD TAYLOR

BESIDE MY HOME
THERE'S AN ANCIENT TREE.
ITS BRANCHES DOME
O'ER THOSE DEAR TO ME.
WHERE E'RE I ROAM
I PRAY
TO RETURN SOME DAY,
AND NEVER STRAY
FROM 'NEATH THAT OAKEN BOUGH.

BENEATH THAT OAKEN BOUGH
THE SPIRIT OF THE LAND
LIVES WITHIN THAT MIGHTY OAK.
ITS ROOTS DELVE EVER DEEPER IN THE EARTH.
BY MY GOOD RIGHT HAND
BY MY GOD, WHOM I INVOKE
THE SPIRIT OF THE SOUTH SHALL FIND REBIRTH!

BLOODGOOD

(leading them)

Everybody!

CROWD

AN OAKEN BOUGH
A STURDY OAKEN BOUGH
OVERLOOKS MY HOME AND THOSE I LOVE.
AN OAKEN BOUGH
THAT MIGHTY OAKEN BOUGH
A SENTINEL ASSIGNED BY GOD ABOVE!

Pierre and Louise dash on stage, opposite the rally.

PIERRE

We did it! We escaped! Louise, we escaped!

LOUISE

We escaped?

PIERRE

We escaped! Come on! We have to hide in the crowd!

He pulls her into the crowd, while Reginald Taylor
takes up the hymn.

REGINALD TAYLOR

THE OAK BESIDE MY HOME
RENOWNED FOR GOODLY STRENGTH
YET SOFTLY DOES IT WAVE IN EVENING BREEZE.
AND THE SOUTH, FROM HILLS TO FOAM,
WILL RENEW ITSELF AT LENGTH
STOUTHEARTED AND AS MEEK AS GOD DECREES!

CROWD

AN OAKEN BOUGH
A STURDY OAKEN BOUGH
OVERLOOKS MY HOME AND THOSE I LOVE.
AN OAKEN BOUGH
THAT MIGHTY OAKEN BOUGH
A SENTINEL ASSIGNED BY GOD ABOVE!

La Frochard bursts onto the stage, yelling.

LA FROCHARD

Where are they? PIERRE! I'll choke the life out of that little weazel...PIERRE!

JAKE

(Entering, also looking)

Did you find 'em?

LA FROCHARD

Not yet. But he's lame, she's blind, how far could they get?

She points him one way, and goes the other
direction.

REGINALD TAYLOR

THAT GREAT OAK STANDS,
 PLANTED FIRMLY IN ONE PLACE
 A LOYAL, TIMELESS GUARD
 HARDSHIP ETCHED UPON ITS FACE
 THOUGH ROUGH THE WIND MAY BLOW
 IT'S ARMS REACH UPWARD STILL
 IN PRAISE OF ONE TRUE GOD
 AND THE TRIUMPH OF OUR WILL!
 THE OAK STILL STANDS ON A GOLDEN SOUTHERN
 HILL!

Under the singing, Pierre tries to sneak off with
 Louise. He bumps into an applectart and upsets it. It
 creates a small stir. La Frochard and Jake, having
 spotted Pierre, start to push through the crowd,
 which is still singing.

CROWD

AN OAKEN BOUGH
 A STURDY OAKEN BOUGH
 OVERLOOKS MY HOME AND THOSE I LOVE.
 AN OAKEN BOUGH
 THAT MIGHTY OAKEN BOUGH
 A SENTINEL ASSIGNED BY GOD ABOVE!

Henriette reenters just as Armand spots Louise.

ARMAND

Henriette! She's here!

He indicates the crowd, where Pierre and Louise are
 hiding.

HENRIETTE

(Calling over the singing)

LOUISE! I'm here, Louise! Louise!

LOUISE

Henriette?

Louise hears Henriette and turns. Just as the two girls turn toward each other, Jake and La Frochard move between them, blocking the reunion. Bloodgood steps to the front.

BLOODGOOD

My friends—

Someone raises a gun and fires at Bloodgood. He staggers back, wounded. The frenzied crowd pulls Henriette and Louise apart. The stage freezes as the lights come down on the TABLEAU.

BLACKOUT.

END ACT ONE

The Two Orphans

ACT TWO

SCENE NINE

The stage erupts in chaos as the interrupted rally suddenly recommences. Jake grabs Louise and drags her off in the confusion, as the ralliers cluster around Bloodgood and carry him off in the opposite direction. Within moments, the stage is empty, save for Henriette, who looks around in despair. She wails in grief, and collapses. Armand returns, behind, and starts for her. Diane returns.

DIANE

Armand! Your uncle needs you.

(Armand looks back at her. Building hysteria:)

He's been shot! Your place is at his side. Armand. ARMAND.

Armand looks at Diane, looks back at Henriette, then moves forward. Quite gently, he picks Henriette up and carries her off. Across the stage, Louise is thrown into La Frochard's den.

SCENE TEN

Louise alone.

LOUISE

MY TEARS HAVE BEEN FALLING
 MY TEARS HAVE BEEN FALLING SO LONG
 MY TEARS HAVE BEEN FALLING, FALLING SO LONG
 THEY SOAK THE GROUND.
 MY SORROW TAKES ROOT
 AND GROWS.

Across the stage, in another pool of light, Henriette starts to sing as well. The song continues as a duet.

HENRIETTE
ADRIFT ON A RIVER OF GRIEF

LOUISE
ADRIFT ON A RIVER OF GRIEF RUN WILD

HENRIETTE
ADRIFT ON A RIVER OF GRIEF RUN WILD
AND DARK AND DEEP

HENRIETTE AND LOUISE
O LORD, STEER ME
O LORD.
I LAY MYSELF DOWN
BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON
OH LORD HEAR MY CRY
I AM TOO FAR FROM HOME
A ROAD IN THE WILDERNESS
A LIGHT IN THE DARK
I CRY OUT, MY GOD!
DON'T ABANDON ME.
REMEMBER YOUR CHILDREN, MY GOD.
REMEMBER YOUR CHILDREN AWAIT YOUR LIGHT
REMEMBER YOUR CHILDREN AWAIT THE LIGHT OF
FREEDOM
WE WAIT, LORD, WE WAIT.

Jake shoves Pierre into their den.

JAKE
Goddamn cripple! What do you think you were doing? What were you trying to do?

LOUISE
Please let me go. Please, my sister, she was there—

JAKE
SHUT UP.

PIERRE
You don't own her! She's not a slave anymore! It's not right to keep her!

LA FROCHARD
I'm taking your shoes and your socks, try and run away then.

PIERRE

Stop it, Mama! She's sick already. She was coughing all night.

LA FROCHARD

If she coughs again, I'm gonna hit her with her own shoes.

PIERRE

Mamma!

JAKE

Don't argue with him! This isn't about arguments! This is about the way things are!

(He picks up Pierre and hurls him on the floor.)

Not right. What does that even mean? You think you're gonna sit there, all curled up and crying like a whining puppy, and tell me what's right? You want to kill me, don't you, little brother? You dream of it at night, your brain just burns with evil thoughts, what you want to do to me. Only thing that stops you is... it wouldn't be right. Ain't got nothin' to do with you being a coward.

SCENE ELEVEN

Bloodgood's office. Bloodgood is there, with the Marquis and Republicans. The book is on the desk. When Bloodgood isn't looking, Marquis idly glances through it.

REPUBLICAN

Just a flesh wound. You're a lucky man, Mr. Bloodgood!

SECOND REPUBLICAN

Unless you keep on talking 'bout giving away our land. You try that again, I wouldn't be surprised if someone took another shot!

Both Republicans laugh but it has a sinister undertone.

MARQUIS

Now, they ain't gonna be no more shooting. They already caught the perpetrator. Colored boy confessed, just after it happened. They lynched him not half an hour ago.

BLOODGOOD

No colored boy took a shot at me.

MARQUIS

Don't work yourself into a lather, it's too hot.

Diane enters, with a cool cloth in a bowl of water.

DIANE

Hello, gentlemen. Marquis, may I help you with something? No? Then I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave. My husband needs his rest, gentlemen.

She crosses and shuts the book, decisive. The Marquis grins at her.

MATT

Of course.

MARQUIS

When you're feeling a little stronger, Mr. Bloodgood, we have some business to discuss. Good day, ma'am.

He goes, with the others. Diane watches them leave, uneasy, then proceeds to wipe his face.

DIANE

I don't like him.

BLOODGOOD

He's a friend of Armand's.

DIANE

Oh yes, your dear nephew Armand, who so quickly fled your side in your hour of need. You could be dead, for all his concern. And do you know why he's too busy to see you? He's running around the streets of New Orleans with a colored girl.

BLOODGOOD

A colored girl. Yes, he told me something of this.

DIANE

Well, I wonder you can be so sanguine about it.

(Armand approaches, unseen, and listens
in the doorway.)

I saw him, just after the rally, you were shot, and I saw him with her. He picked her up and held her. Right there in the street. I was so shocked, I didn't know what to say.

BLOODGOOD.

No, of course not. I'm so sorry, my dear.

DIANE

I don't blame Armand. I know how a man's head can be turned. But perhaps you should do something to help him, Henry. You have so much power here. Can't you just get rid of this girl?

BLOODGOOD

You think that's necessary?

DIANE

I do not think I am hysterical when I say that strong action must be taken. But here I am wearing you out. You have to rest, Henry. You'll never recover unless you take care of yourself.

She helps him stand.

BLOODGOOD

There's just so much to do, and this place is so resistant to change. I try to distribute land, and the whites threaten to riot. I try to get the plantations producing, and the coloreds refuse to work. People taking shots at me. That poor boy who was lynched, where will it end?

DIANE

Well, you cannot repair the entire world in one afternoon. Now you go lie down while I clean this up. I'll be right there.

Bloodgood goes. Diane makes sure he's gone, then goes back to the ledger on the desk. Armand reappears and watches as she looks through the ledger, furtive, and suddenly rips out a page.

ARMAND

What is that? Are you stealing from my uncle? You stealing from his book?

DIANE

As if you cared about your uncle. You have been precious scarce today, right when he needs you--

(As she speaks, she attempts to hide the page. He grabs her and takes it from her. He looks at it, then reads aloud.)

That is not your property.

ARMAND

(Reading)

"Sold: One female octoroon—

DIANE

That is my property!

ARMAND

(Reading)

Mother and unborn child received in exchange for two hundred dollars and six bushels of seed cotton. Is this you?

DIANE

I will call Henry. And he will, he will do anything I ask—

ARMAND

You want to call him? Call him. You call him right now and we can show him this, and I can tell him how I found you trying to take it from his book. Or, I could burn it. Which will it be?

(beat)

Is this you?

DIANE

I am a white woman! Octoroon means one eighth, and I'm not even that! My daddy was white. My mama's daddy was white, my grandmama's too! We don't come from nowhere!

ARMAND

(this is a hit)

I know.

DIANE

(defiant)

My daddy was an important man. He owned the biggest plantation north of Vicksburg, hundreds and hundreds of slaves, and my mama was his favorite one. I used to sit on his lap while he ate his supper. He promised he was gonna set us free. And then I fell in love. I was stupid, I was young and stupid and I fell in love with another slave.

(beat)

My daddy found out, and he sold me. My own father. Everything changed. I didn't know, I was too young, how would I know! So I escaped. I went north. Where no one doubted for a moment that I was a white woman.

ARMAND

What happened to the baby?

DIANE

(evading)

The baby died.

ARMAND
(insistent)

How did the baby die?

DIANE
Babies die! You don't know anything about it. Don't you look at me!

ARMAND
What did you do?

DIANE
(defensive)
I didn't do anything. I left it. I couldn't have a colored child, and be a white woman! So, I left it in the river. There was an old tree there. A funny tree, a kind of blue willow. We used to meet there. But he was gone. And there was nothing else I could do. So. You may call me a murderer if you like, but you may not call me a Negro.

She is suddenly defeated by her own admission.

ARMAND
(disgusted with her)
You don't know anything about it. You dropped that child in the mud. And Henriette found her. Are you listening to me? They found her. She is who we are looking for. She's here in the city, somewhere—

DIANE
Keep her away from me.

ARMAND
Her name is Louise--

DIANE
(Overlap)
Don't make me see her. Don't let them know who I am. Please. You don't know what they'll do.

She reaches for the paper. Armand considers giving it to her, then lights a match, and burns it.

ARMAND
As long as you leave Henriette alone, I'll tell no one.

They watch the paper burn. Light shifts. Marianne enters and SINGS.

SCENE TWELVE

The bar.

MARIANNE

WHEN YOU NEED A LITTLE LUCK,
THAT'S WHEN LIFE WILL ALWAYS LET YOU DOWN
WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING TO SURVIVE
THINGS JUST NEVER, EVER TURN AROUND
ONLY ONE THING TO DO
WHEN IT SEEMS YOU'RE GONNA DROWN
JUST RELAX, BREATHE EASY
RELAX
YES, RELAX, BREATHE EASY

CAN'T ESCAPE FROM THE HEAT
DOWN IN THE QUARTER
STILL THE NIGHTS SMELL SO SWEET
DOWN IN THE QUARTER
THE RIVER ROLLS ON BY
AND WHISPERS WITH A CRY
"PLEASE, JUST ONE MORE TRY"
DOWN IN THE QUARTER

A couple loser sidekicks start to sing with her. They are pretty good, but easily distractable. She has to work a bit to keep them focused on the song.

CHORUS

SO FIND YOURSELF SOME FUN
 EASE ON INTO THE NIGHT
 OUGHT TO KNOW BY NOW
 THERE'S NECTAR IN THE MOONLIGHT
 EVERY CORNER HAS A PARTY
 EVERY HOME AN OPEN DOOR
 ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ASK
 WE'LL BE GLAD TO SHOW YOU MORE

COME AN' DANCE TO THE BEAT
 DOWN IN THE QUARTER
 YOU'LL FIND LOVE IN THE STREET
 DOWN IN THE QUARTER
 YOU CAN LOOSEN YOUR CLOTHES
 'CAUSE A FRIENDLY BREEZE BLOWS
 YOU'LL REALLY LIKE WHAT SHOWS
 DOWN IN THE QUARTER

MARIANNE

THE JASMINE IN THE AIR
 YES, IT HANGS ABOUT YOU LIKE A FRIEND
 AS YOU TAKE AN EVENING STROLL
 LET YOUR WORRIES FIND AN END
 LINGER IF YOU DARE
 COME AND EASE YOUR TROUBLED MIND
 OH, LIFE CAN BE SO DROLL
 WHEN YOUR FLESH IS LESS CONFINED

SO FIND YOURSELF SOME FUN
 EASE ON INTO THE NIGHT
 OUGHT TO KNOW BY NOW
 THERE'S NECTAR IN THE MOONLIGHT
 EVERY CORNER HAS A PARTY
 EVERY HOME AN OPEN DOOR
 IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START
 WE CAN ALWAYS SHOW YOU MORE

There is a smattering of applause. Some people throw money. Marianne turns toward the men and women who are drinking, and listening to her. She picks up coins, and goes to Jake, who is in the crowd.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

You see? We don't need the blind girl. I can sing. I can make money for us.

JAKE

Oh, is that what this is about?

MARIANNE

I'll take care of you, honey. I did it before, Jake. I supported us a long time.

(She kisses him.)

You and me, we could go off, to another city. There's nothin' here anymore, nobody's got any money in New Orleans. We could go north. Leave this all behind us.

La Frochard returns with drinks just in time to hear this.

LA FROCHARD

Hey hey, what about me? That's just great. As soon as I turn around, everyone's trying to get rid of me.

JAKE

No one's trying to get rid of you, Mama, would you cut it out? Marianne's just a feeling a little green around the edges. She thinks I like the blind girl. And I'm not saying I don't.

MARIANNE

I'm just saying we don't need them!

She reaches for him. He shoves her.

JAKE

I say what we need!

LA FROCHARD

(Laughing) That's good, don't let her tell you what to do. Although I like this idea, going north. She's right, the north, they have money.

JAKE

We could go north. Then we wouldn't have to worry about them cripples runnin' off, 'cause they won't know where to go.

They laugh. Marianne watches.

MARIANNE

She has people. Her sister's looking for her. She been all over the city, asking everybody.

JAKE

MARIANNE. If I was interested in this, you would know.

MARIANNE

You can't take her away. That's her people. We should let 'em be, Jake, it's not right.

JAKE

Oh, you on their side now? You and the cripples? You want, I could make that happen. 'Cause I'm thinking... if I rip your tongue out, then one of you can't walk, one of you can't see, and one of you can't talk. That's sounding pretty good to me right now.

Marianne stands, turns and goes. La Frochard stands, starts to run after her.

LA FROCHARD

Marianne! Hey! Stop her!

JAKE

Let her go! She'll come back. She always does.

He hands his mother her drink. La Frochard takes it, laughs. The lights shift.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Armand's apartment. Sounds of rioting, chaos. Henriette is at the window, looking.

HENRIETTE

MY OLD GOLDEN SLIPPERS
MY BETTER THAN SUNDAY SHOES.
I KEEP THEM HIDDEN SET AWAY

Louise appears in her own spot.

LOUISE

SET AWAY FOR FREEDOM DAY

HENRIETTE & LOUISE

OUR CHAINS OF WOE AT LAST TO LOSE
FREEDOM DAY
FREEDOM DAY
OUR CHAINS OF WOE AT LAST TO LOSE.

LOUISE

Henriette?

HENRIETTE AND LOUISE

MY OLD GOLDEN SLIPPERS
DEAR TO ME AS ANYTHING
I'LL WEAR 'EM ONCE AGAIN
AND DANCE MY FREEDOM WHEN
AT LAST

The Marquis enters, behind Henriette.

MARQUIS

Well, look who it is. Hello, sugar. How lovely to see you again.

Henriette turns, startled. Louise disappears. Henriette moves away, instinctively figuring out how to defend herself.

HENRIETTE

What are you doing here?

MARQUIS

I'd ask you the same question, were the answer not so deliciously apparent. Where's Armand? He didn't leave you here alone and undefended, now did he?

HENRIETTE

He just went out for a minute. He's coming back here, right now.

MARQUIS

So time is short for us, is that what you're telling me?

She reaches for a bottle, smashes it, and holds it out.

HENRIETTE

I'm not afraid of you.

MARQUIS

(laughing)

I know, sugar. That's how come I like you so much.

HENRIETTE

You just get out of here. You get out of here, right now –

MARQUIS

Well, if I do that, how you gonna find out about your sister?

HENRIETTE

(beat)

You know where she is?

MARQUIS

The little blind girl? 'Course I do! I been waiting for you to come ask me. Finally give up, waiting, that's why I came over here tonight.

(beat)

Put the bottle down, darling. You and I have some business to negotiate.

HENRIETTE

(nervous)

Armand is, he's on his way.

MARQUIS

You want to wait, that's up to you. I just know where she is right now. I don't know how long she's gonna be there. I'm just trying to help.

(But Henriette knows she is in danger
now. She looks about.)

What's the matter, sugar? You want to find your sister or not?

He takes a step toward her, reaches out his hand.
She reaches out, lets him take her hand. He smiles,
inviting her to go with him.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

We'll just stop by my place on the way over.

She tries to extract her hand, but he has her firmly in
his grip. He grins. Armand enters.

ARMAND

What are you doing here? Let go of her.

Marquis laughs, turns, and slowly lets go of
Henriette.

MARQUIS

Just stopping by, a friendly visit.

HENRIETTE

He knows where Louise is. He said he'd take me to her.

MARQUIS

Well now darlin', that's not precisely what I said.

ARMAND

Where's the blind girl, Marquis?

MARQUIS

What I'm thinking is a fair trade. I give you the blind one, you give me this one.

ARMAND

WHERE IS SHE?

MARQUIS

(annoyed)

Why do you care so much about that lost girl, you got the one you--wait wait wait. She ain't givin' it out, is that it? You too much a gentleman to take it, so you trying to romance her? A nigra. Well, isn't that sweet. Our little Armand's fallen in love with a nigra.

He looks at them both, laughing.

ARMAND

You took her off the street. She didn't mean nothin' to you but a passing thought, and you destroyed her for that, and her sister, you destroyed them both for pleasure—

MARQUIS

You and I both know you done a lot worse in your day, so I'd just hush up for a minute bout what I done. I'm not trying to be harsh, but Armand! Get a little liquor in you, the things you talk about make my frivolties look like frivolity. So what's this about?

ARMAND

Get out of here.

MARQUIS

You want to know where that blind girl went to?

(Armand stops. He waits.)

Yeah, you want to know, but you ain't gonna ask again, you ain't gonna ask polite, everything's power with you people. No matter how bad you want it, you ain't gonna beg.

ARMAND

You want me to beg, Jack?

The two men stare at each other. The Marquis grins.

MARQUIS

I've missed you, Armand. Things ain't the same since you stopped coming around. You're the only man I know with a perspective vaguely similar to my own. Maybe you didn't start that way, but you can't go back, can you? Keep it in for a little while, little drinkin' gives you a hand with that, tell yourself you're falling in love, we both know what you're looking for. That's what I always enjoyed about having you 'round the quarter. It was kind of comforting, watching you lie in wait like a snake, never saying very much, but I always knew what you were thinking about. Every person you saw. You just wanted to cut their throat. Drive the blade in, smell the blood--

Armand suddenly grabs the Marquis by the throat. He strangles him. The Marquis struggles, but Armand shoves him up against a wall and proceeds to nearly murder him.

HENRIETTE

Armand! Let him go. Armand.

Armand finally hears her and drops him. Terrified, the Marquis gasps for breath, then, starts to laugh.

MARQUIS

Just like I said.

Armand picks him up and tosses him out. Blackout.

SCENE FOURTEEN

La Frochard's den. Louise is wrapped in a blanket. Pierre rocks her.

PIERRE

You're gonna be okay, Louise. You're just fine.

LOUISE

I'm so cold.

PIERRE

(scared) Honey, you're burning up, now.

Worried, he tries to wipe her face.

LOUISE

Who are you? Where's my sister? Henriette!

PIERRE

Louise, Louise. Shh, it's me. It's me.

LOUISE

Pierre? You sound so worried.

He pulls the blanket around her and holds her. She
huddles into him.

PIERRE

I am worried, honey. We need to get you to a doctor, but they got us locked in here all
right.

Pierre rocks Louise.

LOUISE

What's going to happen to me, Pierre?

PIERRE

Well, I'll tell you. After I get us out of here, we're gonna take you to a big palace.

LOUISE

A palace?

PIERRE

Yes, ma'am. Out by Audubon park, they got palaces built so big they go on forever, where
rich people sit around all day and have their servants just brush their hair and feed them
chocolates.

LOUISE

It sounds awful.

PIERRE

Well, we're not going to live there, of course. We're just going to stay long enough to meet
the doctor.

LOUISE

The doctor?

PIERRE

Sure. They have their own doctor at these places, who's the smartest man in the world. And he's gonna look at you and say, why this girl has a little head cold, and he'll give you a few pills for that, and then he's gonna say, now wait a minute. What's wrong with this girl's eyes?

LOUISE

I'm blind, sir.

PIERRE

Well, you don't have to be. There's just almost nothing wrong with you. Here, let me fix this... and then he'll just poke at your eyes a little bit, and the next thing you know--

LOUISE

I'll be able to see?

PIERRE

That's right. You'll be able to see your hand right in front of your face. You'll be able to see me.

She coughs. He holds her, trying to stay bright.

LOUISE

What color are you, Pierre?

PIERRE

What color?

LOUISE

I can usually tell, but it's hard with you. So I just thought, maybe you were like me.

PIERRE

I am. We're exactly the same color. Now you just rest and let me sing you a song. My mama used to sing this to me.

LOUISE

(surprised) She did?

PIERRE

Well, no, but I wanted her to.

(He sings.)

WIND WHIPS AROUND
 AND THE RAIN COMES DOWN IN SHEETS
 COLD ON THE OCEAN
 LOST OUT AT SEA
 I WILL CARRY YOU
 THROUGH THE WIND AND THE DARKNESS
 I WILL HOLD YOUR HEART
 AND SHELTER YOU IN ME.

I'LL BE YOUR BOAT
 ROCK GENTLY, LITTLE BOAT
 PLACE YOUR LIFE IN MY HAND.
 YOU NEED A BOAT
 STAY STEADY, LITTLE BOAT
 REST AS I STEER US BACK TO LAND.
 TOSSED ON THE WAVES
 AS THE NIGHT LASTS FOREVER
 COLD ON THE OCEAN
 LOST IN THE STORM
 YOU HAVE COME TO ME
 LIKE A LIGHT IN THE MORN'
 YOU POINTED OUT THE WAY
 TO HARBOR SAFE AND WARM.

LOUISE

YOU ARE MY BOAT
 ROCK GENTLY LITTLE BOAT
 LET ME PLACE MY HEART IN YOUR HOLD
 I NEED A BOAT
 STAY STEADY, LITTLE BOAT
 I WILL GUIDE YOU IN FROM THE COLD.

PIERRE AND LOUISE

WE WILL SAIL AWAY
 LIKE A SONG IN THE DARKNESS
 RIDING ON THE WIND,
 WE WILL FLY ABOVE
 HEAVEN WAITS FOR US
 AS WE STEER THROUGH THE STORM CLOUDS
 WE WILL FIND OUR WAY
 AS WE LIVE THESE DAYS IN LOVE.
 YOU ARE MY BOAT
 ROCK GENTLY LITTLE BOAT.

FEEL MY LOVE FILL YOUR SAILS
 HUSH, LITTLE BOAT
 CALMLY, LITTLE BOAT
 SWIFTLY WE RISE BEYOND THE GALES.

PIERRE
 I SING THANKS TO THE LORD
 THAT YOU CAME TO RESCUE ME

LOUISE
 GOD GRANTS US MERCY
 SENT LIKE A DOVE
 YOU HAVE FILLED MY HEART
 WITH A SONG UNEXPECTED

PIERRE AND LOUISE
 FOR I NEVER WOULD HAVE THOUGHT
 I'D LIVE THESE DAYS IN LOVE.
 NO, I NEVER WOULD HAVE THOUGHT
 THAT I'D LIVE THESE DAYS IN LOVE.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FIFTEEN

*The street, midnight. Henriette runs out,
 Armand follows.*

HENRIETTE
 This was where they took her. She has to be here, in the square. If I just stay here, I'll feel her, I'll know where she is.

ARMAND
 She could be anywhere.

HENRIETTE
 I should've gone with him. Oh, god, he said, if I went with him, but I was too afraid--

ARMAND
 (overlap)
 He wouldn't have told you! He was just trying to get at you, you know that!

HENRIETTE

(confused, in her grief, finally)

She was here. This was where she was when they, the last time I saw her, and then at that rally, and now, where is she? Why isn't every moment, why can't I go back just to that moment when we came here, why can't I go back and take her away? Why can't I take her back?

She looks at Armand, heartbroken. He takes her in his arms, comforting, at a loss for words. She collapses into him. He holds her. After a moment, she remembers herself and pulls away.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)

No, no, what am I doing? Oh no...

ARMAND

Henriette...

HENRIETTE

I can't be with you, Armand! It is dangerous for me to be with you!

ARMAND

How am I dangerous? I have protected you. I have never--I have not laid a hand on you.

HENRIETTE

Not like you haven't thought about it.

ARMAND

Not like you haven't, either. You gonna stand there and try to tell me I'm alone in this?

A beat. They consider each other.

HENRIETTE

When I close my eyes and let you hold me, I know what is possible. I know what God meant when he made us. With all our darkness, and all our light, I know he made us for each other.

(beat)

And then I open my eyes.

ARMAND

We can do this.

(beat)

I love you.

HENRIETTE

You gonna marry me, Armand? Dress me up in pretty dresses, take me out to dinner with your uncle and that fine lady he married?

ARMAND

She's not so fine.

HENRIETTE

No? Why, what's the matter with her?

Pause. Armand doesn't answer, caught. Henriette looks at him, figures it out.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)

She's one of us, isn't she? I wondered, that first time I saw her. You all can't tell. But we can. And that makes her tainted in your eyes, don't it, she's not so fine, that's what you said-

-

ARMAND

That's not—

HENRIETTE

Give it up, Armand. I know you love me, but all the same, you'll have to hide me away, lock me up in some back room. And then you'll get tired of that, you'll find yourself some nice white woman--

ARMAND

No--

HENRIETTE

A wife, who ain't gonna want me around, and then I'm onto the next, another one of your friends, the Marquis, maybe--

ARMAND

How can you even--

HENRIETTE

It's the truth! When a white man tells a colored woman he loves her, it just means one thing. And I'm not selling my freedom for that.

She starts to go. He grabs her by the arm.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)

You gonna force me, Armand? 'Cause that's usually the first step.

They stare at each other. He lets her go. She crosses
the square, and flees. He lets her go, then follows,
as

SCENE SIXTEEN

*The Marquis enters with two republicans. They
are singing and drinking.*

REPUBLICAN

TROUBLE'S GONNA FIND YOU
TROUBLE'S GOT YOUR NAME
COMING ROUND THE CORNER

MARQUIS

NEVER BE THE SAME

SECOND REPUBLICAN

WHEN IT'S FINALLY GOT YOU
TWISTING IN ITS GRIP
NOTHING LEFT TO DO
BUT OPEN UP AND LET 'ER RIP

MARQUIS

SCREAM THEM BLUES

ALL

LET IT OUT, LET IT OUT

MARQUIS

SCREAM THEM BLUES

ALL

YOU'RE ALIVE, YOU'RE ALIVE

MARQUIS

SCREAM THEM BLUES

ALL

GOTTA SHOUT, GOTTA SHOUT

MARQUIS

SCREAM THEM BLUES

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

SURVIVE. SURVIVE. SURVIVE

SECOND REPUBLICAN

LIFE IS GONNA HURT YOU
 THAT'S A SORRY FACT
 NO ONE GETS OFF EASY

MARQUIS

YOU'RE BORN AND YOU GET SMACKED

REPUBLICAN

THINK YOU'RE SOMETHING SPECIAL
 YOU'RE A GODDAMNED FOOL
 'CAUSE WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT
 THERE'S ONLY JUST ONE RULE

MARQUIS

HOWL THEM BLUES

ALL

LET IT OUT, LET IT OUT

MARQUIS

HOWL THEM BLUES

ALL

YOU'RE ALIVE, YOU'RE ALIVE

MARQUIS

HOWL THEM BLUES

ALL

GOTTA SHOUT, GOTTA SHOUT

MARQUIS

HOWL THEM BLUES

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

SURVIVE. SURVIVE. SURVIVE.
 YOU GOT WHISKEY
 YOU GOT CASH
 ALL THEM WOMEN DRIPPING OFF YOUR NECK
 YOU GOT YOURSELF A STASH
 YOU GOT SWAY WITH THEM THAT NEEDS IT
 YOU GOT OYSTERS EVERY NIGHT
 BUT FRIEND YOUR DREAMS ARE SMOKE AND AIR
 YOUR HOLD JUST AIN'T QUITE RIGHT

ALL

KILL THEM BLUES
 KILL 'EM ALL, KILL 'EM ALL
 KILL THEM BLUES
 TELL YOU WHY, TELL YOU WHY
 KILL THEM BLUES
 WATCH 'EM FALL, WATCH 'EM FALL
 KILL THEM BLUES

MARQUIS

DIE. DIE. DIE.

As they finish, the republicans laugh and check their bottles, which are empty. Marianne runs through. They stop her, and try to carelessly molest her. Fierce, she pushes them aside and escapes.

REPUBLICAN

Oh, man!

SECOND REPUBLICAN

We need a refill. You comin', Marquis?

Bloodgood appears, coming through in the opposite direction.

MARQUIS

Sorry, my friends, I have a little business to attend to at the present moment. I will join you momentarily. I think I may have something to celebrate this evening.

He waves goodbye. Stone appears, but hangs behind, watching.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

(Soft) Mr. Bloodgood.

Bloodgood starts.

BLOODGOOD

Marquis! You startled me.

MARQUIS

I'm sorry. Didn't mean to sneak up on you like that. Well, actually, I did.

He laughs a little. Bloodgood turns back to his book.

BLOODGOOD

What do you want, Marquis?

MARQUIS

Oh, you know. Same old thing. I want to help! Get in on the action. Make some money while there's money to be made.

BLOODGOOD

I am attempting the wholesale economic reconstruction of a battered land, sir. Forgive me if I do not feel that your selfish need to "make money while there's money to be made" is one of the priorities of such an enterprise.

MARQUIS

You know, Mr. Bloodgood sometimes you use so many words I just don't know what you're saying.

BLOODGOOD

I'm asking you to leave, sir.

MARQUIS

Yeah, I kinda thought that might be it. But before I go, is your wife around?

BLOODGOOD

My wife, sir?

MARQUIS

Yeah, an old friend of hers asked me to give her his regards. Old boyfriend. They ran into each other last week. She didn't tell you?

BLOODGOOD

No.

MARQUIS

Yeah, he and I are very close. Maybe you've seen us together. He's a kind of dark-skinned gentleman.

BLOODGOOD

I don't believe so. Now, if you don't mind--

MARQUIS

No? Well, he and your wife were real friendly, once upon a time. This was before she met you, mind, so I don't see as how there was any harm in it. Yeah, she must've been a whole different person before she met you.

BLOODGOOD

(Suspicious dawning) We all change with time.

MARQUIS

Yeah, but there's changes and there's changes. My friend tells me he thought she looked real different, now that he's seen her again. He says she's paler than he remembers. Much paler.

BLOODGOOD

(Filled with dread) As you'll recall, she's been ill.

MARQUIS

Paler even than that. My friend tells me that as he recalls, she had a much darker complexion in her youth. Almost as dark as his. You sure you don't know who I'm talking about?

BLOODGOOD

(Pause. He gets it.) No.

MARQUIS

That's him, right back there, right here on the street.

The Marquis shrugs his shoulder at Stone.
Bloodgood does not move, or look.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

Why don't I ask him over so he can tell you about it?

BLOODGOOD

What do you want, Marquis?

MARQUIS

I just want to be friends. And I want--a plantation.

(Pause. They stare at each other.)

I miss country living. I grew up on your daddy's plantation, remember? Course, I was always a sort of a second class citizen and all, but I did admire the way you all pranced around. Like royalty. That's what I wanted to be. One of you. The Marquis! And I don't see as how I can do that without my own land. So that's what I want. My friend suggested I talk to your wife about it, but I said, no. The person I need to talk to is Mr. Bloodgood himself.

BLOODGOOD

That plantation has been in our family for over two hundred years.

MARQUIS

Times are changing, Mr. Bloodgood. Ask your wife. Why, before the war, the idea that a man like yourself might actually marry a --

BLOODGOOD

Thank you, Marquis. You've made your point.

MARQUIS

Good. I had my lawyer write us a little letter of agreement, in case we came to an understanding. You just sign right there, Mr. Bloodgood, that'll just take care of everything for now.

He takes out the letter, shows it to him, hands him a pen. After a moment, Bloodgood signs.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

Life is strange, isn't it, Mr. Bloodgood? Nothing is ever what you think. For instance, people might look at me and see your run of the mill blackmailer. But they'd be wrong. That's not what I am. I'm a member of the landed gentry! Life is surely strange. Good day, Mr. Bloodgood.

And he turns to go.

BLOODGOOD

Marquis. You can call yourself anything you like, but you will never be anything but common white trash.

He goes, the Marquis stands alone, center stage.

MARQUIS

You'll be sorry for that, Mr. Bloodgood. All of you. Where the hell is he? STONE!

Stone materializes to his right.

STONE

Yeah?

MARQUIS

You know where that blind girl is?

STONE

I might.

MARQUIS

(Beat)

Kill her.

He throws some money on the ground and strides off. Stone thinks for a moment, picks up the money, and goes off in the opposite direction while the blues singer comes forward and steps into a pool of light.

BLUES SINGER

A WOMAN GIVES YOU TROUBLE
 BETTER SHOW HER THERE'S A COST
 A WOMAN GIVES YOU TROUBLE
 NEED TO SHOW HER THERE'S A COST
 A DOUBLE-DEALING WOMAN
 WOULD BE BETTER OFF LOST.
 WE'RE GOING DOWN DOWN DOWN
 GOIN' DOWN IN LOUISIANA
 WE'RE GOIN' DOWN DOWN DOWN
 GOIN' DOWN IN LOUISIANA
 GOIN' DOWN IN LOUISIANA
 GOT TO LOSE YOU A WOMAN

SCENE SEVENTEEN

The lights come up on Louise and Pierre, still in the garret. Jake enters, drunk.

JAKE

Well, isn't this a pretty picture.

PIERRE

She's sick, Jake. We gotta get her a doctor.

JAKE

You'd like that I bet. Doctor comes in here, takes her away. How you doin', sweetheart? How's our little angel?

LOUISE

I'm fine.

She pushes him away.

JAKE

There you go. She says she's fine. So we can have us a little party.

He pulls out a flask and drinks. He is clearly drunk.

PIERRE

Where's Mama?

JAKE

Mama passed out at the bar. She just can't hold her liquor the way she used to. Here, honey, have a drink.

He holds out the bottle and tries to force Louise to drink. Pierre pushes Jake away.

PIERRE

Leave her alone.

JAKE

I've had enough of this, little brother. I just want some time alone with our houseguest. I don't think that's too much to ask.

PIERRE

Don't you touch her, or...

JAKE

Or what? Damn cripple, I'm tired, having you underfoot all the time.

PIERRE

I mean it, Jake. You get out of here.

He stands and holds his crutch like a club. Jake starts to laugh.

JAKE

You gonna fight me? You and me gonna fight over this?

PIERRE

I'm not gonna let you hurt her.

LOUISE

Pierre?

JAKE

Get out of the way, cripple.

PIERRE

You're the cripple. You are.

He swings his crutch at Jake. They fight. Jake knocks him over. As he struggles to stand, Jake takes a blackjack out of his pocket and smashes Pierre on the head. Across the stage Marianne finds Armand

MARIANNE

You have to come, now. They're gonna take her away. You have to bring the sister now.

LOUISE

Pierre?

JAKE

He's taking a nap. Now, where were we? Oh, yeah. You and I are gonna have a drink.

He holds his flask to her mouth and tries to force her to drink.

LOUISE

No, I don't want it—

JAKE

If I say you drink it, you drink it! Why is everyone being so mean to me? I just want to have some fun. DRINK IT!

Louise drinks, choking a little. He whacks her on the back.

JAKE (CONT'D)

The first couple of times, it goes down rough. But you won't feel it in a minute. By god, you're pretty.

LOUISE

No, please...

JAKE

Do as I say! I could just take you, you know. I'm trying to be nice about this and all you can do is complain!

Jake suddenly grabs Louise. Henriette starts.

LOUISE

No! Please. You don't want to do this. You don't have to do this, Jake. Listen to me. You're not an animal.

HENRIETTE

Louise?

Sensing Louise's danger, she looks about. Stone appears in the doorway of La Frochard's den.

STONE

What the hell--

(He pulls Jake away from Louise.)

Jesus god above, I thought I'd seen it all. But raping a blind girl beats everything.

JAKE

Stay out of this, Stone.

LOUISE

Please, don't let him hurt me. Please.

STONE

I won't, honey. Come on, let's get you out of here.

Jake blocks their exit.

JAKE

You ain't taking her anywhere. Go on back to your master, boy. This isn't your business.

STONE

Oh, man. You're gonna be sorry you said that.

He slugs him. They get into a violent fight. Jake pins Stone to the floor and starts to strangle him.

Stone reaches into his pocket and suddenly stabs him with a switchblade. He rolls Jake's body off him and stares at it for a long moment.

LOUISE

Who's there?

(beat)

Who's there?

STONE

It's me, honey. He isn't gonna bother you anymore.

(He crosses, puts his arm around Louise and rocks her.)

I'm so sorry. If I'd known what they were gonna do to you, I never would've--

He stops himself. Calm, Louise looks at him.

LOUISE

Where is my sister? (Beat) I know it's you. You're the one who took her.

STONE

Yeah. It's me.

LOUISE

Why did you?

STONE

Somebody paid me.

LOUISE

Please, bring her back. I can't pay you. But I would thank you for the rest of my life if you would just bring her back.

STONE

Okay, honey. Okay.

LOUISE

Thank you.

(She touches his face for a long moment, to see what he looks like.)

So sad. Why are you so--

(He takes her hand away from his face. She touches the switchblade in his hand.)

Oh, no.

STONE

(Backing away, holding switchblade,
considering her)

Yeah, see. It's all a little bit more complicated than you can get your mind around, in a minute or two. Your thanks? I mean, what am I supposed to do with that? That's not much, honey. I'm sorry to be the one to tell you, but that's not much.

LOUISE

Are you gonna hurt me?

STONE

Well, I been paid to, and that's the truth.

LOUISE

But you saved me. You--

STONE

Yeah, but see, that don't mean nothin'. It coulda gone a different way, if I was in a different mood, he was a little less drunk. Lotta life is happenstance. Like your sister exchangein' words with the Marquis in that train station. 'She was a little less uppity to begin with, you all wouldn't be in this kind of trouble. That's just life, see? And the rest of it is business.

LOUISE

NO. No.

STONE

Yeah, you're just a child, you can't understand. Lotta ways, I'm maybe doing you a favor. This world's a hard place and that's a fact. Ain't gonna get easier on a blind colored girl.

LOUISE

(Begging for her life)

Please. My sister. She needs me. We need each other.

STONE

Everybody's got needs. I got 'em too, honey. Been through so much, only thing that fills the darkness is money, and that's another truth.

LOUISE

No. You saved me. You still have feelings.

STONE

I'm sorry, honey. But feelings don't amount to a whole lot.

Quickly, he stabs her. Louise screams.

HENRIETTE
(Filled with dread)

Louise?

Marianne & Armand find Henriette.

ARMAND
Henriette, she knows where she is.

(The lights go out on La Frochard's den.
Henriette stops.)

It's too late.

The lights shift. The stage is empty, except for the
bodies of Louise, Pierre and Jake, which remain on
the floor of La Frochard's den. Pierre stirs.

PIERRE
Louise, are you all right? Louise?
(He sees Louise's body and crosses, still
groggy.)
Wake up, honey. Come on, wake up.
(He turns her over and sees that she is
dead.)

Oh, no. Come on, wake up! We have to get you out of here. I'll take you to the doctor.
Come on, Louise. Wake up. We'll find your sister, and we'll get away from here, we'll
leave all of this, we'll just--Louise. Wake up. Please, wake up.

Henriette, Armand and Marianne enter. Pierre looks
up.

HENRIETTE
What have you done? Get away from her, you murderer! Get away!

She pushes Pierre aside and takes the body of
Louise.

PIERRE
No, I didn't--I didn't do this--I loved her--

HENRIETTE
White people don't know how to love.

ARMAND

Henriette--

HENRIETTE

GET AWAY. All of you! You're devils, you white devils, you're nothing but a scourge, you--you've taken everyone I love, get away from both of us--get away, get away.

(She dissolves in sobs, holding Louise.)

After a moment, Armand goes to her.)

Louise. Wouldn't have this. She always said I was too angry, she would never let me... Louise, Louise, how can I live, how can I, if you're not here?

PIERRE

We tried to find you. I couldn't get her away. I wasn't strong enough. We tried.

HENRIETTE

It's all right. I found you at last, Louise, I'm here. We're together. No one's ever gonna hurt you anymore.

Henriette holds Louise's body as the others look on.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

The lights shift. Stone is alone, and drinking with real fury. Diane appears.

DIANE

Stone?

STONE

Well, look who the cat drug in. What do you want?

DIANE

We have to talk.

STONE

Oh, yeah? Well, it's gonna cost you. I don't do favors for no one, especially not you. As a matter of fact, I'm glad you're here, because I want more money. That last time you came, you didn't give me nothin', that wasn't half what I want. I told you, I'm a greedy guy, and I'm gonna tell everybody about your black soul if you don't--

DIANE

There's a blind girl.

STONE

What?

DIANE

I didn't want to know. I thought she was dead. I thought I killed her. I tried to kill her. I didn't want to, but I didn't... you were gone. I was alone. I didn't know what to do.

STONE

I don't know what you're saying, woman. You get out of here, now.

DIANE

All these years, living with that, every day. I killed my own child. Everything seems so far away. But I didn't kill her. Someone saved her. That other girl, and she's here. This blind girl, our daughter is here. We have to find her, Stone, we could come back to life--

STONE

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

In a rage, he pushes away from her, as the ensemble erupts into song.

ENSEMBLE

CORRUPTION IS JUST SWELL! (TRA LA)
 IT'S NOT A TOUGH SELL
 IN OUR CORNER OF HELL
 GET COMFORTABLE, SETTLE IN (TRA LA)
 YOU WON'T NEED FRESH AIR
 WHEN YOU'RE DROWNING IN SIN.
 NEW ORLEANS HAS DARK CORNERS
 WHERE DARK DOINGS ARE DONE
 UNDER COVER OF NIGHT (TRA LA)

SO IF YOU FIND YOURSELF
 IN A SWEAT SOME EVENING
 JUST STEP IN THE SHADE
 A DEAL CAN BE MADE
 YOUR SOUL IS FAIR TRADE!

They erupt in laughter. Lights shift to the Marquis's apartment.

SCENE NINETEEN

Prostitutes and Republicans are slumped about, clutching clothing and liquor bottles. Stone approaches.

STONE

Marquis.

MARQUIS

Huh? Oh, it's you. You finish that job I told you about?

STONE

Yeah. I did it.

MARQUIS

Good.

Stone stands there.

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

Well, what do you want? I paid you already.

STONE

You didn't pay me near enough for what I did tonight.

PROSTITUTE

What are you talking with him for, Marquis? Now you a land owner, you don't have to hire no coloreds. You say what you want, snap your fingers, the police do what you say now.

MARQUIS

Shut up, you stupid bitch, you don't know what you're talking about.

PROSTITUTE

Who you calling a stupid bitch. I don't have to--

MARQUIS

(Overlap) You are a stupid bitch because this ain't none of your--

They start to squabble. Stone lifts his hand, which carries a pistol.

STONE

SHUT UP.

They all stare at him, startled.

MARQUIS

What'd you say?

STONE

I said, I think you should leave.

He points the gun in her face. After a moment, the
orgy flees, en masse, leaving Stone and the Marquis.

MARQUIS

What the hell is the matter with you?

STONE

How come you had me kill a blind girl, Marquis? She never did nothing to you. She was just a child. She was a good girl. How come you had me kill her?

MARQUIS

I don't know. I was in a bad mood.

STONE

You were in a bad mood?

MARQUIS

Hell, yes! That whole crowd's been treating me like swamp mud my whole life. And I own their land! Who the hell they think they're talking to? And then they're all running around, looking for that girl like she's the Lord Jesus himself. Well, they should've been a little more polite, that's all I have to say. Every last one of them needs to learn a few manners.

STONE

You had me kill her out of spite?

MARQUIS

What does it matter why you did it? You got paid. You always get paid, Stone. I don't recall you ever caring what the reasons were before.

STONE

She was my daughter.

MARQUIS

What?

STONE

I took your money, and killed my own child. I been bought and sold so many times, I didn't even think twice about it, you said, kill that black girl, and I did it, I said give me the money and I'll do anything, I'll kill the uncle, I'll bring you the sister for you to do what you want, you give me the money to turn on my own people and I do it--

He has the gun in the Marquis's face. The Marquis tries to crawl away.

MARQUIS

(Overlap)

Now, Stone--don't you--goddammit, I didn't know!

STONE

(Overlap)

I said give me your white money because that's what makes you human instead of just some thing, a piece of property, I was tired of being a piece of property so I let you buy me like a slave-

MARQUIS

Slaves don't choose, Stone!

(He gets up on his knees and begs for his life.)

Now, I never forced you to do anything, did I? No. Everything I asked you to do, I paid you for. I never owned you! I never wanted to own you! I considered you more of a partner!

(Stone shoves the gun into his face. The Marquis holds his ground.)

All right, not exactly a partner, but a trusted and valued employee. And a friend. You and I are the same, Stone, down to the core, that's why color was never really an issue with us. We're pragmatists. You can't change the past. So you just--chalk it up to human nature and move on.

Defeated, Stone lowers the gun.

STONE

Human nature?

He sets the gun down and sits, desolate. The Marquis keeps talking.

MARQUIS

That's right. Parents kill their children every day. Most of them do it deliberately. At least you--never mind.

(MORE)

MARQUIS (CONT'D)

I just think it's a mistake to get all dewy-eyed about a girl you thought was dead to begin with. Now is not the time to develop a conscience, Stone. It's just going to get in your way.

STONE

Yeah, you're right about that.

MARQUIS

Course I am.

(He turns to get a bottle of liquor from a cabinet nearby. As he does, he carefully reaches into a drawer and picks up his own gun, surreptitious.)

So, let's just, you and me--let's put it behind us, have a drink and remember who we are.

As he turns, he raises the gun. But Stone is quicker. For a moment, the two men point guns at each other. The Marquis starts to laugh, as if it were a joke. Stone shoots him. He goes down.

STONE

I know who I am. Believe me, I know.

After a moment, Stone puts the gun to his own head and shoots.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWENTY

The Marketplace, early in the day. Bloodgood enters the square, alone. Republican 2 approaches, smug.

REPUBLICAN

Why, Mr. Bloodgood! I heard you were leaving our fair city, but I didn't believe it.

BLOODGOOD

I am afraid someone else will have to oversee the work that remains to be done. Circumstances do not permit me to stay.

REPUBLICAN

Yes, I heard you suffered a loss. A close relative of your wife, I believe?

BLOODGOOD

(Faint) My wife and I have separated. I was referring to my health.

Armand and Henriette enter, also dressed for traveling.

ARMAND

Uncle Henry.

BLOODGOOD

Armand. Thank you for coming down.

ARMAND

We wanted to say goodbye.

Bloodgood stares. Beat.

BLOODGOOD

Armand tells me that you've decided to leave New Orleans. I think that's wise.

ARMAND

We're going to California. They say it's almost a new world.

BLOODGOOD

There is no such thing as a new world.

Train whistle. He goes as Marianne and Pierre cross.

MARIANNE

We are not walking all the way to Mexico. You won't make it. You're a cripple, Pierre.

PIERRE

I'm a very strong cripple.

La Frochard rushes on, desperate, and throws herself at Pierre's feet.

LA FROCHARD

NO. No, you can't leave me, my boy, my only child, would you leave your poor widowed mother helpless and alone...

PIERRE

Mama, stop it!

LA FROCHARD

How will I survive with no one to help me? My poor Jake is dead, he was such an angel, such a help to his poor mother, now all I have left is Pierre, my darling Pierre--

PIERRE

Mama, let go. Let go.

LA FROCHARD

(Wailing)

And he wants to leave me! Helpless. Alone. With nothing. I have nothing.

(Going through her empty sack)

Look, look, all I have in the world is rags, pennies... a few broken cards a handful of beans, a couple of shells...

(She stares at them for a moment, then inspired, quickly sets up a con game.)

Now you see it, now you don't, can you find the bean, which shell is it under, two to one says--hey!

Several locals drag her off.

MARIANNE

Come on, Pierre. We have to go. It's a long way to Mexico if we're walking.

Pierre stops and says goodbye to Henriette, then goes.

ARMAND

We have to go, too. The coach is leaving any minute.

Diane enters, frantic.

DIANE

Have you seen her?

Henriette looks over as Diane approaches. She is worn, haunted. She stops and questions anyone who will listen.

DIANE (CONT'D)

A blind girl. She has a beautiful voice, they say, but no one can find her. Do you know where she is?

(Passing strangers shrug her off. She approaches Henriette.)

I'm looking for a blind girl. She has a beautiful voice, like an angel. Have you seen her?

HENRIETTE

Yes. I have.

DIANE

You have! I knew it! She's alive, like he said. After all this time. Where can I find her?

Henriette reaches over and touches Diane's breast.

HENRIETTE

Here.

DIANE

(Pushing her away)

Here? No, no, there's nothing there. I have to find the blind girl. Oh, don't cry. We'll find her. You'll see. I'm looking for a blind girl...

She wanders off. Armand watches Henriette.

HENRIETTE

I can't go.

ARMAND

Henriette, there's nothing for you here. There's too much grief.

HENRIETTE

It's my grief. It's my blood that's been spilled in this terrible place. In the ground, in the river. This is my place now, and you want me to leave, why?

ARMAND

So that you can have a life. So that we can have a future.

HENRIETTE

There's no such thing. There's only the present, and the past. And a world, a sorrowful broken world that I will not leave. I will not leave my sister again.

ARMAND

What will you do?

HENRIETTE

(bitterly determined)

I will not accept the hand of fate. I will raise my people up. I will not flee this place. You and your kind use these words, reconstruct, you're gonna reconstruct, to do that you got to claim your dead, Armand. You should know that. I claim this land, this dead land and these broken people. You want to run? Go. I will reconstruct.

They look at each other. Off, a train whistle blows.

MATT
 LOOK WITH YOUR HEART,
 AT THOSE WHO ARE WANTING
 LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
 AT PEOPLE IN NEED.

MATT & CHRISTINE
 FORGOTTEN AND SMALL
 WITH EYES OH SO HAUNTING

MATT & CHRISTINE & JOSH
 WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU
 TO DO THIS GOOD DEED.

MATT & CHRISTINE & JOSH & GWEN
 WE REACH OUT FOR KINDNESS
 NOT ASKING FOR MUCH

MATT & CHRISTINE & JOSH & GWEN & JESS
 WE ALL HAVE OUR BLINDNESS,
 BUT HANDS HERE CAN TOUCH

MATT & CHRISTINE & JOSH & GWEN & JESS
 & JUSTIN & CAT
 I MAY JUST BE STANDING
 BESIDE OR BEFORE YOU

MATT & CHRISTINE & JOSH & GWEN & JESS
 & JUSTIN & CAT & ANTHONY &
 BLOODGOOD & STONE
 FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW
 WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT TRUE.

ENSEMBLE
 WE SEEK COMFORT

Louise appears in a spot.

LOUISE
 HENRIETTE!

ENSEMBLE
 WE SEEK COMPASSION

LOUISE

HENRIETTE!

ENSEMBLE

WE SEEK A MOMENT OF PEACE
AND PRAY FOR A TIME
WHEN SORROW MAY CEASE.

GROUP ONE

LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
AT STORIES UNSPOKEN
LISTEN WITH GRACE
REMEMBER TO GIVE
A KINDNESS MAY TOUCH
A SOUL THAT IS BROKEN
AND LOVE MAY REVEAL
A NEW WAY TO LIVE.

GROUP TWO

LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
LISTEN WITH GRACE
LOOK WITH YOUR HEART
NEW WAY TO LIVE

ENSEMBLE (CONT'D)

A HEART THAT IS BLINDED
OR CRIPPLED WITH FEAR
MAY NEVER DISCOVER
THE BEAUTY THAT'S HERE.

LOUISE

I MAY JUST BE STANDING,
BESIDE OR BEFORE YOU.

COMPANY

FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW,
FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW,
FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW,
WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT TRUE.

END OF PLAY