BRER CLARE

or

Life Among the Mighty

with apologies to Harriet Beecher Stowe

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An Ensemble of eight (8) actors and one (1) author will play all parts.

This Ensemble may be all people of color, playing all people of white and color,

Or it may be a mix of color and white.

The Characters (and their doubling, trebling and quadrubling) are -

AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE, the Man of the Manor in 1850's New Orleans. An antebellum pragmatist and hedonist. Does not double.

BRER CLARE, enslaved in both time zones, the difference being that he enjoys many perks in the latter as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Does not double.

EVA, the precocious, and then some, daughter of AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE. Doubles, et cetera, as SENATOR ORAL TABERNICKLE, JUSTICE GUIDICE MI DISPIACE and SIMON LAGREE.

VIRGINIA, BRER CLARE'S white wife (although she may be an actor of color, but she must "play" white). SHE puts up with a lot. Doubles as OPHELIA and SR. RULERFINGERS.

OPHELIA, AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE'S Yankee sister-in-law. Doubles as VIRGINIA and SR. RULERFINGERS.

ADOLPH, servant to AUGUSTINE. Gallicized fop. Doubles, et cetera, as SENATOR GHOSTLY SPECTRE, and QUIMBO.

DINAH, cook for the ST. CLARE household. Julia Child, Proudhomme and the Iron Chefs all in one. Doubles, et cetera, as SENATOR KEN TEDDEDY and SAMBO.

SENATOR ORAL TABERNICKEL, doubled as above.

SENATOR GHOSTLY SPECTRE, doubled as above.

SENATOR KEN TEDDEDY, doubled as above.

SR. RULERFINGERS, a Catholic nun of the Old School, doubled as above.

JUANITA KILL, BRER CLARE'S accuser. Doubles as PRUE.

TOPSY, She who just growed. Does not double.

GUIDICE MI DISPIACE, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Doubled as above.

PRUE, enslaved by SIMON LAGREE. Doubled as above.

SIMON LAGREE, the Slavemaster's Slavemaster, but with a twist. Doubled as above.

QUIMBO and SAMBO, enslaved by SIMON LAGREE, enforcers of a particularly cruel sort. Doubled as above.

TIME

The indefinite past and the definite future.

SPACE

The heretofore recondite interstice
of the Underground Railway System known as The Color Line;
the turn-around juncture at the corners of the H B
Stowe Boulevard and the W.E.B. DuBois HighFive Freeway.

The Play moves back and forth in time between the late Twentieth Century and the 1850's, between Washington, DC and New Orleans. The characters sometimes retain their 19th Centuryness 150 years later and sometimes not.

An "Uncle Remus" CHORUS, presented by the Author,

begins the show with The Pre-Prologue.

CHORUS

So one day, Brer Raybee is pimp-walkin' down the lane, feelin' his does-eat-oats, croonin', spoonin', Junemoonin' like the Exxx Hisself. And he sees before him de Tar Baby, blacker than de Devil's spleen, festooned and cooned in all her serious ebony bling blang blung.

And he says,

BRER RAYBEE

Tar Baby, we all know yore story, booby. De last time we gots together up close 'n poisonal was when Brer Fox set you in de field, so invitin' 'n such, dat he knew when I pimp-walked by, dat I'd be hi-ho'n you, 'n when you did not hi-ho me back, he knew dat I would aks you again 'n again until I put my paw forward 'n den I would be stuck on you, Tar baby, 'n den I would put my udde' han' toward you for a little touchy-feely 'n I'd get stuck on you 'n den udder hand, I wanted your bird in, no better dan two in de bush 'n den both feet 'n I could not sextricate my various erogezones from yore inky cloak, good Mama, nor your custom suit of solemn black on my Pronto, Hello Kitty, this is Raybee fur, 'n I could not come loose, 'n jus' then I see Brer Fox comin' 'long to eat me 'n so I said, Brer Fox,

Don't throw me in de briar patch!

You can masticate me, Massa;

you can chew me chomp me fassa

you can even mistahmate me assa,

but

DON'T THROW ME IN DE BRIAR PATCH

EVEN DEEPAH IN DE DEEPEST DOWN HOME.

Now dis time, Tar Baby, we gwine ampissipate Brer Fox in de pisspot royal. Why here he come now.

BRER FOX

I'm Brer Fox 'n I got 'n get de kewlest tail in de lane. Now you say I got fooled las' time by Brer Raybee. When he got all stuck up 'n tol' me DON'T THROW ME IN DE BRIAR PATCH dat I thought dat was de worstest t'ing I coulda done to him, worser dan eatin' him 'n so I did throw him in de briar patch 'n he got away all not eaten by yours so fooly. Well let me revoo de verities in particaler to see how I do not repeat any so-called screw-ups of a briarly nature. Oncet again I shall set de Tar Baby in de field for Brer Raybee to see and address, but dis time she gwine be so TyraBankslike to which Brer Raybee be drawn and quartered for my delactatation de dis time he gwine be de fool, dis time I gwine take Brer Raybee to school – and eat him!

CHORUS

So Brer Raybee pimp-walkin' down de lane oncet more 'n he see de TyraBanksBaby 'n she do look so splendiferous 'n splendapperous 'n he say,

BRER RAYBEE

Tyra Baby, you 'n me do de two-backed beast, 'n afta, we gwine sup duh Monkey Brain Feast, slurpin' out through de cranial hole, all buttery, 'n gritsycollargreened 'n we wash it down mighty speziale wid sum Daygo Rosso.

CHORUS

So Brer Raybee put forth his hand on de Tyra Baby's lower neck 'n she stick it right there 'n so he procede wid de udder hand n' it get stuck down de lower back 'n den sump'in mirakulous happen'. De Tyra Baby start rubbin' up n' down 'n de Brer Raybee doin' de 'frottage' in de groin, gwine be getting it on 'n down 'n no mindin' dat dat Brer Fox, he lookin' on, voyeurista, getting' all mucho caliente y muy botheroso, 'cause dis iss not how iss s'ppose to ISS!, Brer Fox, Zorro now Zero, beleefs, as de Tyra Baby gwine up 'n down 'n down 'n up in couplah stinkapashun 'n de Brer Zero, out of his cabeza with jell o – see, he can't beleef dat he bein fooled oncet again, rushes forward 'n pulls Brer Raybee OFF DE TYRA BABY 'n throws him in de Briar Patch! 'N Brer Fox, he reaches 'cross for DE TYRA BABY, 'cause he gittin' de deepest down hom at las!, 'n he snugglin' 'n hugglin', he be insertin for the ultimate dessertin, he be grindin' out o' his mind'n, 'n he jus' bout dere, HE JUST 'BOUT DERE H E J U S T ' B O U T D E R E 'n sudden all asudden, she nowhere, she collapse right down de raybee hole of his dream.

'N den Brer Fox, so handsum, all slimey, out o' his mindee, he wakes hisself up, reaches for de coke can, picks off some nether hair from its ring, examines it

sniffs it carefully, puts it in his pajama pocket, 'n goes right back to sleepy-bye.

PROLOGUE.

AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE, Lord of the Manor.

ST. CLARE

You know, I'm such a graceless dog that these religious aspects of such subjects as slavery don't edify me much. If I was to say anything on this slavery matter, I would say out, fair and square – Slavery is

necessary to us, we can't get along without it, we should be beggared if we give it up, and of course we mean to hold on to it. This is strong, clear, well-defined language; it has the respectability of truth to it; and if we may judge by their practice, the majority of the world will bear us out in it. But if I begin to put on a long face and snuffle and quote Scripture – well – suppose that something should bring down the price of cotton once and forever and make the whole slavery property a drug in the market, don't you think we should soon have another version of the Scripture doctrine? What a flood of light would pour into the Church, all at once and how immediately it would be discovered that everything in the Bible and reason went the other way!

SCENE ONE.

Two separate worlds. EVA ST. CLARE in one; she's fallen overboard and is drowning. BRER CLARE in the other. Trying to penetrate his world with her words, SHE sometimes does.

BRER CLARE

Carry me back to Ole Virginny

EVA

Uncle Clare, save me. Save me from drowning.

BRER CLARE

Yessir, you bet your bippy

EVA

Save me and I'll dress you up and we'll play house.

BRER CLARE

It's the natural law – I be yo' natural, not yo' due-processed 5th Amendment Daddy. Or is it 4th?

EVA

You get me full house with chile?

BRER CLARE

Where's that woman? I needs me some sugar.

EVA

Sugar, cotton, with the cane or in the fields, on the one-seater privy or two, rescue me Boss Clare!

BRER CLARE (looking off)

There you is, my T-Bone Ducky.

Enter his wife, VIRGINIA.

A little peck and a hug around the neck?

VIRGINIA

Don't cornball me, you cornrow/cornhole huckster.

EVA

I'm fading fast. I fall on the cotton thorns of life, I bleed, I bleed!

BRER CLARE

O now, virgin-down downster, did I ever tell you about the time in Georgia on my mind…

VIRGINIA

Save it for the panel.

BRER CLARE (à la "Honeycomb")

Be my darlin, Got a hank o' hair and a piece o' bone, mah honeycomb

EVA

That's it. If you don't save me from the briny deep in 10 seconds flat, I'll get the nunny-bunnies after you.

VIRGINIA

When the Sisters of the Sacred Seed caught you with the toilet seat around your neck—

BRER CLARE

That's not what I'm telling the panel.

EVA

Nine, eight, seven

VIRGINIA
I heard it so many times I could recite it sideways.

BRER CLARE
Couldn't we be twitching a little sideways before the panel reconvenes?

EVA
Six, five, four

VIRGINIA
Why, you randy buckhouse chigger, you want my scratch for your itch, do you?

BRER CLARE
Just a teeny eeny miny mo, catch me by my two-toned toe

EVA
Three

VIRGINIA
Tell me onct again what I git when you be named ASSociate JustASS?

BRER CLARE
Why you get to ride in the Stretch Court Limo right up there with me and the Mutha Superior of the BMW's, my Blessed Monster Wenches.

EVA
I'm getting that BMW after you and I count TWO!

VIRGINIA
I don't give a BM for your wenches. I want my own Benz and Stutz, you hungdog ole Bearcat.

BRER CLARE
I'm feeling a sudden, all of a sudden

EVA
Do your duty – ONE!

VIRGINIA

If you want me up there a-grinnin' and a-sinnin' –

BRER CLARE
That that that I need to do my Jewd, my Jewd—

EVA
Save me from Lord Neptune's grip. Half!

BRER CLARE
-icial, boa-constrictest, chicken-choking—

EVA
Gasp, gurgle, guulllpppp

BRER CLARE
Activism!

BRER CLARE penetrates EVA's world. Crashing waves, Hero and Leanderic gesticulations and HE saves EVA and the day.

EVA
O, Tommy, Ton of a Gun
Thomases have been made and
Thomases have been broken
Your best plans been laid
Dear boy, you're no token

BRER CLARE
I think you got the wrong Thomas?

VIRGINIA (looking around and not seeing BRER CLARE)
Clare? Wait a sec, I ain't had my meal tickie punched.

VIRGINIA leaves.

EVA
I'm introducing you to my daddy. O, Daddy, Daddy, we must buy him.

AUGUSTINE ST. CLARE rushes on.

ST. CLARE
Child, you nearly scared the devil back into me.

EVA
O, Papa, it'd take more than that. Everyone knows you don't cotton to no God nor no devil neither.

OPHELIA enters.

OPHELIA
Too many negatives.

ST. CLARE
Ophelia—

EVA
O, Auntie Feelie, aren't you glad I was saved from the diny breep by this brave as-different-as-day-to-night knight?

ST. CLARE
Thank you, sir, for crashing those waves with your heroic gesticulations.

EVA
—without your having to scold me for my quadruple negs?

ST. CLARE
Without your quadruple quadceps flexing your super-slave strength, little Eva'd be no better than a guppy or Black Molly by now.

EVA
I'd be singing

EVA & BRER CLARE (singing)
Boop Boop Biddem Wattem Bottom Choo, and they swam and they swam all over the dam

OPHELIA
Stop mumblering that awful Bop Bee and using those coarse references.

ST. CLARE

I'm Augustine St. Clare. Let me buy you—

BRER CLARE

A drink?

ST. CLARE

Let me buy you.

BRER CLARE

Two drinks.

ST. CLARE

No, let me buy *you*, my good man.

BRER CLARE

Some say I'm not, but you, kind sir, recognize quality when you spy me.

ST. CLARE

Spy you, buy you indeed.

EVA

My papa wants you, Bayou, Down by the

BRER CLARE & EVA (singing)

Bayou!

BRER CLARE

But there are those who would undermine my equal opportunities and pull me out by my Arthur Haleys. He be settlin' dat plagiaristic lawsuit, by the by, with my big and bad help. They don't acknowledge that any criticism of me is racist high-tech clinching.

ST. CLARE

High-tech is a term of much interest—

BRER CLARE

You know, like when you're on the tube and honkies say mean un tru'ful things 'bout me-so-truly jus because my wing is rad and my con is neo.

ST CLARE

Sir—

BRER CLARE

And I got a white wifey and a black sonny who look just like me and'll grow up to be just as self-absorbent as I be.

EVA

A white wifey?

BRER CLARE

She's – well, I left her over there to hurl herself into the ocean wide.

ST. CLARE

Right here she's our own muddy Missippissi.

ST. CLARE & BRER CLARE

Dass M-I-S-S-I-P-P-I-S-S-I!

Male bonding gesticulations.

ST. CLARE

You do know how to spell!

BRER CLARE

I had to save this child – something was pulling me down the abba dabba raybee hole and I couldn't resist de TyraBankBaby.

EVA

Where *did* you come from?

BRER CLARE

Why over a fur piece Gorgeous way
Georgia on my mind
But now I live over in Porkbelly Beltway.

ST. CLARE

Pardon this indelicacy, but are you a Freed Man? Or *enslaved*, as the lingo has it? Because if the latter, I'm prepared to have your master name his price and you will be ours.

BRER CLARE

I'm already owned, in a manner of speech – hold on, Homey, whyfore art thou dressed as thou ist? Dese duds would not seem to be all the rage in 19 and 92.

OPHELIA

Rather EX VEE EYE EYE EYE ELL.

BRER CLARE

EX VEE EYE EYE EYE ELL, dass a mighty big size.

EVA

1850. Halfway to the twentieth century. Daddy takes all the stage when punting across Lake Punchyourtrain.

OPHELIA

Anno Domini.

BRER CLARE

Anal Dominay Say Hey, Ofee, you look a might familiar. Would you mind if I put my BEEnign mitt under your several skirts to check for some hostile makeover?

OPHELIA

Augustine!

ST. CLARE

Propriety does dictate—

BRER CLARE (à la Rochester by way of Pigmeat Markham)

Nothin' poisonal, Mr Benny, just lookin' fo' a familiar fold.

ST. CLARE

We shall be your familiar fold.

EVA

O, Papa, what shall we name him?

ST. CLARE

You don't have a brother; I don't have a son. We'll call him Brer Clare.

BRER CLARE

Brer Hare, time for me to skedaddle. Dis mus' be some serious mistakeification. Feets, you ain't doin' yore thaing.

ST. CLARE

Welcome to our planetarium. We call it—

EVA (sings)

BOOM – DEE – AY.

BRER CLARE

A little Good Ship Lollipop, Miss Temple, befo' I sail away?

BRER CLARE & EVA (sing)

On the good ship Lollipop
It's a sweet trip to the candy shop
Where the bonbons play—

ADOLPH, officiousness cubed, enters.

ST. CLARE

Ah, here's our butler and general factotum.

ADOLPH

Le Roi Soleil, the sun neither rises nor sets with such glory and grace
As your return amongst us dawns and dusks 'pon your face

ST. CLARE

That would be scanned, but I couldn't agree—

ADOLPH

Desagréable!

ST. CLARE

More

BRER CLARE

I say dere, Cap'n, gib me some reasons

Why this not be A Man Fop All Seasons

ST CLARE
Why, Brer Clare, are you frightened of monosex?
Cross species, grand feces from my dog Rex

BRER CLARE appalled and fascinated.

ADOLPH
Mademoiselle Eva, the sky above cannot pull my eyes from your feet
While the mud below shall have my coat for your seat

EVA
Why, pray tell, would I want to sit in mud
You make me sound like a cow in its cud

ADOLPH
Ma petit cherie, mud baths set you free
I'll rub you and dub you, ask Madame Ofee
Satisfaction garantiée

OPHELIA
You have my deepest—olé

ADOLPH
J'ai besoin your deepest – trés profondement.

ST CLARE
Adolph, contain yourself. Have you no words for our newest? This is the freshly-christened Brer Clare.

ADOLPH
Mais oui, Maitre, you see, lui et moi—

ST CLARE
Aren't you brothers of and under the skin?

ADOLPH
Ah, where to begin? Je ne comprends pas.

ST CLARE

Yes, I think you do understand. Now, if you will not offer him your treacly words, at least draw him to your powdered bosom.

ADOLPH

Je ne puis pas.

ST CLARE

Why can you not?

ADOLPH

Je ne suis pas pur propre assez, je et lui.

BRER CLARE

You be one poor ass-hey, OK, ‘n my moniker ain’t Loo-EE
Only white fokes call Armstrong Lou-EE
It be Lou-IS to you dere, La Grenouille—
didn't think I knew dat Frogtalk, didja

ST CLARE

No Brer, he say’s he’s not clean enough. And though you must suspect he’s whistlin’ a bit of what we call Dickie, I ask that for the present, you take him at his word. And for you, ‘Dolph, be very kind to Clare if for no other reason than he is my namesake.

ADOLPH

I shall obey in every respect.

ST CLARE

I know you will for your position is not as onerous as it might be if another member of our illustrious family were in charge.
And here – Is-there-anyone-finah Dinah Shinah Lee.

Enter DINAH, the cook.

What’s cookin’, good lookin’?

DINAH

That depends how be the Massa’s appetite this morning after the night before. Is he looking for the hair of the dog or the gut of the catfish?

ST CLARE

Poach me six moonbeams squeezed from a tulip's two lips
Then blanch a dozen magnolia pistils
And save the clarified stamens for future steam-ulation.

DINAH

I fry you the oxtail of Babe the Blue
With sautéed eye of newt
Squeeze some fat back nice au jus
Comin' right up suite de toot

ST CLARE

Sweet de tooth, bring me my chocolate éclat
A burst of sugar cane what I need, Eva,
Then seegars and hookah pipe for your pa.

EVA

But in the morning, Papa, shouldn't you be trying to go, what do they call, wild turkey?

ST CLARE

That's right and Jack Daniel's too. Dinah, bring me the Cold Duck and your lace cookies hashish/One mo'time for the opium den/I know you Creoles capeesh.

OPHELIA

I'm looking the other way now, cousin, but tonight we must talk. These addictions—

ST CLARE

Addictions? My dear blood, I'm merely walking what's left of my pharmaceutical laboratories. The experiments I conduct may one day bring the cure for the common clot.

HE seems to have a heart attack and crashes to the ground. BRER CLARE is the only one who rushes to HIM. The others seem unimpressed.

BRER CLARE

Massa Clare, you be de kindest, don't go. Help him!

ADOLPH

Give him le bouche a bouche.

BRER CLARE

What?

ADOLPH

Bouche bée.

DINAH

It’s the only way.

BRER CLARE

My mouth—

EVA

On his mouth.

BRER CLARE

On—

OPHELIA

I do concur.

BRER CLARE’s decision.

BRER CLARE

No, you just funnin’ me.

ST CLARE bursts out laughing.

ST CLARE

You’re right and you’re the first to get it. All these others, even my dear Eva, when first she saw my ‘stroke’ fell for it hook line and stinko. You are an excellent judge of character or at least situations. Congratulations, Brer Clare, now you must be hungry after your test.

BRER CLARE

I passed?

ST CLARE

With flying F’s at rolling doughnuts.

BRER CLARE

Flying what's?

ST CLARE

Of course, you can't spell everything. How perfect.
And for that – Dinah's doughnuts are yours.

BRER CLARE

Dinah's doughnuts?

ST CLARE

You shall have as many as you like. She hasn't changed the grease in a coon's age, if you'll pardon my vernacular.

DINAH

O, we do 'scuse it, Mistah Big Guy, we know you don't mean no harm when you usin' da racist oppressor's cunning lingua; we know you be on our side in the struggle against the forces of segregation yesterday today tomorrow and forever; we know you just bidin' yore time 'til the Ethiop iron's nice and hot in the fire, 'til the owners all complacent and mint juleppy compfy, when the house and the field nigrahs rise up from their cots and engage the man in 'round the clock peace negotiations.

ST CLARE

No, you're too mild, Dinah; you can't be so mollifying.

DINAH

What's that word, Mistah?

ST CLARE

You can't be so soft.

DINAH

I'm the softest. Just you feel. And da way I fluff up my pillows

ST CLARE

You're remarkable and I know, the world knows, how pillowy you are.

DINAH

If the world knew—

ST CLARE

It would be a better place. Now it's time to take Brer Clare off for some of your softest nuts of dough, some of your most pliable and crunch soft shell crabs and your toothsome gum-gum-gumbo.

DINAH

I shall not forget how the Brer passed da test and what a fine judge he going to make some day.

BRER CLARE

Yes, I will.

DINAH

In the Court beyond the horizon.

BRER CLARE

No no, right here and now. You'll see. I will be confirmed.

ST CLARE

In the Grand Old Nineteenth Century Party?

BRER CLARE

They's the ones supporting me. The G.O. Nineteenth Century P. The P. of A. Lincoln.

ST CLARE

Yes, we've begun to hear of the gentleman, haven't we Adolph?

ADOLPH

Absolutement.

ST CLARE

He served one term in the House and was against the Mexican War.
We like that, don't we, Adolph?

ADOLPH

Mucho gusto.

ST CLARE

And he's a friend of yours, you say?

BRER CLARE
He got my back, tho' I wouldn't eggzacly say we ever met.

ST CLARE
But he's going to make you a judge?

BRER CLARE
With all due respeck, dat is—

EVA
O, don't be a judge, Brer Clare. We'll never see you.
And there's always, "Judge not lest you be sqwudged."

BRER CLARE
But to be on the Suupreemest Court of the Land.

A chance is an Affirmative Thing to Waste!

ST CLARE
Affirmative passion, negative action, all the same when you slice it, if the slave fits, dripping with OJ and a bit of bitters – Dinah, add it to my Captain Morgan, 'diese Morgen' – the Suupreeemest Court, you say?

OPHELIA
Mr. Lincoln will never—

ST CLARE
And why not, Cuz? What should prevent the lowest from reaching the Suupreeemest? Why should we not groom ourselves. It couldn't hurt to have a friend.

OPHELIA
A slave?

ST CLARE
An 'enslaved.' The new term, au courant. The first will be last and the last first. Biblical enough for you?

And what stage is your getting there at, Brer?

BRER CLARE
Well, there are hearings on my confirmation and actually I was on my way there when—

ST CLARE
‘Actually’? An interesting use of the word.

BRER CLARE
When – when I came here.

ST CLARE
I know you’re hungry, but which would you like to do first?

Eat or be confirmed?

BRER CLARE
Those – doughnuts – gee – I suppose I could – did you say OJ? –

DEY FRAMED A GUILTY MAN!

We hear a gavel and a voice:
“The hearings shall come to Ordure!”

BRER CLARE (cont’d, and now HE sings)
Slish slash, I was taking a bath

Long about a Saturday night

Rub dub jus’ relaxin’ in de tub

Thinkin’ everything was alright

Well I stepped out de tub

Put my feet on de floor

Wrapped a towel around me

‘n I opened de door

When a splish slash

I jumped back in de bath

How was I to know dat dere was polees at de door

ST CLARE

You slisher ‘n a slasher

You cutter, head butt-er

You killer, moonwalker,

You shiller, Hertz stalker

What am I saying?! I’ve had a Vision! Dinah-Shinah, hold off, my little hair porkpie. Ophelia, Eva, the peanut gallery awaits.

BRER CLARE is swirled off into the Senate Hearings’ Room. The CHAIRMAN is gaveling.

CHAIRMAN

The hearings shall come to ordure.

A SENATOR interrupts.

SENATOR ORAL

Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN

Will the Senator identify himself for the televisionwary sets?

SENATOR ORAL

I’m Senator Oral Tabernickle from the great state of Polygams and its capital Salt Slick. Ther eare some, I know, and every John, Dick and Harry Smith knows, who’d like to tear the runt pea gonads off Ole Oral, but they’re not going to get a chance. I keep my boxers wrapped up tight around my aqua scrotum, yes the same aqua scrotum with the little Gideons tattooed on each testicle and I’m proud of each and every stitch. The elders say, “Tithe, brethren, tithe,” and Ole Oral never fails to give them a squirt and a half. ‘Cause it’s my squirt that’s keeping this land from becoming a lawless quagmire. And speaking of lawless quagmires, here before us this morning, a man who’s been vilified and willified, from the quotidian, on a daily basis. And I’ll conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, if you’ll just—

The CHAIRMAN gavels HIM down.

CHAIRMAN

The hearings will come to ordure. This is the Senate Judiciwary Panel and I’m the Chwairman, Senator Snarlin’ Ghostly Specter from the gweat stwate of Pennsylwania. We’re here this way’m

investigwating the fitness of the Administwation's candidwate for the Supreme Court, Mr. Thomwass Cwarence. No, Mr. Thomwass, there have been charges against you that your educwation at the hwands of the Sisters of the Bwack Veiled Monsters would lead you to wule unfawy on a woman's pwo choice or pwo wife decisionwary sets. In your own words, Judge Queerance, would you addwess these charges? Especiawy in terms of *stare decisis*.

BRER CLARE

Thwank you, Swenator.

CHAIRMAN

Excuse me?

BRER CLARE

I mean, thank you, Senator Ghostly.

The nuns of rural Gorgia were the rockbed of a very beddy youth which often saw me without a rock and only a bed for my pillow.

CHAIRMAN

Twat you say, I cunt hear you.

BRER CLARE

If I may begin again?

CHAIRMAN

Pwease.

BRER CLARE

Every day of every winter I shoveled the snow in front of the nunnery so Srs. Anachronisma and Precious Wounds, our twin buns who taught kindergarten and first grade piano, could walk the three miles to our half-room school house without fear of hepatica and chilblain.

SENATOR TEDDEDY

Excuse me, Judge Queerass, did you say snow, daily snow in rural Gorgya?

BRER CLARE

Yes.

CHAIRMAN

Would the Senator fwom the gwate stwate of Mwassajewsits identify himswelf?

SEN. TEDDEDY

Senator K-k-k-ken Teddedy. I've had some experience with the C-c-c-cutlick Church. The good C-c-c-cardinals presided over the stat funerals for my fallen brother princes. Now Judge Quince, Peasebottom, Flibertigibbet, as a product of a viagrous Romish education, I – I – I –

CHAIRMAN

Senator Teddedy, it's not your turn off the bridge just yet.

SEN. TEDDEDY

O. Whose is it? I brought the limes.

SEN. ORAL

To fight off scurvy?

SEN. TEDDEDY

Yeah, sure. Clink clink.

CHAIRMAN

Barrister Fagwass, would you pwease continwoo?

BRER CLARE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was speaking of my vast walled experience within the celibate womb.

SEN. ORAL

The Virgin birth, yes; Joseph the Joiner, yes. We Mormorons got the only gamy in towny John Smith, there's a gamy guy for you.

CHAIRMAN

Would the Senator fwom the gwate stwate of Polygams tear the runt pea gonads off yourswelf and pwease refwain fwom intewupting, amigo.

SEN. ORAL

Disculpe la interrupción.

CHAIRMAN

Thwack you. Now Judge, you've hweard the wevidence against you – according to stare decisis –

BRER CLARE

There's evidence against me? You ain't hardly waksed me anything.

A disturbance in the back of the hall.

A VOICE offstage

Mr. Chairman –

CHAIRMAN

There sweems to be swumwon –

The Voice has come forward. It's SISTER ROSARYFINGERS.

SISTER RF

Thwack! That's what did it, Mr. Chairman. Worked every time. Thwack!

BRER CLARE

Thwack!

CHAIRMAN

Thack?

BRER CLARE & SISTER RF

Thwack!

CHAIRMAN

Pwease expwain yourswelf in terms of stare decisis.

SISTER RF

I'm Sister Rosaryfingers, kindly old honey-funny-nunny-bunny.

BRER CLARE

Honeynunny!

SISTER RF

Funnybunny!

THEY embrace.

Whenever any of the other students were acting out or up, I'd hand my rosary-wrapped hands over to Baby Clare and he'd do the rest.

CHAIRMAN

You'd hwand your hwands—

SISTER RF

He never did a thing wrong in his four years in the fourth grade, but he sure did administer the cool and unusual punishment.

SEN. ORAL

Kindhearted Sister, would you kindly demonstrate?

SISTER RF

Just put out your hands.

SEN. ORAL (doing so)

Like this?

SISTER RF

That's fine. Baby?

SHE gives her hands to BRER CLARE. HE takes them clasped, uses them as a karate chopper and 'thwacks' SEN. ORAL over the knuckles.

SEN. ORAL

John Jesus Smith bloody taberknacks.

SEN. TEDDEDY gets quite a charge out of this.

Just you wait, Teddedy, I'll fill your diet vodka with chocolate mousse, your lo-cal Pouilly Fuisse with escar-snow.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Blow!

SISTER RF

Mr. Chairman, have you been bad today?

CHAIRMAN (to SISTER)

Thwank you, I mean no, Swister.

BRER CLARE

This early experience puts me in good stead to weather the assaults against the blind broad, lady, with the cataracts, scales.

SEN. ORAL (to SEN. TEDDEDY)

Chappaquitter.

SEN TEDDEDY

Teetotalitarian.

SISTER RF

I hated to see Baby go.

BRER CLARE

Baby ain't going yet, sweet Sister Chariot.

SISTER RF

Coming fore to carry you home.

SEN. ORAL & TEDDEDY

Judge, what is your position on abortion?

BRER CLARE

Missionary.

BRER CLARE and SISTER RF give each other high fives.

SEN. TEDDEDY starts panting. HE may be having an attack.

SISTER RF (suppressing a sneeze)

Will the Senators please excuse me. It's time for Chappa Chappa Chapel!

SHE sneezes.

SEN. ORAL (also suppressing a sneeze)

Chappa Chappa

HE sneezes. SISTER RF leaves. SEN. TEDDEDY is getting worse.

BRER CLARE

Senators, he's choking.

SEN. ORAL

He's just hypermentilating.

BRER CLARE

No, I've seen this before and at lunch the Senator swallowed a whole pig's knuckle and so if any of you know the Heimlicher—

SEN. TEDDEDY

Liquor!

CHAIRMAN

He just wants a dwinki-winkie.

BRER CLARE

No, Senators, the Heimlicher –

SEN. ORAL

Lick your own hymie.

BRER CLARE

Senators, I'll just have to take the Law in my own capable knuckles.

HE cracks his knuckles, then does the Heimlicher on SEN. TEDDEDY, a pig's knuckle flying forth from his mouth.

SEN. TEDDEDY

You touched me and I am saved. Black touches white. Noir et blanc; scuro e chiaro.

SEN. ORAL

He's speaking in tongues. Where are my tablets? Está uno milagro?

Judge, just one final finalizing moment. A moment to define. Tell us in your own words, or anyone else's if you so choose, just why you deserve our vote to whatever this office is we're voting you for.

BRER CLARE

Senator, in my position as Chair of the Equal Opportunity Omission Council, I have an office on the 32nd floor of the new William Bennet Building. Mr. Bennet, whose latest quote, 'If every black baby was aborted, the crime rate would fall precipitously,' will go down in the anals of jurispatience. As I sit on the floor, Senator, and swivel from starboard to Lee, Virginia, I see below me the paddy wagons as they parade their darkest charges, neck-ironed all, from the slaveship hods to the deepest colons of the duodenums of justice. And as I see them, specks yanked across the concrete in ever-flowing streams of ebony agony, my heart goes right out to the double-paned window which separates me from 32 flights of hell below. And Senator, I spit, I heave up a big hocker and splat it against those double panes because I am angry, Senator, I am hopping mad.

SEN. ORAL (salivating morally)

Let's take the vote right now.

CHAIRMAN

Any fwurther twestimony.

A Woman's Voice from afar.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Senators!

CHAIRMAN

Who goes there?

WOMAN'S VOICE

You have to let me speak!

CHAIRMAN

Appwoach the bwench.

WOMAN

My name is Juanita Kill.
I am here to see you all drop dead.

SENATORS

Ooo, we're weal scwared.

JUANITA (to BRER)

And you, m-f?

BRER CLARE

Not me, c-s.

JUANITA

That c-s for class-sick? As in coke?

SEN TEDDEDY

Blow!

BRER CLARE

You be sippin' 'n a drippin' when I gets through with you, c-s-sister.

JUANITA

You won't be able to choke that scrawny-necked chicken once I through slinging my thing-thaing.

BRER CLARE

Sling it all you want. Ain't nobody here ain't seen it a month of Sundays from the Baptist pew to the vestibule, Ms. Heidi HO HO HO.

JUANITA KILL

I'm taking you to the cleaners and then to church where you goat's going to be sacrificed on the altar showing you long dong silver ain't nothing but the Wrong Schlong Sliver.

SEN. ORAL

Sound like authentic darkie talk to me.

SEN. TEDDEDY

You wouldn't know a coonie from a moonie. Let me handle this. Ms. Kill Kill –

JUANITA

Kill

SEN. ORAL (to his colleagues)

Is she out to off whitey?

To the body.

I cannot stand by any longer while rap singers blap singers of darkest perpanthersuasions foist this bile, pile upon pile –

SEN. TEDDEDY

Oral, put a sock in it.

SEN. ORAL

My tie is so tight. This pin – I can't wait t'dive for my BMW and race around the Tidal Basin.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Ms. Kill, you are a knock-down, excuse me, a lawyess? Law no? Just – just frame it in your own, ah, frame.

JUANITA

A law-*yer*. Graduate of Hale University Law.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Hale Fellow and Well-Met. Did you know—

JUANITA

Not at Hale.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Ah – are you doing—

JUANITA

Yes.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Anything? Uh, Ms. Kill – later?

JUANITA

I went to work for Judge Tom two years out of Hale—one year of pro bono—

SEN. TEDDEDY

Pro bono?

SEN. ORAL

Pro bono?

CHAIRMAN

You too?

JUANITA
Look it up. The American Tradition Foundation, your basic neo-conjob bright-wing –

SEN. ORAL
Think thank thunk tank, one of the nation's slimiest, I mean finest, golldurnit, don't try to confuse me.

SEN. TEDDEDY (to JUANITA)
Please – ah – are you sure –

JUANITA
Imagine my thrill –

BRER CLARE (a la Fats Domino)
I found my thrill

JUANITA (same)
On Capitol Hill
But then the herassment

BRER CLARE
And the hisassment. She ain't telling about the provocation. Why, one day she wore and the next day she didn't wear and the third day there was no wear anywhere. And the fourth day I couldn't stand this brazen hussification and so I said, good Senators, in all good conscience, stuff your genitalia back in some honest and natural-law bras and panties.

JUANITA
The fourth day he asked me for a date, as he had the third, second and first and every single time I rebuffed him.

BRER CLARE
Buff buff buff in the re0buff and how is a man to keep his pants down, on, I mean on.

SEN. ORAL
He means 'on.'

SEN. TEDDEDY

You turn my pants on.

BRER CLARE

Date? I don't give a fig leaf for no dates.

JUANITA

On the fifth day he came to my house.

SEN. TEDDEDY

You live where?

JUANITA

He surprised me by being right in my face as I answered the door.

SEN. ORAL

Did you let him in?

SEN. TEDDEDY

I beg your pardon. This panel shall not tolerate outyouendo.

JUANITA

I tried to slam it in his puss.

SEN. ORAL

He brought a puss with him?

JUANITA

His brolly blocked the door.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Was it raining?

JUANITA

He said he wanted a golden shower and if I didn't know how, he'd brought some videos to show me and how.

BRER CLARE

No show. She's a no-show ball-buster who on numerous ocumsions tried in vain to pick me up.

JUANITA

By your testicles you wanted me to pick you up and I should have.

BRER CLARE

See? See?

JUANITA

And swung your monkey nuts from the highest tech.

BRER CLARE

High tech lynching, that's what I'm talking about. I've never seen uppity nigrahs with attitudes treated worse.

JUANITA

Tell them what you told me about abortion.

BRER CLARE

I've never spoken about abortion.

SEN. TEDDEDY

We're very interested in your position.

BRER CLARE

I told you when nunny-bunny was here.

JUANITA

Not what you told me.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Tell the committee what he told you in flagrante delicto.

JUANITA

He was speaking of consistency.

SEN. TEDDEDY

Of?

JUANITA

Women's orgasms.

BRER CLARE

I have never discussed a woman's orgasm.

SEN. TEDDEDY

There are quite a few things you've never discussed.

BRER CLARE

I'm concerned about judicial temperament. The temperate jurist is a blank slate upon which every case is writ.

JUANITA

He's lying. He's got a complete agenda. For instance—

BRER CLARE

I have no agenda whatsoever.

JUANITA

That he'll reveal. And that's why I'm here. To expose and depose.

SEN. ORAL

What did the judge say about abortion?

JUANITA

He said it's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it.

SEN. ORAL

The murder!

JUANITA

He said we just have to start playing God, that God's been out to lunch since early in this Century, hasn't even bothered to call in, and now we can't even raise Him on His beeper.

SEN. ORAL

Young lady, I'll have you know I'm on very good terms with the Almighty—

JUANITA (overlap)

Dollar, the Almighty Dollar.

SEN. ORAL

And he does not have a beeper. One more sacrilegious outburst and I'll have a cow.

JUANITA

He talked about cows constantly. Teats, udders.

BRER CLARE

I wouldn't know Elsie the Cow from Beauregard the Bull.

JUANITA

He compared himself to Beauregard the Bull when he boasted of his size and his ability to satisfy from all directions.

SEN. TEDDEDY

He said he went both ways?

JUANITA

He said he was bi-, tri- and uni.

BRER CLARE

I've never been anything but heterodoxual.

JUANITA

Doxies, roxies, six at a time and he offered to demonstrate. He even said he did it with a dead fetus which he himself had aborted.

BRER CLARE

Ghostly, ghastly. Chairman Spectre?

CHAIRMAN

I have sat by long enough. The longeurs are setting in. The anal warts are wising in my thwoat. Pwofessess Lawyess Kill, one on one, mano a womano. Are you weady?

JUANITA

Ready for Freddy.

CHAIRMAN

Snarlin', wight back achu. Is you cog*niz*ant of the fact that Judge Cwarence is the onliest negrow evah to be nominated to the Suupreme Court?

JUANITA

I am not cog*niz*ant of that anti-fact.

CHAIRMAN

Don't turn things awound on me, young lady. I've had female law deKlerks straight fwom South Afweeka.

JUANITA

The Judge is not the only –

CHAIRMAN

And he shall not be the last.

JUANITA

Brother Thurgood Thurbetter Thurbest.

CHAIRMAN

What?

JUANITA

Have you forgotten Justice Marshall?

SEN. TEDDEDY

He's dark, a dark personage, an MLK Jr sort of XXX kind of Malcolm Poitier Belafonte character, that's for Sammy Davis sure.

CHAIRMAN

Now, Ms. Kill, you wouldn't have an ulferior motive –

JUANITA

Ulterior or inferior?

CHAIRMAN

Both.

JUANITA

No.

CHAIRMAN

You wouldn't like to see yourself on the Suupweme Court? You don't have some dark, sinister, left-handed – you are left-handed, aren't you?

JUANITA

No.

CHAIRMAN

Aha! Pewjewy! Clear as the five thousand years of Jewish suffering on my face. Oi gevalt! Oi gefilte! Am I t'irsty! Hath not a Jew eyeteeth? Juanita Pickel, I saw it in your havan a gilla monster. You are a Jezebel "painting your eyes and adorning your head" as we have it from the Second Book of Kings.

JUANITA

And the victorious Specter shall throw me out the window so my blood will spatter against the wall. Then you will trample upon me an dafter you have eaten and drunk, you will give the order to bury the cursed woman but no more of me than the skull and the feet and the palms of my hands will be found.

SEN. TEDDEDY

O, baby, whither the rest of you goest, I goes too.

JUANITA

But the Lord shall exact His vengeance for the way the Spectre has ascended to power. And the Spectre shal be but a will o' the wisp, a wisp of will-less smoke.

CHAIRMAN

Gwate Caesar's choke!

CHAIRMAN has an attack. Commotion, consternation. TEDDEDY and ORAL fight for the gavel to try to restore order. BRER CLARE starts to steal away, but JUANITA's right on his devil's food butt.

We go to the Peanut Gallery. ST. CLARE and EVA.

ST. CLARE

So you've seen democracy in action, Little Eva.

EVA

Stop calling me 'little,' Father.

ST. CLARE

You've grown up in the last few minutes.

EVA

Tolerably so. That woman –

ST. CLARE

What about her? Are you heartened? Appalled?

EVA

Frightened. Thrilled. She made me want to make love.

ST. CLARE

Really? I wouldn't tell this to cousin Ophelia.

EVA

Why?

ST. CLARE

She might take it the right way.

EVA

Has she ever had a beau?

ST. CLARE

I don't know. And where is she?

EVA

She went off to the loo.

ST. CLARE

Using a little cold water and the left hand, no doubt. So you've seen democracy in action, Big Eva?

EVA
She made me want to make love to the whole world.

ST. CLARE
Oh.

EVA
Oh? That's all you have to say? Oh?

ST. CLARE
Well –

EVA
What did you think – O, Daddy, you have a dirty mind.

ST. CLARE
I don't so much have a dirty mind as I have a mind.

EVA
It's you who wants to make love with her. Ever since Mommy died –

ST. CLARE
You were our only issue

EVA
If you mean I don't have brothers and sisters—

ST. CLARE
You are the result of our only joining.

EVA
I'm growing up faster and faster.

ST. CLARE
Now that she's gone, you can't begrudge me the occasional –

EVA

Wanderlust.

ST. CLARE

Yes, my eyes do wander and I do have lust.

EVA

Have you ever had lust for me?

ST. CLARE

Child –

EVA

Father –

ST. CLARE

It would be a violation of the natural law.

EVA

Brer Clare seems to be an expert on the natural law. Perhaps we should ask him.

ST. CLARE

Were you impressed with his erudition?

EVA

Will he be among the smartest on the Court?

ST. CLARE

Are you answering my question with a question?

EVA

Aren't you?

ST. CLARE

I think I liked you better lesser.

OPHELIA stumbles on.

A trip to the Congressional loo is more than one's leftism can take.

OPHELIA

That Brer came storming into the Ladies as if he didn't know where he was and, just as he's crawling through the transom, in hurricanes this Jezebel look-alike yanking on his drawers and yelling that he's not getting away. Well, over he goes and off come the pants and Jez is left holding the bag, as it were.

ST. CLARE

Thank you for that exciting rendition, Cuz. Now we better hurry back to N.O. before my powerful hunger takes me right over. Enough of Chocolate City, take us down to New Orleans.

And THEY're back.

Here we are, lovely to be home again with our faithful servants.

ADOLPH and DINAH come forward.

Adolph and Dinah-no-one-could-be-finah. Haven't sold the sliver yet, I trust?

EVA

Father!

ST. CLARE

Just funnin'. A little. I wouldn't even mind if they did. It's to be expected.

EVA

Are you saying –

ST. CLARE

That when in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for a fellow to hold two or three dozen of his fellow-worms in captivity, a decent regard to the opinions of society requires –

OPHELIA

I don't see that you're growing more serious.

ST. CLARE

Wait – I'm coming on – you'll hear. This cursed business of slavery, accursed of God and man, what is it? Why, because my brother Quashy is ignorant and weak, and I am intelligent and strong – because I know how, and can do it – therefore I steal all he has and give him only such as suits my fancy. Whatever is too hard, too dirty, too disagreeable for me, I may set Quashy to doing. Because the sun burns me, Quashy shall stay in the sun. Quashy shall lie down in every puddle, that I may walk over, dry-shod. Quashy shall do my will and not his, all the days of his mortal life, and have such chance of getting to heaven, at last, as I find convenient.

OPHELIA

I never in my life heard anything like this, even at the north.

ST. CLARE

You northern folks are cold-blooded; you are cool in everything.

OPHELIA

But the question is –

ST. CLARE

How came I in this state of sin and misery? My father, you know, came first from New England; and he was a man much as your father, upright, noble-minded with an iron will. Your father settled down in New England, to rule over rocks and stones and to force an existence out of nature; and mine settled in Louisiana, to rule over men and women and force existence out of them.

EVA

O, Daddy, isn't there a place where we can take everybody away? Or better still, let's stay here and make everybody free.

OPHELIA

Out of the question. One must be prepared for freedom.

ST. CLARE

Eva, you shouldn't hear this.

EVA

I hear it all the time – inside my head. Sometimes I'm ready to do more than curse. Prepared for freedom! I'm more prepared every second.

OPHELIA

There has to be a sense of order. I came here to impose that sense but I'm afraid –

ST. CLARE

Don't be afraid.

OPHELIA

Take the kitchen.

ST. CLARE

Please take it.

OPHELIA

But Augustine, you don't know how I found things.

ST. CLARE

Don't I? Don't I know that the rolling pin is under her bed, and the nutmeg grater in her pocket with her tobacco – that there are sixty-five different sugar bowls, one in every hole in the house – that she washes dishes with a dinner napkin one day, and with a fragment of an old petticoat the next? But the upshot is, she gets up glorious dinners, makes superb coffee; and you must judge her as warriors and statesmen are judged, by her success.

OPHELIA

But the waste, the expense.

ST. CLARE

Oh, well, lock everything you can and keep the key.

OPHELIA

I can't help feeling as if these servants are not strictly honest.

ST. CLARE

Oh, cuz, that's too good – honest! As if that's a thing to be expected. Honest! Why, of course, they aren't. What upon earth is to make them so?

OPHELIA

Are there no honest ones?

ST. CLARE

Well, now and then, one, whom nature makes so impracticably simple, thruthful and faithful, that the worst possible influence can't destroy it. But you see from the mother's breast the colored child feels and sees that there are none but underhand ways open to it. It can get along no other way with its parents, its mistress, its young master and missie play-fellows. Cunning and deception become necessary, inevitable habits. It isn't fair to expect anything else of him. He ought not to be punished for it. As to honesty, the slave is kept in that dependent, semi-childish state, that there is no making

him realize the rights of property, or feel that his master's goods are not his own, if he can get them. For my part, I don't see how they *can* be honest. Such a fellow as Tom, here, is – is a moral miracle!

OPHELIA

Tom?

ST. CLARE

Brer Clare!

BRER CLARE stumbles on, worse for the battle, his pants off and his valentine's shorts ripped.

OPHELIA

And what becomes of their souls?

ST. CLARE

That isn't my affair. I'm only dealing in facts of the present life. The fact is that Brer Clare is worse for the battle. She chased you up and over, did she? What's the line – A judge chases a law clerk until she files him?

BRER CLARE

You wouldn't believe –

ST. CLARE

Believe, brother.

EVA

Brer Clare, I thought you were –

BRER CLARE

Magnificent?

EVA

Just short of it, possibly, but what I started –

BRER CLARE

I saw you there shouting encouragement.

EVA

Perhaps not shouting, I wanted to say –

BRER CLARE

Without you I don't know what I would have –

EVA

Done? Are you –

BRER CLARE

Frightened? Me? To live in a world where there's no you? Yes!

EVA

I'm not –

BRER CLARE

Leaving. Heavens forfend!

EVA

This life, I'm not –

BRER CLARE

I should hope –

OPHELIA

And pray –

BRER CLARE

Let me feel your fever.

EVA

I don't have –

OPHELIA

My charge!

EVA (feeling her forehead)

I do!

ST. CLARE

It's hot. It's not a fever –

BRER CLARE

I know just what –

OPHELIA

She's my charge – and if she's hot, I shall cool her off.

ST. CLARE

Off!

EVA

Father, I shan't leave you so soon.

ST. CLARE (cradling HER)

I know, mein Schatz.

Gunshots offstage.

BRER CLARE

Shots! She won't say 'die.'

EVA

Don't say –

ST. CLARE

Lie still, meine liebsten.

BRER CLARE

Mr. St. Clare, Esquire –

ST. CLARE

Not now, Brer –

BRER CLARE

But I know –

ST. CLARE

No!

EVA

I'm feeling suddenly very much better.

ST. CLARE

Rest.

EVA

No, really, There's an energizing, healing force –

PRUE, an Imperial slave woman, dressed in scores of overlapping skirts, ribbons and bandanas, enters lugubriously tipsy.

PRUE

Show me the way to go home
I'm tired and I want to be dead

ST. CLARE

Prue, my darling.

BRER CLARE

She's been chasing me seems like across the centuries.

ST. CLARE

Prue never chased no on she never caught quick.

PRUE

Quick or dead, still or alive, quiet or bubbly.

ST. CLARE

Unless she didn't really want him.

PRUE

I didn't really want him, no one, never you mind

(sings)

I had a little drink about a minute ago

And it went right to my head

ST. CLARE

She didn't really want you, Brer. Isn't that right, Prue, short for Prudence, Providence, see into the future –

PRUE

I see –

EVA

Energize, heal me.

PRUE

I don't see what I'm supposed to carry.

ST. CLARE

Because you lost it. The rusk, you lost the rusk.

PRUE

I lost it. The rusk.

ST. CLARE

The bread. The sacred bread.

PRUE

I lost the sacred rusk.

ST. CLARE

No, Prue, that's not what happened. You lost it, but not in the way you don't know where it is.

PRUE

Not in the way –

ST. CLARE

You wagered it away, you gambled – and you know exactly –

PRUE

Black Jimmy –

ST. CLARE

Yes, Black Jimmy.

PRUE

He’s the one.

ST. CLARE

You bet –

PRUE

I bet –

ST. CLARE

Your life –

PRUE

No.

ST. CLARE

Your hide –

PRUE

I did not go seek.

ST. CLARE

Brer Clare.

PRUE

Who?

ST. CLARE

The man in front of you.

PRUE (to BRER CLARE)

Black Jimmy, you touch me like no one can.

BRER CLARE

I never –

PRUE

Put your –

BRER CLARE

I didn’t.

PRUE

Again.

BRER CLARE

Not the first.

PRUE

Under –

BRER CLARE

On top.

PRUE

Folding over and through –

DINAH (to ADOLPH)

Lordy Lady, they’s making bread.

ADOLPH (to DINAH)

And we got to poke that yeast down.

BRER CLARE

Don’t make me.

PRUE

Make me.

ST. CLARE

Let her.

EVA

Daddy!

ST. CLARE

This is the source of her energy, her healing.

OPHELIA

She is not a healer, but a trickster. She's nothing more than a medium for this godless –

OPHELIA has an attack rendering HER speechless.

EVA

She's mine! He's mine! They must be undivided! I need them both, the two-backed beast!

EVA swoons and collapses.

ST. CLARE

Everyone just stay –

BRER CLARE

Stay what?

ST. CLARE

Stay. We all need to stay as we are.
Adolph, Dinah, no attacks for you?

ADOLPH

Mais non, le maître

DINAH

Who'd be finding that rolling pin and that nutmeg-grater and those 65 sugar bowls?

ST. CLARE

That's my girl. Now would you tend to big Eva? I'm sure it's just a little spasm. Runs on the feminist side of the family.

HE has a quick spasm HIMself, but shakes it off.

DINAH

A hot succotash plaster'll fix her right up.

ST. CLARE

And Adolph, carry Miss Ophelia to her room and give her your special Oil of Olay.

ADOLPH

Huile de Ofay.

ADOLPH and DINAH drag OPHELIA and EVA out. ST. CLARE turns to BRER and PRUE.

ST. CLARE

Now do I put you in the ring together? Kickboxing between cobra and mongoose?

BRER CLARE

I ain't getting in no ring.

PRUE

Ring 'round my finger, B.J.

ST. CLARE

Are you married, Brer?

BRER CLARE

White, a white – not like –

ST. CLARE

She's not your accuser.

BRER CLARE

She ain't?

ST. CLARE

So much as she's your Black Maria conscience.

BRER CLARE

Why do I need –

ST. CLARE

For when you're deciding all your high and mighty cases.

The bell for the Supreme Court session rings.

BRER CLARE

I need to be deciding –

ST. CLARE

Ringing some changes. You need to be –

BRER CLARE

Ringing some changes.

PRUE

Black Jimmie, I am your Black Maria.

ST. CLARE

Take over and be clear, Clare.

BRER CLARE

Be clear, Clare.

PRUE

I'll heal you and energize your briefs.

BRER CLARE

Stay away from me. I'm married – to the Law.

ST. CLARE

She's the spirit; you're the letter.

PRUE

Cut my rug and fly my carpet.

ST. CLARE

Prue, darling, right this way.

PRUE

Where would you take me?

ST. CLARE

To a courthouse seat, front and center. This cat ain't just whistlin' Dickie.

The bell rings.
ADOLPH comes on with BRER's hairshirt robe. It's short-sleeved and has lettering across the back, 'Da Judge.'

ST. CLARE (cont'd.)

I'll take that.

PRUE

I'll take that.

PRUE takes it away from ST. CLARE and holds it for BRER, who allows HIMself cautiously to be helped into it.

BRER CLARE

Makes me all prickly, tickly, keeps me on edge, on pins and needles for Justice.

The Court swivels on. As BRER busies HIMself for holding forth, ST. CLARE and PRUE converse to the side.

ST. CLARE

Did they beat you, darling?

PRUE

Powerful and often.

ST. CLARE

And what had you done?

PRUE

It's because I'm fond of the glass.

ST. CLARE
And if the glass is not available? If the mirror is shattered?

PRUE
The bottle will do.

ST. CLARE
The genie comes pouring and pouring.

PRUE
And another bottle is pulled from the box.

ST. CLARE
And Pandora the Cow jumps over the moon.

PRUE
And all evil shit falls out of the sky.

ST. CLARE
And Prudence the slave girl –

PRUE
And St. Clare the slave boy –

ST. CLARE
Get it –

PRUE
Get it –

ST. CLARE and PRUE
On.

ST. CLARE
Don’t leave my sight.

PRUE
I have to go later.

ST. CLARE
I can’t protect you if you do.

PRUE
I have my rounds.

ST. CLARE
I’ll buy you.

PRUE
Lagree won’t sell.

ST. CLARE
I’ll offer

PRUE
Ever

ST. CLARE
Everything

PRUE
Isn’t it pretty to think so?

ST. CLARE
You’re pretty enough for me to think so.

PRUE
Pretty?

ST. CLARE
Slave girl

PRUE
And slave boy

ST. CLARE and PRUE

Get – it – on.

As THEY recede, we discover ADOLPH and DINAH.

ADOLPH

Comme se trouve –

DINAH

Can the Frog.

ADOLPH

How’s yours?

DINAH

Wet. Yours?

ADOLPH

Change her.

DINAH

She’s burning up.

ADOLPH

Mine’s diddled.

DINAH

Come now.

ADOLPH

Or addled. I mean addled.

DINAH

The potion worked.

ADOLPH

Of course it worked. Now there’s more, I trust.

DINAH

It’s thinner. I couldn’t find enough newts.

ADOLPH

Down by the bog. Send Prue on her next trip.

DINAH

If Prue don’t stay off her boss’ sauce, her next trip’ll be to the basement and an hour later the flies will find her.

ADOLPH

I don’t understand why Gustine Clare don’t just fork over the dubloons and buy Prue Hoo for all of us.

DINAH

‘Cause Simon Lagree ain’t sellin’. He thinks she in love with his bony-assed simple self.

ADOLPH

Simon Lagree, about whom is said ‘he’ll break any beast black.’ Je suis la bête noire who’ll slice him front to back.

DINAH

I think Prue’s in lust wit da massa. I feared that’s what it’s comin’ to.

ADOLPH

It’s already come. That love pouring out of her bloodshot eyes so much yesterday morn, I thought her peepers’d clear.

DINAH

And the feeling is hootchual mutual. Steeney putting away the blood mighty good hisself. And every time he raise his glass *and* his offer for Prue to Old Simple, Lagree think he better keep her, get more later.

ADOLPH

It’ll get later latest if he beats her to death sooner.

DINAH

Hear tell he leave the beating to Quimbo and Sambo bucks.

ADOLPH

Hear tell you had a time with both of those monsters and you came out unscathed.

DINAH

It be me scathing witty.

ADOLPH

Now what of our charges?

DINAH

A few more doses and they'll be hooked. Then we make our move.

DINAH and ADOLPH

We'll drug them good and nothing they'll detect
And all will fall as we then insurrect.

ADOLPH and DINAH recede as BRER CLARE is ready. GUIDICE MI DISPIACE, one of his colleagues, gavels us on.

GUIDICE

Buon giorno, il nomo Guidice Mi Dispiace. Inglese, si si. I choose to decide in the case of Dredd Scott, mi fatello Claro.

Up on BRER CLARE at the bench.

BRER CLARE

The case of Dreadlock Scott vs. the state of Five-a-see. After proper deliberation over the many statures impinging upon the impingement concerning the impingeability of impingitude I hereby impinge – A slave has been taken by his master from a slave state to a free state and back again. The slave says—Once free, forever free. Therefore I declare that this he, note even creature enough to be a he or a she or an it, collectively less than all three, a sort of Hesheeeeit, but not a citizen, barely—barely—am I thirsty—

JUANITA KILL appears.

JUANITA

How's about we pop a nice cold can of Class-Sick?

BRER CLARE

Ah, some CokaCoka – you, is it, my Sweet Nita? How they been hangin', Ms. Pill Hill?

JUANITA

Ain't you heard? I'm off to my hearings, Mr. Crow.
Drivin' in a fiery chariot, and I be swingin' low
So quaff your CokaCoka, it doth quench your thirst,
I'm shovin' your stench to the end of the Bench
See you October the Monday First.

SHE climbs into her fiery chariot and flames off. BRER CLARE sucked in behind.

EVA

Yesterday morning I went into the basement to get a jar of quince preserves. I like quince. It has just the right mix of qui and nce and there amidst the jars was a swarm of flies and a powerful smell like the quince gone bad and some of the jars were broken and had blood all over their shards and the blood was in a pool and I slipped and fell rigyht smack against the crusted face of a liquor-smellin' person and I got my cheek all crusted too and I scooped it up with my finger and it tasted just like the sacred rusk. Prue, the sacred rusk of Prue the healer. And it gave me a powerful thirst.

BRER CLARE stumbles on.

BRER CLARE

That fire gave me a powerful thirst.

EVA

Here, Clare, drink from my cup.

HE seizes the cup and gulps its contents.

O, you rude person, you didn't leave any for me and I was so thirsty myself. I can barely get my tongue in to lick out the last drop.

Just as she's sticking her pink tongue in, OPHELIA enters.

OPHELIA

Stop that this instant!

EVA drops the cup and it smashes.

EVA

Grandfather's favorite!

OPHELIA

Better it be smashed to smithereens than infecting your golden mouth.

EVA

But, Cuzzie, you're from up North where tolerance is next to godliness. Wouldn't you spread your last drop of vinegar across the lips of Brer Clare?

OPHELIA

Child, you'll bring the death knell to me yet. Now come inside and hold my knitting for me.

EVA

No, I want to stay here and pray with Brer Clare.

OPHELIA

Pray with a slave?

OPHELIA swoons and faints.

EVA

O, Cuzzie, come to.

BRER CLARE

Leave her rest. In due time, if she don't arrive once twice thrice, we'll both give her mouth-to-mouth.

EVA

Alright, if you say so, but it's going to get awful crowded around her labials. Brer?

BRER CLARE

Yes, Eva?

EVA

May I ask you a question?

BRER CLARE

You already did.

EVA

O, you're so clever. I'll get you for that.

BRER CLARE

I want you to.

EVA

Get me? Wouldn't that be something?

BRER CLARE

A gas.

EVA

Beg pardon?

BRER CLARE

What's your question?

EVA

Funny you should mention gas. Daddy had a furious row over something called 'natural' gas. Talk about rights and lots of money right here in N.O. I knew you'd like the 'natural' part, being so concerned, I should even say 'engrossed' about the 'natural law' and 'natural urges' and 'natural smelling feet.'
But what is it about all this naturalness that's got you so exercised, Clare?

BRER CLARE

It's its die-reckness, from the She-Godmouth to my ear. O, I don't mean to brag none, but sometimes I think the She done singled me out.

EVA

For greatness?

BRER CLARE

A mere mortal and a slave to boot should never talk about greatness.

EVA

Or gas-ness.

BRER CLARE

Now, gas-ness. Who was it you say your Poppa talkin' to?

EVA

His brother, my awful Uncle who owns the big plantation that we all left some time back.

BRER CLARE

Why was it you al left?

EVA

Daddy couldn’t stand all the beatings that went down ‘tween the overseers and the slaves.

BRER CLARE

Right kind, Massa St. Clare.

EVA

Do you have a prime mate, Brer, back in Come-luck-me-Kentucky?

BRER CLARE

Everybody’s got a prime mate here and there.

EVA

Would you like us to bring her here?

BRER CLARE

O, no no, don’t you be worrying yourself over my urges, natural or otherwise.

EVA

Is that what they are?

BRER CLARE

What do you mean?

EVA

Urges to be together. I thought they meant love and tenderness and monogamosity.

BRER CLARE

Little Eva, may I ask you a question?

EVA

You already did.

BRER CLARE

O, I'll get you for that.

EVA

Now we're even. Do you think about what I think about? Like in my heart, well, some of the things we've been talking about. And feelings. Do you have feelings like I have feelings?

BRER CLARE

Am I human behind this black skin?

EVA

O, I wouldn't put it that way.

BRER CLARE

That's the way it needs to be put. How would I know if I feel what you feel? I see something but I can't –

EVA

Stay with what you see.

BRER CLARE

I don't see it anymore. A flash. Gone. A flash in the pan.

EVA

You saw a pan?

BRER CLARE

An expression.

EVA

I know, but I saw a pan too. A pan of a boy. A round grease-licked jelly-belly charred-black pan of a boy.

BRER CLARE

Destined?

EVA

For bigness.

BRER CLARE

Greatness. On earth.

EVA

In heaven.

BRER CLARE

For an instant I saw it. Then it was gone.

EVA

And now you see it as through a glass darkie.

BRER CLARE

Then you see me face to face.

EVA

If you want that, you'll have to follow me soon, you Bible-toting, feet-smelly and feet-smelling, corn cob pipe-sucking, handkerchief-headed, heiny-smacking, picka – m'f-er ninny! What's come over me?

EVA faints.

BRER CLARE

Missie Eva, don't die yet, not before you tell me about the natural gas.

OPHELIA comes to.

OPHELIA

Bounder! What have you done? The drop in that cup must have done it.

ST. CLARE rushes on.

ST. CLARE

What is it?

HE tends to EVA. BRER CLARE feints fainting.

ST. CLARE

Wake up, Little Eva, I blow the cool winds of New England over you humid brow. Yes, it's the heat and nothing more.

EVA revives.

EVA

O, father, I saw the eye of the hurricane, the eye of the celestial needle and dem eyes is a-callin' me.

ST. CLARE

You're mixing your metaphors and talking like a field hand. I'm sure you're perfectly recovered.

EVA

I'm not in the least and you mustn't cry when I go and you must tell Brer Clare about the natural gas.

BRER CLARE stirs awake.

BRER CLARE

O, O –

ST. CLARE

Welcome back to the land of the quick and the home of the slave.

BRER CLARE

I heard the word 'dead' ass-ssociated with Missie Eva and I couldn't stand to lose her.

ST. CLARE

Get those strong arms working and carry Eva into her room.

OPHELIA

Augustine!

ST. CLARE

And Auntie Nicey and I'll have it out right here.

BRER CLARE sits EVA on his shoulders.

BRER CLARE

Come, Little One, they having it out right here and when they haves it out, the haves-in better skedaddle.

EVA

Giddyup, Brer Horsey, beat me Clarence, 8 to the bar.

THEY ride out.

ST. CLARE

Horse and rider, yes indeed.

OPHELIA

You don't see what's happening right under your nose.

ST. CLARE

"The problem of the 19th Century is the problem of the color line." So say E. B. W. DuBois.

OPHELIA

Augustine St. Clare, you are an enigma.

ST. CLARE

E-nig-pa and enig-nigger. I hold two diametrically opposed ideas in my addled brain simultaneously. I want this society to tumble and crash alla bout us without delay; yet I do nothing to bring that about.

OPHELIA

You say and quote daring things. This color line line – do you believe it?

ST. CLARE

I believe we have the power to kill the evil goos that lays this ebony egg and then we shall be free to see you way of life – ease for us and pain for them – disappear. It's only the palpable in-our-face structure of stinking Melanesians and perfumed Caucasians, equally stinking, that sustains out sandcastles on this bloody beach. But even beaches can cover only so much blood.

OPHELIA

I don't want you for a second to think that I believe in the institution of slavery…

ST. CLARE

Not much. Not more or less than, if the truth will out.

OPHELIA

The institution as such –

ST. CLARE

You don't believe in the institution completely. It's the visibility of the organization that offends you. The hierarchy should be angelic – that is, unseen. It should just exist, just be, to accomplish all we need by way of menial and income-producing labor from the bed pans to the cotton fields so long as

the slop, when being carried out by our invisible cherubim don't splash over onto our clean pumps and that the cotton thorns, as our field hands humming and dancing softly past us with seraphic bushels on their pinheads, don't prick our gloves. Then the institution is pleasing and very Northerly.

OPHELIA

I want to take Eva away.

ST. CLARE

You don't want to argue this out, do you? You simply want to take Eva away. Well, of course, you may not.

OPHELIA

You saw the way she rode out of here.

ST. CLARE

You're worried about Brer Clare getting a little randy, are you? Let him.

OPHELIA

You're telling me you'd countenance –

ST. CLARE

I'm telling you we can't stop blood because it's all red and that the future belongs to café au lait children.

OPHELIA

You'd want him for your son-in-law?

ST. CLARE

Trust him. Trust her. It won't be him, but someday it'll be some other. She's practicing for her real darkie; and he for his genuine lightie. One never know, do one, Feelie. She could be the likes, the light, of you.
And now I have a little surprise for you.

OPHELIA

No surprise, Augustine, not this late in the day.

ST. CLARE

Oh yes, it's never too late to introduce a new character. That's the wonder of making up these plays on a wing and a prayer, if you'll pardon the term.

O, Topsy!

TOPSY, a young slave girl, enters.

Ophelia, meet Topsy, your personal enslaved one.

OPHELIA

I don't want a personal enslaved one.

ST. CLARE

Just hear what she has to say.

TOPSY

Elenguen, nahke nash nashiang?

Elenguen sha nath ngong e shiang

Elenguen, nahke nash nashiang

Elenguen sha nath ngong e shiang

OPHELIA

This is some sort of cruel joke.

ST. CLARE

She speaks with great power and beauty, although for the life of me I don't iknow what she says. It's now your job to learn her language and she will learn yours.

TOPSY

Engu u mashi jiak elong e ngu mah shijak

Elong mah nyenyyen oh

OPHELIA

Stop that!

We hear EVA moan offstage. BRER CLARE rushes in with EVA in his arms.

BRER CLARE

All of a sudden, Massa –

ST. CLARE

Give her to me, you goat.

ST. CLARE takes HER and carries HER off. TOPSY rushes after them. OPHELIA and BRER CLARE are left alone. THEY start to leave opposite sides of the stage. THEY stop and change into BRER CLARE as Chief Justice and his wife VIRGINIA.

BRER CLARE

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, yuck, and that it us be fitted to be tied,
To bear our groins in grief, and this whole planetarium
To be contracted in one brow of woe is me, Sapphire –

VIRGINIA

Kingfish!

BRER CLARE

Time for recessifying and kicking back time.

VIRGINIA

It's so nice to be at home just with you.

BRER CLARE

Let's get right down to the netherness.

VIRGINIA

You really do love me, don't you?

BRER CLARE

Love? Love thyself first; only then can you move in a spousal direction.

VIRGINIA

I have a confession to make.

BRER CLARE

You needn't say a word.

VIRGINIA

I’ve fallen –

BRER CLARE

I couldn’t be more titillated.

VIRGINIA

I’ve fallen but not where you think.

BRER CLARE

In the sink system of your own eco. How forward, how fin de siècle.

VIRGINIA

Guidice mi Dispiace.

BRER CLARE

What’s the sound that shit makes when it hits the fan?

VIRGINIA

He and I –

BRER CLARE

Wop!

VIRGINIA

-- have been balling each other’s brains out.

BRER CLARE seems to be having a seizure.

It may not be anything serious.

BRER CLARE

I’m s-s-s-eriously having a s-s-s-eizure.

VIRGINIA

It’s only been going on for a year.

BRER CLARE

A y-y-y-ear.

VIRGINIA
But the first time was your swearing-in ceremony.

BRER CLARE
D-d-d-uring

VIRGINIA
I thought, well, if I'm going to do it, who better with and when better where.

BRER CLARE
Unf-f-faithf-f-ful

VIRGINIA
O, that's such a déclassé remark.

BRER CLARE
De-c-c-c –

VIRGINIA
O.K., you don't want to talk about class. De – race, how about?

BRER CLARE
My m-m-m—

VIRGINIA
How about –

BRER CLARE
M-m-m-entor

VIRGINIA
Who better and is he better!

GUIDICE MI DISPIACE enters.

GUIDICE
Permesso? Avanti.

VIRGINIA

Guidice mi Dispiace, speak of the diabolo and his pitchfork arrives.

GUIDICE

Hey, negro, Virgie tell you what's che?

BRER CLARE summons all HE has and strangles GUIDICE. VIRGINIA looks on.

VIRGINIA

Oo, serious fun. Erection erection!

GUIDICE

Fungoo la matza.

GUIDICE dies. BRER CLARE seriously out of his seizure and positively energized.

BRER CLARE

The m-f had a heart attack. Can't you see the marks on his throat?

VIRGINIA

Oo, Clarie, mannie me.

BRER CLARE strangles VIRGINIA to death.

BRER CLARE

Two heart attacks in one sell fwoop.

DINAH rushes on.

DINAH

Come quick, Brer Clare, it's Little Eva. She's breathing her last!

BRER CLARE

Has someone strangled her? Where is she? Meine Liebchen!

We swivel to the deathbed of Little Eva. ST. CLARE, ADOLPH at her side.

ST. CLARE

She’s been calling for you, partner.

EVA

O, Brer, I’m having my last attack and ain’t it glorious. I’m going to leave here running because walking is much too slow.
You ain’t nothin’ but a hounddog
Rockin’ all the time
You ain’t never caught a rabbit and you ain’t no friend of mine.

BRER CLARE

White trash line, where’d you learn –

ST. CLARE

Don’t you be callin’ Little Eva –

BRER CLARE

I never – no – I didn’t mean – it’s just – she can’t be going – there are those that need dispatchment by heart attack –

EVA

‘Cause it’s only 25 to nine at Heart Attack and Vine.

BRER CLARE

But this charming child has not felt my insertion of various vegetables in her various orifices.

EVA

I’m a St. Louis woman with my diamond rings

BRER CLARE

She seems to have transmogrified –

ST. CLARE

Into the downest of downhome – she fulfills the prophecy.

BRER CLARE

Fulfills?

ST. CLARE

My mama May Ann and my sister Mama Lucy said the child of my loins –

BRER CLARE

I love that word –

ST. CLARE

Would hit the charts –

EVA

What's love but a second-hand emotion

BRER CLARE

Let me see her chart.

HE snatches it away from ADOLPH.

EEG, EEK – Eeeeek! — what she needs is swift and sure.

HE begins to give her mouth to mouth. SHE gets into it. THEY are definitely getting it on.

ADOLPH (to ST. CLARE)

Monsieur, hitting the charts is not seizing the charts; seizing is not giving mouth-to-mouth and getting it on; mouth-to-mouth and getting it on is not – is not –

ST. CLARE

Yes, Adolph?

EVA exclaims—

EVA

Shaboooooommmmm crash bang

SHE slumps to her death in BRER CLARE's arms.

ADOLPH

He's strangled her.

DINAH

He's strangled her.

OPHELIA enters.

OPHELIA

Look at the marks on her throat!

ST. CLARE

It's true, Brer. You have ended her in extremis. The path is before us. Quimbo and Sambo shall have at you.

QUIMBO and SAMBO enter and put BRER CLARE in chains.

Now I'm going to get drunk as a skunk.

Passage of time. ST. CLARE, drunk. BRER CLARE in chains.

Tomorrow you'll go to Simon Lagree.

BRER CLARE

Yes, Massa.

ST. CLARE

What's that?

BRER CLARE

I said, How's your anus? Can you see Saturn?

ST. CLARE

Yes, it's a starry night, Brer.

BRER CLARE

These chains, Massa –

ST. CLARE (doing Ray Charles)

Unchain my heart, baby, set me free
Do a little Ray for me, Clare. I love to call you Clare. It reminds me of myself.

BRER CLARE

What is there about –

ST. CLARE

Imprisonment?

BRER CLARE

No –

ST. CLARE

Enchainment?

BRER CLARE

I didn’t mean to kill her.

ST. CLARE

Are you expressing remorse?

BRER CLARE

I don’t even think I did .

ST. CLARE

Express remorse?

BRER CLARE

Kill her.

ST. CLARE

Kill her? I never said you did. It was the rest of them insisted upon it. I just went along for the drink.

BRER CLARE

Why do you drink so much? Oh, why do I care? Tomorrow I’m off to Simon Lagree unless – unless –

ST. CLARE

I drink because it shuts the floodgates, it dams up the beavers, it stops me thinking of black pussy.

BRER CLARE

Excuse me?

ST. CLARE

There was a girl when I was a boy –

BRER CLARE

Don’t tell me the story of the massa boy in lust with the slave girl, the old Tom Jefferson-Sally Hemmings bit.

ST. CLARE

Then don’t you tell me of the slave boy in lust with the massa girl.

BRER CLARE

Never!

ST. CLARE

You do understand why I have to give you up, don’t you, Clare?

BRER CLARE

Because you don’t believe in the death penalty. You believe in beatings without parole. You don’t want to put another person of color on execution row. Crips, Bloods, make no diff. Some gubners’d fry ‘em all.

ST. CLARE

Capital punishment is official murder. It’s two wrongs don’t make a right. Period. I stopped a lynching once.

BRER CLARE

Once?

ST. CLARE

She got lynched the following week nonetheless.

BRER CLARE

None the more

ST. CLARE

She might have been Eva’s momma. You don’t know what Eva –

BRER CLARE

Meant to me.

ST. CLARE

Meant to me.

BRER CLARE

She—

ST. CLARE

Yes?

BRER CLARE

“When she shall die, take her and cut her out in little stars, for she shall make heaven so fine that all the world will be in love with night and pay no worship to the garish sun.”

ST. CLARE

Jesus, Mary and Joiner Joseph, where’d you learn that?

BRER CLARE

I don’t know.

ST. CLARE

Just popped out to make the tears pop out.

BRER CLARE

I –

ST. CLARE

So I’d release you, hold you not.

BRER CLARE

Did you say ‘*she* got lynched’?

ST. CLARE

I was wondering when you’d –

BRER CLARE

Pick up on that she.

ST. CLARE

She –

BRER CLARE

Was the girl when you were a boy.

ST. CLARE

She wasn't so very young. She was Prue's mother.

BRER CLARE

Prue dead/mother dead/Virginny dead/Guidice dead/Eva dead/fetus dead. How's your health, Massa Clare?

ST. CLARE

Planning on killing me, Brer?

BRER CLARE

I won't have to.

ST. CLARE

Who has to?

BRER CLARE

'Cause you doing it to yourself with the drink. I'm afraid it will be loss of all – body and soul. The Good Book says, 'it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.'

ST. CLARE

Now you're voice's supposed to choke and tears run down your cheeks.

BRER CLARE

I won't choke and I won't cry.

ST. CLARE

And you will not be free, for tomorrow –

BRER CLARE

I shall go to Simon Lagree, but I shall escape and I shall be the Chief Just-ass –

ST. CLARE

Too many chiefs and not enough Native-Americans. That's me – A Native-American. I was born here.

BRER CLARE

Raised here and here were formed your values.

ST. CLARE

What are *your* values, Brer? I saw you before that committee and on that bench an din my household, back and fourth in time and space, the Dreadlock debacle. Who do you work for? Do you think you're autonomous? Do you think you haven't been taking it up the Almighty arsehole since conception? You ninny, so what that you have power and perks? What does it profit a coon if he gains the whole plantation in Gehenna, Maryland, but loses his bunged-up hole?

BRER CLARE

Someday, Papa, I'm going to sit on your face.

ST. CLARE

You know how you got that job on that kangaroo court? The Bushwhacker sat back in his nice moist Ovum Office, put his tennies smack on the Presidential seal and said, "Who is the dumbest shine snowball who's bought into every lie we've spouted since the Mayfuckingflower, the nigga wid no attitude whatsoever? Find me dat boy and we'll make him a star. They want affirmative action? We'll give them negative passion."

BRER CLARE

I'll fight you I'll fight you I'll fight you.

ST. CLARE

Good, Brer Clare, good. There may just be an ounce of piss and a gram of vinegar in you yet. Well, you're going to need them and then some 'cause time and space travel going to be limited from there on out, if I got anything to say. So be you prepared, you post office jigaboo boyscout, for Lagree the third degree.

SIMON LAGREE enters with QUIMBO and SAMBO.

Brothers in the skin trade.

LAGREE (to ST. CLARE)

Step aside, poofmeister, he is *my* chattel from here on out.

ST. CLARE

You take care –

LAGREE
Off to your darkie sisters and your darkest rum.

ST. CLARE
Prue Prue Prue my boat, gently into that good night.

ST. CLARE slinks off.

LAGREE
Well, brother, shall we join hands and pray for our mutual deliverance?

BRER CLARE
You are a God-fearing man?

LAGREE
I'm a betting man. You've heard of Pascal's wager?

BRER CLARE
I knew a Pascale Jean-Louis – a great looking Frog piece of ass, if you'll pardon my reference to the eternal posterior.

LAGREE
The master and slave who pray together –

BRER CLARE
I'll pray, I'll pray.

LAGREE
The rosary?

BRER CLARE
Who are you?

LAGREE
I've come to be your maker.

BRER CLARE

Make me –

LAGREE

Really? Quimbo, Sambo – exeunt.

THEY do.

Now about Pascal's wager –

BRER CLARE

Oh yassir, that fine piece –

LAGREE

Why are you terrified of me?

BRER CLARE

Oh, just these chains –

LAGREE removes the chains.

BRER CLARE

And your reputation.

LAGREE

I can't very well change my reputation.

BRER CLARE

No, I speck not.

LAGREE

Speak well, not coon-ly.

BRER CLARE

I don't rightly –

LAGREE

Understand what I want.

BRER CLARE

No.

LAGREE

I want you to look into the future, well beyond the time you first got on the bench and see what I see and I want you to make it happen.

BRER CLARE

I need to see what you see?

LAGREE

Pascal bet that God existed. If God didn't exist, Pascal wouldn't have lost anything.

BRER CLARE

Uh –

LAGREE

I'll try to oversimplify it for you. If God *is* and Pascal bets against this, when Pascal comes to the end of life, time to meet his Maker, God will not be happy that Pascal bet against God's is-ness and may even wreak vengeance.

BRER CLARE

So Pascal bight as well be God exists, 'cause what has he got to lose?

LAGREE

Monkey, you do have a brain!

BRER CLARE

When all about us, the evidence is clear –

BRER CLARE and LAGREE

That God is everywhere.

LAGREE

Ah, but here's the kicker. Let's defy the odds. Let's kick God back to the Dark Ages.

BRER CLARE

Sure, but how? And wait –

LAGREE

No waiting. Judicial activism now. Let us finally be true to the Founding Fathers, who did not believe in God.

BRER CLARE

Huh?

LAGREE

They were atheists, you ring-tailed baboon.

BRER CLARE

How dare –

LAGREE

I tell the truth? Jefferson, Madison, Franklin – they were men of the Enlightenment, Deists at most.

BRER CLARE

Deists?

LAGREE

I will explain as we go along the judicial activism trail. Have you noticed that every time you're off high and mighty making decisions, you get yanked back here?

BRER CLARE

I been deducin' that for my deduction.

LAGREE

That's me, good buddy.

BRER CLARE

How –

LAGREE

Do I do it? For me to know, sweetums. Let me just say that I am the author of your fate. Not his is what I want you to do.

LAGREE takes BRER aside and speaks to HIM with great urgency.

Musical bridge.
ALL the Dead People play an air dirge on various air instruments.
Out of this BRER CLARE emerges to give his judgements.

BRER CLARE

One nation, with liberty and justice for all, not under God, or under any other old white bearded cracker muthafucker, with liberty and justice for all.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

But God –

BRER CLARE

I don't go into his house and He sure as Good 'n Plenty black and pink shinola ain't comin' into mine.

OFFSTAGE REPORTER

What has come over you, Justice Clare? You came onto this Court as a defender of the shit-us quo. And now you are removing God from the Pledge of Allegiance?

BRER CLARE

Next.

OFFSTAGE REPORTER

You have no answer?

BRER CLARE

My answer is this. The shit-us quo needs a pschittabrush to shove it all down. I cook down, I love down and I shove down. Next!

OFFSTAGE REPORTER

Flags!

BRER CLARE

Flags. It wasn't so long ago that folks were arrested for wearing flags in what was determined a defamatory manner. Hippies, Yippies, Dippies draped themselves and their not so private parts in every size and shape of the Old Glory. And the Law said, Enough already. Do not dispute, do not disgrace. Then more turmoil, more unrest and none of us got no rest and the smell of the red white and blue smoke wafted over our nation's amber waves. Flag-burning criss-crossed the land and cries for a Racoonstitutional amendment were bruited from every flag-making factory in northern Jersey New.

But the amendment did not come until now. I hereby declare that no flag shall be flown anywhere in public sight. On no holidays, in no burst of patriotic balderdash shall anyone *dis*play or *dat*play the f-f-f-flag.

OFFSTAGE REPORTER

Not on the F-f-f-fourth?

BRER CLARE

Not even on the muthafourther Inde-effin'-pendence Day. You can take all those parades, Memorial, Veterans', Armed Forces and ram 'em all into Benedict Arnold's musket and blow it out the Stealth Veep's backside 'fore I cave into special jingoistic interests.

Now try this on for scandal-size. Guns, goombah. I hereby declare what the Founding Fathers meant, the strictest interpretation of the original intent. Yes, we may all bear arms – each and every man, woman and child – with no waiting period, no checks, no licenses, the buckshot stops here, bubula – there's only one little proviso. Any weapon is fine and dandy – as long as it existed in 17 and 76. Get your muskets, your blunderbusses, your cross-bows and your single-loading cannons – all with the approval of the NRA – that's Niggers – Rifles – Attitudes!

Let's see – we done G-O-D, glag, guns – Ah ha! – Mother! A woman's right, or lack thereof, over her re-pro-duck, and I ain't talkin' no drake, -tivity. And herein I call upon my strict Cat'lick training. And I quote – Semper ubi sub ubi – always where under where – ubi dubium, ibi libertas – where there is doubt, there is freedom of moral choice. In the 17th Century, a Jesuit theologian, Thomas Sanchez, could find no Cat'lick scholar who did not allow abortions to save a woman's life. The fetus, at times, could be considered an unjust aggressor, a term developed in Christian ethics to justify killing in war. And we all love war. More War in Store with Peace as Chief of Police! Even today, when miscarried or aborted, fetuses cannot be baptized or given Christian funerals as if they were persons.
End of argument.

REPORTER

Mr. Justice, these are sweeping changes and open you to cries for impeachment.

STRAWGRASPERS and WOOLGATHERERS

Impeach Impeach
And drive the Brer from reach

BRER CLARE

Brer-baiting, hey? I'll show you the back of my butt and you going to kiss me where the sun don't shin 'cause I'm here for life and I'm serving out my term.

HE has a point, but is nevertheless chased off by the GRASPERS and GATHERERS shouting for his impeachment.

BRER CLARE discovered asleep in his office late at night. SIMON LAGREE enters.

LAGREE

Ahem! Ahem!

BRER CLARE awakes.

BRER CLARE

Who the samhil –

LAGREE

Good job.

BRER CLARE

Lagree. Complex Simon. What do you want?

LAGREE

Now that you've pierced the weenie of every Puritanical pisspot from sea to shining, it's time for your reward. And don't forget – you have me to thank. Boys?

Enter QUIMBO and SAMBO, carrying baseball bats.

Quimbo and Sambo need to hit a couple of homers.

HE starts to leave.

BRER CLARE

Before you leave, that is, before I leave, would you grant me two quick requests? Your last act of kindness?

LAGREE

Yes?

BRER CLARE

What happened to St. Clare?

LAGREE

A little altercation over Perdido Way at the Funky Butt Hall. Trying to keep that rhinestone-toothed scraggly-assed Stagger Lee from offin' her Billie, St. Clare got his cirrhosis all shot to shite.

Now for your second request?

BRER CLARE

Second, ah yes, my secont request. Have you met my second, my very own Topsy?

TOPSY, with Uzi aimed, enters.

LAGREE

Can't say as I have. What plantation has the pleasure?

TOPSY

Elenguen, nahke nash nashiang

Elenguen sha nath ngong e shiang

LAGREE

A corruption of Zulu or Dinka, my guess.

SHE cuts LAGREE down with a barrage of bullets.

BRER CLARE

Now you two homer-hitters, do you care to question Topsy's linguistic prowESS? I thought not. Now drop the Louisville Sluggers on your way out and see you around the United Negro campus. A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

QUIMBO and SAMBO

Thank you, Massa; thank you, Miss Topsy

BRER CLARE

Thank you is enough.

THEY've gone.

Well, Topsy. What say we get down on in and under?

TOPSY

Teth loida nangua shegua keo bin shuop Sudan.

BRER CLARE

I too will be happy when there is peace in Sudan.

TOPSY

There's a fine lady here to see you.

Enter JUANITA KILL

BRER CLARE

You can leave us, Darlin', but don't go too far with that Uzi.

TOPSY

I speck I just growed.

TOPSY leaves. A long look between BRER and JUANITA.
To black.

EPILOGUE.
One year later.
JUANITA in judicial robes addresses the crowd.

JUANITA

AT 6 a.m. today just hours before Justice Clare was to celebrate his first year on the bench, the Judge succumbed to gout and novelistic ennui. Rumors that his newest law clerk, Plurabelle Galore, could not get his gaiters up fast enough before 911 arrived are just that – gaiters, I mean rumors. With record speed I have been named Chief Justice Juanita Kill, the first female Chief in the Court's history. Some say I now have the awesome responsibility to fill Ole Brer's stinky patent leather brogans. But those shoes are not right for me. Women and gentlemen, it's the first Monday in October all over again and our agenda is overflowing. I'm not here merely to put sawdust on the patriarchal puke, but to re-direct the rivers of our Sapphonic energies and turn the firehose on Old Beauregard Bull's bunged-up barn. And this ain't no H. Ross Poopot speaking. And if you think I'm talking judicial active, honey, I ain't never been no passive. The case of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania vs. the Women of Three Mile Island will be decided. The case of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts vs. the prostitutes of South Boston, the SoBo 100, will be decided. The case of the District of Columbia vs. the people of Chocolate City, in which the former claim to be discriminated by the latter, will be decided. The case of Reebok vs. the Little Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes will be decided.

As for me, I will strap on my state-of-the-art cantilever pumps and I will hit this Court running. Catch me if you can.

The Kill Court is now in session.

The Gavel of Commencement begins the rest of our lives.