

she had her hair slicked back. Her mouth made her face look pretty. She was dancing and she had tears in her eyes. I asked her why she was crying. She said she was lonesome. I told her I couldn't fix that but if she wanted somebody to walk her home after the dance I'd walk her. See that she got home safe. She thanked me and went on crying. Say she felt better, and after the dance I could walk her home since I was going that way. She had a good time dancing with some of the other men. I danced with her some more. She was smiling but she still had tears in her eyes. After the dance I walked her home. I seen at the dance that she had a nice way about her. When she was walking home she put her hand in mine. She asked me did I want to stay the night. I told her yes. I told her I was at the dance looking for a woman. She asked me why didn't I tell her, we could have saved each other some time. I woke up in the morning and she was laying there crying. I didn't ask her about it. I didn't try and stop her. I lay there a while trying to figure out what to do. I ended up holding her in my arms. She started crying some more. I held her a while and then I left. I said good-bye to her and started walking away. She was standing in the door. I looked back and she was standing so she fit right in the middle of the door. I couldn't see if she was crying. She kind of waved at me. I got a little further on and turned and looked back and she was still there. Look like she had got smaller like she might have sat down in the doorway. That's what it looked like to me. I can still see her standing there. Had a green door and I can see her standing in it. I don't know what happened to her. I'd like to look on her face again. Just to know that she all right and if she stopped crying. If I could see her face I believe that would be enough.

BLACK MARY: Maybe you'll get the chance. What you gonna tell her if you see her again?

CITIZEN: I don't know. Sometimes I lay awake at night when I be lonely and ask myself what I would say to her. Some-

times I tell her to stop being lonely. I tell her it's something she doing to herself. But then I'm laying there lonely too and I have to ask myself was it something I was doing to myself? I don't know. I ain't lonely now. I ain't got no woman but I still don't feel lonely. I feel all filled up inside. That's something I done to myself. So maybe I did make myself lonely.

BLACK MARY: You got to be right with yourself before you can be right with anybody else.

CITIZEN: That's what I'd tell her! I believe she was looking for somebody else to make her right with herself. That's why she was crying.

*(Aunt Ester enters from her room.)*

AUNT ESTER: Mr. Citizen, listen to what I tell you now. Rutherford Selig should be heading upriver by now. He go through Little Haiti and then he cross over the river to go to Scotch Bottom before he go to Hazelwood. You got to catch him before he cross the river. He sells pots and pans. Look for a wagon by the river with pots and pans. That's Rutherford Selig. Tell him Aunt Ester needs him. Ask him to come right away. Then you come back with him. Be careful. If Caesar see you he'll follow you. Hurry now, the time ain't long. If Rutherford Selig get across the river you can't catch him. Ask him to come right away.

CITIZEN: I'll catch him.

AUNT ESTER: You look just like my Junebug. You old rascal you! You be careful. Go in prayer.

*(Citizen exits.)*

Black Mary, fix up a plate of whatever you got and bring it in the room. Draw that shade. Bring me that plate and let me know when Selig comes. You got that stove too hot. Damp it down. You be done burnt down the place.

**BLACK MARY:** It's down already.

**AUNT ESTER:** It's too hot. Damp it down! Take some of that wood off that fire.

**BLACK MARY:** You need fire to cook with. How else the food gonna get done?

**AUNT ESTER:** Turn it down!

**BLACK MARY:** Here! You cook it! You turn it down! I can't do everything the way you want me to. I'm not you. You act like there ain't no other way to do nothing. I got my own way of doing things. I like the fire high. That's the way I cook. You like it down. That's the way you cook. If you ain't cooking you ain't got nothing to say about it. All you got to worry about is the eating.

**AUNT ESTER:** I just say the fire's too high.

**BLACK MARY:** It's been three years now I can't do nothing to satisfy you. I may as well lay down somewhere and forget about it. You got something to say about everything. Turn the fire down. Wash the greens in the other pot. Shake that flour off that chicken. Tuck in the corners of the sheets. That too much starch. That ain't enough salt. I'm tired of it! Your way ain't always the best way. I got my own way and that's the way I'm doing it. If I stay around here I'm doing it my own way.

**AUNT ESTER:** What took you so long?

*(Aunt Ester turns and exits into her room. The lights go down on the scene.)*

#### SCENE 4

*The lights come up on Eli, standing looking out the window. Black Mary is in the kitchen. Eli sees Selig's wagon.*

**ELI:** Here he comes now.

*(Eli heads to the back door and opens it. Citizen and Selig enter.)*

Come on in, Selig. Aunt Ester's waiting on you.

**SELIG:** Good thing Citizen caught up with me. They got all the roads blocked off. They say they looking for whoever burnt down the mill. They say they know who done it. They won't let anybody cross the river down in Scotch Bottom.

*(Aunt Ester enters from her room.)*

**AUNT ESTER:** How you doing, Mr. Selig? I thank you for coming. I need you to do me a favor. God is a good worker and he works all kind of ways in the world. The Bible say he rewards those who do just works. I need you to do me a favor. Caesar might catch you and if he catch you I can't say what the matter will be.

**SELIG:** I ain't never known you to be on the wrong side of anything. I ain't scared of Caesar.

**AUNT ESTER:** I need you to carry Solly downriver. Caesar looking for him. Say he burnt down the mill. I don't know whether he did or not. Sometimes them ain't the right questions.

*(Solly enters from Aunt Ester's room.)*

**SOLLY:** Yeah, I burned it down! The people might get mad but freedom got a high price. You got to pay. No matter what it cost. You got to pay. I didn't mind settling up the difference after the war. But I didn't know they was gonna settle like this. I got older I see where I'm gonna die and everything gonna be the same. I say well at least goddamn it they gonna know I was here! The people gonna know about Solly Two Kings!

**SELIG:** I got my wagon out back.

**AUNT ESTER** *(To Solly):* If Caesar catches you he'll kill you. You know that?

**SOLLY:** He gonna have to catch me first.