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Prodigal

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Prodigal

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Creative Writing
Playwriting

by

Jonathan White

B.A. Ouachita Baptist University, 2004

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Abstract:

Following a similar pattern of the classic Biblical story of "The Prodigal Son", the play allows for a modernization of the characters and setting. Set in 1968, the playwright takes a look at what happened after the "Prodigal Son" returned home as well as the effect the return had upon the Son that stayed as well as the Father. How can family relationships survive in the midst of lies and turmoil of a time of great change in America's history.

Play, Prodigal Son, Louisiana, 1968, Father, Son, Drama.

Cast of Characters:

Arvin	The Patriarch.
Saul	Arvin's Oldest Son, 29
Lucas	Arvin's Youngest Son, 25
Pauline	Arvin's cook and housekeeper
Olivia	Pauline's daughter
Ray	Olivia's husband

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: Louisiana, 1968.

AT RISE: Dusk. The stage is divided into two distinct rooms, living and dining, with a visible hallway in the middle. The hallway contains a door leading outside and stairs that lead to the upstairs area, which we cannot see. In the living room there is a clean leather sofa and chair set with dark wood tables and lamps with large fabric shades. A fireplace with a mantle is on one side. Above the mantel is a portrait with an older man, and two young boys. One looks happy, the other boy does not. A single barrel shotgun is mounted beside the picture. A liquor cabinet filled with various types of alcohol is prominent on the wall. There is a small TV off to the side. The dining room is not yet dressed for dinner. There is a swinging door that leads to the kitchen beside a wood hutch filled with fine china. PAULINE, a heavyset African American woman in her late 50s is wiping down the table, humming a peppy song. SAUL enters flipping through a stack of mail. He is nicely dressed. PAULINE jumps when she sees SAUL. They exchange looks.

PAULINE

I didn't see you there.

SAUL

Dinner almost ready?

PAULINE

I know he doesn't like music in the house.

SAUL

I'm not going to tell on you.

PAULINE
I'll try to keep it down.

SAUL
What's on?

PAULINE
Gumbo. Just about ready.

SAUL
Smells good. Let me just take a little taste.

PAULINE
No, sir. You got to wait till it's done.

SAUL
It doesn't matter. I think it might just be me tonight.

PAULINE
Mr. Hebert not feeling good?

SAUL
Dr. Guidroz told him to rest.

PAULINE
I can take some up to him.

SAUL
That'll be fine. He probably won't eat much though.

PAULINE
Little bit will do him good. My mama always used to say
Cajun food feeds you mind, body, and spirit.

SAUL
Especially yours, Pauline.

PAULINE
Thank you, Mr. Saul.

SAUL exits the dining room. ARVIN enters the hallway. He is dressed in a bathrobe. He carries a newspaper and some cigarettes. He looks pallid.

ARVIN
Get me some matches will you?

SAUL
Dr. Guidroz told you not to smoke.

ARVIN
He's a hack.

SAUL

That may be, but -

ARVIN

Are you going to get me the matches or aren't you?

He pushes SAUL aside, and goes to the living room. He digs around a drawer, and finds some matches. He plops into one of the chairs and lights a cigarette. He labors to smoke. After a few drags, he opens the paper and begins to read.

SAUL

Anything interesting?

ARVIN

Those coloreds up in Memphis causing all sorts of trouble.

SAUL

Pauline made gumbo for dinner. You want me to bring some in here?

ARVIN

I'm not hungry.

SAUL

You need to eat.

ARVIN

I'll eat when I'm hungry.

SAUL

How about a sandwich?

ARVIN

You gone deaf?

PAULINE enters from the kitchen.

PAULINE

Mr. Saul? You smoking in this house? Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Hebert. I thought you was upstairs asleep.

ARVIN

Couldn't.

PAULINE

Mr. Hebert, you know you're not supposed to be smoking. Dr. Guidroz would throw a fit if he knew you were in here like this.

ARVIN

I'm a grown man. I don't need no good for nothing doctor coming, telling me what I can and can't do.

PAULINE

Yes, but -

ARVIN

It's one cigarette. This isn't going to hurt me.

PAULINE

Mr. Saul, you let him do this?

SAUL

He won't listen to me.

PAULINE

Shame on both of you. And the light in this room ain't no light for reading.

She begins to open the curtains and turn on all the lamps.

ARVIN

You trying to blind me? There's nothing in here anyway.

ARVIN struggles to get comfortable. In his effort, he has a coughing fit.

SAUL

You alright? You want a pillow or something?

PAULINE

I'll go pour some water.

ARVIN

I'm fine. Y'all stop fussing over me like I'm an infant. I don't need to be looked after.

SAUL

Pauline, go and get him some water.

PAULINE

Yes, sir.

PAULINE exits to the kitchen.

ARVIN

I told you I was fine.

SAUL
It's just water, Dad.

ARVIN
Turn on the TV will you?

SAUL
You should be resting.

ARVIN
Just turn on the TV.

SAUL
Sure.

He turns on the TV. WALTER CRONKITE is announcing the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is heard, not seen. SAUL and ARVIN watch stoically. PAULINE enters and gives the glass of water to ARVIN. She is visibly shaken by the news.

PAULINE
Sweet Jesus.

ARVIN
Turn it off. What are you sitting there for? I said turn it off.

SAUL jumps up and turns off the TV as the news trails off. PAULINE sits dazed. Beat.

ARVIN
I'm sorry, Pauline. I know he was a real good man for your people.

PAULINE
He was a rabble-rouser. Getting everybody all stirred up with talk of hope and dreams. Still it's a shame. The Good Lord don't want nobody to have to die like that. Especially no preacher. I'm going to go look after dinner.

She exits, tearfully. SAUL gets up and goes to the liquor cabinet and

pours himself a glass of bourbon.

SAUL

She seemed upset.

ARVIN

Yeah.

SAUL

You think we should send her home?

ARVIN

What for?

SAUL

I don't know -

ARVIN

You know, that's your problem boy. You're too soft. Life isn't always a party. Look at me. You think this is easy?

SAUL

No, sir.

ARVIN

You can't run a company, letting your feelings run everything.

SAUL

I understand. I think I've done a good job for you.

ARVIN

How'd we close first quarter?

SAUL

Up.

ARVIN

Good. We need to call a meeting with the Board of Directors for next Wednesday.

SAUL

Already did.

ARVIN

Did you make sure the plant managers got their bonus checks?

SAUL

Yes, sir.

ARVIN

We have to keep -

SAUL

The managers happy. Yes, sir. It's taken care of.

ARVIN

Well, I never know with you.

SAUL

I'm going to go check on Pauline.

ARVIN

Soft.

SAUL leaves ARVIN seated in the chair and goes to the dining room where he finds PAULINE setting the table. She is crying. When she sees SAUL, she quickly tries to hide her tears.

PAULINE

Mr. Saul, you've got to stop sneaking up on me.

SAUL

I'm sorry. Are you okay?

PAULINE

Fine. Just fine. Dinner's ready. You want me to go and fetch Mr. Hebert?

SAUL

No, I'll tell him, although he may not want anything. You sure you're okay?

PAULINE

I said yes. Now don't you say another word about it. Go get your Daddy.

SAUL goes back into the living room where he finds ARVIN pouring himself a drink.

SAUL

You shouldn't be having that.

ARVIN

I can't smoke, I can't drink. You going to change my diaper too?

SAUL
Dad -

ARVIN
I'm not a child!

SAUL
Dinner's ready. You coming?

ARVIN
I guess.

SAUL exits to the dining room. He sits at the foot of the table and waits. PAULINE is bringing some bread and a pitcher of ice tea. ARVIN enters with his drink. He sits at the head of the table.

ARVIN
Thank you, Pauline. Looks good.

PAULINE
Thank you. I'll just be in the kitchen if you need me.

PAULINE exits. SAUL and ARVIN eat in silence. ARVIN has a coughing fit. SAUL rushes to him.

SAUL
Dad? Pauline? Call Dr. Guidroz.

ARVIN
(catching his breath)
I'm fine.

SAUL
Just in case.

ARVIN
No! He was just here poking and prodding me. I don't want him here. Or does what I say not matter anymore?

SAUL
Dad -

ARVIN
Big man. Call the doctor every time his old man coughs. I'm dying.

SAUL
Stop talking like that.

ARVIN
Why shouldn't I talk that way? I'm dying, and that's that.

PAULINE enters.

PAULINE
Dr. Guidroz wasn't home yet. We need to go to the hospital?

ARVIN
No.

PAULINE
Mr. Hebert?

SAUL
No.

ARVIN
So, that's how it is? You need his permission now?

PAULINE
No, sir. You just stubborn as an ox that's all.

ARVIN
I'm fine. I'm going to bed.

SAUL
You barely ate.

ARVIN
Pack it up.

SAUL
Yes, sir.

ARVIN exits.

PAULINE
Lord help us, ain't none of us going to make it if he keep acting like that.

SAUL
Do you mind putting this away?

PAULINE
Not at all.

*PAULINE exits into the kitchen.
SAUL stands alone. He exits to the living room, where ARVIN is standing, drink in hand staring at*

*the picture on the wall. SAUL
pours himself a drink.*

SAUL
I thought you were going to bed.

ARVIN
Please, just leave me alone.

SAUL
Suit yourself.

SAUL starts to exit.
You know Lucas is not coming back, right?

*ARVIN stiffens, but does not
respond. He stares at the picture.
SAUL exits. LIGHTS down as ARVIN
sips his scotch, never taking his
eyes off of the picture.*

END SCENE 1.

Scene 2

*The Next Morning. ARVIN is asleep
in the chair. His glass sits empty
on the table beside him. We hear
the sound of keys unlocking the
door. PAULINE enters with bags of
groceries. She crosses into the
hallway towards the dining room,
but stops when she sees ARVIN in
the chair.*

PAULINE
Mr. Hebert? Mr. Hebert? Mr. Hebert, wake up!

ARVIN awakes.

ARVIN
Pauline? What time is it?

PAULINE
Nearly eight. Did you sleep in this chair?

ARVIN
I guess.

PAULINE
That isn't going to be good for your back. You want me to
call Dr. Guidroz?

ARVIN

No. I'm fine.

PAULINE

(noticing the empty glass)

How many of those did you have?

ARVIN

Just the one.

PAULINE

Right. Just the one. I bet you didn't even eat the rest of your food either.

ARVIN

I wasn't hungry.

PAULINE

How could Mr. Saul let you sleep in that chair with no food and God knows how much liquor -

ARVIN

I asked him to leave.

PAULINE

The house?

ARVIN

No.

PAULINE

Good, cause we can't have both of them-
(realizing)

I'm so sorry.

ARVIN

It's fine.

PAULINE

No it's not. I've put my foot in my mouth so many times I can't keep up anymore, but that beats them all. I'm so sorry. I'll just go ahead into the kitchen.

She starts to exit.

ARVIN

Pauline?

PAULINE

Sir?

ARVIN

Do you think he'll come back?

PAULINE

That ain't none of my business.

ARVIN

Do you?

PAULINE

I used to. But, I guess the only one who knows that is Lucas. My Livy used to say that when they'd play hide and seek as kids, he'd always find the best hiding spot. And he'd stay there until somebody found him or until all the other kids got tired and quit. Then she'd say when you least expect it, he'd pop out and scare the living daylights out of everybody.

ARVIN

He always had a strong will.

PAULINE

That he did.

ARVIN

How is Olivia?

PAULINE

She's getting better. Ray's been real good for her.

*ARVIN starts to get up, but he
seems like he's in a little pain.*

You sure you don't want me to call Dr. Guidroz?

ARVIN

No, I'm fine. I just need to stretch my legs.

PAULINE

I better get these vegetables to the kitchen. You want some breakfast?

ARVIN

Just coffee.

PAULINE

No, sir. You didn't have no dinner. You're at least having some toast. You want butter or no?

ARVIN

Just some jelly on the side.

PAULINE

Now that's more like it. You want me to bring it in here?

ARVIN

I think I'll take it on the porch.

PAULINE

Fresh air will do you good. Coming right up.

SAUL comes in from the other hallway and crosses into the dining room. ARVIN heads outside, and PAULINE enters the dining room. She sees SAUL and pops him in the head with a newspaper.

SAUL

Ow! What was that for?

PAULINE

What kind of a son lets his father sleep in a chair? I ought to tear you up!

SAUL

He asked me to leave. I didn't know he slept there.

PAULINE

You didn't even feed him!

SAUL

Pauline, he said he wasn't hungry. What was I supposed to do, force feed him?

PAULINE

Yes! I got to get him his toast so he don't starve!

SAUL

Are you making coffee?

PAULINE

Not for you!

PAULINE exits into the kitchen.

SAUL

(calling after her)

I'll take it with just a little cream, please.

SAUL sits and begins to read through the paper. Beat. From offstage we hear ARVIN calling for PAULINE. He is frantic. The sound becomes more distant as if ARVIN has left the porch running.

ARVIN (O.S.)

Pauline! Pauline! Oh Dear God! It's him! Lucas, my son!

PAULINE rushes in from the kitchen as SAUL stands up from the table.

She quickly moves to the outside door.

PAULINE

Oh my God! Mr. Saul, come quick! Your brother's come back! I saw him out the window!

SAUL

What?

PAULINE

Mr. Lucas is home!

SAUL does not go outside. His demeanor changes. Off stage we hear ARVIN and PAULINE both shouting unintelligible words of happiness and excitement. SAUL quickly leaves the dining room and hides in the living room. ARVIN and PAULINE enter ahead of LUCAS, a young man wearing old, ratty clothes. He is thin and his hair is long. They bring him into the dining room. LUCAS doesn't say anything. He stares at ARVIN. ARVIN, in turn doesn't say much either.

PAULINE

Mr. Lucas, it's so good to see you! Oh, you look so thin.

ARVIN

My son.

PAULINE

I can't believe my eyes. You look so thin.

ARVIN

Are you alright, son?

PAULINE

You look like you've been walking for days. Let me get you some water.

PAULINE exits.

ARVIN

Son?

No response.

You alright?

PAULINE returns.

PAULINE

Here you go. You hungry? Let me fix you something.

LUCAS sips the water, but his hand shakes. He spills the water.

ARVIN and PAULINE exchange looks while LUCAS tries to clean up the mess.

PAULINE

Don't you fool with that. I got it.

LUCAS

I'm sorry.

PAULINE

It ain't nothing. Just a little water that's all. It'll dry right up.

She takes a rag out of her apron and begins to clean up the spill.

PAULINE

See? That's better. Let me get you some more water.

LUCAS

I'm sorry.

PAULINE

Now don't you say another word. Lord knows that ain't the first time something's been spilled in this house.

ARVIN

Are you hungry?

He shakes his head "yes".

ARVIN

Good. Pauline, I suddenly feel like an omelet. We have eggs?

PAULINE

Yes sir.

ARVIN

Two omelets.

PAULINE

Yes, sir. It's good to have you home.

PAULINE exits.

ARVIN

Lucas? What's wrong boy? You hurt?

LUCAS
I'm so sorry.

ARVIN
It's just water.

LUCAS
Not about the water.

ARVIN
Now you listen to me. What's done is done. We're not talking about it any more. You understand?

LUCAS
You must have a lot of questions.

ARVIN
No.

LUCAS
I understand if you don't want to talk to me. I needed -

ARVIN
What is it?

LUCAS
I know that after everything that you wouldn't have me back in the house, but if I could stay in the guest house -

ARVIN
What?

LUCAS
Just for a few days.

ARVIN
I don't understand.

LUCAS
Just until I can find a job.

ARVIN
You're not staying?

LUCAS
Staying? I didn't think that you'd want me to.

ARVIN
Son, I didn't run to you outside because I'm angry with you. I ran to you because I have thought about you every moment of the last five years. I want you to stay. You know that I do.

LUCAS
You'd let me stay in the guest house?

ARVIN

You're not a guest. You're my son.

ARVIN kisses LUCAS on the cheek.

If you want to, I'd like you to stay. In your old room.

LUCAS

I can't. Not after all that I've done.

ARVIN

I said it's done. Enough moping around. This house has been like a funeral home for too long. I say it's time for a party. Pauline!

PAULINE enters.

PAULINE

Yes, sir?

ARVIN

What are we having for dinner?

PAULINE

I was going to make spaghetti. You want something else?

ARVIN

Yes. Go to the market and get the best cut of steak you can find. Steak dinner tonight. Invite some people over. We need a party. Where's Saul?

PAULINE

I don't know. He was in here just a minute ago.

LUCAS

Dad.

(Letting the word roll over
his tongue)

Dad. May I wash up before breakfast?

ARVIN

Sure. You remember where everything is?

PAULINE

I kept your room nice and clean.

LUCAS

Thank you.

PAULINE

Now, you hurry up and get back down here. Don't want your breakfast to get cold. It sure is good to have you back.

*LUCAS heads upstairs. SAUL does
not let LUCAS see him. SAUL enters*

the dining room.

SAUL

Good morning.

ARVIN

Where have you been?

SAUL

Taking care of things.

ARVIN

He's back.

SAUL

Who?

ARVIN

What do you mean who? Your brother.

SAUL

Is that what all the commotion was about?

ARVIN

You know you could be more excited.

SAUL

I'm thrilled.

ARVIN

Sounds like it. How about you do something useful and see if Pauline needs help with breakfast?

SAUL

I have things to do at the office.

ARVIN

We're taking the day off. I don't understand you. He's home! What's the matter with you?

SAUL

Nothing.

ARVIN

We're having a big steak dinner tonight. Go help Pauline.

SAUL

You're the boss.

ARVIN

Would it kill you to be happy?

ARVIN exits to the porch. His steps are a little lighter. SAUL stands rigid and alone. He seems

overwhelmed. He sinks into a chair. PAULINE enters with a stack of plates and silverware.

PAULINE

You alright?

SAUL

Never better.

PAULINE

Now don't you start lying. What did I tell you when you was a boy?

SAUL

I don't remember.

PAULINE

There you go lying again.

SAUL

You'd say telling lies is like running a race with bricks in your pockets.

PAULINE

They don't do nothing but slow you down. You still say you're alright?

SAUL

Yes.

PAULINE

Don't get weighed down.

She looks at him seriously.

I know it's hard.

SAUL

No you don't.

PAULINE

Mr. Saul -

SAUL

I'll be in my room.

He exits upstairs. Lights down.

END SCENE 2.

Scene 3

Evening. ARVIN and PAULINE are in the dining room setting the table.

They're not in focus. SAUL stands in the living room with a half drunk glass of bourbon in his hand. LUCAS enters. He looks cleaner than before and his clothes are much nicer, although they are a bit big. This is their first encounter.

SAUL

So, it's true?

LUCAS

Hi, Saul.

SAUL

You're back.

LUCAS

Yes. I wondered if you'd heard.

SAUL

I heard. Couldn't really miss it.

LUCAS

We missed you at breakfast. And lunch.

SAUL

Yeah, well I was busy working. You remember working?

LUCAS

How are you?

SAUL

You want to know how I am?

LUCAS

Obviously.

SAUL

Just peachy.

LUCAS

Look, I know this isn't easy for you.

SAUL

Do you think you can just apologize and wipe the slate clean?

LUCAS

No, I guess not.

SAUL

You ran out of money, right?

LUCAS

Yes.

SAUL
You came back for more?

LUCAS
No.

SAUL
Right.

LUCAS
It's not like that.

SAUL
It's not?

LUCAS
No. Listen, I can see that you need your space, so I'll just go.

He starts to exit, but SAUL stops him.

SAUL
No. Sit down. Come on, you came all this way. Why don't you explain where you were for the past five years?

LUCAS
Get out of the way, Saul.

SAUL
Well, well. My little brother went away and became a big man.

LUCAS
One of us had to become a man.

SAUL
Ah, there's the little brother I know.

LUCAS
Saul, don't do something you'll regret.

SAUL
Is that a threat?

LUCAS
No. I just want you to move. Can we not do this now? Please.

SAUL Moves to a liquor cabinet and gets out a bottle of Maker's Mark.

SAUL
Fine. Have it your way. You always do. You look terrible.

LUCAS

Thanks.

SAUL

No, I mean really terrible. I'd have figured that all that money you stole, um I mean borrowed would have fed you well. You want a drink?

LUCAS

No. I'm good.

SAUL

You're good. So how was it?

LUCAS

How was what?

SAUL

The world, of course. Isn't that where you went?

LUCAS

Sure.

SAUL

Did you see a lot of interesting things? Meet interesting people? Spend a lot of interesting money?

LUCAS

Look, I'm sorry. I really am.

SAUL

You're not sorry.

LUCAS

You don't know anything about it, Saul.

SAUL

I guess not, little brother. I didn't get to leave.

LUCAS

How many of those have you had today?

SAUL

Don't. Don't judge me!

LUCAS

I'm not. Believe me, I'm not. You just were always a lousy drunk.

SAUL

We can't all be the life of the party.

He downs the drink, and goes to pour another. SAUL seems frozen.

Examining the bottle. LUCAS looks at him with a mixture of fear and irritation. Beat.

LUCAS

It's been a long day for both of us. Why don't we both go rest before dinner?

SAUL

Where were you?

LUCAS

I really don't want to do this.

SAUL

Why not? It'll be fun.

LUCAS

You've had enough to drink.

SAUL

I'm fine.

LUCAS

I really think you've had enough.

SAUL

Shut up!

LUCAS

It's true.

SAUL

I said shut up!

LUCAS

But -

SAUL

No! It doesn't matter. Nothing matters! I could find the cure for cancer and it wouldn't matter because he still wouldn't think it was enough! I'm the one who stayed! I'm the one that took care of him, and took care of the business and the house! Me! But he didn't care.

LUCAS

Saul, give me the drink!

LUCAS moves to take the drink from SAUL's hand. SAUL backs away.

SAUL

Don't touch me!

LUCAS
Saul, put the drink down.

SAUL
Make me!

LUCAS moves to SAUL to get him to put the glass down. They struggle and the glass falls to the floor, shattering.
Now look what you did.

ARVIN enters from the dining room.
ARVIN
What was that?

LUCAS
Nothing, Dad. I just broke a glass. I was just getting something to clean it up.

ARVIN
Oh. Never mind that.

ARVIN takes a step back and clutches his chest.

LUCAS
Dad, are you okay?

ARVIN
I'm fine. I just wish your mother were here to see you. She'd be so proud of you.

LUCAS
I'm not so sure.

ARVIN
Enough of that. You're home now, that's what matters.

SAUL
Yes, that's what matters.

ARVIN
We'll have to get you some new clothes. Those don't seem to fit anymore.

LUCAS
These are fine, really.

ARVIN
Nonsense. I'll give you my check book. You can go shopping tomorrow.

SAUL

Do you really think that's such a good idea?

ARVIN

Of course. Those clothes are at least two sizes too big.

SAUL

No, I mean giving him your check book after -

ARVIN

He's home now. We're not speaking of the past.

LUCAS

Dad, you really don't have to do that. These clothes are fine.

ARVIN

You can go shopping tomorrow and that's the last I want to hear about it. Now, as if we haven't done enough eating, Pauline's almost done with the steaks and she's invited Olivia. Should be ready any minute. I'm going to go check on her.

LUCAS

Olivia's coming?

ARVIN

Yes. We invited more people, but on such short notice - I hope that's okay. But we're going to have a big banquet soon. The whole town will be there.

LUCAS

Fine.

ARVIN exits.

SAUL

That must make you feel great, knowing that after all you did to him, and he still loves you. Still trusts you.

LUCAS

Stop, please!

SAUL

Now, now. Don't get testy.

(sniffs)

Steak smells good.

PAULINE calls from the dining room.

PAULINE

Soups on! Come and get it while it's hot. I don't know what's taking Livy so long.

SAUL

Good to have you back little brother. Now how long are you in town for?

LUCAS

Like it or not, I'm here to stay.

SAUL

We'll see about that.

LUCAS

I wouldn't push me too hard, big brother.

SAUL

Why's that?

LUCAS

Because I know what you've been doing.

SAUL

I don't know what you're talking about.

LUCAS

I think that you do. I saw you.

SAUL

You were always one for wild stories.

LUCAS

This isn't a story and you know it.

SAUL

What do you want from me?

LUCAS

Believe it or not, I don't want anything. I just wanted to come home. I think we both can agree that I've hurt Dad enough for the both of us, so there's no reason that he needs to know about anything.

SAUL

Then why bring it up?

LUCAS

I want you to get off my back. Understood?

SAUL

Clearly.

There is a knock on the outside door. OLIVIA, a beautiful young woman enters carrying a basket of bread.

Knock knock!

OLIVIA

PAULINE hears her and calls out to her.

PAULINE

Livy, we're in here.

OLIVIA

Here, Mama, I brought some bread.

PAULINE

You think your Mama didn't make bread?

OLIVIA

Just a gesture.

PAULINE

Little girl, you don't have to make gestures here.

ARVIN enters from the kitchen.

ARVIN

Olivia! You look beautiful as always.

OLIVIA

Mr. Hebert? You were in the kitchen?

ARVIN

Yes, ma'am.

OLIVIA

Mama, you were right. This house has been turned on its ear.
Is he here?

SAUL and LUCAS enter from the living room.

SAUL

Who? The boy wonder?

OLIVIA

Saul, it's good to see you.

She hugs him.

LUCAS

Olivia.

(beat)

ARVIN

Lucas, are you okay?

SAUL

You're staring.

LUCAS
Was I? I'm sorry.

OLIVIA
(to LUCAS)
You look different.

*She gives him a short, cordial hug.
There is an awkward air around
OLIVIA and LUCAS. They both try to
hide it.*

PAULINE
Yes it has! Now, who wants steak?

ARVIN
Yes, let's eat.

OLIVIA
I'm starved.

PAULINE
Well, come on now. Don't nobody be shy. Dig in.
SAUL holds OLIVIA back.

SAUL
I hear congratulations are in order.

OLIVIA
What?

SAUL
I talked to Ray.

OLIVIA
Oh. Don't tell anybody. I haven't told Mama yet, and I
don't think tonight's the best time.

SAUL
Oh, yeah sure. Mum's the word.

OLIVIA
Thanks.

PAULINE
Dig in, everybody.

ARVIN
Why don't you sit next to me Pauline?

PAULINE
Sir?

ARVIN

Olivia, you come eat with us too. I don't want you trying to sneak off to the kitchen.

PAULINE

Mr. Hebert, we can't do that.

ARVIN

I insist.

OLIVIA

Really, it's okay. I don't mind eating in the kitchen.

PAULINE

It's your night.

ARVIN

I insist.

PAULINE

But it's not right.

ARVIN

Right and wrong don't matter tonight. Now sit.

PAULINE

Yes, sir.

They all sit except ARVIN who stands with his glass ready to toast.

LUCAS

Dad, you don't have to do this again. The ones at breakfast and lunch were enough.

ARVIN

Olivia and Saul didn't get to hear it, so I'm doing it again. I'm a proud father, let me have my moment. I'd just like to say that for the past five years there's been a hole in this family. And for whatever reason, today it was filled. Son, it's good to have you back.

All except SAUL raise their glass and say "Cheers". They start to eat, passing bowls and plates of food around. The table is silent.

ARVIN

How come no one's talking? What kind of party is this? It's a special occasion! Talk. Pauline, Olivia, don't be shy.

LUCAS

Honestly I don't know if my stomach can handle any more of this special occasion food.

PAULINE

I've got to fatten you up again somehow.

LUCAS

Sure, but in one day?

OLIVIA

Mr. Hebert, do you mind passing me the bread?

ARVIN

Sure.

ARVIN passes her the plate of bread. Beat.

SAUL

So, Olivia. I hear you have news.

PAULINE

News?

OLIVIA

I thought we said we weren't going to talk about it.

SAUL

We did, but no one was saying anything. The old man doesn't want this to be awkward, so -

PAULINE

What's going on?

OLIVIA

It's nothing. Now's not the time.

SAUL

Don't be modest. It's wonderful news.

OLIVIA

Please -

ARVIN

Saul -

SAUL

What? I just think we should share with the table.

OLIVIA

Saul -

SAUL

Olivia and Ray are expecting! Isn't that great?

PAULINE
Is this true?

OLIVIA
Yes.

PAULINE
Why didn't you tell me?

OLIVIA
I didn't want to say anything just yet, but it seems Ray told Saul this morning at the factory. I'm sorry.

PAULINE
Sweet Jesus, I'm going to be a grandmother! Hallelujah!

ARVIN
Congratulations!

LUCAS
(stunned)
You're expecting?

OLIVIA
Yeah.

LUCAS
Wow. Congratulations.

OLIVIA
Thank you.

LUCAS
Is Ray your -?

OLIVIA
Ray's my husband. You knew him actually. He works for your father.

LUCAS
Ray. Ray LaMond?

OLIVIA
Two years in June.

LUCAS
All the way Ray?

PAULINE
All the way? That better not mean what I think it means.

OLIVIA
It's nothing Mama. It's just an old joke from-

SAUL

Yeah, it means that he had sex with a lot of girls in school.
Can I have the bread too?

ARVIN

Saul, that's enough.

SAUL

What? Just filling Pauline here in on her son-in-law's past indiscretions.

OLIVIA

He's changed a lot. He works in one of your father's factories now. He's floor Manager.

ARVIN

Just for the coloreds of course. He's quite a good worker from what I hear.

LUCAS

I'd love to see him.

OLIVIA

He had to work tonight, but I'll tell him you're back in town. I'm sure he'd love to see you too.

(beat)

This is really good, Mama. Or should I say, Big Mama?

PAULINE

Big Mama?

OLIVIA

That's what Ray wants the baby to call you.

PAULINE

Makes me sound like Hattie McDaniel.

OLIVIA

I think it's cute.

SAUL

So, am I the only one who's going to address the elephant in the room?

ARVIN

Saul. You've added quite enough to this conversation.

SAUL

What? I mean, we're all sitting around talking about All the way Ray and Big Mama, but no one is going to ask the man of the hour where's he's been for the past five years? What he's been doing? I mean, aren't we all the least bit curious?

LUCAS

Saul.

SAUL

Oh come on, Luke! Tell us some fascinating stories of what you did.

OLIVIA

Actually, I'd like to know.

SAUL

See! Liv wants to know too!

ARVIN

You don't have to say anything, Son.

SAUL

Of course he doesn't.

LUCAS

It's fine. Um, when I left I went to San Francisco. I stayed there for about four years and then moved around a lot after that.

OLIVIA

Where to?

SAUL

Yes, where to exactly?

LUCAS

Just places.

PAULINE

Places?

OLIVIA

What were you doing that whole time?

SAUL

Yes, how much of Dad's money were you wasting in all those places?

LUCAS

I don't think we want to talk money.

SAUL

Sure we do.

ARVIN

Enough!

SAUL

Come on, we all know that he was on your dime the whole time. What was it Dad? What was the grand total again?

ARVIN

I said enough! Now you can either sit and enjoy the meal with the rest of us, or you can leave, but you will not insult your brother or myself. Is that clear?

ARVIN has a coughing fit.

PAULINE

Mr. Hebert? Saul, call Dr. Guidroz.

SAUL

Let Lucas call.

ARVIN

I'm fine.

PAULINE

We should call just in case.

LUCAS

Dad, are you okay?

ARVIN

I'm fine. Saul, I think you should go upstairs.

SAUL

Are you sending me to my room?

ARVIN

Yes.

SAUL

I'm not a kid.

ARVIN

You're acting like one. And as long as you live here, you live by my rules.

SAUL

You know, the only reason I live here is so that I can take care of you.

ARVIN

Get upstairs!

SAUL

Fine. I'm calling your bluff, little brother. Tell him or don't. I don't care. Dinner was great, Pauline. Really special.

He exits outside. The rest sit.

LUCAS

Dad, are you okay?

ARVIN

Fine. Did you have something to tell me?

LUCAS

No sir.

ARVIN

Okay. Olivia, I'm sorry you had to be here for that. Please, everyone let's enjoy the rest of the meal.

They try to have a pleasant dinner, but it's ruined. The lights go down on eating in awkward silence.

END SCENE 3.

Scene 4

Midnight. LUCAS and OLIVIA sit alone in the living room. LUCAS is drinking. Jazz music plays.

LUCAS

I love this old stuff.

OLIVIA

Are you talking about the drink or the music?

LUCAS

Both.

OLIVIA

Should we be worried that Saul hasn't come home yet?

LUCAS

I don't think so. He can take care of himself. It's late. Don't you have to be home?

OLIVIA

Ray doesn't get off work until 3:00.

LUCAS

AM? My father's rough!

OLIVIA

No. Every couple months he has to oversee the third shift crew and make sure they're behaving. Your father's been very gracious to Ray actually. Not many places for a colored man to be somebody's boss around here, even another colored man.

LUCAS

My Dad.

OLIVIA

Your Dad, what?

LUCAS
I thought he'd be so mad.
He stares off into space.

OLIVIA
Are you awake?

LUCAS
Yeah. I'm sorry.

OLIVIA
It's fine.

LUCAS
Do you want some more water? Or something else?

OLIVIA
I've barely touched this glass.

LUCAS
Oh. Sorry.

OLIVIA
What are you thinking about?

LUCAS
It's weird being in this room with you.

OLIVIA
I thought I wouldn't be able to be anywhere close to you again. Much less in the same room.

LUCAS
What's the verdict?

OLIVIA
It's oddly comfortable. Familiar.

LUCAS
You look beautiful.
She stiffens a bit.

I mean, you seem happy.

OLIVIA
I think so. I didn't think I could be again, but I think I am.

LUCAS
I'm sorry.

OLIVIA
Please don't do that.

LUCAS

But -

OLIVIA

My Mom would murder me if she knew I was here with you alone.

LUCAS

We've spent plenty of time alone together.

OLIVIA

She doesn't know any of that. *Anything.*

"The Very Thought of You" by Nat King Cole plays.

LUCAS

No way. I can't believe this. Do you hear this?

OLIVIA

It's been a long time.

LUCAS

We have to dance.

OLIVIA

No. It's late.

LUCAS

Come on. Dance with me. It's fate.

OLIVIA

Fate? Your fate's got a bad sense of timing.

LUCAS

Just one dance. For old time's sake.

He begins to sing.

OLIVIA

Don't sing.

He sings louder.

Shh! You'll wake your Dad up.

He sings louder.

Luke! Fine. One dance.

LUCAS

I knew you'd say yes. You always did.

They dance. They are at first loosely holding each other, but as the song plays on, they begin to grip each other more passionately. As the song ends, he stops and

takes her face in his hands. He holds it for a long moment, looking into her eyes.

OLIVIA

What are you doing?

LUCAS

I never stopped loving you.

OLIVIA

What are you doing?

LUCAS

Do you think if I had stayed - I mean, would we? I mean would the baby -

OLIVIA

Shut up.

LUCAS

Would it?

OLIVIA

I said shut up! How dare you?

LUCAS

I didn't mean -

OLIVIA

I should have known we were doomed from the start. Even if nothing bad had ever happened, you're still white and I'm not. That's enough.

LUCAS

I'm sorry.

OLIVIA

This was a mistake. I shouldn't have come here.

LUCAS

Please stay.

OLIVIA

I've spent the last five years tortured by what we did. I'll never be able to let it go.

LUCAS

Please.

OLIVIA

No! I need to go.

LUCAS

Liv-

As OLIVIA is leaving, LUCAS passionately embraces her. She pulls away.

Don't go.

OLIVIA

Please -

LUCAS kisses her. She resists, but then leans into it. She snaps out of it and exits the room. LUCAS is left alone. Suddenly, OLIVIA enters again. She's angry.

You think you just get to leave and everything's okay? I'm supposed to just welcome you back?

LUCAS

No. I -

OLIVIA

You will never understand what you've done to me.

LUCAS

You're not the only one with regrets.

OLIVIA

I don't believe you! Now I'm going home and I'm going to wait for my husband. I don't want to see you again.

LUCAS

Are you telling me you don't love me? Not even a little?

OLIVIA

Goodbye, Lucas.

LUCAS

Wait.

OLIVIA

No.

OLIVIA exits. LUCAS goes to the liquor cabinet and coolly makes another drink. SAUL enters from outside. He crosses into the living room. He's still drunk.

SAUL

Was that Olivia's car? She was here late.

LUCAS
Yeah.

SAUL
Did you sleep with her?

LUCAS
I don't know what you're talking about.

SAUL
Oh. Right. We don't know about you two.

LUCAS
What do you want, Saul?

SAUL
I want you to tell the truth.

LUCAS
Goodnight.

LUCAS turns to leave.

SAUL
What's it like to just waltz back into the house with your dignity intact? I mean he didn't even ask you where you'd been!

LUCAS
Saul -

SAUL
No, I mean I know I'm going to get grilled about my little tantrum tomorrow. One night and I get crucified, and you come home after five years, and nothing. Not one word about it. I just want him to ask you. That's all.

LUCAS
Saul, he's not asking because he knows.

SAUL
What?

LUCAS
Dad knows where I've been. He knows what I've been doing.

SAUL
You're lying.

LUCAS
I'm not.

SAUL
There's no way that Dad knows everything!

LUCAS

There's no way that he doesn't! Come on Saul, you don't get to be where Dad is without knowing a thing or two. He's a very powerful man.

SAUL

So you're telling me that Dad knows everything but hasn't said anything to anyone else about it?

LUCAS

I didn't know whether he'd said anything or not.

SAUL

How do you know all of this?

LUCAS

Because he found me.

SAUL

He found you?

LUCAS

He came to my apartment in San Francisco. He told me that he missed me. He told me the company needed me. He told me that he thought it was time I came home.

SAUL

When was this?

LUCAS

About a year ago.

SAUL

Is that why you started running?

LUCAS

Yes. I was running from him.

SAUL

Did he follow you?

LUCAS

I didn't see him again until this morning, but I know he knew where I was.

SAUL

How?

LUCAS

He'd send me letters. It didn't matter where I was, he'd somehow manage to find my address and I'd get a letter in the mail.

SAUL

That doesn't make any sense! I mean, why wouldn't he tell

anyone? Me?

LUCAS

I don't know. I figured he would have.

SAUL

If it had been me that left, he wouldn't have cared at all.

LUCAS

That's not true.

SAUL

It is! He wouldn't have followed me around the country writing me letters.

LUCAS

He loves us both-

The phone rings. LUCAS answers.

Hello? No, I'm his Son. Yes that's our property. At the gate? Have you called the police? Did you call an ambulance? She's pregnant. Oh my God!

He hangs up the phone.

SAUL

What was that?

LUCAS

Liv's been in an accident.

Both men scramble to go outside.

SAUL

I'll call Pauline and Ray. Get Dad. Don't just stand there! Go!

The lights go down on SAUL dialing, and LUCAS running upstairs. In the darkness we hear SAUL'S voice.

Pauline? It's Saul. You'd better get over here now.

END SCENE 4. END ACT I.

ACT II

Scene 1

Two months later. Morning. ARVIN is sitting in the dining room alone sipping coffee reading the paper. The house is not dirty, but there are items left lying around. There is a knock on the front door. ARVIN gets up and goes to the door. It is RAY. RAY is tall and thin with a handsome face. He appears sleep deprived.

ARVIN

Ray! My boy, come in. Come in.

RAY

Good morning, Mr. Hebert. I'm sorry to come by so early.

ARVIN

Not at all.

RAY

Pauline told me to tell you that she'd try to be back this afternoon.

ARVIN

I told her to take her time. We're just glad Olivia's okay.

RAY

Yes, sir. She's been acting a little funny, but it's probably just the pain medicine.

ARVIN

Gave us a little scare for a while.

RAY

Yes, sir. Just glad everything's okay. Almost everything.

ARVIN

Did they ever figure out how it happened?

RAY

Olivia just wasn't looking.

ARVIN

Scary, scary. Would you like some coffee? I'm afraid it isn't as good as Pauline's, but we've had to make do while she was helping Olivia. It's very stout.

RAY

Sure.

ARVIN
Fearless. That's a good quality!

RAY
Yes, sir.

ARVIN pours coffee.

ARVIN
Well, what brings you by? I'm sure you're not here to talk about coffee.

RAY
No, sir. That is stout. Actually I was hoping to talk to Luke.

ARVIN
I'm afraid he isn't here. He's gone to Jackson to see his grandmother. Should be back tomorrow.

RAY
Are you sure?

ARVIN
I see you and Saul think alike.

RAY
I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything by it.

ARVIN
It's fine. Truth is I've wondered the same thing secretly. But he's a big boy. He'll come back if he wants.

RAY
And if he doesn't?

ARVIN
Then I guess he doesn't.

RAY
You seem very confident in him.

ARVIN
Always have been. Even in the hard times.

RAY
I wish I had that type of confidence. Truth be told, most of the time I don't much know what in the world I'm doing.

ARVIN
Give yourself some more credit. Pauline says you're a great husband.

RAY
I try.

ARVIN

You're doing great things in the company too I hear.

RAY

I really like the work. I like the idea of building something that helps people.

ARVIN

Me too. I'm too old to do it though.

RAY

Hardly.

ARVIN

No, I think my days of building are over.

RAY

There's always management.

ARVIN laughs.

ARVIN

That's good.

RAY

I should be going. Thank you, Mr. Hebert, for the coffee. No offense, but next time I'll wait for Pauline's.

ARVIN

Honesty with the boss. Brave. Yet another quality I like. Should I tell Lucas that you stopped by?

RAY

No. I'll come back later.

ARVIN

Good. I'm sure he wants to see you.

RAY

Yeah.

ARVIN

Ray?

RAY

Yes, sir?

ARVIN

I really was sorry to hear about the baby.

RAY

Thank you sir.

*RAY exits out the front door. Beat.
ARVIN returns to the dining room,*

as SAUL comes down the stairs.

SAUL

Who was that?

ARVIN

Ray LaMond.

SAUL

Everything okay with Olivia?

ARVIN

He said so.

SAUL

Is there breakfast?

ARVIN

I wasn't hungry. There's some food in the fridge. I made coffee.

SAUL

No thanks. Your coffee's like battery acid.

ARVIN

Are you going into the office today?

SAUL

No.

ARVIN

But we've got the meeting with the Board tomorrow.

SAUL

I know.

ARVIN

Well there's a lot to do to get ready, and -

SAUL

It's done.

ARVIN

The information packets are done?

SAUL

Yes.

ARVIN

The financial information? Including last quarter's figures?

SAUL

It's done. It's all done, Dad! Why can't you just trust me?

ARVIN

I just want to make sure things are settled.

SAUL

I've watched you my whole life, Dad! I know what I'm doing.

ARVIN

I worked my whole life to build that company from nothing,
and I just don't want to see-

SAUL

See what? See me screw it up?

ARVIN

Yes. But -

SAUL

But what?

ARVIN

I don't want to fight with you, Son. I feel better than I've
felt in years, and I don't want to waste my energy.

SAUL

Why don't you trust me? What did I do?

ARVIN

Nothing.

SAUL

No, tell me! You'd let Luke take your check book for a road
trip to Grandma's, but I can't take care of a single meeting
without you breathing fire down my neck!

ARVIN

Leave him out of this.

SAUL

It's always been like that! What is it about him that makes
you love him so much more than me?

ARVIN

Is that what you think?

SAUL

Isn't it obvious?

ARVIN

Stop.

SAUL

Why shouldn't we talk about it? I want to talk about it!
We've been putting off this conversation for five years!

ARVIN

Saul.

SAUL
No, let's talk about it! Is it because he looks like Mom?

ARVIN
Enough! -

SAUL
'Cause he always got the best grades?

ARVIN
No!

SAUL
Then what? Why don't you trust me?

ARVIN
Saul, please.

SAUL
Say it. I know you already know. Say it.

ARVIN
No!

SAUL
Why not? Why don't you trust me?

ARVIN
It's because of the books! You're stealing from me!

SAUL
You said it.

ARVIN
You've been stealing from me for six years.

SAUL
Yeah.

ARVIN
You're not going to try to deny it?

SAUL
Why bother? I knew that you knew.

ARVIN
You think I don't double check them? Just a little bit here,
a little bit there.

SAUL
Honestly I didn't. Until right after Lucas got back. He told
me you'd known where he was the whole time. I started
thinking if you knew that, you might know other things too.

ARVIN

I knew.

SAUL

Why didn't you say anything?

ARVIN

Why would I say something? It's my money. You're my Son.
What's mine is yours.

SAUL

So you're okay with it?

ARVIN

(broken)

No. You lied to me. You lied to me about money. Why? There
isn't enough for you now? There isn't enough set aside for
your future? How much more do you need?

SAUL

I just wanted -

ARVIN

What?

SAUL

I wanted to know that it was there.

ARVIN

It's always been there. You didn't have to take it.

SAUL

No. Maybe for Luke. Not for me. I had to be sure that there
would be some left for me.

ARVIN

Whatever gave you the idea that there wouldn't be enough?

SAUL

I saw him slowly edging me out and I -

ARVIN

You what?

SAUL

I just had to make sure.

ARVIN

You should have come to me.

SAUL

I couldn't.

ARVIN

Why? Fear of what I'd say?

SAUL

I don't know. It's not like it is with you and Lucas -

ARVIN

Enough about your brother! This is not about him, it's about you! The choices that you've made. You could have come to me, but you didn't. You know why?

SAUL

Why?

ARVIN

Because you're soft. You're scared. Of your own father.

(beat.)

I'm giving your brother the company.

SAUL

What?

ARVIN

Saul, you disgraced me.

SAUL

Because of the money? Lucas took the money too.

ARVIN

Lucas asked me for the money! He came to me in private, he asked me for the portion that was coming to him anyway. I've had to cover for you with the Board. I'm humiliated.

SAUL

You're giving the company to him? After everything?

ARVIN

Yes. The Board is meeting about it, but it should be final next week.

SAUL

I won't work for him.

ARVIN

I don't expect you to.

SAUL

Are you telling me that I don't even have a job?

ARVIN
You can resign, or you can be fired.

SAUL
Does he know?

ARVIN
Not yet.

SAUL
You can't do this!

ARVIN
Saul, it's done. I've already had the papers drawn up. It's better this way. You need to move on. You're really a good boy. I know it. You love your Father. You stayed and took care of me.

SAUL
I stayed because I thought you needed me. But now, you have the one you wanted all along.

ARVIN
Son -

SAUL
Drop dead.

*SAUL exits upstairs. Lights down on
ARVIN alone in the hallway.*

END SCENE 1.

Scene 2

*Dusk. SAUL sits in the living room,
drinking. A knock on the front
door. SAUL gets up to answer it,
it is RAY.*

SAUL
Ray. Come in.

RAY
Sorry to bother you this late. I was hoping to talk to your brother.

SAUL
He's not back yet. Maybe he did us all a favor.

RAY
I guess I'll come back then.

SAUL
No, please sit down. You want a drink?

RAY

It's late. Folks don't take too kindly to my kind being at a white man's house this late.

SAUL

But you'd stay for Lucas?

RAY

I've got some business with him.

SAUL

What kind of business?

RAY

I'd rather not say.

SAUL

Does this have anything to do with your wife?

RAY

How'd you know?

SAUL

It's no secret, Ray.

RAY

Can I ask? Were they - ?

SAUL

Of course. Lovebirds from the start. Pauline's been with our family for a long time. She's like a mother to us. Olivia was a playmate when we were younger. People didn't think too much about color with kids. They'd sneak off during games. I found them kissing behind a tree when Lucas was twelve.

RAY

And it didn't stop when they were grown?

SAUL

Not from what I could see. It just got more serious.

RAY

How serious?

SAUL

Well, I can't know for sure.

RAY

But you have a good idea?

SAUL

Fairly good.

RAY

And what do you say?

SAUL

To put it bluntly, you weren't her first.

RAY

It ain't right. That just ain't right.

SAUL

I don't mean to upset you. And you can't take it personally.

RAY

It's personal to me!

SAUL

My brother can be quite a charmer. He's always had a knack for getting people to do what he wants them to do.

RAY

You saying she didn't want him?

SAUL

I'm saying she was deceived by a very good, manipulative liar.

RAY

I don't know what to do no more. She was fine, we were fine. Then after the accident, she -

SAUL

What?

RAY

She was out for a long time. The doctors put her on this medicine and she was so sleepy. But she would talk to him.

SAUL

In her sleep?

RAY

Imagine holding the woman you love while she's dreaming about another man, and there ain't nothing you can do about it but keep on holding. It's eating me up. I don't know what to do.

SAUL

You don't have to just take this.

RAY

What?

SAUL

You have to put him in his place.

RAY

How you mean?

SAUL

She's your wife, not his. Let him know. Use force if necessary.

RAY

I don't know. I ain't looking to get lynched.

SAUL

You wouldn't have to worry about that. I'd protect you.

RAY

I don't know.

SAUL

You know the night of the accident she was here alone with him just before she left?

RAY

She told me y'all had dinner?

SAUL

Yes, but that was much earlier. Right before she left, it was just the two of them. Who knows what could have happened?

RAY

But -

SAUL

You said it yourself. What he's done, just isn't right. In his mind, she belongs to him. But that's not how it really is, is it?

RAY

No, sir.

SAUL

Then you have to show him.

RAY

How do I do that without getting myself strung up somewhere?

SAUL

There are ways. Listen, tomorrow meet me in the break room. We can talk there.

RAY

You're going to help me?

SAUL
Yes.
RAY
But he's your brother.
SAUL
He's no brother to me. Not anymore. Go on and get out of here. We'll talk tomorrow. 8 AM. It's best you don't talk to Lucas, understand?
RAY
Okay.
SAUL walks RAY to the door. PAULINE enters.
PAULINE
Hello? Mr. Hebert? Mr. Saul? I'm back! Just thought I'd check on you. Ray, baby what're you doing here?
RAY
Me and Mr. Saul was just talking business.
SAUL
I'll see you tomorrow. 8AM.
RAY
Yes, sir.
PAULINE
Livy okay?
RAY
She will be.
PAULINE
Well don't leave my baby girl alone for too long! It's getting late. You run on home.
RAY
Yes, ma'am.
SAUL
8AM.
RAY exits.
PAULINE
Where's everybody at?

SAUL

No idea. You cooking?

PAULINE

Of course. Should I cook big?

SAUL

Just cook as much as you want. We'll eat it sometime. I'm going to go upstairs and freshen up if you don't mind.

PAULINE

Yes, sir.

She goes into the kitchen. LUCAS enters from outside.

LUCAS

Hey, Dad! I'm back. Dad? Anybody home?

PAULINE

I don't think he's at home. How was Jackson, sugar?

LUCAS

Great. It was really good to see Grandma. She sends her love.

PAULINE

I haven't seen her in ages.

LUCAS

How's Olivia?

PAULINE

Just fine.

LUCAS

Good.

PAULINE

She's been asking about you.

LUCAS

Oh. She thinks I took off again?

PAULINE

No.

LUCAS

Well, if I find some time, I'll try to stop by and see her. I don't want to crowd her though.

PAULINE

She's married you know.

What? LUCAS

PAULINE
My daughter's married to a good man. He may not be her dream man, but he's got a good heart, and he loves her.

LUCAS
I know that.

PAULINE
I don't want her to get hurt.

LUCAS
Neither do I.

PAULINE
Good. Glad we're on the same page. I just felt like I should say that. It's probably nothing.

*LUCAS starts to head upstairs.
PAULINE begins to straighten things up. ARVIN enters. He looks disheveled.*

LUCAS
Oh my God, Dad?

PAULINE
Mr. Hebert? You okay?

ARVIN
Just went for a walk.

LUCAS
Dad, it's almost dark out.

ARVIN
Just wanted to walk.

PAULINE
Are you hungry?

ARVIN
No.

LUCAS
Are you sure you're okay?

ARVIN
I'm fine.

LUCAS
Dad -

ARVIN
Make me a scotch.

LUCAS
Do you think that's a good idea?

ARVIN
I said, make me a scotch!

PAULINE
Make it. I'll get some food.

ARVIN
I said I'm not hungry.

LUCAS begins to make the drink.

PAULINE
You don't have to eat it. I'll just put it out in case you want it.

ARVIN
Don't bother.

PAULINE
It's no bother.

ARVIN goes to sit down. LUCAS brings him the scotch. As ARVIN drinks, he begins to cry.

ARVIN
I've failed, Pauline. I've failed them.

She runs to him, and holds him. He begins to cough, it is worse than before.

PAULINE
Mr. Hebert? Sweet Jesus. Mr. Lucas, you get on the phone right now with Dr. Guidroz. We got to get him to a hospital, quick. Mr. Lucas!

Lights down.

END SCENE 2.

Scene 3

The Next Evening. A knock on the door. It is loud and constant.

LUCAS enters from upstairs. It is OLIVIA. Her appearance is rougher than before. She is thin and pallid.

LUCAS
Liv? What are you doing here? It's getting late.

OLIVIA
I heard about your father.

LUCAS
Yeah. The doctors don't know how much longer.

OLIVIA
I'm sorry.

LUCAS
It's not your fault.

OLIVIA
Can I have a drink?

LUCAS
You sure?

OLIVIA
It don't make no difference now.

LUCAS
I guess not. Scotch or bourbon?

OLIVIA
Just pour.

LUCAS begins to pour both of them a drink. His hands are shaky.

LUCAS
Here. It's awfully late. Ray know you're gone?

OLIVIA
No.

She downs the drink.
Give me another.

LUCAS
Slow down.

OLIVIA
I don't want to. I want to be drunk.

LUCAS
You sure that's a good idea?

OLIVIA

I don't care.

*LUCAS pours her another. She downs
that one too.*

Another.

LUCAS

Okay, why don't we just talk for a minute?

OLIVIA

I don't want to talk. I want to stop feeling like this.

She cries.

Can you do that? Can you make me feel like you used to?

LUCAS

Liv-

OLIVIA

I just want this hole to go away.

*She tries to kiss him. He pushes
her off.*

LUCAS

I don't want you like this.

OLIVIA

But you do want me?

LUCAS

I've thought about it, sure.

OLIVIA

How do you want me?

(beat)

Remember our first time? You took me by that Old Miller's
Crick. Said we had to go somewhere secret, so no one would
see a colored girl and a white boy together. You spread a
blanket on the ground and laid out a picnic. We didn't do
much eating. You kissed me here. And here. I was scared,
but you made me feel like it was going to be alright. You
stood up and took off your shirt, I touched your chest. My
hands were shaking. I unbuttoned my dress, I knew what was
about to happen. I wanted it.

LUCAS

Stop.

OLIVIA
You told me you loved me. You told me you'd do anything so
we could be together.

LUCAS
I said stop.

OLIVIA
You made me feel safe.

LUCAS
Stop it!

OLIVIA
You lied to me! You took them both from me!

LUCAS
Just go on home.

OLIVIA
No, I won't.

LUCAS
I said go home!

OLIVIA
No! I've had to live with it for five years, and I won't
hold it in anymore!

LUCAS
Shut up!

OLIVIA
They ripped him from my body with a hook. I never felt such
pain.

LUCAS
I said shut up!

OLIVIA
It was a boy, they could tell. You had a son. Look at me.
You took me to that horrible place and let them take him from
me! You let them take him from me. You made me do it.
Could you hear me screaming?

LUCAS
If you don't shut up -

OLIVIA
Could you hear? Tell me! Look at me and say it!

LUCAS
Yes! I could hear you. Is that what you want? You think
you're the only one who lost something that day?

OLIVIA

Yes.

LUCAS

It tore me up too. I had to leave; I just couldn't look at you anymore.

OLIVIA

You lied to me. You told me you loved me.

LUCAS

I did. I never lied to you.

OLIVIA

You did!

LUCAS

No.

OLIVIA

It's all been lies, hasn't it? From the start?

LUCAS

Of course not.

OLIVIA

You're a liar!

LUCAS

I loved you!

OLIVIA

Love doesn't make a person do that.

LUCAS

It's not that simple.

OLIVIA

Then why? Why?

LUCAS

Because my kid couldn't be a nigger! I hate that you had to do that, but you *had* to do it.

OLIVIA

Get away from me.

LUCAS

Liv -

OLIVIA

Don't! You took one baby from me, and now I lost another one

because of you.

(beat)

My whole life I wanted to be a Mother. I saw my Mama, and how good she was and I wanted to be just like her. And now I won't ever be a Mother. It's all your fault.

LUCAS

That was an accident. That wasn't my fault.

OLIVIA

I was trying to get out of here as fast as I could because of you.

LUCAS

You - you could still have another one. You and Ray.

OLIVIA

Doctor said I'd never have another baby. Said my womb's too messed up now. Said I was lucky to even be pregnant the second time.

LUCAS

I'm -

OLIVIA

Don't you tell me you're sorry. I don't believe anything you say. You ain't nothing but a low down liar.

LUCAS

Liv -

OLIVIA

You listen close to me, Lucas Hebert. I swear if it's the last thing I do, I will make you pay. You're going to pay for what you've done.

*OLIVIA exits. LUCAS stands alone.
The phone rings in the hallway.
LUCAS makes no attempt to answer
it. It rings three times. SAUL
enters looking angry.*

SAUL

Don't move, I've got it.

He picks up the receiver.

Hello? This is his Son. What time? Thank you. We'll be right up.

*SAUL hangs up the receiver and goes
into the living room.*

Let's go. That was the hospital. Dad's dead.

LUCAS looks at SAUL, and then looks front. Lights up on the dining room, where PAULINE has been for some time. Lights down.

END SCENE 3.

Scene 4

Two days later, Evening. SAUL and LUCAS enter from outside. They have just come from the funeral. LUCAS pours a drink.

SAUL
Little early, don't you think?

LUCAS
Do you want one?

SAUL
No.

LUCAS
It was a nice service.

SAUL
Sure.

LUCAS
Is Pauline here? I'm hungry.

SAUL
You know you could always make your own food.

LUCAS
I know that.

SAUL
She's grieving too.

LUCAS
I know.

SAUL
You don't act like it.

LUCAS
I'm going to go make a sandwich.

SAUL
You do that.

LUCAS
What do you want from me?

SAUL
I don't want anything from you.

LUCAS
Then why are you punishing me?

SAUL
I'm punishing you?

LUCAS
Yes.

*LUCAS turns to go to the kitchen.
SAUL takes a deep breath.*

SAUL
I'm sorry. It's hard to have you gone for so long, then suddenly back with no explanation. I'm sorry that you feel like that.

LUCAS
I know.

SAUL
But I am trying.

LUCAS
Okay.

SAUL
You mind making me a sandwich, while you're in there?

LUCAS
No.

SAUL
Just, whatever you're having.

LUCAS
Okay.

LUCAS goes into the kitchen. SAUL waits for a moment, walks to the mantle and looks at the picture. He takes the shotgun off the wall, opens it, and places a round inside. He cocks it quietly and places it back in its place. He walks to the liquor cabinet, takes out a bottle of Maker's Mark and pours a drink. He walks back to the mantle and looks at the picture. LUCAS returns with two sandwiches.

LUCAS

Here you go. Turkey okay?

SAUL

Great. Thanks. I decided to have a drink.

LUCAS

You know, I don't remember taking that picture? It feels like I do because I've seen it so many times, but I don't actually remember that happening.

SAUL

You were young. It was right after Mom died. You look like her.

LUCAS

So I've been told. I barely remember her either.

SAUL

She was a great woman. She told the best stories.

LUCAS

Really?

SAUL

You loved them.

(beat)

Can I ask you something?

LUCAS

Sure, I guess.

SAUL

What happened to the money?

LUCAS

The money?

SAUL

That Dad gave you five years ago?

LUCAS

Is that why you were being so nice to me all of a sudden?

SAUL

Just tell me the truth.

LUCAS

I don't want to talk about it.

SAUL

Well, I know it's gone. The question is where is it?

LUCAS

I don't know, maybe you took it.

SAUL

I took that money because I didn't trust Dad to save any for me. I knew if you wanted, he'd bail you out and it'd all be gone. I took it for protection. See, I always figured that you gambled it away. Did you?

LUCAS

None of your business.

SAUL

I think at this point, it's pretty much my business.

LUCAS

How so?

SAUL

Because of the company.

LUCAS

What about it?

SAUL

He left it to you.

LUCAS

What?

SAUL

You didn't know?

LUCAS

Not officially.

SAUL

It's all yours. Everything. So you got your share five years ago, blew it, and now you're getting everything anyway. And I don't get a thing. Not a dime, except for what I've already put away.

LUCAS

I didn't ask him to do that.

SAUL

It doesn't matter. When you blew that money, you were losing my inheritance too! You don't get to have both! So I think I have a right to know where it is. Is it all gone?

LUCAS

Yes. All of it. I partied it away. After everything that happened with Liv, I snapped. I just couldn't handle it.

SAUL

Handle what?

LUCAS

I got her pregnant. I made her get rid of it.

SAUL

Did Dad know?

LUCAS

Yes. It was his idea. I came to him in a panic. I didn't know what to do. He told me that he knew a guy up near Memphis that would perform a procedure. Painless and quick. I told her that it was best. She didn't want to do it. She wanted to have the baby. I couldn't let her do that. I told her that if she just did this for me that we'd run away together somewhere we could be together in public, maybe up North. I could tell she didn't want to go, but she did it anyway. When we got to Memphis, it was nothing but a shack at the back of a bar. I could hear her screaming. The ride back was awful. She was bleeding everywhere. When I told Dad about it, he said that it would be best if I took off for a while. He agreed to go ahead and give me my share of the money so I took it and ran. I drank it all away. Three months ago, I was practically homeless, working as a cowhand on this farm. I got a letter from Dad saying he was dying and he wanted me to come home. I ignored it for a while, but after a few weeks, I just couldn't stand being away so I came home. I was so ashamed of myself. And I just wanted to be a part of a family again.

SAUL begins clapping.

SAUL

Bravo. A brilliant performance, little brother.

LUCAS

You don't believe me?

SAUL

You're a liar. Where's the money?

LUCAS

It's gone.

SAUL

I want the truth! Where is it?

SAUL moves to the mantle.

LUCAS

I told you.

Liar!

SAUL

SAUL rages back and tackles LUCAS, positioning his body so that he is restraining all movement. He is choking the life out of him.

You're choking me.

LUCAS

The truth!

SAUL

Saul!

LUCAS

Tell me!

SAUL

It's gone.

LUCAS

Stop lying!

SAUL

Saul!

LUCAS

Tell me!

SAUL

It's in a bank in San Francisco.

LUCAS

SAUL gets off of LUCAS, who stays on the floor coughing.

You're crazy.

SAUL

Why have you been lying?

LUCAS

You could have killed me.

SAUL

Answer the question, Luke. Has anything been true?

LUCAS

I got Liv pregnant. Dad helped me take care of it.

SAUL

Why tell me that?

LUCAS
It's the story I've used.

SAUL
And it's true?

LUCAS
Yes.

SAUL
How could you do that to her?

LUCAS
It wasn't easy, but it had to be done.

SAUL
But the money -

LUCAS
Is that all you care about?

SAUL
It's all I have.

LUCAS
Well don't worry. It's still there. I mean I used some of it. But I'm not stupid.

SAUL
So, this whole time?

LUCAS
I did get a letter saying Dad was dying. I knew if I came back, then I'd have an opportunity to squeeze you out and get the whole company. Funny thing is that I never actually had to. You did it for me. Ironical, huh? You steal to secure your position, but you actually end up securing mine. Amazing.

SAUL
So the whole "poor, Lucas" thing was an act?

LUCAS
I lost a few pounds, bought some cheap clothes, put a little dirt on my face and there you have it. Had to look the part. But it worked. It's all mine, now. Now if you'll excuse me, I have some packing to do.

SAUL
You're leaving?

LUCAS
You going to miss me?

SAUL
Where are you going?

LUCAS
Calm down, big brother. I'm coming back. I just have to get back to San Francisco for a few days, secure some things there before I come back and start running Dad's company. Oh, that reminds me, about your resignation.

SAUL
How could you do this?

LUCAS
It's just business. Have your resignation on Dad's, I mean my desk by tomorrow.

LUCAS exits. SAUL stands paralyzed. A knock at the door. SAUL stands frozen for a minute, then goes to the door and answers it. It is RAY.

RAY
Mr. Saul, I came by-

SAUL
It's all ready. He's upstairs. It has to be now.

RAY
That's why I came by. I don't think I can.

SAUL
What? We had a deal.

RAY
I know but Olivia -

SAUL
Did you tell her?

RAY
No, sir.

SAUL
If you only knew what he did to her.

RAY

That's just it. I *do* know. She told me. She's broke up something awful. I can't risk doing something that's going to get myself hurt. Who's going to take care of her then?

SAUL

I'm going to protect you! I promise. Nothing will happen, but it has to be now. He's leaving.

RAY

Good, let him leave.

SAUL

No! If he leaves I get nothing. You'll lose your job, Ray. He'll own it all, and he'll fire you first thing. How are you going to take care of Olivia then?

RAY

I'll find another job. I can't do this.

SAUL

Please, I'm begging you.

RAY

No, sir.

RAY turns to exit as PAULINE enters. SAUL tenses.

PAULINE

Ray? What are you doing here?

RAY

I was just leaving.

PAULINE

You hurry home to Olivia. She'll be needing you now.
She glares at him. He understands.

RAY

Yes, ma'am. Good afternoon.

RAY exits.

PAULINE

Hello, Mr. Saul. It was a nice service. The flowers sure were nice.

SAUL

What?

PAULINE

The funeral. It was nice.

Oh. Yeah.

SAUL

You alright?

PAULINE

Fine.

SAUL

You hungry?

PAULINE

No.

SAUL

PAULINE

Well, I'm going to cook a big dinner for you. Spaghetti for Mr. Lucas, and gumbo for you. You eat all the gumbo you like. I know you don't like pasta. Don't taste it. It ain't for you. It's for Mr. Lucas. Now you make sure he eats it. I don't want y'all wasting away.

SAUL

Sure.

LUCAS comes downstairs, suitcase in hand.

PAULINE

You going somewhere?

LUCAS

Back to California.

SAUL

You can't do this!

LUCAS

It's done.

PAULINE

You leaving now?

LUCAS

I'm afraid so, Pauline. But I'll be back.

PAULINE

But I was just about to fix a big dinner. Your favorite.

LUCAS

I can't.

*LUCAS exits out the front door.
PAULINE starts after him and exits.
SAUL runs to the mantle and grabs*

the shotgun. He runs outside, slamming the door behind him. Beat. A struggle is heard. SAUL screams.

SAUL (O.S.)

Pauline!

A shot is heard. Beat. PAULINE enters holding the shotgun. She seems calm. SAUL enters behind her, shocked. Both have blood on them. PAULINE collects her things and walks to the phone. She picks up the receiver and dials.

PAULINE

Hello, police? I'd like to report a murder.

SAUL

What are you doing?

PAULINE

Yes, sir. I'm at the Hebert place off route 61. Shotgun. I did it. I killed him. I'll be waiting. Now, I'm turning myself in, so y'all go easy on me. No need for force.

She calmly places the phone on the receiver and walks into the living room, sitting on the couch.

SAUL

What are you doing?

PAULINE

I wish he'd have stayed to eat.

SAUL

What?

PAULINE

I ain't fired a gun since I was a girl. I wish he would have eat up that poison instead.

SAUL

You mean you wanted this to happen?

PAULINE

He hurt my baby.

SAUL

Why'd you call the police?

PAULINE

I've done murder. No need in trying to hide from it. But you best get on out of here. They'll be here quick.

SAUL

Pauline.

PAULINE

Paper says somebody shot that young Kennedy boy last night. They just killing everybody.

SAUL

Pauline.

PAULINE

Go, now. I'll be fine. You get on out of here.

SAUL pauses for a moment, and then runs out the front door. Beat. Sirens are heard in the distance. PAULINE sits. Lights down.

END PLAY.

Vita:

The playwright was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Musical Theatre Performance from Ouachita Baptist University in 2004. He joined the University of New Orleans Low Residency Program in 2008, studying under Jim Winters, Henry Griffin, and Steve Bogart.