

ALABAMA STORY

ACT ONE

Prologue

Garth Williams appears on a blank stage, carrying a picture book. The others enter variously or are present at the top. They should be aware of each other as fellow storytellers, with future relationships hinted at. Garth should be a watchful presence throughout the play, when practical.

GARTH. This is the story of two rabbits. Two rabbits who hopped out of a children's picture book and into the hot, bright light of the real world. A world so unbelievable that you could only call it... The Deep South. Well, let's call it The Deep South of the Imagination. It was a land where the soil was rich and black, and the air was always...thick.

LILY. This is the story of a girl in a big house in a small town in that land.

GARTH. Her people were in cotton.

JOSHUA. And this is the story of a boy in the shadow of that big house in that small town in that land.

GARTH. *(Drily.)* His people were in cotton.

HIGGINS. This is the story of a leader in a shining city—let's call it Munkgumry—which was in the middle of that land. Where Cotton was King—

JOSHUA. —once upon a time.

EMILY. *(In a correcting tone. Matter-of-fact.)* This is a story about books!

GARTH. (*Holding his picture book aloft.*) A picture book! My picture book—about rabbits!—with words and illustrations by me.

EMILY. (*Correcting.*) Many books.

GARTH. (*Referring to Emily.*) The story of a librarian who came to that shining city.

THOMAS. (*Genial.*) And another librarian, native to that city.

HIGGINS. A kingdom.

THOMAS. Where royalty was scarce.

JOSHUA. And God went missing.

LILY. Where God watched over things.

EMILY. Where books were beloved. And reviled.

GARTH. And there are rabbits!

HIGGINS. (*Sourly.*) Yes, rabbits.

LILY. This is a story of children.

JOSHUA. A story of parents.

EMILY. (*Correcting again.*) No, no— *books* . This is about books.

GARTH. Many books, but one book in particular. And, to properly peruse it, we have *us* ! And, there are *other* people in this land. I will play that population. I wrote the picture book, after all. I know something about creating characters.

THOMAS. And this is certainly a story about character.

GARTH. (*With finality.*) So, then, picture this: The story of a story.

THOMAS. A story within a story.

LILY. A children's story.

JOSHUA. A love story.

HIGGINS. A local story.

THOMAS. A Southern story.

EMILY. An Alabama story.

GARTH. And somewhere—between the lines—a true story.

They address Emily, perhaps each handing her costume pieces or props for the next scene.

JOSHUA. Tell me a story.

LILY. Tell me a story.

HIGGINS. Tell me a story.

THOMAS. Tell me a story.

GARTH. Tell me a story.

She enters the next scene.