

Scene 2: March 1959

A bench on a sidewalk on the edge of a city park, a few miles from downtown Montgomery, Alabama. Lily Whitfield sits reading a book through sunglasses. A light coat is casually thrown over the back of the bench. We might see a high fence and a park gate, closed and bound with chains. Joshua Moore, dressed as if for work or church, with Bible in hand, is walking along the sidewalk near her bench. He does a double take. She is lost in her book. During their exchange, he stands and she remains seated. He never sits; they never touch.

JOSHUA. Excuse me.

She's all cold caution and business.

LILY. Yes?

JOSHUA. I think I know you.

LILY. I don't think so.

She goes back to her book.

JOSHUA. Didn't we—?

LILY. I'd like to be left alone, please. There's an entire park here—

Back to her book.

JOSHUA. Not really. It looks like this park is closed. That gate's locked up with chains.

LILY. Well, an entire sidewalk then.

JOSHUA. Are your people from Demopolis? Lily? Lily Whitfield? It's Joshua. Joshua Moore. You used to call me "Rabbit." I was Br'er Rabbit, you were Br'er Fox.

Lighting up, relieved, with a thread of anxiety inside her. Lily hides it with chatter and charm.

LILY. "Rabbit"! Oh, my. We did love our Uncle Remus stories!

JOSHUA. And your mama read them with such flair!

LILY. Is it you? Joshua Moore! *Rabbit Moore!* Really?

He beams.

I see it is. I see a familiar dimple in your cheek. Now, what is it people say when they reunite? "Why, I bet it's been..."

JOSHUA. Twenty years. Mama and I left your place in summer 1939. So it's just about twenty years now. I recognized you the minute I saw you—even under those glasses.

LILY. I'm hardly a girl of eleven or twelve anymore.

She looks him over.

You grew, you grew like a tree. It's your mama's fault. So much fine Alabama cooking. Our family treasured her! Those meals! I remember everything down to the last black-eyed pea.

JOSHUA. And on your birthday, I remember a cake with fruit filling and white frosting—

LILY. It's called Lane Cake.

JOSHUA. Lane Cake! That's the name!

LILY. For special occasions. In between the layers is a paste of raisins and nuts and sugar—with just a hint of hooch. Mama made sure you got a slice.

JOSHUA. A tray loaded up with leftovers from The Big House.

LILY. We were blessed.

JOSHUA. Mama used to say, "Got no Depression workin' at the Whitfield house."

LILY. On account of Daddy's business! Demopolis Cotton was always "Growin' Strong." At least that's what they used to paint on the side of our barns and sheds. I remember everything, like Mama readin' us those stories out back.

JOSHUA. And my mama telling me, (*Heavy accent*) "Joshua, you be careful you don't trample Miss Rose's herbaceous borders! Watch them herbaceous borders!"

LILY. All those little pathways around the yard, with mint and rosemary—

JOSHUA. How's your mama doing these days?

LILY. (*Ruefully.*) —All those aromatic herb plants are gone, all gone. Mama passed on about ten years back. Her heart just—went out.

JOSHUA. I'm sorry to hear that. She was a good lady. I remember her telling me that I should call you "Lily" and not "Miss Lily." She said that "best friends don't use courtesy titles." That stuck with me. Mama once said if it wasn't for Rose Whitfield, we would be Lost People. A job and a place to live during hard times!

LILY. Bless her heart.

Garth Williams, as a white passerby, appears. A heavy Southern accent.

PASSERBY. Miss? You, miss! You OK, there? This boy botherin' you?

Joshua steps away from the bench.

LILY. (*Cheerfully.*) No, sir. We're fine. Thank you kindly!

The man exits. Lily and Joshua refocus.

Your mama, she's well?

JOSHUA. Mama's been gone more than ten years now. After we left your place, we settled here in Montgomery: boarding houses... odd jobs...bad schools...she got sick...I got drafted. What about your daddy? He still running Demopolis Cotton?

LILY. No, no—Daddy's retired. He's right here at the Jackson Hospital.

She nods to the building, which is across the street.

He's got trouble in his chest, his lungs. They wanted him to go to a