

HIGGINS. Nice and smart and attractive lady like you, never married?

EMILY. No, Senator. Is that a concern?

*Bobby Crone discreetly signals his colleague away from this line of inquiry.*

HIGGINS. No—concern. We'll move on. I would like to see you happy, Miss Reed. It's natural and normal to be married.

*Thunder. Begin concurrent Scene 5C, in a bandshell within the park. Lily and Joshua find shelter in the downpour. They should ideally invade the playing area of the budget meeting, so the entire company shares the stage.*

LILY. Your Bible didn't get wet, did it?

JOSHUA. It's fine.

EMILY. Do you have other questions, Senator?

JOSHUA. It's not letting up.

LILY. It's like Noah, all right.

HIGGINS. Are you familiar with the *Montgomery Home News*, Miss Reed?

JOSHUA. You seemed to know this bandshell was here.

LILY. When I got bored with my book, I would peek through the park gates and see this old bandshell beyond the brush. I thought, "There's a place just begging to have the sound of a human voice in it again."

*She shouts.*

HELLOOOO!

*She hears an echo. She shouts.*

I HEAR THE ECHOES OF YOUR OLD MUSIC!!!!

*Her words echo.*

Why's this old park locked up?

JOSHUA. They were talking about this park over at the house where I'm staying. A federal judge made a ruling that white folks and black folks ought to be allowed to picnic here together. But The City of Montgomery didn't like that idea. So they shut it down. For everybody. No more Oak Park.

LILY. Oak Park! That's what they called it! I remember that. (*More to his point.*) I think that's terrible, them closing it. I think Negroes should be allowed to picnic just like white folks.

JOSHUA. Well—we do picnic. We just do it in our own private parks, just like white folks.

LILY. The paper used to be full of these stories. Why can't people just be happy living the way they live? Daddy stopped taking the state papers 'round about when Miss Rosa Parks made the news. Made his blood boil.

JOSHUA. You don't read the newspaper? You used to be so curious, Lily. About the world. Aren't you curious about what's happening beyond Marengo County?

*He hands his folded newspaper to her, or perhaps she takes it from him. It is now hers.*

LILY. I suppose you're right.

JOSHUA. This park—these trees—it reminds me of the woods around The Big House. Don't you think?

LILY. Yes, I feel that, too. (*Carelessly.*) I'll never, never, never understand why you and your mama left us, Joshua.

*She begins fishing in her purse.*

JOSHUA. You've said that before. Do you really not remember that night?

LILY. What night?

JOSHUA. That night Mama and I left The Big House.

LILY. I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. Now, here it is!

*She finds something in her purse. A flash of lightning.*

You want a stick of Doublemint?

*There is a terrifying crash of thunder. It's 1939 and they are eleven years old. Their Alabama accents are more pronounced.*

I said, do you want a stick of Doublemint?

JOSHUA. Doublemint? I thought you said you wanted me to come here for somethin' important. You said it was important, and not to tell Mama.

LILY. It *is* important! Take a stick of gum.

*He does, and she does, and they begin to chew.*

Sit down.

*He crouches to the ground.*

Not there, next to me. There's room next to me.

JOSHUA. If Mama wakes up and finds me gone, she'll beat me.

LILY. If your mama wakes up and finds you gone, you say you went to the outhouse, that's all.

JOSHUA. Why're we here? The ground is cool and wet. My feet are wet.

LILY. It's called "doo."

JOSHUA. I know what it's called. Why'dja wanna meet?

LILY. I wanted to see you.

JOSHUA. How'd you get out?

LILY. I sneaked out. Mama's asleep, Daddy's workin' late.

JOSHUA. At Demopolis Cotton? Why's he workin' so late?

LILY. Shush. Mama said he was at a meetin'. Takin' care of business.

*She strikes a thick kitchen match.*

JOSHUA. What're you doin'? You crazy?

LILY. I wanted to see your face, but I couldn't find a candle.

JOSHUA. So you're playin' with matches? Someone'll see the light out here.

LILY. No one'll see. We're behind the trees. Hello, Rabbit.

JOSHUA. (*Uneasily.*) Hello.

*He blows out the match.*

LILY. Don'tcha think my hair looks pretty? Girls at school pull my hair and call me "poor little rich girl." They say cotton's dead, but they're jealous. I don't need them. OK, gimme your gum.

JOSHUA. What?

LILY. Your gum, spit it out.

*She holds out her hand. They each spit their gum into her hand. She discards the gum.*

I like being here with you at night. I want to share something secret with you.

JOSHUA. What is it?

LILY. Close your eyes.

JOSHUA. Why?

LILY. Just do it.

*He does. She leans over and kisses him on the cheek.*

JOSHUA. (*Flinching, eyes open.*) What're you doin'?

LILY. That was a kiss.

JOSHUA. I know. Why'd you do it?

LILY. I wanted to. For a long time I wanted to. Don't you want to? Now that we're older...

JOSHUA. We're only twelve—next month.

LILY. Don't you want to?

*She leans in to kiss him on the mouth. He kisses her back. Sweet. Innocent. Suddenly, noise, light, commotion. Her father, perhaps voiced by Garth, calls out her name.*

JOSHUA. (*Alarmed. Pulling away.*) Someone's coming!

LILY. It's Daddy!

*They freeze. Begin Scene 5D, at Capitol hearing.*

HIGGINS. Are you familiar with the *Montgomery Home News*?

EMILY. I know of it, I am not *familiar* with it.

*Lily and Joshua snap into the present, as adults.*

LILY. I don't remember that. I would have remembered that.

HIGGINS. (*Genial.*) But you know that it's a publication here in Montgomery. You do know that.

EMILY. Indeed.

HIGGINS. A clipping from that publication was sent to me. The clipping is about a book, called *The Rabbits' Wedding*. Do you know the book?

EMILY. The book has come to my attention recently, yes.

HIGGINS. But you didn't know the book before "recently"?