

MISSISSIPPI

A NEW MUSICAL

AUTHOR, COMPOSER AND LYRICIST

GREGORY JAMES TORNQUIST

© 2021 All Rights Reserved

Mississippi

8 Characters

Augusta Jackson known as **Gussy**. 60 years old African American woman who cooks at *Home Cookin'*.

Moses Jackson 25 years old African American moonshiner and juke joint owner. Gussy's son.

Kitten Frank 19 years old white girl. Runs the cash register at *Home Cookin'*. Mr. Frank's abused, bi-sexual daughter.

Justine Brown 17 years old African American live-in maid for Deacon.

Tobias Jackson known as **Toby** 26 years old white man. Works for his daddy, Deacon. KKK member.

Deacon Jackson 60 years old white man. Richest man in the county. Owns the freight train, the "Blue Caboose", and *Home Cookin'*. Ku Klux Klan leader.

Reverend Davis 50 years old African American preacher and Civil Rights advocate.

Mr. Frank 50 years old white man. Kitten's father. KKK member.

MISSISSIPPI

ACT 1

Lights up as CAST clap along with diddley bow riff and then sing:

Miss-iss-i-pp-i Miss-iss-i-pp-i Miss-iss-i-pp-i Miss-iss-i-pp-i

Kitten sings:

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi way down South

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi listen now

Kitten and Toby sing:

There ain't no finer place than Dixie

Magnolia blossoms in the air

Gentleman callers wooing hot Southern belles

And cotton blooming everywhere

Mississippi Mississippi

Cast sing:

Miss-iss-i-pp-i Miss-iss-i-pp-i

Gussy sings:

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi way down South

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi listen now

Gussy and Justine sing:

There ain't no meaner place than Dixie

Old Miss but a police state

Mister Mississippi writing all the wrong laws

To segregate the human race

Entire Cast sing:

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi

At end of song CAST say in unison:

Hope River Mississippi Nine-teen-fifty-nine!!

Scene 1

Lights come up on the interior of Club Moses, Hope River's only juke joint. Reputed to be the best in Mississippi.

Moses Juke

Moses make the strongest whiskey Dandelion wine
Copper kettle always brewin' Great moonshine
Don't forget the finest womens I love them all to death
Lonely ones don't feel so lonely Give a dead man breath
What are you gonna do about it? When you get those blues
What are you gonna do about it? When you get those juke joint blues
If you're thirsty If you're lonely Tell you where to go
'Cause we supply the drinks and ladies if you got the dough
What are you gonna do about it? When you get those blues
What are you gonna do about it? When you get those juke joint blues
Open ev'ry weekday evenin' Saturday 'til dawn
Sunday better go to church and pray for what you done
Come inside Everybody jukin' Come inside everybody jukin'
Come inside Everybody jukin' Come inside everybody jukin'

Scene 2

Lights up on the sidewalk of Hope River, MS.

Reverend Davis and Gussy walking in the sultry night air.

GUSSY: What a revival, Reverend. You were on fire!

REVEREND DAVIS: All for the glory of God.

GUSSY: Love how our church be. Always challengin' but comfortin' at the same time. You know? Your preachin' give my soul ease. Yes Lord.

REVEREND DAVIS: Just the Spirit took over and that's what come out. Don't rightly recall most what I said.

GUSSY: Well, was wonderful. You told us say: "Beloved, when you hear 'you only live once' whoever sayin' such, just repeating a lie."

REVEREND DAVIS: The devil's lie.

GUSSY: Tell us "We only *die* once what true. We live, die and then live forever. In Glory. Die once."

REVEREND DAVIS: Live twice. Amen. Remember that part. But not what come...

(He's interrupted by a woman screaming "Help! Stop it! Help me!")

GUSSY: Who that yellin'? Sound like Kitten. Lawdamercy!

(They hurry around the corner and find Kitten and her father, Mr. Frank, who has her arm gripped tight and is dragging her along.)

REVEREND DAVIS: Excuse me. Ever'thing alright here?

MR. FRANK: None of your concern, boy.

KITTEN: I'm not alright!

MR. FRANK: Shut up girl!

(Kitten manages to get loose and stands back a few feet from Mr. Frank) Brought you in this world and I can take you out.

KITTEN: What's wrong with you?

MR. FRANK: Shut up! *(turns to Reverend Davis)* It's you idn't it?

REVEREND DAVIS: Sir?

MR. FRANK: Stirrin' up ever'one. I know it is. It's you. Idn't it?

REVEREND DAVIS: I'm a preacher of the word and a...

MR. FRANK: Shut up, boy! Be preachin' in a heap of ashes 'fore long. Now go your way! 'Fore I call the law. Both you. Now! Skedaddle!

KITTEN: Better go. I'll see you tomorrow Gussy.

MR.FRANK: Yea. That's right. Scram! Mark my words! Don't you ever come between no white man and his bidness. Ashes I tell you!

(Gussy and Reverend Davis *walk out of earshot*)

GUSSY: Oh Reverend! You don't think they burn down the church. Do you?

Lights down on scene as Gussy and Reverend Davis walk away.
Mr. Frank grabs Kitten's arm and yanks her toward him.

Scene 3

The next morning. Lights up on *Home Cookin'* a small café in town. Gussy is talking with Justine when Moses enters.

JUSTINE: Hey Moses.

MOSES: Hey Mama. Sweet Justine. Y'all tellin' secrets?

JUSTINE: No. Talkin' 'bout Reverend Davis. Plannin' to register folk to vote and all.

MOSES: Klan sure makin' that a nasty bidness. Votin'. Remember that Reverend Lee what got hisself killed for registerin' work he done.

GUSSY: Yea. I remember him. Reverend Lee. Got him with a shotgun while he just sittin' in his car. Where was it? Mound Bayou or maybe Bentonia. Somewhere down the Delta. Oh! It was Belzoni. Yea. Belzoni. Poor man never had a chance.

MOSES: Now they targetin' churches all over. 'Nother burnt outside Greenwood. Burnt to the ground.

JUSTINE: But change comin' here. Comin' to Hope River. At last.

MOSES: Oh it comin' alright, but I do believe gonna be more preachers murdered. Never thought I'd see the day when bein' in church be more dangerous than bein' in a party house.

JUSTINE: But we gotta do something.

GUSSY: Nothin' move much for years and years and years and now just when we start to go, here they come, actin' evil. And got the very same Bible in they churches. Mercy.

MOSES: Oh Mama. How people be all. Two sides a folk. Why I sing the blues. Why you sing spirituals. Like, two sides the same hand. Blues and Gospel. Blues. Gospel. Two sides the same hand. Ask me.

GUSSY: But, how my very own boy, who raised right, could end up being a, well, beyond me. You rascal.

MOSES: Lis'n to her. Signifyin'. I hear you hummin' radio songs. Uh huh. You know that's true.

JUSTINE: You're right. But two sides the same hand. Can't have one 'out the other.

MOSES: Why, what a body be without two sides the same hand?

GUSSY: Alright. I allow you usin' your God-given gift for music. Just not the way I 'maged. But you right. Two sides. As Reverend Davis say we got us an angel whisperin' in one ear and a demon in the other. Who we listenin' to is what decides things. Amen? Who you listenin' to Moses? Oh now now. You know I love you. Look at my sweet thing, Justine. My boy not such a bad man. Kinda good lookin'.

MOSES: Mama!

GUSSY: What? You gonna blush?

JUSTINE: Baby, every time I hear you playin' that guitar, and way you sing, make me feel, I dunno, can't hardly put in words, but I love that feelin'. Deep down it feels, delicious.

GUSSY: And to think he learned all that singin' and shoutin' in church.

JUSTINE: When you runnin' your fingers up and down, and stoppin' at just the right spot, and kinda wiggle your finger, Lord, how'd you teach your fingers to know where to do so good?

MOSES: Could say I learned from two teachers. The Spirit in church and that other spirit in, well, only one hand, but they's two sides you know 'cause...

Moses and Gussy sing:

Who Are You Lisn To?

Moses

Devil got the juke joint

Gussy

Lordy got the choir

Singin' up in heaven

Moses

Screamin' down in fire

Gussy

Lordy got the spirit

Moses

Devil got the brew

Gussy
Lordy got salvation
Moses
Devil got the blues
Gussy
Lordy
Moses
Devil
Gussy
Lordy
Moses
Devil
Gussy
Lordy
Moses
Devil devil
Gussy
Lordy Lordy
Moses
Devil devil
Gussy
Lordy
Moses and Gussy
Who who who are you lisen to?
Who who who are you lisen to?

Lights to black

Scene 4 The next day. Lights up on *Home Cookin'*. Gussy is taking a cake out of the oven when Justine enters.

JUSTINE: Wait til you hear today's secrets. You ready? Two of 'em.

GUSSY: Ain't I always? Hang on a sec.

JUSTINE: Okay. Both big. One real good and one's really bad. Good go first. Okay, don't faint now, but I got feelin's for Moses. I do.

GUSSY: Moses?

JUSTINE: Uh huh. Can't keep from thinkin' 'bout him. Don't he always look so handsome and dif'rent than most anyone with them pale blue eyes his. I swear, Gussy, I do believe I meant for Moses.

GUSSY: Well my son's a handful, honey. Got a great big heart. But Justine, he do love the ladies. You know that. And I never knowed him to be no one woman man. Moses know how you feel?

JUSTINE: Look at me more. Talk with me more. Smilin' that friendly come-try-me smile, his. Yea. Believe he know.

GUSSY: Nothin' please me more than you two together. Long as you both be true.

JUSTINE: True love keep us true.

GUSSY: Well, be good seein' Moses settle down. Who knows? Maybe you go from being my daily-secret friend to a sure 'nuff daughter-in-law some day. Wouldn't that be wonderful.

JUSTINE: But there's something else. Is. Been 'fraid to tell you. See my little maid quarters right down the hall from...

GUSSY: Don't tell me. Deacon's been after you.

JUSTINE: What? How you know?

GUSSY: Experience, child. Got a gift of knowin'. Nobody say nothin'.

JUSTINE: Experience? What experience?

GUSSY: Oh honey. We may get to that later. You go on now.

JUSTINE: Well, I got nowhere to run.

Started makin' me back a few months.

GUSSY: Not surprisin' he after you. It's his way.

JUSTINE: He say if'n I don't oblige him, "submit" as he say, or should I tell, he'll...well, I got no choice.

GUSSY: No choice.

JUSTINE: Makes me feel scared and 'shamed.

GUSSY: Ain't your fault. Gotta be careful all. Don't need no baby now.

JUSTINE: I know. I might be in trouble. Could just be late. You can't never tell Moses.

GUSSY: No child. Never. You know you and me always trusted each other with our silly stories and little secrets for years. Some not so little. Like this one. Lordy! Keepin' a secret's like havin' a treasure you can't never spend. But ain't it a blessing? Trust. Now, I got a big secret my own. Been carryin' too too long. Weighs on a body.

JUSTINE: You know I never tell. Keep a big one same as a small. Tell me.

GUSSY: Feel like I should only whisper this, but years ago, more than twenty years ago Deacon was after me.

JUSTINE: He was?

GUSSY: Right after my men was murdered by that mob in Byhalia and...

JUSTINE: You told me. But Deacon...

GUSSY: Yes, child. You need to know you not the only one. No. This nothin' new for Deacon. See, with my husband out the way, Deacon started in, and, 'fore long, I was carrying his child.

JUSTINE: Oh Lord!

GUSSY: He never knew was his. Still don't.

JUSTINE: What? How he don't know?

GUSSY: Where to start. Lots happen 'fore you was born and when you but a child. See, I moved up to Memphis and lived with my crazy cousin 'til the baby come. But I needed me a safer place to stay and a job in the worst way, so I moved us back to Hope River. Only one take me and baby Moses in was Deacon. Give me my old job back. Uh huh. Stayed in that same room you do. With my baby boy. That's right.

GUSSY: But then when Moses got be 'round oh ten or eleven, Deacon didn't want Toby playin' with him like they'd did since they babies. That's when Deacon bought this café, for me to keep cookin' but not us livin' there no more. Course he needed him a white woman workin' up front. Pretty white lady takin' money and none 'em think 'bout all the shopping and all the cookin' and all the cleanin' and whatnot done by this face.

JUSTINE: Wait. Ain't none my business, but I got to ask, did you have to keep "submittin'" as Deacon say?

GUSSY: No. No. He never bothered me again after the baby come. He knowed I'da took my butcher knife and cut his fool head off.

JUSTINE: So...Moses, Deacon's.

GUSSY: Uh huh. Deacon think he my husband's. But he ain't. No. Moses daddy, Deacon.

JUSTINE: And nobody know?

GUSSY: Girl, my husband was what old timey folks back then called "yellowbone." Now we call 'em "high yella." But my husband didn't have no blue eyes like Deacon do. Deacon never asked why Moses eyes blue. Never ask why he got his hands neither.

JUSTINE: So then Deacon think Moses was...?

GUSSY: Go like this: Deacon got after me not long after my husband murdered. Not a month pass. Know this now. If you ever be with child, Deacon can never know. Get rid of it. White mens in Mississippi kill colored girls carry they baby. You know that. Think they poison their pure, white race. Now I never told nobody this so don't you ever say nothin' to nobody! I'll snatch you bald-headed girl!

JUSTINE: Think Deacon's wife found out and that's why she...

GUSSY: No one knows. Not for sure. After I took the bus to Memphis, she got herself hit by Deacon's train. Lord. The Blue Caboose smashed right, well, curious she killed like that.

JUSTINE: Kitten told me her car stalled on the tracks.

GUSSY: They say when the train hit her, why that brand new Buick just exploded like a bomb! So why it stall out? Had plenty gas.

JUSTINE: How terrible.

GUSSY: She wasn't a bad woman, Justine. Married a bad man's all.

JUSTINE: So Moses don't know neither?

GUSSY: No. Both Deacon and me name of "Jackson." Such a common name not so unusual. Jackson. No kinfolk, of course. Me and Deacon. We no kin.

JUSTINE: You're a riot. Jiminy Cricket! And Moses never suspect.

GUSSY: No. I hid it in my heart. But listen now, you got me worried 'bout you, honey. There's a woman offa Beale Street what takes... Uh oh! More later. Look who's comin'? Your twin sister!

(Kitten *enters the café*)

KITTEN: Hey ladies. Smell something yummy. Oh yea.

My tummy's growlin' for some your yummy coconut cake.

GUSSY: Good timin' Miss Kitten. Just out the oven. Get you something?

KITTEN: Cup of coffee's all. Thanks for tryin' to help me last night.

JUSTINE: Help you?

GUSSY: Wasn't nothin'. Oh, golly. We low on coffee. I'll be right back. Gonna run to the Piggly Wiggly and get us some Maxwell House. You ain't in a hurry is you, Kitten?

KITTEN: No. Nothin' to do. Already made the deposit.

GUSSY: Alright then. Be back directly.

(Gussy *exits*)

JUSTINE: What you need help with girlfriend?

KITTEN: Daddy. She and Reverend Davis saw Daddy draggin' me home and twistin' my arm. Still hurts.

JUSTINE: I'm sorry, but your daddy's evil. The way he do.

KITTEN: Wish I could get Toby to look at me. Maybe, if he see how much a woman I could be, he'd help me get free. Give me some money. Gosh. I swear, I wanna get away from Daddy so bad the highest bidder win ever'thing I got.

JUSTINE: Talkin' ever'thing, when you know they only want one thing.

KITTEN: Not like it have to be a man neither. You know I don't care.

JUSTINE: I know you don't.

KITTEN: Long as they good lookin' to me why should I care. Man or woman. 'Specially they got some money. Money make ever'body better lookin'.

JUSTINE: Still and all, you got to know Toby's most like Deacon and the rest them white mens. Must be a better way than Toby.

KITTEN: If Mama was here she'd find a way to get me gone. I know it.

JUSTINE: Still no idea where your mama be?

KITTEN: No. No address. No phone number. She just gone. Daddy say she worst than white trash for runnin' off with some colored man. But he's a big fat liar's all. No proof that.

JUSTINE: Your mama was cool. Always treat me nice. Like she like me.

KITTEN: Oh Justine! She did. She told me you got a quick wit.

JUSTINE: She did? Well, must be awful scary bein' all alone at nights with your daddy.

KITTEN: I fight him now. So, he don't get his way like when I was younger, when he say it was but a game all good little girls play with their daddys. No. I fight him. Have for years. Like last night.

JUSTINE: I feel sorry for you sister. But I got me a problem too.

KITTEN: Now what?

JUSTINE: I'm scared. May have to go up and see that woman in Memphis. I'm late.

KITTEN: Oh Justine! God girl. Who's the daddy?

JUSTINE: Only one I ever been with is Deacon.

KITTEN: Deacon? Damn. Deacon!?! That's almost bad as Daddy.

JUSTINE: Wish it was Moses'.

KITTEN: I see how Moses study you. Believe he's sweet on you.

JUSTINE: Maybe someday we get together. Think I'm in love with him.

KITTEN: Ah hah! Knew it. You two would make beautiful babies. But if Deacon find out you been with Moses he likely to...

JUSTINE: Oh, I know. Don't think I don't. But I ain't been with Moses. Not yet. Lord have mercy! Look at us. What a pair. Both us fightin' off one man and wanting another.

Kitten: Twin sisters.

Justine: From dif'rent misters. I love you baby doll.

Kitten: Love you doll baby. But no kiddin'! If Deacon should catch you with Moses there's no tellin' what he do. So you gots to be real careful. I mean...

Kitten and Justine (with offstage chorus) sing:

Another Baby Come

Kitten

What if somebody see you? What if somebody tell?
What if Deacon should find out? Girl your life would be hell.
What if somebody catch you? When you foolin' around.
You never be safe girl. Not in this little town.
Oh sister! You know these local men are bums.
What if What if Another Baby Come Another Baby Come.

Justine

You know if I was married. I would not fool around.
I'd be faithful and happy with a man all my own.
I would not have to worry 'bout what anyone say.
I could live like I want to. Never have to be 'fraid.
Oh sister! 'Course you know I worry some.
What if What if Another Baby Come Another Baby Come
You always told me you'd be right beside me. Where are you now?

Kitten

I'll always love you. I'll stand right beside you forever.

Justine

Why'd the blues come so young?

Both

What if What if What if Another Baby Come

(Deacon *enters café.*)

DEACON: Well hey, Kitten. How's business?

KITTEN: Register ringin'. Made the deposit.

DEACON: Good girl. Register ringin' is music to my ears. Justine, I need you run back to the house. We gonna clean out the spare bedroom. I'll be there directly. Where's Augusta?

JUSTINE: Gone 'round the corner for coffee.

She be right back. Oh! Here she come.

(Gussy *enters café*)

DEACON: You girls run along now. Need to speak with Augusta. Alone.

KITTEN: But she baked a cake, and got me some Maxwell...

DEACON: Have to wait. Told you. Now run along. Justine, I'll be there soon as I'm done here.

JUSTINE: C'mon, Miss Kitten.

KITTEN: I'll be back in a little while. Save me a piece.

GUSSY: Cake need to cool some 'fore I frost it. Won't be long.

(Justine and Kitten *exit café*)

GUSSY: So, what's so private you have to run off them girls?

DEACON: Augusta, you got to speak to that Reverend of yours. Get him to stop all this nonsense 'bout registerin' and all. Never happen. Not in Hope River.

GUSSY: Comin' everywhere. Change is. Hope River no different.

DEACON: Dammit! Hope River will never have you votin'.

Not long as I'm alive.

GUSSY: Oh dear! Well. I best call the undertaker.

DEACON: That's not funny. What good it do you votin' anyway? No reason for you to worry with things you can't understand.

GUSSY: Don't underestimate us. We see what's hap'nin'. Read the paper. We look at the television. We have the right to vote.

DEACON: Let me make this clear, Augusta. You don't go to that church of yours and get, what's his name?

GUSSY: Reverend Davis. You know his name.

DEACON: Don't take that tone with me. If'n you can't get that Davis to stop, then, you can forget this café. I'll close it. Close it for good. Not to mention your churches must have some kind of highly flammable...

GUSSY: Go on.

DEACON: Was just gonna say so many seem to end up catchin' fire's, all. Wonder why. Must be cheap, colored wiring. Do you understand?

GUSSY: Not hard to follow.

DEACON: Good. Now I 'spect results Augusta. We have ways of finding out what y'all up to. And I won't tolerate any my employees disrespectful push for mixin' when you know segregation is God's plan.

GUSSY: You speak for the Lord now?

DEACON: Sure. Birds of a feather designed to fly together. Oh, I don't have to spell it out chapter and verse. Do I?

GUSSY: No. No sir. What you after, always, obvious.

DEACON: Good. Look, we known each other for the longest. No one wants to have to hurt anybody. But facts is facts and the fact is we will not abide more this. Not now. Not ever. Not in my Hope River.

GUSSY: You made your point. But know this, Mister Mississippi. You is all wrong 'bout this. Shameful what you say. Shame on you. Makin' threats. No. I don't agree with a single thing you...

DEACON: I don't give a good god damn what you think. Dammit! This ain't a negotiation.

GUSSY: Hush now! I don't allow no blasphemy in here.

DEACON: I'm serious. I demand it. See you get this stopped.

GUSSY: Alright. I'll talk to Reverend Davis. Can't promise nothin'.

DEACON: Just tell him what I told you.

Then, whatever blood... be on his head.

GUSSY: Told you I'd tell him. Now. You goin'?

DEACON: Depends.

GUSSY: No. You stayin'. 'Bout to make a fresh pot.

I know you be stayin' for your fav'rite. Cake's coconut.

DEACON: Well then. You know me too well. Yea. Bring me a fresh cup of coffee and cut me a piece. Big ol' piece. And 'nother to take home. Two big pieces.

Lights down on scene as Gussy goes to make coffee and Deacon settles in with his newspaper waiting for some cake.

Scene 5 Later that afternoon. Mr. Frank and Toby talking by the train tracks.

MR. FRANK: So, tell me, Toby boy. Got you a girlfriend?

TOBY: Yea.

MR. FRANK: Don't recall seein' any gal.

TOBY: She's not from Hope River.

MR. FRANK: Why don't you ever bring her 'round? Ashamed of us?

TOBY: No.

MR. FRANK: What then? She ugly as a mud fence?

TOBY: No. We just keepin' what we do between the two of us.

MR. FRANK: Sweet Jesus! You don't like 'em dark like Deacon do you?

TOBY: None of your concern.

MR. FRANK: Alright. None of my business. Don't stick my nose in other men's business. No no. Why if you Jackson boys are squeezin' the juice outa some sweet lil blackberries not for me to spread it...

TOBY: Shut up! You on my last nerve, Frank!

MR. FRANK: Alright, but best not be no baby-making boy.

White Knights don't believe in mongrels and miscegenation.

TOBY: Told you. Shut up! Shut up!!

MR. FRANK: Calm down. Calm down now. Oh! Did you hear?

Deacon's getting us new robes of satin and hoods with better eyeholes. New hoods won't slide 'round. So we can see better out the eyeholes.

TOBY: Robes of satan?

MR. FRANK: No. Satin. Satin robes. Sorta like silk. Robes of satan? Don't make me laugh.

(Deacon *enters.*)

DEACON: What you laughin' 'bout?

TOBY: He said we're gettin' new robes of satan.

MR. FRANK: Naw. Told him satin. Robes of satin.

DEACON: We needin' new. And these are professional sewn.

Where's the Blue? Dammit! She's late again.

(Harp suckin' like a train heard in the distance.)

DEACON: Oh! There she is.

TOBY: Could get a new engine. Might run more on time.

DEACON: You right. I could. Maybe I'm just sentimental but if Blue's boxcars could talk. Lord! The stories they could tell. 'Tween throwin' hobos off and catchin' that college couple copulatin' and all the timber shipped. No. She made me a fortune.

Toby, Mr. Frank, Deacon and Cast sing:

Blue Caboose

All 3

Rickety-rackety Clickety-clackety Rickety-rackety Clickety-clackety

Rickety-rackety Clickety-clackety Rickety-rackety Clickety-clackety

Toby

Train comin'! Don't she make the whole world shake.

Mr. Frank

Hear her blowin'! Echo off of Deacon's lake.

Deacon

Primitive Ancient Just a little overdue

Toby

Yellow Dog Railway freight train

Mr. Frank

That everyone here knows her as the

ALL 3

Blue Caboose

Deacon

So load it! Get them roustabouts to load. *(load faster load higher)*

Mr. Frank

Smell the sweat drippin' off those bad boys' bones *(load faster load higher)*

Toby
Logs to lumber Boards to build some schools
Deacon
So load it up boys! Load her up high! Stack it on the Blue Caboose
Toby
She'll be slowin' down to take on some water to make it up that next grade
Deacon
Blue steel tracks ahead
Toby
Hobo up here baby
Mr. Frank
Jump on the Blue Caboose
Deacon
Ain't 'fraid of riding
Mr. Frank
Ain't 'fraid of rollin'
Toby
Ain't 'fraid of ridin' all night with you
Deacon
No train longer
Mr. Frank
No train longer
Toby
No train longer
Deacon
Two lovers thinkin' that they all alone
Mr. Frank
Boxcars bangin' hear them lovers groan and moan
Toby
Train rollin' through the cottonfields
Mr. Frank
And the inky midnight rain
Deacon
Lovers linger like lovers will
ALL
And all of us ridin' on the Blue Caboose
Rickety-rackety Clickety-clackety Rickety-rackety Clickety-clackety

TOBY: I still say you need to change engines. Why not? Everything's else changin' 'round here.

MR. FRANK: Like what?

TOBY: Opinions. Folks feelin's. Like some my friends say it's wrong burnin' churches and all.

DEACON: Boy, don't listen to them.

TOBY: But we don't want to lose those who agree 'bout segregation and such, but think we wrong with torchin'. Right?

Little change might...

DEACON: Little change? Little change like a little crack in a dam. Start small, and 'fore you know it, that little crack's bigger and bigger 'til the whole damn dam gives way and ain't no way to dam the damn thing up again. Dammit! You see, son, the tactics necessary. To keep the peace. All 'em necessary when our venerable traditions bein' disrupted by a buncha bearded agitators come down here pokin' their commie noses.

MR. FRANK: Wish they'd all go back to where they come from.

DEACON: And now television got ever'one sneakin' a peak behind the Cotton Curtain. You know they here with but one intent. To shred our sacred Cotton Curtain!

MR. FRANK: Sin and a shame. Them liftin' it up. Showin' ever'thing.

DEACON: It's up to us. Why we lose here we be lost forever.

TOBY: Just the Blue's worn out.

DEACON: Told you no. Our real threat's them bastards what run the new Natchez Trace railway. Word has it they sniffin' 'round Tupelo.

Talkin' to some my best timber customers...

(Lights down as men continue talking.)

SCENE 6 Lights up on Hope River Community Church. Gussy and Reverend Davis are mid conversation.

REVEREND DAVIS: Oh, sister. Just go to show how hard it is workin' out our soul's salvation. I know you seen some tryin', dark, dark days.

GUSSY: Not only the terror of the past neither.

REVEREND DAVIS: Yes. Mr. Frank the other night.

GUSSY: No. Just today, another threat.

REVEREND DAVIS: What now?

GUSSY: Deacon come by the café. He told me say, if I can't get you to stop organizin' and all, well, he come right out and say, he gonna close the café. Make it so I can't work no more. Threaten the church too. He did. Made remarks 'bout how easy our churches burn. And he was dead serious.

REVEREND DAVIS: Knew it would come to this. Only the ones in power want things to remain the same. But I can't back down. We can't back down. Just need to find a way to know when they comin' so we can resist. Peacefully. But stop them. With non-violence. Like we practice.

GUSSY: How we ever gonna know what evil they plannin'?

REVEREND DAVIS: I don't know. All we can do is pray and keep on prayin' 'til the answer come.

GUSSY: Can we pray now? I'm scared for us.

Lights go down on Reverend Davis and Gussy with heads bowed.

Scene 7 Later that night. Outside the not yet open juke.

JUSTINE: Why you wanna tell that lie?

MOSES: Always been you Justine. Been watchin' you for years, baby. And look at you. All grewed up and filled out fine.

JUSTINE: They's always plenty other gals on your arm.

MOSES: Not that special. They just whistle stops on my way to you.

JUSTINE: Wish I could believe you. I do. But how I s'posed...

MOSES: You my only special one. Come here.

(Moses kisses Justine for the first time. She pulls back but he reaches for her and kisses her again as she wraps her arms around Moses. She pulls back again and sings:)

By The Blues

Moses your kisses really got me going
Now you want more than my lips
I love you baby But I don't want a baby
What's a girl to do I'm crazy over you
You've got me by the blues and you won't let go
Uuummm You got me By The Blues

Moses you touch me and my body quivers
Again and again I want to be yours
Sometimes my mind goes wanderin'
Down deep desires baby
What's a girl to do I'm crazy over you
You got me By The Blues and you won't let go
Uuummm You got me By The Blues
Got me By The Blues you got me
Got me By The Blues baby don't let go

Lights down as Moses and Justine kiss again.

Scene 8 That evening in Mr Frank's drab living room.

KITTEN: Why? Tell me. Why can't I have a friend over?

MR. FRANK: Please! Like you got any friends.

Why don't you just come on over here and cuddle?

KITTEN: No! No more. How many times gotta tell you.

MR. FRANK: Come here.

KITTEN: No!

MR. FRANK: I won't bite.

KITTEN: God daddy! Think about it. I have. I mean I couldn't have been nine years old when you first told me what you was doing to me was our "play time". Said was how good little girls play with their daddys. If they was lucky. Remember? Well, I wanted to be your good little girl. I did. What little girl don't want to please her father? But I didn't feel lucky. You hurt me. Then Mama found out. But even she couldn't stop you. And now, she's gone, and I'm grown Daddy!

MR. FRANK: Growed up ripe and luscious lookin'.

KITTEN: What's wrong with you? Need to find you another woman. Not your own daughter!

MR. FRANK: Come here. I'm turnin' your sassy ass over...

KITTEN: No! No more. You try and I'm runnin' to the police.

MR. FRANK: High Sheriff a friend of mine, dummy.

Think he gonna come down on me?

KITTEN: I hear tell prisoners at Parchman love gettin' their hands on men who ruin innocent girls.

MR. FRANK: Innocent? You gave that up a long time ago.

KITTEN: Didn't give it. You took it.

MR. FRANK: Like you don't like it.

KITTEN: Like it? How many times I yell: "No! You're hurtin' me. Stop it!" Huh? Ever' time. You never listen.

MR. FRANK: Get over here. Now!

KITTEN: No! Never!! Never ever again!!!

(Mr. Frank grabs Kitten and pull her to him. Holds her in a bear hug. The phone rings loudly right next to them.)

MR. FRANK: You know what I like. Strip off that dress and do...

KITTEN: Stop it! Daddy! What's wrong with you?

MR. FRANK: Like a hun'erd times before, baby girl.

KITTEN: Stop it! Quit that! Daddy, stop!!

(The phone continues ringing. Mr. Frank reaches for the phone with one hand which gives Kitten a chance to break free. She runs out the door and escapes.)

MR. FRANK: Kitten! You gonna get it!! *(turns his attention to the caller)*

Hello? Callin' at a bad time old friend.

Oh. Kitten just run off. What? Yea, I'll be there.

Hey! Need our robes? Alright then. See you tonight.

(Mr Frank hangs up and goes outdoors looking for Kitten. When Kitten realizes she's not being followed she slows way down and walks in a circle.)

KITTEN: Oh Mama! He never stops. Always treat me like I'm worthless. Like he owns me. Like I'm his little plaything.

Like he's way up there and all the rest of us are way down here. Little nothin's. Less than him. Less important. Less smart. Less of ever'thing.

Like he's lord of creation. Speakin' of, Mama,

I saw God. I did. I saw God. And you know what? He's colorblind!

Don't care a thing 'bout colors. Don't even see what color. So, that got me thinkin'. Ain't we all his children? Then why can't we be more like him?

Yea. Not see nobody like they less. Why can't we all just stop

treatin' others like they less than us. Stop treatin' our own selves like we less than somebody else. Right? Nobody less. We unlock locks.

We unbutton buttons. We undress. Why can't we un--less?

Kitten sings Un-Less:

Un--Less

Tonight tonight I believe I see the light tonight
See we need to stop this old ugly fight
Learn how to treat each other right Can I get a witness?
Unless we Un--Less Gonna blow up Mother Earth in a flash
Blow up blacks and whites and yellows and reds
Til there won't be no people left to treat less
See no baby's born with hatred in their eyes
We learn as we go Learn the truth or learn lies
We fight and we war We hurt each other so
Tell me where is the love Where did our love go
We need love more and more
Un---Less
We can do it Yes we can Oh yes
We can change our ways and won't God be blessed
If nobody do unto others like they was less
Every nation would Un--Less All of God's children must Un---Less

Lights down as Kitten walks off.

Scene 9 The next evening. Hope River Community Church is meeting to discuss inviting Medgar Evers to speak to them.

REVEREND DAVIS: So it's unanimous. Good. I'm to write Medgar Evers and invite him to address us here. Whenever his schedule allow. And it's decided we will take up a love offering to pay his expenses and such. Long way to Jackson and I know he's busy so...

(Kitten bursts in.)

KITTEN: I need to talk y'all.

REVEREND DAVIS: Miss Kitten?

JUSTINE: You shouldn't be here. Golly girl!

REVEREND DAVIS: Miss Kitten, if someone see you here, why...

KITTEN: Nobody saw. Just listen. Won't take but a sec.

Look. Had me a revelation. Okay. God showed me. Nobody's less. Nobody's less than anybody else. Nobody. So if nobody's less why don't we all un--less? Get it? Kinda like the Golden Rule. Only shorter. Un--Less. Treat everybody kind. Not less.

REVEREND DAVIS: Yes. We know. We all equal in heaven's eyes. But why you feel the need of comin' up in here and sharin' that so urgent?

KITTEN: For me, was like some dark clouds parted. Everything looked cleaner and brighter. The future did.

GUSSY: Like you born again.

KITTEN: Maybe I am. Tell you the truth, I tried it. I un--lessed. And you know what? Made me feel good. About myself. About me. Can you imagine? Me feelin' good about me? Anyways, I been studyin' on what I can do about it, and, well, the reason I'm here is, I got a proposition.

REVEREND DAVIS: Proposition?

KITTEN: I could be your lookout. Your spy.

JUSTINE: Spy?

GUSSY: Spy on what?

KITTEN: Like if I hear that Daddy or Deacon or Toby plannin' on doin' somethin' awful, then I come warn you. Be a lookout. You know, spy.

REVEREND DAVIS: Well now, that's interesting. Might even say an answer to prayer. But it's most too dangerous, Miss Kitten. You know Deacon in charge their klavern.

MOSES: Toby told me Deacon with that White Citizens Council, too.

REVEREND DAVIS: And they all Klan, Miss Kitten.

JUSTINE: You know that. All 'em.

GUSSY: Why if they found out you even here talkin' to ...

KITTEN: But they won't. Trust me.

GUSSY: They live for burnin' crosses.

REVEREND DAVIS: And torchin' churches.

JUSTINE: They enjoy it. Terrorizin' us. How you gonna...

REVEREND DAVIS: Hold on here. We not doin' nothin' needs no spyin'.

Ain't no law say we can't meet here in our own church.

(One instrumental verse of Gospel Got The Blues plays as underscoring while Kitten speaks.)

KITTEN: No law? No law!? They are the law. You know that.

I heard 'em jokin' plenty times 'bout the law and justice.

"They want justice? Well here's they justice:

Just us. Just us...white folks." And then they laugh and laugh.

"Justice? Just us white folks." Oh yea. They think it's hysterical.

No foolin'. So, can I help you...or not?

Church Cast and Kitten sing:

Gospel Got The Blues

Reverend Davis

No one knows what comin

Moses

Whole world upside down

Gussy

Threats of violence scarin'

Justine

Everyone in town

All

What comes next

Who will choose

Life or death

Now that Gospel Got The Blues

Reverend Davis

We could use some spyin' No denyin' truth

Gussy

Child it kind you tryin' but Jesus see us through

All

What comes next

Do we choose

Life or death

Now that Gospel Got The Blues

Kitten

I'm frightened She's frightened He's frightened We're frightened

Ain't you scared

I could be near em overhear em

Come here without fear and tell you...

Gussy

Lands alive!

Moses

We all end up in Parchman!

Kitten

I am not a hero I am not some saint

Wanna help a little Huh What is wrong with that

All

What comes next

You don't choose

Life or death

Now that Gospel Got The Blues

Kitten

I'm panicked Hearts kickin' So frightened Panic-stricken
Ain't you scared

What if we

Take Deacon's big Lincoln

I'll sneak in and get the keys and

We can leave and we be free in no time

Yea! Borrow Deacon's big Lincoln

Just sneak in and get the keys and

We can leave and best believin'

You be seein' freedom gleamin'

Reverend Davis

No! We all gotta stay together

Gussy

Can't lose our home now

Reverend Davis

Strength together

Moses

Linked up tight like boxcars on the Blue

All

What comes next

Do we choose

Life or death

Now that Gospel Got The Blues

Mississippi Mississippi

Slide guitar solo (Deacon, Toby and Mr Frank walk through unnoticed by others)

Deacon

These new hoods were worth ev'ry penny

Toby

Yea No scroonchin' See everything now

Mr Frank

Satin robes feel sexy

Toby

Robes of Satan

Deacon

Don't start that again

Gotta focus on the enemy

Mr Frank

Yes boss The enemy

Deacon

We'll stop them

Toby

But not with no lynchin's

Right?

All

What comes next

Do we choose

Life or death

Now that Gospel Got The Blues

Gospel Got The Blues

Reverend Davis

Pray we stay together Pray we stay on track

Justine

Mister Mississippi can not hold us back

Gussy

Love will conquer hatred We will rise as one

Reverend Davis

Ev'ry life is sacred We shall overcome

All

What comes next

Do we choose

Life or death

Now that Gospel Got The Blues

Gospel Got The Blues

Lights down

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

Scene 1 Lights up on interior of *Home Cookin'*. Mississippi Keys underscores Gussy working on breakfast as she fantasizes.

GUSSY: Oh Lord! How many years I makin' breakfast here?
Ain't they tired? Fussin' at each other. Be so much better when we all
be but one family. Eatin' together. Imagine Lord.

Gussy and Cast sing:

GRAVY ON TOP

Mornin'! Mornin'! What a beautiful mornin'
Mississippi good mornin' With some gravy on top
Oh Mornin' What a beautiful mornin'
Mississippi good mornin' With some gravy on top
Gravy on biscuits Gravy on grits
Gravy on your sunny side ups
Cradle full of gravy Ladle it thick
Gravy on gravy with some gravy on top
Gravy everybody good gravy Got your gravy this mornin'
With some gravy on top
(spoken) C'mon children.
Justine (spoken)
Make me some scrambled eggs 'stead of those sunny side ups
Gussy
Oh With some gravy on top
Gravy on biscuits Gravy on grits
Gravy on your sunny side ups
Cradle full of gravy Ladle it thick
Gravy on gravy with some gravy on top
Gravy everybody good gravy Got your gravy this mornin'
With some gravy on top Put some gravy on top
Plenty gravy on top
Give me gravy on top

Lights down

Scene 2 That same evening. Right outside Moses' juke/home. Everyone's gone except Moses and Justine.

MOSES: Justine, you was movin' like you sure know what to do with a man. My, my, my! When you dance you tell the whole story with your body, baby. Don't need to hear no words. Can tell by watchin' you move what the whole story of a song be.

JUSTINE: Yea I love dancin' and your beat just grab hold me and won't turn loose! Course not like when the Holy Ghost come in one our spirituals now. That's a whole other thing. But you do get to me, Moses. You do.

MOSES: Where I getcha? Here? Here??

JUSTINE: Stop it. You know I can't say.

MOSES: Girl, if you sweet on me as I am you, and we get to know each other more like a man and woman, I might... take you for a wife!

JUSTINE: Go on away from here!

MOSES: Make you Mrs. Moses Jackson.

JUSTINE: Go on away from here!

MOSES: Might marry up with you. Get us some kids.

JUSTINE: Why you wanna tease me?

MOSES: I's serious girl. Always figgered me and you marry up.

JUSTINE: In church?

MOSES: Yea baby. Reverend Davis say the words.

JUSTINE: No foolin'?

MOSES: Naw. Real wedding. Ring and ever'thing. You know I favor you. And I think you cares for me. Don't you?

JUSTINE: Stop. You 'barassin' me.

MOSES: Well, don't you? Your kissin' make me believe you care. Don't kiss like no girl. No. Kiss more like a ready woman do. Tell me you don't care.

JUSTINE: Oh Moses. I do. I do care. I do baby.

(They kiss.)

MOSES: So come on. Stay. Stay here with me tonight.

JUSTINE: Stay? Never said nothin' 'bout no stayin'!

Moses sings: OH JUSTINE

OH JUSTINE

Moses

Oh Justine where you gonna be?
Where you sleepin' tonight?
Oh Justine stay right here with me
Don't you want my lovin' tonight?
I wanna be your lover tonight

Chorus

Oh Justine Oh Justine (Justine moans)

Moses

Oh Justine look around the place
Let me get us some ice
Oh Justine what a pretty face
You gonna get my lovin' tonight
I'm gonna be your lover tonight

Chorus

Oh Justine Oh Justine (Justine moans) (Moses) Oh Justine
Oh Justine (Justine moans) Oh Justine

Moses

Oh Justine take another sip
Let me turn down the light
Oh Justine lick my fingertips
You know I need your lovin' tonight
Ooh I need your lovin' tonight

Chorus

Oh Justine Oh Justine (repeats til end)

Moses

Whew! Justine.

My Justine Sweet Justine Oh Justine Oh Justine

Scene 3

(Later that day. Gussy reverently enters the church carrying a bouquet. She waits on Reverend Davis who doesn't realize she's there. His eyes are closed, hands in the air as he sings.)

REVEREND DAVIS: Oh oh oh Deep in my heart I do be...

(Reverend Davis *senses someone and opens his eyes.*)

REVEREND DAVIS: Oh! Gussy! Didn't know you come in.

GUSSY: I could hear you from outside and didn't want to interrupt.

(Gussy *places the bouquet in a vase on the altar.*)

REVEREND DAVIS: You could have joined in.

GUSSY: No, Reverend. Ain't here for no singin'. I needs to speak with you. If you got time.

REVEREND DAVIS: Got the rest of my life.

GUSSY: Well...Not sure this come out right. Ain't somethin' a body speak of. Where to start? I'm strugglin'. I trys to be a good Christian. But see, I knows we gonna keep meetin' 'bout civil rights and votin', and I'm all for that. The future. But, well, here I is, stuck in the past. I can't get past the past. I try. I pray. I even fast. But I ain't past it. Feel like I'm losin' my nat'chal mind. I was such a young mother... but I still see my boy... like was yesterday. Hangin' in that tree. Body all burnt, and cut up. How I s'pose to forgive them what hung him there?

He but 14 years old!! How?!

REVEREND DAVIS Forgivin' never easy. But I'm sure the Lord gave him a special place in heaven. Why he up there right now.

Watchin' over you.

GUSSY I wish I could believe that. But sometimes I can't hardly believe nothin'. So I pray. I listen for the Lord... but I don't hear nothin'. Not really. Most nights, with nobody at home, no one come by and nobody call, all I hear is... silence. The quiet. Night after night. Year after year of nothin' but, quiet. Did you know silence can smother a spirit? Make it so I can't hardly breathe. Oh Pastor, I confess, I break down and moan most ever night. Uh huh. I lean up in the doorway and just wring my hands.

GUSSY sings: TROUBLE EVERYWHERE

Trouble Everywhere

(Hums melody leaning up in the doorway)

Why Lordy

Why'd you take my child

Why Lordy why my child

When you see your own child hangin' from a white rope

Lord someone cut him down

Like you're hearin' from the voice of God

Like you're learnin' that your world is through

You prayin' but ain't nobody lis'nin

Nobody but trouble (Chorus hums Oh Lord)

Trouble everywhere Trouble everywhere

When you cry and cry and cry out for the Savior

Why don't the Savior come

Like you're hearin' from the voice of God

Like you learnin' that your world is through

You prayin' but ain't nobody lis'nin

Nobody but trouble

Trouble everywhere Trouble everywhere

Nobody but trouble

Trouble everywhere Trouble everywhere Trouble everywhere

(she hums the melody with melisma)

Lights down as Gussy and Reverend Davis join outstretched hands.

Scene 4 That afternoon. Kitten goes by Deacon's home looking for Toby and runs into Justine.

JUSTINE: Miss Kitten. Don't you look nice. All dolled up. Smell nice too.

KITTEN: You sweet to say. Come to see Toby. Give him a sniff.

JUSTINE: He in there somewhere. Watching the television, I think. I fittin' to go see Gussy.

KITTEN: Oh girl. You good?

JUSTINE: Am now. Aunt Flo fin'lly paid me her visit.

KITTEN: Well, that's a relief.

JUSTINE: This month, the curse be a blessing. See you later alligator.

KITTEN: After while crocodile.

(Justine *exits*.)

KITTEN: Yoohoo! Toby! Yoohoo! Yoohoo! Toby?

(Toby *enters*.)

TOBY: Hey you.

KITTEN: Tell me the truth, handsome. Tell me. How I look to you?

TOBY: Look? Look fine.

KITTEN: Then? C'mon. Doncha wanna make Kitten purr?

I could purrr for you, good lookin'. Purrrrr!!

TOBY: Get a holda yourself.

KITTEN: What then? I know you think Justine's cute.

Like to take her skinny dippin' my own self.

TOBY: You know, you just dumb as a stump.

KITTEN: No I ain't. Smart as a whip. Looks is all you lookin' for.

TOBY: You don't know nothin'.

KITTEN: Really? I know you got some cute little negro girl over in Holly Springs.

TOBY: You don't know nothin'.

KITTEN: Do to. But, c'mon Tobe, don't you ever think of me? I wanna purr for you. Why, strip off this dress and Elizabeth Taylor got nothin' on me. You could see if you want, handsome.

TOBY: Ain't just looks, Kitten. Ain't. It's the feelin' inside a guy has.

KITTEN: What about me? Huh? I got feelings inside. That's why Doc Pearson sent me up to that Memphis hospital. 'Cause of feelings I get. For boys. And girls. Said I'm sick. But they're wrong. Ain't sick to love everybody what's good lookin' to me. And Toby, I'm all tingly inside. Right this very minute. Here. Feel. I'm purrrrrinnn...

TOBY: Stop now! No! Why you gotta be so crazy? Jesus! Just cool down. Breathe. Breathe deep. Listen. I been thinkin' 'bout what we talked about the other day, I have, segregation, and maybe you got a point about nig...groes.

KITTEN: That's better. See? Don't hurt not to talk so ugly.

TOBY: Sound strange, but I don't really see color much on some of 'em. Maybe still, shouldn't matter so much. Color I mean.

KITTEN: Now you sayin' color don't matter? Good for you.

TOBY: That's what you been sayin'. Right? What's on the outside don't matter as much as what's on the inside a person. Right?

KITTEN: Right. And if'n the outsides don't matter, you wanna see inside? You can. Be happy to show you anything you want. See all this outside stuff, even this dress, could go.

Kitten, Toby and Cast sing:

YOU LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

Kitten

You, You look a lot like me You been lonely too long

Love wasn't meant to be That vision is gone

But you're not the only one

Open your eyes and see You look a lot like me

I, I have this thing for you You got it comin'

You're gonna feel it too Ain't love really somethin'

Imagine you and me

Open your eyes and see You look a lot like me

Who is the one in your dreams late at night

Don't I look like that in this morning light

We, We could be lovers soon There's no need to rush

Under the covers ooo soft fingers touch

Places the sun can't be
Open your eyes and see You look a lot like me
You look a lot like me You look a lot like me
Her face is black baby My face is white
But that don't make me wrong and that don't make her right
You look a lot like me You look a lot like me
Open your eyes and see You look a lot like me You look a lot like me
Toby

You look a lot like me

Kitten and Toby

You look a lot like me

Female Cast

You look a lot like You look a lot like (repeats to end)

Male Cast

You look a lot like me You look a lot like me
(repeats to end)

Kitten

You look a lot like me

(At the end of the song, Cast exit except for Toby and Kitten. Kitten tugs on her dress, seductively puts one hand under a strap and with the other reaches out to Toby.)

KITTEN: Show you anything you want.

(Toby takes one step towards her. Kitten drops her dress.)

KITTEN: Ever'thing.

(Lights down on scene as Toby slowly backs away, staring at Kitten.)

Scene 5 The same day. Father and son talking outside the café.

TOBY: Can I ask you something? Kinda serious.

DEACON: Of course.

TOBY: Well, anybody ever tease you 'bout, you know, women?

DEACON: Women?

TOBY: Yea. Frank try to make fun of me for not bringin' any girl 'round. Told him to shut up.

DEACON: No. No one'd dare. Don't pay Frank no nevermind. He's a knucklehead.

TOBY: It's not fair. My friends get after me some. Same thing.

DEACON: Son, you know I always raise you to not take nothin' off no body. All us gotta defend ourselves these days. But you also gotta live with yourself, son. Be a man. Face the consequences your own doing now.

TOBY: I guess.

DEACON: I believe I know your preference. With females. Could be you inherited that itch from me. Nothin' to be ashamed of. Long as you careful. But didn't I teach you you got to live with your own doings, boy?

(Intro to No Matter Where You Go There You Are underscoring)

Oh, you can escape others. Hell, that's easy. Runnin' away. But, dammit, you always have to face your own face. Hear me?

TOBY: I know. Just wish I could get out of here sometimes.

Move up to Memphis maybe. Get away from 'em all.

Deacon sings with Cast:

No Matter Where You Go There You Are

No matter where you go there you are
You can walk real fast You can run real far
But you can't outrun your head and heart
No matter where you go there you are

The wind may blow down at the crossroads
But no one can tell you which way to go
You gotta choose and take what follows
You know the steps Put on your shoes

No matter where you go there you are
You can walk real fast You can run real far
But you can't outrun your head and heart
No matter where you go there you are
No matter where you go there you are
You can walk real fast You can run real far
But you can't outrun your head and heart
No matter where you go there you are

Nobody's perfect Nobody
We all have sides we hide and seek
Innocent guilty what's your verdict
Look in the mirror what do you see
Do you like who you see Well who do you see

No matter where you go there you are
You can walk real fast You can run real far
But you can't outrun your head and heart
No matter where you go there you are

Scene 6 Two days later. Gussy stops by the church.

GUSSY: Hear you took a fever, Reverend. Got some kinda food poisonin'?

REVEREND DAVIS: I fixed some deviled eggs and left 'em out overnight. Musta been them. So hot 'round here. Should have known better. Wasn't nothin' from the café. Just them deviled eggs.

GUSSY: I'da come sooner, I knowed.

REVEREND DAVIS: Appreciate that. I would have called, but my fever so high, I was out my mind. Had this repeating vision. No. Not a vision.

GUSSY: Nightmare?

REVEREND DAVIS: No. Not exactly. I was hallucinating I guess. Well, let's see. Moses was in it. You too. See, first I was at the church. Just hollerin' and goin' on like I do. But then all us was in Moses juke. And, you know, we were having the best time.

GUSSY: Me? I don't think so. And you? In a juke? Never knowed you to be in no juke joint 'fore.

REVEREND DAVIS: No. I never. But don't mean I don't care for Moses. Not just he your son, but you know how giving he is. Why he's more righteous than some our church folk. With being generous and all. Tell you something, Gussy, I seen this sacred community of ours is like Hope River, the river. You know how she flows in to the Little Tallahatchie and her flowin' in to the Yazoo River and her flowin' into the mighty Mississippi. Hundreds of rivers do. Pour into the Mississippi from all over this country. That's us! All us workin' for votin' and rights. Not just Christians neither. All them from up North and all. We be little streams into creeks into rivers into the Mississippi. Oh, we just a part. But there's mens and women like us all over this country. We becomin' a flood that will swell our rivers that pour into the Mississippi so strong she has to change course.

GUSSY: Amen. I understand. So that was your hallucinate?

REVEREND DAVIS: No. Not the river. Just got goin' on that now. Let me recollect. Oh! I was preachin' how ever'one is in the middle of church. And the choir was spelling it. Like c h UR c h ... Even the word. You are in the middle. With the UR in the middle of spelling "church."

GUSSY: Huh. Never looked at it like that. c-h-U R-c-h.

You are in the middle. We are. You right.

REVEREND DAVIS: It was a high, high fever. But yea, I was just a hollerin' and welcomin' folk and then we was in his juke. Then back in church and back in the juke. Then church then juke. Over and over. Church juke. Church juke. 'Til the two blurred into one.

One holy congregation and one rowdy crowd. One people you could say. Yes. We was one sacred community.

Reverend Davis and CAST sing Slide Closer Church:

SLIDE CLOSER CHURCH

Reverend Davis

The Lord said "Come unto me all ye who hunger and thirst after righteousness and ye shall be filled"

Come as you are

Congregation

(repeating) C-H-**U**-R-C-H (4X)

(Moses Juke)

Jukers

Slide closer

Justine

Spoken: (Toby) Baby bring me over another. (Justine) Can't you see I'm workin'?

(Toby) Hey I can't come over there now. (Justine) I got my hands full. It's time to go.

Jukers

Slide closer. Moses Juke

Spoken: (Hattie) Hey Daddy
(inside church)

Reverend Davis

Yea Yea Yea Oh Whoa Yea You are in church You are in my church
Oh yes you are
Oh yes you are Oh Come as you are Come as you are Yea Yea Yea Yea
Is this a dream Am I in church
Can't believe what I'm seein'
White folks in my church
No colored section here
No boss No overseer
No KKK to fear
I know the Spirit's here
Church Oh church
(Juke)

Moses

What are you gonna do about it? Yea
When you get those juke joint blues?
Open every week day evenin' Saturdays to dawn
Sunday better go to church and pray for what you done
(spoken) Y'all better pray Don't hey daddy me

(Church)

Reverend Davis

We're walkin' through pearly gates
We're singin' a hymn of praise You are in church
We worship you Lord We honor you Lord
You are the Holy One The righteous Morning Sun
Come Jesus come
C-H-U-R-C-H C-H-U-R-C-H
You are in the middle You are in the middle of church (repeats)

GUSSY: Don't the Lord works in mysterious ways.

REVEREND DAVIS: His wonders to reveal. Indeed, he do.

GUSSY: Well, I still strugglin' with what to do about Deacon and them's threats. Can't shake the feelin' if I don't stop, then someone gonna get hisself killed. But maybe if Deacon and them think I quit, you know, me, personally, then maybe, maybe they'd go easier. Can't sleep thinkin' ...

Gussy sings:

WHAT'S A WOMAN TO DO

Here come the future Won't be like our past
Things that we prayed for Happin at last
Changes be righteous Not changing wrong
But is righteous right if it Hurts the very ones I love
How can I decide
What am I sposed to do
Tell the truth I'm afraid and confused
If I stand up they burn down
If we back up we lose
Oh what's a woman
A strong faithful woman
Oh what's a woman to do
Time waits for no one There's no guarantees
Is this our moment Lord help me please Please
I just need an answer I lift up my soul
Give me some wisdom
Give me your wisdom
Give us your wisdom
We need to know which way to go
Why can't I decide
What am I sposed to do
Tell the truth I'm afraid and confused
If we stand up they'll blow up
If we back down we lose
Oh What's A Woman An outspoken woman
Oh What's A Woman To Do
Oh What's A Woman A strong faithful woman
Oh What's A Woman To Do
Oh What's A Woman To Do

Lights go down as Reverend Davis puts his arm around Gussy.

Scene 7 Café that evening. Gussy is cleaning up when Kitten runs in, breathless.

KITTEN: Gussy! They got him! Put him in jail.

GUSSY: Who, child?

KITTEN: Your son.

GUSSY: What? Moses?!

KITTEN: Yea! Heard Daddy was talkin' on the phone to Deacon, I believe. I could tell they was plannin' something. Next thing I know Daddy run off. Said he had some business and for me not to cook him no dinner.

GUSSY: So how you know they got Moses?

KITTEN: I ran into town thinkin' they might be plottin' 'gainst the church and I could make my first spy report. But then I saw Sheriff Higgins and Daddy and some other men pushin' Moses down the street and into the jailhouse. He's there now. Inside. In jail.

GUSSY: Oh Lawd! I best get down there my own self.

KITTEN: I'll go with you.

GUSSY: No. Things be too raw for us to go together. I'll go. But you run quick and tell Reverend Davis. Don't go with him neither.

You go after a little bit, when we gone, and find out what you can.

KITTEN: Okay. I'm sorry. Really.

GUSSY: Ain't your fault. Just pray he okay.

KITTEN: I will. Best hurry.

GUSSY: Lord! What I thinkin'? No. You go by tell Justine to... No! Don't do that neither. Lawd! I can't hardly think. Just stay and watch the café. I'll find Reverend. Oh Lawd. Will you do that for me?

KITTEN: Of course. I can stay and pray at the same time.

GUSSY: Alright then. Where's my purse? Heaven help us.

Lights down on café.

Scene 8

Later that night. Gussy and Reverend Davis are in the church to pray for Moses. Kitten is there giving her spy report.

REVEREND DAVIS: What you find out?

KITTEN: They say they arrest him for moonshinin' and immoral conduct.

GUSSY: What?

REVEREND DAVIS: No doubt the gamblin' and women at the juke.

GUSSY: Been doin' the same thing ever since he took over Uncle Albert's club years ago. Changed the name's all. Same thing for years.

REVEREND DAVIS: They tryin' to get us to quit any way they can.

KITTEN: Why pick on Club Moses?

REVEREND DAVIS: People look up to Moses. If they make an example of him, close him up, and if they close the café, and torch the church then, in their own wicked way, they think they shut down the threat of change. I do belie...

(Justine *rushes in*.)

JUSTINE: They just took him! Not sure where, but they took Moses in Mr. Frank's old truck. Saw 'em drive off towards Potts Camp.

REVEREND DAVIS: Nothin' much out that way but woods.

GUSSY: Oh! Dear God!

JUSTINE: He didn't have handcuffs or shackles on or nothin'. Wasn't puttin' up no fight. Just got him in the back that blue pickup with some white men with shotguns and headed off.

GUSSY: They gonna lynch him!

REVEREND DAVIS: No. No. Don't jump to that.

GUSSY: They might say he foolin' with a white woman. He'd never. But I wouldn't put it past 'em to lie on him.

REVEREND DAVIS: Well, let's go. Justine, you stay here. Kitten run back to the jail and keep an eye out. C'mon Gussy. We'll take my car. We'll find them. Might just be scarin' him. Lord knows. We got to go.

(Reverend Davis, Gussy and Kitten *exit*. Justine *is suddenly alone*.)

JUSTINE: We only had us one night. Now you takin' my sweetest mem'ry? Why Lord? Why? You got to help us. Help him. What if I never see him again? Oh Moses. What if I never no more see those beautiful eyes?

Justine sings:

BITTERSWEET

Bittersweet the memory Bittersweet the song
Bittersweet the taste of a love come and gone
Bittersweet he felt so right All this wrong
Bittersweet the taste of a love come and gone

(Toby *rushes in*.)

TOBY: Justine! What you doin' here, alone?

JUSTINE: This my church. What you doin' here?

TOBY: Hopin' to find Gussy. Got something to tell.

JUSTINE: Tell me.

TOBY: You know where she is?

JUSTINE: Maybe. Tell me what you here for, and, chance I'll say.

TOBY: You know Moses was in jail. Right?

JUSTINE: Ever'one know that.

TOBY: Well, some mens took him.

JUSTINE: And why you sayin' such? Huh? Know you part of them.

TOBY: I am. Well, I was. Look, I don't go for ever'thing they do.

Naw. They got ways that are way too old. And I don't go for that.

Besides, me and Moses growed up together, playin' when we was kids, 'til I got the age that, you know, can't see each other much. But we still see each other all the time.

JUSTINE: So you lifelong friends?

TOBY: No. We not 'xactly friends, you understand. Can't hardly be friends the way things are 'round here.

JUSTINE: So you not friends.

TOBY: Moses like family to me. Hell, he lived in our house for years when Gussy worked cookin' for us. She pretty near raised me like a mother. Not my mother, but, God Justine, Moses and me, we're not brothers, but if we was, could almost be, almost, brothers. Growin' up so close. But not brothers. Then, I dunno. You know?

JUSTINE: Can I talk plain? You don't know if you pitchin' or catchin'. Figger it out. What is it you want?

TOBY: I dunno. It's confoundin' whicheverway I turn.

Used to be ever'one knew their place. Now, no one's sure.

JUSTINE: Ain't thinkin' 'bout no places. Why we gotta have places and all that? All that belong in the past. So what is it bring you up in here?

TOBY: Thought maybe Gussy would want to know they took him's, all.

JUSTINE: Oh! Well she know. Reverend Davis too. They know alright. They drove off to look for them. See if they could save Moses.

TOBY: Take a miracle. Men's all liquored up and smell blood.

JUSTINE: Well, what you gonna do? Huh? Just let them? Why don't you be a brother, be a man, and go find them. Stop them.

TOBY: What can I do? I can't do nothin'. Can't. I mean I could try I guess.

JUSTINE: Of course you could. You can. You can try can't you?

TOBY: I guess. Maybe.

JUSTINE: Are you a man or a mouse? Squeak up! Won't you try?

TOBY: Okay. Okay. I'm goin'. Not sure I can do much.

JUSTINE: Good. That's real good. So, what you waitin' on? Go!

TOBY: Right. Alright then. I'm goin'. I'm goin'. I'm gone.

(Toby *exits*.)

Lights down as Justine bows her head and weeps.

Scene 9 The next night. Reverend Davis had scheduled a voter registration meeting and nonviolence practice. Reverend Davis, Gussy, Justine and Kitten are in the church. Moses rushes in.

GUSSY: Moses!

JUSTINE: Moses baby! (Moses and Justine hug)

REVEREND DAVIS: You alright, brother?

MOSES: Fine now. (Gussy hugs Moses)

GUSSY: What happen?

MOSES: Got lucky.

KITTEN: Lucky?

MOSES: Turns out all them depend on me. Shine saved me. If I can say that here, Reverend.

REVEREND DAVIS: Just so grateful you back with us. Go on.

GUSSY: How you get free?

MOSES: By the time they drove me out in the woods, they realize they done drunk up their last bottle. Oh no! Not like there's a bottle store in this dry county. So, 'stead of drivin' all the way up to Memphis they load me back up in the truck and drove to the still. Some of 'em stayed 'til dawn.

JUSTINE: They did?

MOSES: Yea. Oh, they keep makin' all sorta ugly threats 'til they got so drunk they act the fool. Even got 'em singin' with me. Can you believe? Amazin' what a little liquor do.

GUSSY: It's a wonder you safe. Thank the Lord!

JUSTINE: I was so scared, Moses. 'Fraid we never be able to be together no more.

REVEREND DAVIS: We just glad you safe, yes brother, and no one hurt. They charge you with *any* thing?

MOSES: Yea. "Public Nuisance." But on the paper they wrote "Worthless." Made me pay a ten-dollar fine.

JUSTINE: Worthless?

KITTEN: Nobody is worthless. Just more of their shameful lies.

MOSES: Appreciate y'all more than ever. Didn't know I'd see you any more in this world.

REVEREND DAVIS: Did they explain just how you a "Public Nuisance?"

MOSES: So many cars parked 'round my place. Told me say, I need to put in a paved parking lot. That I be a nuisance to the neighborhood. You know I don't hardly have no neighbors. And most all them jokers. Naw. I never hear tell of no juke with no paved parking...

(They hear a vehicle outside. Doors slamming. Muffled voices.)

REVEREND DAVIS: Hark! You were right, Miss Kitten. Here they come. Alright. Y'all know the plan and let's see, Miss Kitten, you slip out the back door.

(Kitten runs out the back door.)

REVEREND DAVIS: Rest of you do what we practiced.

(The church pick up their Bibles.)

Nonviolence. 'Member. If they hit, you don't hit back. If they curse you, don't curse them. If they kick you, just cover up, like we drilled. Act nat'ral now. Here they come.

(Deacon, Mr. Frank and Toby barge in.)

DEACON: What's goin' on here?

REVEREND DAVIS: We havin' our weekly Bible study.

Would you gentlemen care to join us?

DEACON: Don't get smart, boy! We know you plannin' on organizin'.

MR. FRANK: Like they did in Alabama with them buses.

GUSSY: Ain't no buses in Hope River.

DEACON: Dammit! We know that. But you plottin'. Ain't ya?

REVEREND DAVIS: No. No sir. We only studying Matthew.

TOBY: Who?

GUSSY: Matthew gospel. Where Jesus say:

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

REVEREND DAVIS: Welcome to join us. We got plenty Bibles.

JUSTINE: Most of them black, but you can use mine. See, it's white.

(Justine hands her white Bible to Mr. Frank who takes it before realizing he's now got her Bible in his hands.)

(Kitten *runs in.*)

KITTEN: Oh! Daddy! What you doin' here? Readin' the Bible?

MR. FRANK: I do not. (Mr. Frank *quickly hands the Bible back to Justine.*) I am not. What business you got here?

KITTEN: Saw your truck, so, thought I'd check.

DEACON: Well, alright then. Enough of this foolishness. You studyin' do-unto. Let's learn: do-unto. I got a little do-unto of my own.

I warned you Augusta, if you don't shut this integration talk down... I'm closin' *Home Cookin'*. Close it down for good.

TOBY: What? No! Never told us that. Not the café.

Can't do that now. No.

DEACON: Just watch me.

TOBY That won't do any good. What about all the plates I bring you home? You love her cookin'.

MR. FRANK: Have to cook at home. Like the rest of us.

GUSSY: Oh, no sir. Lots of whites come eat. Not just Hope River folks neither. Come from all over.

KITTEN: I tell him. Why I ring up all kinds of folks. He just don't listen. I told you Judge Brothers and Sheriff John drive over from Senatobia. And the Mayor of Como come. Always bring his wife.

GUSSY: Some from Tupelo, Knights of Columbus and even a few from the VFW come in reg'lar. You know we do a good business. Year 'round. Never been no trouble.

TOBY: Can't close the café. Be hated all over the Hill Country.

DEACON: Dammit! Jim Crow the law but see what happen when we let it lapse a little. My own people make it so I can't even close a colored café. And I own it, dammit!

TOBY: C'mon, it's Gussy! Can't close it. Please. No. Tell me you won't.

DEACON: Dammit. Well, Moses, I see you mixed up with this.

What? Wasn't gettin' arrested once enough? Could board up your old uncle's party house and smash that still yours to smithereens.

TOBY: No. No. You be hated even more than closing the café.

Don't hurt nothin'. Moses don't. All us buy from him.

MR. FRANK: He's right, boss. Can't bust up that still. Please. Got a flavor like no other. Mens know good whiskey now. There'd be a riot.

TOBY: I tried plenty other shine, but Moses the best. Lotsa whites buy.

MOSES: Sure do. Reg'lar folk, but couple judges, even some police. Uh huh. Come reg'lar. Lots your men do. They my best customers. Fill the tables in Club Moses.

DEACON: Dammit! (*turns to Reverend Davis*) Well, you then. Might as well get to the heart of the problem. This all on you. You know these old, wooden, colored churches burn so easy.

REVEREND DAVIS: Oh Lord. I hope not. That would be hard on ever'one. Most the men work on your Blue Caboose be members here. Why if the church gone, and I move on, most them move on with me.

GUSSY: We follow our pastors now.

MOSES: I hear talk that new Natchez Trace Railroad comin' through here.

DEACON: Dammit. Think I don't know that.

REVEREND DAVIS: More'n half my congregation work for you. And they ever-so-faithful workers. Still, can't blame 'em none if they could make a little more workin' elsewhere.

MR. FRANK: What? Who's payin' more? What?

REVEREND DAVIS: Don't know who would maintain your old engine. No, sir. That be a shame to lose most your experienced workers now.

MOSES: Could get some white men trained, but I don't know if they work for the half wages you payin'.

MR. FRANK Knewd it! Been way too long without no raise now, boss.

DEACON: Dammit! This ain't the time, Frank. And you. Ungratefults. Tryin talk your way out...

TOBY: Stop! I hate this scene! No more now! All we do is argue. What do we ever do with our time but argue and fuss? Huh? Not cool. Tik tok. Tik tok. Wastin' our time fightin' when we could be...

DEACON: Dammit! I'm in the middle of something now. Ought to have him arrested again. In fact, I do believe what's needed to...

TOBY: Tik tok. Tik tok. Clock tickin' away all our lives. Ain't you sick of this! I am. I'm sorry but...

Toby, Gussy, Kitten, Reverend Davis and CAST sing Hope River

HOPE RIVER

Toby

I'm tired of tryin' to live in the past
Nothin's forever and none of this last
Tell me the truth Who are we anyhow in
Hope River down by the blues

Gussy

I love you Hope River You are my home
You've given birth to this dream that I own
Where nobody's cryin' No one's alone in
Hope River down by the blues

Kitten

Faith has been tested Love has been lost
What will we do now Who will we trust
I know the truth and the truth is too much in
Hope River down by the blues

Reverend Davis

Oh Mississippi care for your soul

Justine

When will you let all your prejudice go

Toby

Now changes comin' so fast

Justine

And too slow in

All

Hope River down by the blues

Cast

Have mercy on us Forgive us we pray We never meant to go so far astray
Please take our hands but don't take us away from Hope River down by the blues
Hope River down

Kitten

By the blues

Gussy

By the blues

GUSSY: Excuse me. Could I offer up a suggestion? What if, instead of closing down and bustin' up and burning down, what if, let's just say, instead, we just... leave things like they is. Go on about our business. Someday, whenever whichway you want, we can talk 'bout what's botherin' you 'bout us.

KITTEN: That's a great idea!

DEACON: Get it through your thick skulls. You ain't votin'.

MR. FRANK: Period. You can't be trusted.

REVEREND DAVIS: Trusted?

MOSES: Just livin' and workin' here like we always.

GUSSY: Bein' a blessing to y'all.

DEACON: Dammit!

MR. FRANK: We know you tryin to change things up.

REVEREND DAVIS: Oh! We back to that? Sure, things change.

Some things. Some people. But, who keep your train rollin'? Huh? Ain't it mostly us? Who keep you folks fed? And, yes, I allow, drinkin'? Who? Who clean your house and do your laundry? Your trustworthy neighbors who. We do. Surely, you gentlemens not 'fraid of a little change now and then.

MR. FRANK: You nothin' but a jive talkin', rabble rousin'...

DEACON: You never gonna get to vote. Hear me?

MR. FRANK: Oh to hell with the still! Have him arrested, Deacon. Let him rot.

DEACON: Take but one call to my buddy Sheriff Higgins and...

GUSSY: Hang on a minute. Wait up! Never thought I'd have to say this, but I been carryin' something troubled my mind way too long. And I'm with Toby. Tired. Tired. So, gots to ask you something. Deacon? You ever look good at Moses? You never see his eyes be blue? Same color yours.

DEACON: So. Your husband was a light skin.

GUSSY: But he didn't have your blue eyes. Did he?
DEACON: I don't remember colored eyes. What you sayin'?
GUSSY: You never notice Moses hands? They thin-like. Like yours.
DEACON: What you tryin' to say, Augusta?
GUSSY: Ain't *tryin'* to say nothin'. No, sir. Sayin' straight out.
Moses yours. You his daddy!
DEACON: What?!
MOSES: Mama! No!
DEACON: Why you wanna tell that lie?
GUSSY: When you ever know me to lie? Huh? Never.
DEACON: You lyin'. She's lyin'.
GUSSY: Not in my nature to lie. Moses not my husband's boy.
God rest his soul.
MR. FRANK: Deacon, could that be true?
DEACON: Don't listen to this. She's crazy.
MOSES: Mama, why you never tell me. You sure?
GUSSY: I wasn't carryin' no child when my husband murdered.
No. But I was a couple months later. After you force me!
MR. FRANK: Then that make you guilty of miscegenation, Deacon. You made a mongrel. And you, supposed to be the high and mighty Grand Wizard. All righteous and all.
DEACON: Dammit! Can't be mine.
GUSSY: Talkin' can't be mine! Can't? Think back, old friend.
Remember? Y'all look at Deacon.
Now look at Moses. Look them eyes. Them long slender fingers.
MOSES: Why you never told me?
GUSSY: I couldn't bear to, son. Just coincidence my husband share the same name as you, Deacon. So, no, never come up that you be Moses Jackson and you, Toby, be Tobias Jackson. Half brothers.
TOBY: We grew up almost like brothers. Not so bad.
DEACON: Don't believe her lies.
GUSSY: Why I wanna lie?
DEACON: To save your son.

GUSSY: Our son! Ours. Just look at him!

DEACON: Ain't true boys. (Deacon and Moses lock eyes)

Not your daddy. Not.

MOSES: Even if you is, you ain't! (*Moses turns to Gussy*) When I ask things 'bout my father you never told me any this.

GUSSY: Forgive me. Least I give you a better example to follow.

No. You got his eyes, his hands and his head for business I believe.

DEACON: You can forget your job, Augusta. Dammit. You fired!

GUSSY: Really? Alright then. Never thought it come to this. But here. Here go something prove it.

(*Gussy hands Deacon her Bible. He reluctantly takes it.*)

DEACON: What's this?

GUSSY: Bible my husband give me. Raggedy now, but been my only, for lo, all these years. Fittin' to prove it, directly. Open up to Psalms.

DEACON: Do what?

GUSSY: Open to the Book of Psalms. It's in the middle. Right there in the middle of, that's right. Unfold that paper I tuck in there. Now read it. Been my page marker ever since Moses born.

DEACON: What's this?

GUSSY: Birth certificate from that hospital I was in up in Memphis. Colored hospital name of Mercy. Right there is Moses' certificate.

DEACON: So?

GUSSY: So look at the name where his parents. Read where it say the father's name. Uh huh. Earl R. Jackson. That's you, Deacon.

Told the nurse the truth. One who filled in that name right there.

Earl R. Jackson. That paper proof.

DEACON: I don't believe this.

GUSSY: Don't have to. Don't have to believe me. Just leave things be.

MR. FRANK: Something ain't right here, Deacon. They gotta pay!

TOBY: Why? What they done? They most like fam'ly and if Moses and me are...

MR. FRANK: Don't be stupid! She makin' Deacon out a fool.

DEACON: Watch your mouth, Frank!

MR. FRANK: Just sayin' we got a lot to regurgitate on.

DEACON: What? Oh, c'mon boys. Let's go. I'm all knotted up inside. Dammit!

GUSSY: Wait, Deacon. Please. Don't go yet. We can fix this.

DEACON: How Augusta? Made a shameful accusation.

GUSSY: Look. Don't have to change nothin'. Not a thing. You have your belief and, you know, I have mine. But, let's just let it go at that. Won't do no good you gettin' ulcerous.

DEACON: How we ever gonna go on like before?

GUSSY: Oh, Deacon. We got way too much history of years between us to let this ruin things. No. I never mention any this for over twenty years and, now, I won't ever speak of it again. Long as you leave Moses alone and ain't no church burnin'.

MOSES: Nobody ever mention this again, suits me. I'm never sayin'.

REVEREND DAVIS: Really? Well then. Can't we all just keep this... to ourselves? Sure we can.

TOBY: No way to know for sure anyways.

DEACON: You two not gonna spread this 'round?

KITTEN: Not me. Nary a word.

JUSTINE: What possible good that do?

DEACON: How about you, Frank? Always shootin' off your big mouth.

MR. FRANK: Your word again' her. I'm with you, boss.

REVEREND DAVIS: Alright then. We in one accord. Mums the word.

GUSSY: Good. No need to be worryin'. Anyone ever say, I just tell 'em take all that someplace else. You know I don't abide no foolishness.

Forgiven and forgotten. So let's see now, made another cake.

Not coconut. Chocolate fudge. Have some. Y'all want a piece?

JUSTINE: And got us some coffee.

REVEREND DAVIS: Yes. Why don't y'all stay a while. Fellowship.

DEACON: That ain't never gonna happen. Huddle up, men.

(Deacon and Mr. Frank go off to the side and confer conspiratorially.

Gussy whispers to Reverend Davis.)

GUSSY: My cake gonna save my Moses!

(Deacon and Mr. Frank *return*.)

DEACON: Give us the cake. Yea. Give us the whole cake.

MR. FRANK: But we takin' it with us.

DEACON: You can keep your coffee.

GUSSY: Sure. Want it all? Of course.

DEACON: Don't get smart! There's no way to figure the damage you done here. To the Jackson heritage and my reputation.

MR. FRANK: Ruined it I'd say.

DEACON: Frank, shut up! Just better not be talk any this.

I hear of such and, well, use your imagination. This ain't over.

MR. FRANK: No, there'll be talk. When word gets out how you ever gonna recover?

DEACON: Dammit! I be watchin' all y'all. All y'all. Like a hawk.

JUSTINE: Don't matter. Whole world be watchin' us. You can't stop 'em. And what will they see? I'll tell you. Change. Change sparkin' like a down powerline. Oh some may be afraid to touch it. But we ain't never lettin' loose.

DEACON: See if you sass like that back home.

REVEREND DAVIS: Gentlemen, nonviolence teaches us to...

DEACON: Save it! Save it for your sheep.

TOBY: Can't we all just get along? Jesus!

KITTEN: How? Stubborn boneheads! Blind as bats believin' in a musty, rusted Old South fantasy. Too scared to face facts.

TOBY: Like what exactly?

KITTEN: Like no one is less than anybody else. That's a God fact.

Not colored not woman not poor not nobody. Goodness gracious! Why can't you see that? A God fact. Read it sometime. It's in there.

DEACON: Well now! If that don't beat all. Kitten preachin'! Lookie here little girl, I don't care. Makes me no nevermind. No matter what the facts are. I do not care. No! The fact is I'm all y'all's provider. Why, you ever wonder where you be without me?

REVEREND DAVIS: Or you without us. We made you rich. Why without us...

DEACON: Save it! Did not ask your opinion! Plenty others out there. Believe me. Don't need you. I don't want a thing from any you. Not a single thing. Believe you me. Now, how 'bout that cake, Augusta.

GUSSY: Yes sir. One big fam'ly here. Cake for you. Coffee for us. We be fine. But mark my words I'll love votin' just like I love cookin' and servin'. Don't make a face! Someday we be votin' same as y'all. Oh yes. We gonna see a new day. Amen?

REVEREND DAVIS: A brighter day.

DEACON: Never happen!

GUSSY: But...in the meantime... I be doin' what I done all my days. Doin' unto others. Yes Lord. Cookin' and servin' and singin' our songs of freedom. C'mon church. We can still sing, can't we?

Cast begins singing Mississippi Reprise:

MISSISSIPPI REPRISE

Mississippi	Gussy
I warned y'all change is comin'	Toby
Mississippi	Moses
Serious change is comin'	Kitten
Mississippi way down South	Justine
Jim Crow gonna die in Dixie	Reverend Davis
When people learn Un---Less it's true	Kitten
We Shall Overcome our victory song	Gussy

Justine

We're free and freedom feels so cool

Cast

In Mississippi Mississippi

Black cast and Kitten sing as Deacon, Mr. Frank and Toby look on.

MISSISSIPPI MERCY ME

Mississippi gonna sing a brand-new song
Mississippi been in the past too long
Mississippi gonna see some changes come
Mississippi gonna be a better home
Oh yeah Mississippi Mercy Me

(Toby joins in.)

Mississippi gonna sing a brand-new song
Mississippi been in the past too long
Mississippi gonna see some changes come
Mississippi gonna be a better home
Oh yeah Mississippi Mercy Me

Mississippi gonna sing a brand-new song
Mississippi been in the past too long
Mississippi gonna see some changes come
Mississippi gonna be a better home
Oh yeah Mississippi Mercy Me

(into Mississippi 4 chord retard---- Deacon and Mr. Frank join Cast)

Mississippi Mississippi Mississippi
Mississippi – You've been bad but we --- love you!

CURTAIN

© 2021 Gregory James Tornquist
All Rights Reserved