

ZARA'S FAITH

A Play in Two Acts

By
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Zara's Faith, set in an inner city in America, unfolds around a police shooting of two unarmed brothers on their way to meet friends. At opening, Zara, their grandmother, a spirited and gregarious Jamaican-born African-American elder, learns about the incident from dead friends. In a play informed by historical events and religious syncretism, Zara summons the courage to rally her community into standing up and fighting back against a national conspiracy with roots in the post-bellum South.

log line: To try to save her grandson from a bogus murder trial, a Jamaican-American grandmother, after hearing (?a delusion, a dream or a religious experience) from ancestors, risks all to unite her community and the Black Police Officers' Association in a campaign to expose the uncovered deeper story.

Act I: night and early morning

Scene 1: inside Zara's home, Zara asleep in her rocker.

Scene 2: inside Zara's home

Scene 3a,b: inside Zara's home

Scene 4a, b, c: the police station. Split stage set

Scene 5: court room (audience = audience)

Act II: clearing a path

Scene 1: police station, McIntyre's office

Scene 2: church interior (audience = congregation)

Scene 3: jazz bar

Scene 4: Zara's home

Scene 5: Ballroom (audience = audience)

Scene 6: Zara's home

Scene 7: only sky backdrop plus Zara's rocker

Cast of Characters
(and suggested doubling)

- Zara: 85 year old heavy set Jamaican-American, wheel-chair bound from arthritis, her weight and weak heart but can walk some with a walker. She is affable, loves to laugh, and has an assertive and acerbic personality.
- Alvin: African American elder over 80 years, stutters, partial facial paralysis
- Rosie: African American woman over 80 years of age.
- Ancestors: Alvin + Rosie + other voices added to convey a call and respond Congregation (Some scenes are pre-recorded on video).
- Phillips: An arrogant, racist, white police sergeant 40 years old
- Jim Traskett: A 26 year old white police officer (only 2 years on the force)
- Thomas: About 40 year old tall, clean cut, African American, Police Lieutenant
- Brenda: Irish, home-care worker for Zara
- Reverend Simms: Pastor of the Church
- Jim Peery: 28 year old African American police officer
- McIntyre: 55 year old Police Captain
- Sheila Jefferson-Taylor: 35 year old African American woman lawyer
- Leroy: veteran cop (by McIntyre actor)—**(this is only on the video, not a live actor)**
- Judge Schiazo: a racist judge (McIntyre actor)
- Erlene: **(another voice, only on the telephone, southern accent)**
- Chief: **(gruff voice only on the telephone)**
- 3 reporters: (2 male and one female)
- Delia: church official (by ROSIE actor)
- Armstrong: African American youth, a friend of Daniel
- Young Woman: a friend of Daniel's (by Brenda actor)
- Community Center Worker: young man or woman
- Dubois: Zara's grandson
- Daniel: Zara's grandson (by Jim Peery actor) **(seen only on the pre-recorded video)**

The third staged reading of Zara's Faith took place on November 13, 2015 at La Pena Cultural Center in Berkeley, California with the following cast. It was directed by Ayodele Nzinga, Artistic Director of the Lower Bottom Playaz, Oakland, CA, who collaborated in previous revisions.

Cast of Characters

Zara: Cat Brooks
Alvin: Reginald Wilkins
Rosie: Kenitra Love
Ancestors: All.
Phillips: Mark Vanzant
Jim Traskett: Todd Chase
Thomas: Adimu Madyun
Brenda: Serenity Taylor
Reverend Simms: Reginald Wilkins
Jim Peery: Pierre Scott
McIntyre: Ken Hayes
Sheila Jefferson-Taylor: Venus
Leroy: Duff Rieter
Judge Schiazo: Duff Reiter
Erlene: Venus
Chief: Duff Reiter
Reporters: Edward Ewell
Delia: Kenitra Love
Armstrong: Edward Ewell
Young Woman: Venus
Community Center Worker: Edward
Dubois: Stanley Hunt
Daniel: Koran Streets
Lottie: Venus
News Broadcaster: Venus
Bailiff: Edward Ewell
Mr. Baker/Voice: Edward Ewell

SETTING

A home in the African American community of a U.S. city with a large police force and a substantial African American population.

TIME

Early morning

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: *Home interior. There is one main room with a refrigerator, stove top and kitchen sink counter up stage left. A TV down right and a telephone on the TV table; A small dining table center, middle; a sizeable bookshelf right almost perpendicular to stage; a hallway goes off stage up right beyond the bookshelf. There is a large video screen about 6 feet high and 12 feet wide above the back of the stage middle to right. Zara sits on stage at left in a large, cushioned rocking chair.*

AT RISE: *Lights come up dimly to suggests evening before sunset as the screen shows the clouds and sun approaching the horizon. Zara's profile is visible to the audience. She is in a bathrobe. Zara gently rocks back and forth in her rocker and softly sings-*

ZARA:

(singing) I carry me ackie come to Lindsted Market not a quattie worth sell, I carry me ackie come a Linstead Market not a quattie worth sell. lawd what a night, not a bite, oh what a Saturday night... (she stops briefly then sighs, then sings again(singing) I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the river side (beat) . hmmm....I'm gonna put on my long white robe, down by the river side, down by the riverside, down by the river...

(The lights go out suddenly, and simultaneously there is a cymbal crash, a flash of light, and the video opens on screen Zara watches confused)

Projection of a Video tape onto the screen:

(The video reveals the "incident" and has a clear audio of the police assassination of Daniel and shooting of Dubois Richards and officer Creighton. Perhaps it's

played at 1.5 x real time and will be shown at actual speed later. Or the director may edit it down further for this version. The car which Dubois is driving, with Daniel as passenger, is pulled over by a police car with sirens sounding (carrying 3 cops) in a Black neighborhood with high rise apartments. The camera is located inside the police car and scans forward. A male apartment resident from the third or fourth floor, not visible on camera, hearing the siren, opens a window and shouts down at the cop car). The full video will be shown later.

MALE VOICE

(shouts from a distance) Git ya' asses up out the hood! Just leave us be and get outta here.

LEROY

(the driver of the police car, he radios) This is car 38 to dispatch....We've stopped a suspicious Camaro on Houston, 4800 block. And we've got an agitator in the project too. Alert back-up. 10-4....

DISPATCHER'S VOICE

Back up alerted.

(Dubois and Daniel sit quietly. A beer can is thrown and hits the roof of the police car. Phillips, talks through an amplifier)

PHILLIPS

(sitting in the back seat he reaches forward and grabs the radio microphone from Leroy without a word. Speaking into the amplifier mike) Get out of the car.....now. And you up there, back off or we'll come in and get you...

(Slowly, Dubois and Daniel get out from opposite sides)

PHILLIPS

(through amplifier): Both of you turn toward the car and put your hands on the roof.

(Dubois and Daniel begin to comply)

PHILLIPS

(to Leroy, the driver) Leroy, you search the boy on the left side for weapons and drugs. Traskett you just stay put and back us up. I'll take care of the other one.

(Leroy hops out of the car pulling his gun and moves toward Dubois)

VOICE

(from apartments above) Always harassing folk. Somebody call you don't even come.

TRASKETT

(a younger cop, he is sitting in the front) Isn't this a risky situation? *(He's ignored).*

(As Leroy comes first into the camera view, three more full beer cans rain down on him, one hitting the car again. Leroy's gun is in his right hand. As he raises his right hand over his head to ward off the beer cans, a can hits his arm and the gun goes off firing into the air. Meanwhile Phillips also exits the car (on the passenger side) he stands crouched behind the open door with his gun pointed toward Daniel. As soon as Leroy's gun goes off)

VOICE *(from above)* SSSShiiit!!!

(Window slams, Phillips, crouching behind the car door suddenly fires 5 shots in quick succession. The first hits Daniel in the head and he falls, then Phillips stands, obviously swivels his arms to the left facing Leroy who is bent down after being hit by the can and fires directly at Dubois hitting him in the chest and in the thigh with the second and third shots. As Dubois falls crying out in pain Phillips fires a fourth shot directly at Leroy hitting Leroy in the head. Leroy falls; Phillips then walks over to Leroy, takes his pulse, shakes his head, and then moves to Dubois who is groaning and moving slightly. Phillips checks his pockets and ID, inspects his leg wound and handcuffs Dubois behind his back. Then he kicks Dubois who groans more loudly. He then quickly goes around to Daniel on the passenger side. He inspects the wound in Daniel's head, then places the gun into Daniel's right hand and walks back to the car.)

TRASKETT

(While Phillips inspects Dubois, Traskett talks into police radio): Dispatch? This is car 38. Send a paramedic ambulance to 4800 Houston quick. We've got an officer and two others down. We need back up. 10-4.

DISPATCHER

I read you. Ambulance and back up in route. 10-4

Traskett exits the car and puts a jacket under Dubois' head and sets flares around

him since he is lying in the middle of the road. Then he goes over and checks Leroy and Daniel for pulse and respiration. He doesn't touch the gun and returns to the passenger side of the police car. Sirens are heard as the ambulance and police cars arrive)

PHILLIPS

You saw it all Jim, we'll talk about it later.

(Video freeze frames, as Zara (moans loudly)...

NOOOOOOOO!!.

the voices of a chorus singing "Lonesome Valley" comes up along with lights showing Zara staring at the screen trying to comprehend what she has seen. She starts to cry softly as if waking from a too real bad dream. Evening has changed into morning

ANCESTORS EN GROUP

(several voices only chanting) Be strong Zara, be strong.

(Zara shaking her head no, aware something unusual is happening. The voices swell; as a Slow bass drum beats regularly and ends with 3 snare rim shots: ta..ta...ta..)

(The screen breaks to a fidgeting fair African American man with an apparent paralysis of half his face and right side. He has some trouble speaking and stutters, but his words are easily understood. He appears quite anxious).

ZARA

Alvin?

ALVIN

(On-Screen) Zara, yes it's me Alvin. You know, Alvin Sm..sm...smith. Zara, there's been trouble.

ZARA

Alvin, you passed. Leija was all tore up, you know.

ALVIN

I'm sayin I got important and sad things to tell you Zara.

ZARA

Alivin? I don't understand.

ALVIN

The ancestors need you to listen to me. Did you see it? the pictures?

(Screen flashes and several other faces appear behind Alvin. They include Rosie).

ROSIE

You need to listen Zara.

ALVIN

I brought Rosie and Willam and Ella..

ROSIE

All of us are here Zara.

ZARA

Oh, my Lawd. It's joy and sadness altogether to hear and see all of ya. I'm listening now; but seein n hear'n ya I can't believe my eyes and ears.

ALVIN

It's....it's your grandsons. Daniel's been killed by the police; they've shot Dubois too, beaten him ta ta ta within an inch of his life and they gonna charge him with murder. Did you see it? Don't aks why. I'm so very sad bringin this to you, but the showin had to be done by someone.

(sighs, relieved that he got it out ok)

ANCESTORS

(first startled, now coming to understand): I saw that story. Noooooo!! This can't be. I seen my boys leaving out the house just a while ago. How can you say these things? Who made those pictures? It's not real. I'm dreamin it; can't be real. Oh help me, help me Jesus. Help me Asaase. *(she sobs and moans)*

ALVIN

You'll understand, Zara. We're here with you; and all your passed friends and generations too. We are with you. We're standin with the Myalman healer.

(The lights fade to the sounds of drums)(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

(Zara sits in her chair obviously asleep in the dark. Lights come up to day-time outside. There is a brief siren and commotion in the street outside. Zara stirs, wakes, struggles up to standing, stretches and reaches for her walker. There is a terrible pounding at her door, upstage left. She slowly moves toward the door wagging her head)

PHILLIPS

Open the door now! It's the police. Open the door!

ZARA

I'm coming, hold on won't ya. I'm just an old lady...

PHILLIPS

We've got a warrant, so open the door now or we'll have to break it down.

(She slowly makes it to the door and unlatches 3 security locks. Traskett stands at door with Phillips who has a bag, standing behind. Traskett steps in respectfully. Phillips is blocked momentarily, then pushes his way in behind Traskett.)

TRASKETT

Ms. Richards?

ZARA

Yes.

TRASKETT

Do you have two grandsons, Daniel and Dubois?

ZARA

Yes. *(She is holding her breath, looking fearful, hoping that this is not confirmation of the event she has seen.)*

TRASKETT

(spoken with some sympathy) Maam, Daniel is dead and Dubois has been shot. He's charged with the murder of Daniel and a police officer.

ZARA *(trying to hold back sobs)*

Yes, I know these tings.

TRASKETT

You know this? How do you know ma'am?

ZARA

I saw it on the Tele.

TRASKETT

(Is concerned for the old lady.)

TV? Ma'am, we wouldn't release their names without notifying you first.

PHILLIPS

(With no sympathy, pushes past Traskett and attempts to pass Zara as he speaks.)

Traskett, quit wasting time. We've got a search warrant for this house. *(to Zara)* Step out of the way. *(he physically brushes Zara as he passes her).*

(Zara staggers back slightly with her walker, but does not retreat).

ZARA

Let me see the warrant, then.

(Phillips shoves it at her and walks past her.)

PHILLIPS

(Looks around as he talks into his radio)

Dispatch, tell the officer of the day that the Richards' warrant is served and the old lady notified of the death.

(Zara studies the papers while T. & P. begin to search the room focusing on papers on the desk and books on the bookshelf.)

ZARA

What does this mean, 'to search for weapons and drugs and political connections of a radical nature?'

(Phillips walks over to the bookshelf and starts perusing)

TRASKETT
(somewhat sensitively)

You'd best sit down ma'am. We'll be here for a while.

PHILLIPS *(to Zara, sharply)*
We're here to get answers not to give answers, so it would be nice if you just sit quietly and let us do our work.

ZARA
Is that how you were taught to address your elders? Is that what policin means to ya? You've a lot to learn yet, Mr. Policeman.

(Phillips sneers but suddenly notices a book in the shelf he's surveying)

PHILLIPS
Say, look at this?

(He takes a book from the shelf and walks over to Traskett)

PHILLIPS
(shows the book to Traskett)

"Revolutionary Suicide" by Huey P. Newton of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Advocacy of terrorism, now we're getting somewhere. I'll check the bedrooms; you keep on with the papers and usual hiding places here...

TRASKETT
Yes sir.

(Phillips disappears through the back hallway up right carrying his bag.)

ZARA
Most all these books in here are mine, son. Even including that one you've got. The boys ha been with me only since their mamma died. Course they read, probably read all these books, and we talk, but they mostly read from the public library because they don't have money to buy books.

TRASKETT
I see.
(Phillips returns exuberant).

PHILLIPS

Look at this Jim! We got Illegal ammo, an automatic conversion kit, an extended clip, a hash pipe, an ounce of rock cocaine and another book—Recovery from the Addiction to White Supremacy, by Marvin X. Now that's peachy: "Addiction to White Supremacy," and some rock to boot. How do ya like that? Found them all together underneath the bed. This case is all but closed!

Zara looks daggers at Phillips shaking her head in disbelief. She gets up and begins to waddle off toward the hall with her walker. Phillips stops her.)

PHILLIPS

And where would you be going now Granny?

ZARA

To the potty if that's alright with you.

PHILLIPS

(to Traskett) Jim, why don't you walk her down there and stay close with her.

(As soon as Traskett and Zara disappear, Phillips takes a book out of his bag. He opens it, revealing that it is hollow and he puts a grenade inside. He places the book up into the empty space on the shelf; he then crosses to the refrigerator, opens it and takes out a piece of fruit which he then begins to eat with enthusiasm. He sits down in the rocking chair and clicks on the TV. He changes channels until a newscaster hits the screen....

TV NEWSCASTER

...the President has announced that he won't enter conversation about renewed Congressional calls for the extradition of militant Aasata Shakur/formerly Joanne Chessimard from Cuba. Now to the local news. Police today are without any clues as to why two African American brothers ambushed a police car on Houston and Kirkland avenues last night. One police officer and one of the brothers sustained fatal injuries in the attack. The dead officer, Sergeant Leroy Creighton who, with 16 years of service, leaves a wife, a son 9, and daughter¹². Police have identified the brothers as Daniel and Dubois Richards. Dubois Richards is in critical condition. He has been charged with two counts of homicide. The officers came upon a stalled vehicle on Houston and when Sergeant Creighton got out to investigate, shots rang out. At a press conference at City Hall, the mayor praised the surviving officers' quick thinking response and voiced support for police use of any force necessary to keep our officers out of harm's way.

(PHILLIPS clicks off TV; Zara and Traskett return).

ZARA

I heard my TV on.

PHILLIPS

OK.

ZARA

I suppose that watching peoples' TVs is part of your job too, then? If you got what you come for I would like you to get out of my house and leave me be as you've finished your business. I have lost my 2 grandsons and I'd like to be left alone.

PHILLIPS

Correction--just one lost so far granny; but we'll work on the other, we will.

ZARA

Leave now before I call down the wrath of God on ya.

PHILLIPS

As long as we have this piece of paper *(he picks up the search warrant and waves it)* there isn't any wrath's gonna touch us.

(Phillips and Traskett exit, ZARA turns, falls into rocking chair and growls in anguish and anger.

(LIGHTS-FADE)

(END OF SCENE II)

(Musical interlude (1 minute or so) "Trouble In Mind" by a plaintiff female a capella voice).

Scene 3a

ZARA

(on telephone)

-Yes, Myrtie, how are you? ... Thank you for the flowers. Your kind thoughts helped me through this week, Myrtie....Yes, I've been to see him and he is healing. His spirits is holding up, but he's so sad about his brother it's scarin me... I'd say he's still more bewildered by what's happened than angry. I need your help, Myrtie. Pastor Simms at Church will do the funeral service for Daniel day after tomorrow, if you can come..... Yes 43rd Avenue, that's right..... We're still fighting with the Police to get Daniel's body released. They takin Dubois from the hospital to County Jail today after his arraignment. We got him a good lawyer, a friend of Mr. Morris', but she says they'll not let him out on bail with a murder charge..... Yes, that's the point dear. Murder is enough to scare the bejeesus out of everyone, includin me... Listen, could you let the prayer circle know and also see if a few of the folks over at the senior center might come out to the County Courthouse to show their support for Dubois..... No, of course he didn't do it.....What do you mean, "how do I know?"..... I know. Like I know I am sitting here talking to you. I know. Don't I know my own boys? ... Can you trust me, like I trust them?..... Thanks Myrtie. I'll see you later at the Courthouse. And please tell people it's ok to get angry so long's they're careful not to hurt themselves or anyone else. My love to your niece Juanita.....Ok, I will, bye now.

(She hangs up the phone..)

(She walks [with determination] upstage to the stove with her walker and pours a cup of coffee from the pot. As she starts to sit down again in the rocking chair the screen above lights up again and a flustered Alvin is trying to get himself into position to talk)

ALVIN

(on the screen above)

Zara, it's me, Alvin again. I've got to talk to you.

ZARA

(startled) Alvin, What now? You brought me enough bad news for a lifetime. It'll be the death a me. And I've got so much to do to try and save Dubois. What a sorrow.

ALVIN

We're only the messengers Zara.

ANCESTORS

(in unison):

Don't send us away Zara.

ROSIE

People down there's all we've got to pin our hopes on. You're our eternity..

ALVIN

Zara, someone's here who sh..sh..shared some thoughts about yer problems.

ZARA

You mean the host?

ALVIN

No, not a host, not the Holy Ghost, This is another ancestor; she was a poet and she had a big beautiful voice people used to like to listen to. But her voice is gone—lost it when they raped and killed her. Rosie tell her the poem.

ROSIE

“Neighbor stand by me, it’s so lonely to be free. Can’t ya hear the voice of martyred men through history. There’s no use denyin we still have to do some dyin. Evers, Chaney, Reeves and Shwerner died too young but ther’ll be younger, millions more will fall asunder afore all men are free.” (Rosie continues)

I was sharin your situashun with her and she whispered like this cause she can’t speak out: That’s a tough nut, she said. Your Zara’ll have to get inside this thing and taste it and feel the terrible heat of it-- like she’s looking at the world from way inside this angry thing that’s bound us all. That’s what she said, Zara.

ZARA

Alvin, Rosie, you are going round in riddles. I got to save Dubois. I need prayers answered. And you come to me with a woman poet I done never heard of and she na talkin. When Pastor Simms says to believe in things unseen I don’t think this is what he means. And I’m angry enough already. How’s it I need to get inside some other angry thing?

ALVIN

It’s your faith that brought us here now Zara. I’m talking about the future of the race.

ZARA

An what race that be Alvin? I know yer a race man, Alvin, but make yerself clearer.

ALVIN

Well ye...ye..yer right, I’m a race man, but I mean everybody. The human race. Somebody got to stand up to this Zara and you are appointed.

ZARA

Appointed? By who’m I appointed?

ALVIN

We’re just trying to help out with Dubois and help you to represent us. It’s desperate times.

ZARA

What do you mean about my appointment and representing you? I’ve got an appointment down at the Courthouse and one at the Church funeral and isn’t that enough terrible appointments for this old lady now? I didn’t agree to be appointed to anything else.

ALVIN

This appointment isn’t much different Zara from that. Those others were made for you by

destiny and so is this one. It's just some bigger, and you're elected. Y'll see.

ROSIE

Remember when we used to sit together in the Center and talk and sing and laugh and tell stories of the Ancestors? You were my hero Zara, my best friend too. Be determined dear.

ZARA

Here I am talkin to dead folk. Dead folk talkin to me. All the poems I've known are pretty simple; they're about lovin your neighbors, havin faith and treating people well, and about the sufferin of my people. That's my creed; and the gospel songs; you know, I love those gospel songs like "gonna lay down my sword and shield by the riverside". I don't know what you want. I'm hopin it'll come clear. Am feelin your closeness to me, Rosie. Alvin you too. But the fate of the human race...that seems too much.

ANCESTORS

Be determined Zara. We are with you. Be brave Zara. We need you. We are with you.

ALVIN

You got all you need Zara. You will see it in time. But you got to have the courage to do what you know is right. No matter how hard it is Zara somebody got to stand up. We appointed you.

ZARA

The whole human race?

(screen fades out as a knock is heard at the door, Zara stares at the screen..... the knock repeats)

ZARA

Brenda?

BRENDA

(enters via door up left. She has a strong Irish brogue or latin accent. She is extremely respectful to Zara. She is young and full of life.

Good Mornin, Ms. Zara.

ZARA

Brenda I am glad t see you *(She glances at the screen)*. *(Brenda looks at her a little concerned. Zara notices and pulls it together)* Morning Brenda, how are you? Would you fix my breakfast before you help me get dressed and washed?

BRENDA

I'm just fine Ms. Zara, and yes I'll fix ya yer breakfast first thing. *(moves to start breakfast with an eye on Zara.)* How are ye feelin Ms. Zara?

(She begins to prepare breakfast of eggs and juice and toast while they talk).

ZARA

Oh Brenda you can imagine what a hard time it's been since the shootins. I suppose you've heard all about it all. I'm worried sick about what's gon happen to Dubois.

BRENDA

Yes, love, I've heard about yer tragedy. Everybody's heard. Me cousin Sean is on the Force and he thinks there's a video of the whole thing. He said you'd want a lawyer to get a look at it. If he says that, you better get it done sooner than later, if you follow my drift.

ZARA

(quickly) The police may have a video of the shootings? Sean says?

BRENDA

My cousin says its become standard police practice. . But they don't show them to anybody and Sean says this sounds like one of the times when the video could just disappear.

ZARA

Well, thank you Alvin.

BRENDA

Now what's this Alvin, yer calling me?

ZARA

Oh, I'm sorry. You know Alvin Smith, he died last year.

BRENDA

Sure I remember him. Nice old fella. Tha stroke made him stutter.

ZARA

I was just talking to I mean I was just thinking about him.

BRENDA

Now don't ya let the shock of these tragedies have ya talking to ghosts and sprites, Ms.ZARA. We'll ha none a tha.

ZARA

Brenda.....Don't ya ever talk with yer past ones, your ancestors? They gone but they still apart of yer life, you know. Don't ya sometimes hear their voices?

BRENDA

(Is concerned for Zara)

I think I know what yer talking about. But I do all the talking n they don't talk back... cause they're not alive.

ZARA

No, not alive. But still they're real, don't ya think? They're part of us.

(Brenda smiles, doesn't answer, pats Zara on the arm and sets breakfast down and Zara begins to eat.)

BRENDA

So wha were ya thinkin bout Mr. Alvin?

ZARA

Oh nothing; just him trying to make do with his stroke n all.

BRENDA

(Relieved)

I see now. Yer a very sympathetic person, Ms. Zara *(pause)*...Do ya wanta watch the Telly or listen to some music with yer breakfast?

ZARA

No thank ya, maybe you could help me get dressed after this?

BRENDA

I'll go get yer good dress out now .

(Brenda leaves stage via hall to bedroom. Zara eats...Lights fade slowly to black. The elders appear on screen again as a chorus sings: "Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho" [with a little praise shouting) End of Scene 3a

Scene 3b

Lights up on stage. Zara comes slowly out of bedroom dressed and with walker and sits down to look at a newspaper. She doesn't notice the singing. She is interrupted by a knock at the door and both the sound and visual of the chorus fades. Chorus sings softly Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho. A knock on door silences the song)

ZARA

Is that you Thomas?

THOMAS

(Let's himself in) Its me mama Zara.

ZARA

Oh, Thomas, I'm so glad ya came.

THOMAS

Of course I'm here, mama Zara. Where else would I be? Are you holdin up?

ZARA

Yes,....well yes and no. But I do count on ya being here. I do.

(She clucks and gives a shy grin as he comes over and kisses her and she hugs him tightly).

THOMAS

I'm sorry I couldn't get bye sooner. They made me work a double shift; put me on the beat.

ZARA

That's ok Thomas, now's you're here.

THOMAS

Something's not right here. Mama Zara, something is goin on—you can feel it down there—something don't track with what they told the press.

ZARA

Tell me about it, now, Thomas. Will ya please tell me?

THOMAS

I know them boys; watched em grow up and start acting like men. They're a long ways from when Daniel got caught up selling weed at school. I keep remembering him calling out the principal as a racist. He cussed that fella out so bad I'd bet his ears are still burnin. Mama Zara, I know neither of them called this up. I know it. Something just doesn't add up.

ZARA

You're right, Thomas. My boys ain't did this thing. It means the world to me that you know they ain't no killers. Thank you Thomas.

(Brenda comes out of the hallway)

BRENDA

Hey there, Mr. Thomas. I'll be on my way to Mrs. Williams now if you're set, Ms. Zara?

ZARA

Thank you I'll be fine Brenda, but I have a favor to ask.

BRENDA

Ms. Zara I'll do anything you need.

ZARA

Brenda, there's more to this than we know. I could use some help if you're up to it? I'm callin a meetin over here the day after the funeral at 7 in the evenin.

BRENDA

Okey doky, I'll come meself with me son and brother--and bring folks from the neighborhood as I can.

(She leaves)

THOMAS

Mama Zara, you know you and the boys are like family to me. You family. My own folks were too far gone to pay much attention, and then I lost them. If it wasn't for you taking me on after Juvenile hall.... *(she interrupts him)*

ZARA

No need to go on Thomas; it's me needin you this time. Do you suppose there's a video tape of this shootin and such?

THOMAS

Well there should be. It's policy. But if it's incriminating evidence... it might come up missing. Jim Peery, whose a leader in the B.P.O.A. is in charge of the evidence locker. If a video made it to the locker it might be incriminatin. Any guilty party'd want to get it out the locker.

ZARA

What's the B.P.O.A.?

THOMAS

That's the Black Peace Officers Association. Some of the white guys call us the Black Panthers of America. Hard to tell if they think that's a joke or if that's how they see us in their heads.

ZARA

Does that mean there's a White Peace Officers Association, Thomas?

THOMAS

Well, not exactly, mama Zara. Not technically speaking, but I'll tell you about that later. Right now we better not waste time. I should go to see if there's a tape and, if there is, make sure we duplicate it before it,(pause) you know, "gets lost".

ZARA

Thomas... Dubois' court arraignment is at noon. I want to tell you, Thomas, I think I'm traveling on divine inspiration alone right now and maybe a bit of salted popcorn the doctor says will kill me. But I need you. If we can't hold up they're just going to kill Dubois too ain't they?

THOMAS

Maybe that's their intention, but we can't let em do that, Mama. I'll be back this evening. *(He kisses her and exits at the door. As he opens the door to leave Reverend Simms is walking up and about to knock. They meet on the threshold)* How are you today Reverend?

SIMMS

We've a difficult road ahead I think. But I'm well myself. And you?

THOMAS

I'm good, pastor, but I've got to be running. I've got to get back to the Station.

SIMMS

Take care now. *(Thomas exists and Simms enters the room coming over to Zara, bending over and giving her a hug)*. And how is my favorite choir member holding up under these terrible events?

ZARA

It's all one can do, Reverend.

SIMMS

That's surely the truth. Tell me what you hear of Dubois. Is he recovering from his wounds? And how are his spirits?

ZARA

He has a broken leg and he had a punctured lung but he's recovering. A bullet went through his leg and fractured a bone. He wants to come to Daniel's funeral. That's the main thing on his mind just now. I know they won't let him out, not even for that.. Would you be able to take me to the Courthouse just now? I was going to take the bus.

SIMMS

Yes, of course I'll take you. You should have called me and asked. I didn't know the arraignment was today.

ZARA

I didn't want to burden you pastor.

SIMMS

It's my calling. I would have brought a few others from the staff. *(He pulls out a cellular phone and calls a secretary)* Felecia, I'll be going down to the Court with Ms. Richards. Ask Elmatine if we can talk later today or else early in the morning. Anything else I need to change? Good. Bye for now. *(Hangs up and pockets phone)*. There ya go.

ZARA

Funny that... My daughter, Tamara bought me one shortly before she died. I kept it as a remembrance but every time I got a call I couldn't make it work, and then I kept thinking, "maybe it'll be her". That made me cry. And then you miss half your life that way—you don't even notice interesting unexpected things you see out there. So I gave up on that phone and that was simply satisfyin. I hope Tamara don't mind.

SIMMS

Zara, tell me more about Dubois. Do you have any idea how this all happened. He's always seemed a gentle lad to me. This is so out of character for him.

ZARA

It's a frame up, Reverend. We're trying to get the evidence if we can. But I know they ain't did this.

SIMMS

How do you know that? Is it his word you're relying on? Sister Zara when a man is in trouble you can't always rely on his word...

ZARA *(Interrupts)*

Pastor, I rely on his word and there's more. He and Daniel were going down to meet some friends, a man and 3 women. They were all to go out dancing. There's that jazz spot down at the Square you know. They had tickets for the show. I seen those tickets. And top of that there's a lot of bad things going on down there in the Police Department. You know there was that police shooting over on 62nd two weeks ago and the news is full of it every day. It's like target practice at the amusement park fer dem.

SIMMS

I know you're angry and upset Zara. And yes, even one police shooting is too many. Sure to tell there are still plenty of racists and some on the police force, but I think we ought not to jump to conclusions or it could get out of control. I think you know what I mean. There are different ways to defend our community. Causing more resentments against the police may not always be the best way. *(beat)* Of course, if we get evidence then something has to be done. But before you rush into something remember you can give to the Lord and he will fight your battles for you. Give it to the Lord and all things will be revealed in time.

ZARA

I take your advice seriously, Pastor. You wouldn't be in the service of the Lord if you didn't care about our welfare. I surely know that. But we're going after that evidence. Then we'll see what's to be done. Doesn't that sound right?

SIMMS

You got to do what the Lord puts on your heart. Take it up in prayer and the Lord will guide you. I can help with some on what needs to happen now. Do you have a burial policy for Daniel? These morticians charge an arm and a leg you know...well that's not a joke, you know what I mean. Could be as much as 8 thousand dollars for burial even with the service being free from the Church. Cremation would be cheaper.

ZARA

(trying not to break down)

Why would I have a burial policy for a 17 year old? I got my own policy. I'm living off of \$856 dollars a month Social Security. What am I going to do about Daniel?

SIMMS

If you'd agree I'll take up a collection at Church and I'll take charge of getting it organized. Do you object to that?

ZARA

(pulls herself together)

I'm a proud woman, you know. I hate to encourage people to pity me. But I suppose there's no other way out of it. And I can't object to your helping me Reverend Simms.

SIMMS

Good woman.... You know, everyone will want to help. It'll work out.

ZARA

Do you mind if we go along now, Reverend?

SIMMS

Of course we can.

(She puts on a bonnet. He helps her up to her walker. They go out together)

(END OF SCENE)

(Musical interlude—His Eye is on the Sparrow--and major set change)

Scene 4a

The set upstage is divided into different rooms in the Precinct station of the Police Department. The actors for sub-Scenes are on stage at the same time with lighting shifting. The actor in the Scene that is not going on sits quietly in dim lighting as if thinking.

McINTYRE

Phillips, come in here please.

PHILLIPS

(enters upstage left) What' up Mac?

McINTYRE

Don't call me that at work. I want you to shape up. You've got stripes to uphold and you damned well better know it.

PHILLIPS

I got ya. But what're you all worked up about my good captain?

McINTYRE

Have you got that footage yet? Has it been reviewed? You seem to be taking this a bit lightly, you know. This family's got hold of a hot shot Black lawyer. The Police Brotherhood is powerful but that doesn't mean we're immune to things getting out. All the judges and prosecutors in the country can't nullify bad PR even when they're on our membership roles. You saw what happened with Oscar Grant, Mike Brown's hands in the air, Andy Lopez, Eric Gardner and so on. Videos are a very big deal. Do I need to paint you a clearer picture?

PHILLIPS

I get the point, but getting to it isn't that easy. Peery runs the evidence locker. We don't want him calling down suspicion on us among the BPOA guys, so it has to be done.. "with finesse", if you know what I mean. So far no one has even looked at the evidence. Besides, we got a lot on the other Richards kid that will settle the whole thing.

McINTYRE

Don't give me that bullshit, Sergeant Phillips. You're a career cop. You know how to get things like this done. Get a key, have one of the guys distract him for a cup of coffee. It's already been 72 hours and this lawyer will be getting discovery going before we know it.

PHILLIPS

You're getting kind of tight assed, aren't you Captain?

McINTYRE *(leaning into Phillip's face)*

Listen up Phillips. You better act like you know who you are talking to. I'm not just your Captain you know. This has all been discussed by leadership at the highest level. If you don't snap to you could be out on the street or *(now slowly and emphatically)* worse--maybe we'll let you eat the whole damned thing. You were the ranking officer and lead actor that night, right? I don't even know why you were along in the car. Traskett's done with training. How'd you get assigned? You want us to start thinking about why you were there Phillips along with Creighton?

PHILLIPS

(acting deferential and suddenly shocked)

Ok, ok. I've got the message. Give me until tomorrow morning. I'll get it and I'll report back.

McINTYRE

Thank you, Sergeant....*(pauses)*...but instead of getting back to me, report your findings to officer Traskett.

PHILLIPS

But I'm his Sergeant, Captain. That's a humiliation. Traskett's loyalty hasn't even been tested in tough situations. That's why I went along.

McINTYRE

Just so's you get the point, you report to Traskett on this. He needs to be brought into the BOP circle anyway.

(Phillips leaves and McIntyre waits until he's sure he's gone)

McINTYRE *(he picks up the phone)*

Myra?

McINTYRE

(He speaks into the phone): Myra, tell internal I want someone tailing Phillips. Full report daily. Keep it quiet. Thanks. *(seemless scene break)*

(Lights go down on stage left and up on Stage right simultaneous with McIntyre's last words. Thomas and Jim Peery are sitting at a table. The room is Jim's small office with lockers)

Scene 4b

THOMAS

Hey Jim, how's it goin'?

PEERY

It's going.

THOMAS

You know this case with the two brothers?

PEERY

Are you kidding? Sure.

THOMAS

Anyone signed to examine the evidence?

PEERY

Nope.

THOMAS

Have you looked through it yet?

PEERY

Not really my job. I just check it in and check it out.

THOMAS

Well, maybe you **ought** to really "check it out"?

PEERY

What do you mean, Thomas? I'm not going to tamper with evidence.

THOMAS

Since when is lookin the same as tampering? I'm not talking about tampering with evidence. I'm like an uncle to those brothers. This thing goes way past the usual racial profiling stops. Dubois and Daniel weren't about cop killing. Not their mind set.

PEERY

So what are you saying here?

THOMAS *(somewhat perturbed)*

Man, we wouldn't have elected you head of the BPOA if you didn't know what was what. Where you at Jim, how come you ain't already been on this?

PEERY

I am on it. Here's a copy for you and Ms. Richards. *(cooly reaches into a satchel and pulls out 2 DVDs and gives them to Thomas, talking seriously and directly now)*. Better lock one away. I've got a copy locked away...

THOMAS *(at first surprised, then smiling)*

Listen, Ms. Richard's holdin a meetin after the funeral to plan out how to help Dubois and such. Should we show it there, do ya think?

PEERY

You better look it over first, man. It's bad stuff.

THOMAS

Like that?

PEERY

You better look at it before you let their grandmother see it too. It was hard to watch. If you want ta show it, tell Ms. Richards it can't be shown or discussed publicly until their lawyer gets a request in for discovery. I got to cover my ass. I'm no good to anybody if they track it back to me leaking it. The Captain already knows **you're** tied in to the family. I'll come by the gathering myself after work to pay my respects. It'll worry the brass about what we be up to. Be interesting jes to see their reaction. Watch the footage, then watch yourself.

THOMAS

Yeah, thanks.

(End of Scene 4b)

Scene 4c

McINTYRES office. He's on intercom:

Yeah, Lieutenant Thomas... (McINTYRE shuts off the intercom, *walks around thinking and brooding for a minute, then Thomas walks in*). (Friendly tone) Oh there you are. I didn't see you on the floor. I've got something to run by you.

THOMAS

About the Richards brothers?

McINTYRE

Right. I know you're their godfather. It's got to be a terrible big shock to you, what happened. And to Ms. Richards. I want you to know that I'm doing a full investigation. I'm not going to let this case go until we've got all the evidence of what happened...how, why, and whose responsible. Your people deserve the same rights as anyone else. Tough situation, but I'm going to need your support if we're to bring justice to bear. Can you give me some time and space before getting more involved in anything outside?

THOMAS

Captain, I'm a dedicated cop. I hope I'm a good cop. I'm godfather to Daniel and Dubois. I'm also a black man in the end too; that's obvious enough, and a citizen. All I can do is try to be the best I can at all those things. I got to go where the evidence takes us; but I won't prejudge the evidence before it's all in. That's all I can do. If your investigation gets to the truth of what happened..well, we both respect the truth. So then we'll work it out ok, sir. I'm sure of that. I'm not going to rush to judgement.

McINTYRE

Good, good. I wouldn't want it any other way, Lieutenant. But please give me some time here. And will you send my condolences to the Grandmother. I guess you'll be seeing her tomorrow.

THOMAS

Yes, I'll be going to the funeral and to her gathering afterwards. I'll be sure and personally tell her what you said.

End of Scene 4c

Scene 5

(A court room. The audience is the courtroom crowd. Zara has entered before the scene begins as sitting on a chair in the front of the audience. Dubois lawyer, Ms. Taylor, enters down an aisle in the audience, Dubois will be brought in from the right wing, the judge enters from the left)

BAILIFF

All rise for the Honorable Alfred Schiazo. Court is now in session. Be seated.

(Dubois is led in, in chains, from up right. He's pallid. His leg is in a cast, and he has facial cuts and bruises. He smiles at Zara then sits next to his lawyer. They are angled away from the audience toward the judge)

JUDGE

In the case of the State versus Dubois Washington-Richards the charge is First Degree Murder, two counts; as well mayhem, conspiracy, and terrorism. Counsel, is the defendant prepared to enter a plea?

TAYLOR

Yes, your honor. He is.

JUDGE

And what is that plea?

TAYLOR

Your Honor Mr. Dubois Washington will enter it for himself.

JUDGE

Right now I'm just talking with you.

TAYLOR

I think he has that right to make the plea himself your honor.

JUDGE

I know his rights Ms. Jefferson-Taylor. Did I say otherwise? I will let him speak as long as he answers only with his plea. Is that understood?

Ms. TAYLOR

Certainly your Honor.

JUDGE
(to DuBois)

How do you plead?

DUBOIS

I am not guilty.

JUDGE

Very well then. Do you waive your right to a speedy trial in order to prepare your case?

DUBOIS

I do not yield my right.

JUDGE
(pointedly to attorney)

Maybe he doesn't understand the custom in these complicated cases, especially in a capital case. You won't have time to prepare fully if he insists. Is this how you want to proceed?

Ms. TAYLOR

We've talked extensively. He understands the consequences, your honor. My understanding is that the prosecution has convened a secret Grand Jury to investigate whether this case is part of a conspiracy to kill police. Mr. Washington is very upset about the death of his brother, but his decision is purposeful and made with full understanding.

JUDGE *(more hostile)*

I didn't ask you about his feelings concerning his brother's death. He is accused of murdering his brother and the officer. We're not here to deal with anything else at this time. And as you well know, killing a police officer is a capital punishment case; and I take most of the capital cases.

Ms. TAYLOR

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE

Your request for bail is denied. Pretrial motions may be heard in two weeks.

(He gavels the Court session to a close) (black out)

(END OF SCENE, ACT)

ACT II

Scene 1

SETTING: *McIntyre is on stage in his office talking on the phone.*

AT RISE: *Before the house lights dim, but after the audiences has seated for ACT II there is a sudden snare rim shot and then the music "Oh Death" as in the O'Brother Where Art Thou sound track is heard. The houselights go down, then the stage lights go to black and slowly come up. McIntyre is on a conference call among leaders of the Brotherhood of Police. He is talking inaudibly below the music and as the music fades he begins*

McINTYRE

Well folks, I am a bit concerned about this current case. The family's got the video by discovery which is bad news. We've been doing just fine. But that Council decision requiring that police live in the community has left us with a large number of Black officers. The Black guys have an organization and this case is now on their agenda. The president, guy named Jim Peery, may be a problem...and I've got a lieutenant who's Godfather to the boys that were shot and on top a that a white Sergeant, Phillips, who doesn't understand this isn't the wild west. He was involved in the event. Video shows he killed our man, Leroy Creighton, a prospect for public office. Phillips claims it happened because Creighton was between him and the dead kid when a shot went off, but the video isn't clear on that ad there's some ambition between the two. I asked for the meeting to say that if this video tape shows up public, I plan to give em our Sergeant, which should get us out of the whole mess, set the record straight.

ERLENE

(Female Voice on speaker phone)

Mac, Erlene here. Phillips is a valuable man. Understands the BOP mission as well as anyone. He's fearless and reliable. Uses military discipline on the men so they know this is serious business not duck hunting—we're into an all out war against the drug dealing terrorist lazy ape bastards, homos, communists, atheists, and abortionists. We've got to stand firm or they'll have us answering to Community Review Boards and such....

McINTYRE

(she's interrupted by McIntyre)

Hold on there now, Erlene. We can't have that kind of language. You know better'n that.

CHIEF

(Male Voice)

This is chief. Erlene, calm down now before you break a blood vessel. The last thing we need is incitement when we are on target to hit our goal of increasing the national prison numbers again within 15 months. Unless someone else has a different view from what we've heard from Mac and Erlene I'd like a poll right now. I'm tending to go with Mac. We don't instigate controversy. Let the Courts play their role. Alfred's sitting on this case; the outcome is fairly well assured. Our role is to be good cops--just remember, will ya, that we are the good guys. There'll come a time to clean house, but we sure don't want a war here. Presently, twenty five percent of our forces in the big cities are minorities and women. We don't have the laws in place yet, the right Court decisions haven't been rendered, to reverse that. Now, let's do the poll on Mac's proposal to use his discretion and, if need be, to feed the sharks.

McINTYRE *(guffaws)*

Shark feed *(jocularly)*? I guess that's about right, chief.

CHIEF

Ok, just push yes or no on your consoles. *(Waits about 6 seconds)*. There's 24 yes, 7 no and 13 not voting. Look here, need I remind: y'all are the Board of Directors, so what the hell's the 13 not voting all about? Let's do this again. Ready, go. *(Waits 6 seconds)*. That's better: 36 yes, 7 no, 1 not voting. But those that didn't vote, ya know the rules Ther'll be the usual follow up. I'll call each of you to get yer reasons. Unless the Senator wants to say a word, that will do it for today? Ok?

(A group "yeah" comes over the speaker phone).

CHIEF

That's it, then. Mac keep yer powder dry. We are counting on yer makin this go away.

McINTYRE

(hangs up and sits pondering a good while. Then presses intercom):

Myra, could you ask Traskett to come in if he's not tied up.

(McIntyre, writes some notes to himself, then picks up a golf magazine. Traskett enters.)

McINTYRE

Hey Traskett, how's the wife and kids? Everyone doing well?

TRASKETT

Sure captain. Just had our 9th anniversary. Marc and Susan are getting good grades. Sally likes her work at the newspaper. She's promoted to lead copy editor.

McINTYRE

Nice. Glad I got the chance to meet them at the St. Patrick's dinner-dance. You know, my impression is you're very dedicated to your work with the force.

TRASKETT

Is something wrong, Captain McIntyre? Did I do something wrong?

McINTYRE

No, NO. Of course not. You would have been written up and counseled. No it's just that I want to get to know you better on a personal basis. We'd like to encourage you to become more active, maybe a leader in the B.O.P. There are some issues I've been asked to talk to you about. Have you been to some of the general BOP meetings?

TRASKETT

Yes, I've been to a few meetings. And, of course it would be an honor to play some role, but aren't the Brotherhood of Police leaders elected by membership?

McINTYRE

Yes, but not exactly. We in leadership scout all the local forces and school young guys to become leadership. The members ratify our choices, but it's mostly a formality.

TRASKETT

I see. Didn't know that.

McINTYRE

You seem qualified so I wanted to talk with you about it. The Brotherhood is based on loyalty and obligation to police work. Of course the force is also, but we keep things separate. There's no money involved and the things members could be asked to do involve judgments that require a sharp mind--sometimes edgy. Our mission is to strengthen police work coast to coast, mutual support and brotherhood for our members working under these very difficult conditions. We also take public positions on political matters of interest. How does all this sound so far?

TRASKETT

Sounds interesting, but what do you mean by "edgy?" I'm not sure I'd feel ok with doing something illegal, if you know what I mean.

McINTYRE

Well, don't get me wrong now. (*sternly*) I didn't use that word, "illegal," did I? (*McIntyre shakes his head and Traskett shakes his head no as well*) Here's an example. Let's say your supervising officer himself did something that was clearly illegal and not consistent with Department policy, and you were the only one who knew it, who saw it happen. Have you ever been in that situation?

TRASKETT

I have once or twice.

McINTYRE

So what did you do?

TRASKETT

Like you said, he was a supervisor. I gotta admit it. Actually, I didn't do anything. Didn't see any alternative.

McINTYRE

No problem. That's what I would have done too under those circumstances. But let's say that the Brotherhood learns about this and decides that something needs to be done about it because that supervisor went far out of line, jeopardizing the integrity of the Department. Let's say you are asked to ... say..help fix the "problem." We're concerned about having an internal situation get into the media. So we decide to avoid the usual disciplinary channels. Mind you, I'm saying the guy's done something that was really bad; and you're maybe asked to level the playing field. Could you do that?

TRASKETT (*trying to conceal his nervous reaction*)

Well, I can't respond on hypotheticals. It would depend on the circumstance, I'd say. In the example you gave, where a cop both jeopardized the Department and acted illegally I'd most likely be ok with it so long as the punishment wasn't life threatening. Still it would have to be that kind of a scene I think where we weren't out for some kind of personal payback. I mean, what about the Internal Affairs Unit? Aren't such things their job?

McINTYRE

Sometimes Internal Affairs isn't involved because no one will tell them what's going on. Like in your case you mentioned. People get afraid that the whole thing could blow up in their face or go public and so on. And we learn this particular cop was acting out of personal motivation, and so he needs to be retired. I couldn't frame up another fellow cop who hadn't done anything egregious either. But I mean, say this supervisor you mentioned framed up someone innocent or worse?

TRASKETT

I can see that. I know we have to protect each other from rogue cops and if that's what the situation required, naturally I'd protect the Force.

McINTYRE

I believe you and I figured you would. But then again, as you say, we're just talking hypotheticals here and people get tested by reality, don't they. It's just experience that teaches us who you can trust.

TRASKETT

Sure, we trust people based upon their record, how reliable they are over time. I appreciate your having confidence in me, Captain.

McINTYRE

So let's meet once a week. I'll orient you and keep you up on BOP affairs. We'll see where we go from there. Meanwhile do write up a private report for me on the incidents you mentioned, where you saw inappropriate behavior, who was involved and so on. Don't worry, I'll protect your anonymity. No one else will know about the report.

TRASKETT

Yes, sir, Thanks. But if I'm the only one that saw something, won't information I give you implicate me as the person who ratted on someone?

McINTYRE

Exactly my point, you see. That's why we have the BOP; so that things like the report you'll give me, if we decide to act on it, doesn't have to get out into the open air at all. No record of it at all. And it will be destroyed. Will you set up the next meeting with Myra, son? Say hi to the wife and kids for me, ok?

(Lights to Black, Musical Interlude: "I'll Fly Away" chorus, last verse, chorus; from O'Brother sound track). (END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

SETTING: *the Church; the theater audience is the Congregation. Actors arise from within the audience to come forward and speak.*

Minister SIMMS

(At pulpit up stage right preaches to audience. Call and response is from back stage and audience.)

God has a plan. Let the church say Amen. (AMEN!!) God has a plan. A complete, perfect, divine plan. We can't always see the plan of the divine but God has a plan. When God moves we stand still. I said when God moves – we stand still. (YES, WE DO!!). When God calls we answer. (TELL IT, PASTOR!!) God has called Daniel. Daniel has answered. We may feel sadness over the loss of Daniel but our Lord tells us to weep when we come into this vale of tears and to rejoice when our race is done. Daniel is through with all the troubles of this world. Daniel is home with God the Savior, his race is run. So I ask that you help us rejoice in Daniels life. Let us lift him up-- as we remember him as he was in life, for that life, no matter how brief, was his gift to those who miss him now. We know that God works wonders and he calls his children for a purpose. Despite our own personal feelings of grief and loss, we are here to celebrate. We are here to celebrate the gift of Daniel's life and his home going. Today as we say our good byes to brother Daniel Washington Richards, we seek shelter in our faith in a living God and in him take our refuge. For in our faith we find shelter and sustenance. God has a plan. God has a plan for each and every one us. Our beloved Daniel has played his part.

Song: Swing Low Sweet Chariot—a woman's voice (Delia) comes through the speakers either live or recorded. Simms stays at pulpit in stance of prayer.

Sister DELIA

The LORD is my refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust! He will cover you with The Blood, and under His wings you may seek refuge; his faithfulness is a shield. You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day. Sister Zara please come to us.

Zara walks to the podium and is hugged by Sister Delia.

ZARA

Daniel Washington Richards was my daughter's chile, my grandson. I loved him. His brother loved him. *(She stops to collect herself)*. I want the world to know that Daniel was loved and his life mattered. *(She gathers her strength to her purpose)* I want to thank you all for being here for me Daniel and DuBois. Daniel has gone to be with the Lord. He was only 17. He didn't give me trouble. He did all he could to make my life easier. He took me over to the senior center whenever I wanted to go, to the doctor's or shopping. When he come to me he used to be very quiet and fearful after his ma was killed, but in the last year he was starting to find himself again. He was in his life again, you know? He was goin to finish up high school this year and his grades looked good enough for him to go to college. I know that I'm not supposed to feel sorry for myself, because he's gone to a better place. But I can't help it. He was so young and he didn't deserve to have his life taken from him. He should be here with me. The folks that killed my Daniel want his brother too. They aim to kill Dubois, but he ain't caused his brother's death, or killed no police. Daniel is gone. Dubois is all I got in this world and I refuse to let them take him from me too. I'ma do what I got to do. If you got a mind to help, come to my house tomorrow evening at 7. We can't let these things keep goin on...we just can't... *(She can't go on, Thomas helps her sit down, a young woman moves to show concern and when Zara is seated goes to speak. Thomas remains standing behind Zara)*

(Each of the subsequent speakers comes to the pulpit/podium)

YOUNG WOMAN

(she is tearful, speaks through emotion)

Daniel was my friend. We been like brother and sister since he moved over to live with his Gran, 5 years ago. He'd tell me all kind a things that was on his mind. He was full of funny stories. He said he was gonna be a doctor. I think he woulda made it too. He was the smartest boy in school. He had a soft kind voice ... he was a very gentle person, and he sang real nice. He taught me how to keep guys away if they come on strong, cause I had some bad experiences and there wasn't no one to turn to. I miss him ...
(sits next to Zara they comfort each other)

THOMAS

(comforts Zara as he leaves to speak, he is composed but it is obvious how deeply he feels)

Daniel was always one of my favorites, and he never let me down. He never resisted my help or tried to take advantage. He was always eager to learn. He learned even from negative experiences. He was shaping up to be a fine man; he did have a deep inner calm and he had Mama Zara's humor and humility. He was able to laugh at himself; he let go of troubles, took the lessons, and moved on. I loved Daniel Washington as if he were one of my own sons, and I miss him. *(He gives Zara a reassuring look and sits)*

Reverend SIMMS

I need to say a few words to Sister Zara here today. Sister Zara has stepped forward whenever people needed her. She stepped up and took on the guardianship of Daniel and Dubois. We wish that Dubois could be here with us today to comfort his Grandmother and to share in this home going service, but, as most of you know, he has other obligations over which none of us have any control. God bless him and keep him safe. *(Directly to Zara)* We hold him in prayer and wash him in the blood of the lamb. Sister Zara he is on the altar of God bound by our faith. If we but believe in the Lord our God all things are possible. Have faith Zara. Have faith. I offer you God's promise, I assure you that though we may weep now, my God has promised joy comes in the morning. We just need to make it through this dark night.

(He turns back to the congregation)

My remarks are from the Book of Job -- Chapter 1, verse 6. The Lord sent this scripture to be a balm on our bruised souls in this moment of tribulation.--"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came forth also. Lord said unto Satan: Has thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fearest God. Satan answered the Lord: Thou hast made a hedge about him, and about his house, thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But take away your favor and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan: behold I withdraw my favor; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."

And of course we know what kinds of troubles were brought down upon Job. When Job sought out the Lord to know why he would let Satan treat him so -- his friends fell away from him, and called him sacrilegious. Oh, Job was tested! (HE WAS TESTED) Oh my God was he tested.(YES HE WAS PASTOR). Trials and tribulations poured forth on old Job's head. Church do you feel like Job sometimes? I say, do you feel like Job sometimes?

CHORUS

Oh My Lord. Amen. Hallelujah. Praise God.

SIMMS

Job was tested. All manner of trouble fell upon him. It rained misery on Job. I want you to know church, sometimes I feel the weight that fell on Job's shoulders. Do you ever feel like Job?

CHORUS

Amen.

SIMMS

When I feel the weight of Job on my shoulders I do what Job did. I rest in my faith. I look to the Lord. I look to my rock. I look to my shelter. I lean on my faith. I said, I lean on my faith. I go to my refuge. Because my God, who so loved the world he gave his only begotten son, tells me that joy comes in the morning. I tell the devil get up off me like God told Satan to release his faithful servant Job. Faith the size of a mustard seed can move a mountain because my God is able. So when I feel the weight of Job I call him up. Can I get an Amen Church? I need an Amen right now!

CHORUS

Amen. Preach Reverend. Preach. Praise God. Amen. Hallelujah. Yes Lord. Oh, My God.

SIMMS

We want to offer Sister Zara support the way she has supported so many others but we must use calm and measured judgment and not jump quickly to point fingers at others, for we are all in need of help and understanding. If we act rashly, if we respond more from our passion than from reason, we may multiply the trials and tribulations of our own community. I know that no one here would want to see any more harm to our people than we have already suffered. I feel sister Zara's grief, but my role as a counselor and pastor guides me to these words and thoughts. There is a difference between truth and belief and only the Lord knows all. I say we give this to the Lord. Let God discern for us. Put your faith in the Lord God Almighty. As we come to a close I ask you to call up the Lord and let him guide your actions. Remember Daniel as a bright promise, remember him as a soulful song, remember his love for his Grandmother and his brother and rejoice that God has called him home to his infinite love.

Let the church say Amen.

CHORUS

Amen

(Closing music: I'll Fly Away) (END OF SCENE)

Scene 3

SETTING: *A bar.*

AT RISE: *Background jazz throughout the scene. Peery and Traskett sitting at a table.*

PEERY

I gotta say you got balls, man. You're risking your future, to say nothing of your life, comin in to us on this. These guys play hard ball.

TRASKETT

(A more direct demeanor than earlier)

Aren't we all brothers, man. I hope that's no offense. You know, I grew up down in the South Bronx, New York. Survival was day to day.

PEERY

I know what you talking about.

TRASKETT

We had this...well yeah it was a gang--bout 40 of us, very diverse, young women too. Five of my best friends were killed in the space of 3 years. We started Triboro Shadows after we screened the video of West Side story together, one Saturday night—we had got Angelo who owned the neighborhood bar to let us watch it there after he'd closed. He hung around, made sure we didn't get into his stuff. This Puerto Rican guy Simon, comes up with one of those blood brother pledges--everybody swears that we're in it together so anyone uses differences against each other get thrown out. We led a school strike to support a teachers' protest over class sizes, we exposed some racist teachers. We set up a local youth newspaper, El Perico, nothing big. That was south Bronx.

PEERY

I heard you had some kind of history that made the brass interested in you. Go on.

TRASKETT

Well, the very first meeting of the BOP I could see there's a big problem going down here that I hadn't expected. And now this mess. You know, man, I was there that night Phillips shot up the brothers. I think I still want to be a cop, but I can't deal with this shit. It's probably the same all over. They're using these attacks to keep their power thing going. I think it's a part of a bigger political thing....

PEERY

Traskett, we want to trust you, but so do they. We got to be careful here. You can help by tellin us what you're hearing over on that side a town?

TRASKETT

At is request, I gave the Captain a report on what went down that night. He hints they might ask me to finger Phillips. That scared me enough that I went back into McIntyre's office after hours and bugged his phone; cause I'm believing this thing goes way beyond him. Now get this. He's asked me to train for leadership in the BOP and he expects me to get involved in these community meetings around the case. I'm supposed to attend the meeting at the Richards' house and report back. Are they setting me up? Phillips is screwed, but he deserves it, the bastard. But maybe I am too. I don't know how much I should tell them from the meeting.

PEERY

Oh, they'll have someone else there besides you. An me and Thomas will be there too. There won't be any secrets. Tell them whatever they want. Tell them what happens at the meeting. Keep us in the loop on what turns up on your wire. I can't believe you did that man.

TRASKETT

I will. Can you be sure Thomas and Ms. Richards know all this too?

PEERY

Why don't you say hello to Thomas right now?

TRASKETT

What? You mean your wired right now? *(Peery shakes his head affirmatively)* Geez!

PEERY

You obviously realize this is serious business Traskett. We got to know where folks stand. We can't afford to take chances. I hope I made a point. You, me, Thomas, all of us. We're the small fry here. Those BOP guys have a lot more hi-tech and tricks than we do. And so much pull. Be very careful. You slip up you expose us all.

TRASKETT

Man, they're testing me to make sure I'm white enough and you're worried I might be too white. I don't know whether to laugh or cry. But I know I'm in with yas.

PEERY

Just keep your head up out the water and watch your back. This is something nasty and we got to get it right the first time. Let's get on up outta here.

(Lights fade) END OF SCENE

Scene 4

SETTING: *Zara's living room with same backdrop as opening Scene minus the right wall. When the Scene begins Zara and Thomas are stage left, down from the front door, talking toward the right. There is an audience to the right, seated. The seats appear to extend off into the wing. Speakers from the audience can be visible on stage or off stage right.*

ZARA

Thanks to y'all for commin out. Warms my heart, friends, you from the Church, the senior center, friends of Daniel and Dubois, Brenda's people, and all of ya. I can't thank you enough. You bein here is the beginning for us together. There's a lot of hard work, and risks ahead. We're facin big problems. It's not only Dubois life that's at stake, but you'll see there's a bigger picture. Bigger even than here in our community; it goes all over the country and back into history; maybe half way to hell itself. You know, I'm not used to speechin so I'll be having our fine lawyer, Ms. Sheila Jefferson-Taylor to answer questions on some details on Dubois' case after a bit. First I got to show how the sadness came on us. Here's the police video we got. Look up over there at the sheet we hung up.
(Video plays on the white sheet and the people react).

Y'all saw that Dubois and Daniel were shot by the police. Them that are putting Dubois on trial know that we have this videotape because they had to give it to us; we been expectin that they would free Dubois, but they been keepin him. Why? We don't know for sure, but we found out there's more riding on this than the life of my Dubois—one innocent young man. If there are any police officers here today, I want to be very clear about our intentions and I hope you'll transmit this back to your chiefs. We are goin to turn this tape over to the media, the Justice Department and the FBI. We was just waitin for you to release Dubois first, but it's gonna happen soon now even if ya don't.

VOICE

(from the crowd)

So why haven't you given it to the TV already?

ZARA

Because we been worried. We still don't know what the police and prosecutors have in mind, keeping an innocent young man. We'd hoped they'll come to us and tell us something. We know, and now you all know, he should not ha been arrested at all. As things stand we have a month until the trial. We'll hold a press conference right soon. Even if they don't release Dubois it'll happen soon anyway. We're not goin to let them manipulate the situation.

leans over to Thomas in a stage whisper)

And waiting a bit gives us the time to hook some bigger fish too, if we're lucky.

JEFFERSON-TAYLOR

Are there other questions?

JIM PEERY

(stands up)

I'm Jim, I live over on 48th and I come over to lend my support. So what are you asking people to do?

TAYLOR

Zara you want to answer that question.

ZARA

Well, aren't you Mr. Jim Peery, the policeman that's a friend of Lieutenant Thomas'?

PEERY

Yes, Ms. Zara, that's right.

ZARA

Well, Mr. Jim Peery, thank you for commin. There's talk all over town that these shootins aren't accidental a'tall. And we need people to tell us what's goin on in these Police departments with all this stopping and frisking and shootin of people with their hands in the air and the rest. You might help with that and Thomas too. Fer everyone else, contact yer families all over the place; friends and relatives and community groups and such. We need numbers and we're gonna get to the bottom of this whole mess. We likely to march and boycott and make noise and such. So we're asking that at the end of this meeting, you come up and talk to any of us that's up here in front and tell us how you can help, what you think you can do and we'll get the details down. Let's form some committees and such and take it from there.

JIM TRASKETT

(stands)

I'm saddened by your loss Ms. Richards, My question is: Are you concerned about the police interfering with your plans?

ZARA

I recognize you too. You been in this house afore with that nasty murderin one. Thank you too for comin along here. I think we have to have faith that we're doin the right thing in seeking justice for Dubois. We can't be worryin about anything like that, or we'll not ever do a thing. We're not goin to provoke the police and such. We be out for justice, that's all. So we'll just have to grow our strength, keep ourselves together and get through whatever bad times may come....if we can depend on each other and people a good will like yourself we've no need to worry. We got to have faith in each other, to help each other stand up tall. That's what it's about now.

JEFFERSON-TAYLOR

So we've already got a legal committee, a publicity committee, a community organization liaison committee, a church outreach and a fund-raising committee you all can join. Anything else?

VOICE

How about a Black media Committee?

JEFFERSON-TAYLOR

Do you want to put that under publicity or make it separate, Mr. Baker?

VOICE

I'd say separate because it's about time we directed some pressure at the Black media, except for Mary and Willie they's turned mostly to just selling stuff to our kids and not standin with us.

TAYLOR

All right. You want to be the point man for the Black Media Committee, Mr. Baker?

VOICE

Yeah, I'll do that. Come talk to me.

ZARA

Ya know, I never done anything like this before, but I do read a lot and I remember when Dr. King stood up and spoke out against that Vietnam war and injustices of all kinds; and that Malcolm —I read his autobiography. And that man said we gonna have to fight by any means necessary and that these lynchin people have got a lot a chickens that are all due to come home on dem sooner or later, like overdue books at the library. And I believe it. So I guess we're done for now. Are we done folks?

VOICES

Yeah, sure nough.

ZARA

Well then, let's stay in touch.

VOICES

We're with ya.Let's do it then. Amen.

Room noise, hubbub, people and chair moving noises and music [civil rights song "ain't gonna let nobody turn me round"] comes up as sound simulates people moving around and socializing at the end of a gathering. Then there is acute and sudden silence)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 5

SETTING: *Ballroom (perhaps resembling the Audobon Ballroom where Malcolm X was killed) with stage, podium and a speakers table. Backdrop from Zara's apartment is gone. Chairs from the previous scene have been turned 90 degrees to face to back of stage. The podium has been moved to up center and two narrow tables (left and right of the podium) sit behind the podium. Zara sitting behind one table facing the audience. Brenda sits behind the other table stage right. Thomas sits behind the table stage left next to Zara.*

AT RISE: *As the lights come up we see (on the screen up right) rapid fire spliced video excerpts of Oscar Grant and other police shootings and attacks and then only the end of the clip of Dubois being shot and kicked. As the video closes out a spot focus goes to Zara crying who uses her walker to struggle up to a standing position and moves forward to the podium. When Zara gets up Thomas rises to help her, then returns and sits in her seat so that he is somewhat obscured from the audience by the podium. There are 3 reporters, one with a TV camera set up on a tripod, in the area of the orchestra pit, slightly lower than the stage.*

ZARA

Well there you have it. The police video shows that Dubois is innocent like all the others, and the police are guilty of murdering Daniel and Officer Creighton (*murmuring*), but they kept Dubois anyway.

MALE REPORTER 1

Ms. Richards, we've learned earlier today that based upon a review of the evidence, presumably this video, that the District Attorney is dropping the charges and Dubois is being released. Can you confirm this? And if it's true why did you decide to show us the video? And are you sure this video hasn't been tampered with?

ZARA

I heard the same thing about Dubois and I'm waitin to see him before me before I get my hopes up too high. Where is he Mr. Reporter? Why ain't he here with us? We got this video some time back with what they call discovery by our lawyer and we decided it was important to release it to the public, but we thought they'd let Dubois go free sooner than this; that they'd offer us some consolation for dese crimes. We felt they'd have to release Dubois once we had this evidence. But they didn't. Mr. Jim Peery, who'se in charge of police evidence confirmed this is the real thing, not tampered.

MALE REPORTER 2

Ms. Richards, isn't releasing trial evidence, against the law, or at least, likely to prejudice the case.

ZARA

Ya saying that the truth in this video, might prejudice the case? Is that what you're saying, son? Well, I don't know about the law, but this information's too important to keep it hidden. And it's not trial evidence because there won't be a trial. Ain't it plain that this shows why. Should we just let our innocents be treated that way and not show the truth? We were thinking the police might come to the public with this video themselves over the past month and drop all the charges; that they might release Dubois when they had to give us a copy; but they acted like it didn't exist, so we're doin' what we needed to protect our community from this kind of terrible behavior. We've all seen this kind a thing before, ya know.

MALE REPORTER 2 (*persistent*)

But what if it had gone to trial? The judge might have found you in contempt and could have removed your lawyer from the case.

ZARA

Yes, you can tell it anyway ya want, but that didn't happen did it?

LOTTIE

Don't you pay these men no mind, Ms. Zara. I think what you did was brave, and the public is goin to think the same thing. Could you go on and let us hear what else you have to say now about this situation?

ZARA

That's Ms. Lottie from the Church Newspaper there, I want you all to know. Thanks for coming along to tell the truth, Lottie. And it's good to see so many news folks here. So's time to go on and let you know this is only the beginnin of our story, this video. We've got a sorry tale that is going to make a lot a people cry and shake and shudder. It's about more than this one nasty policeman you saw there...and....

(before Zara can finish this thought a man with a ski mask pulled down over his face stands up from the back of the theater audience and starts firing a gun repeatedly at the stage. There is the reverberation of weapon discharges from the sound system as if about a dozen or so shots are fired within a few seconds. Zara slumps to the floor. Brenda who has been sitting at the right table also falls, obviously shot. Thomas dives to the ground in Zara's direction both trying to avoid the shooter and to cover her. At the same time, the masked shooter begins

to run from the theater to the back—he runs up an aisle to the back; sirens are heard. As soon as he reaches the threshold, someone grabs him rips off his mask (a spotlight hits his face revealing Phillips); then shots ring out and he staggers, hit and falls out of the theater. More sirens are heard from the back of the theater; there is a rising din of commotion, human voices in panic and sobbing as the lights suddenly go to

(BLACKOUT)

(Simultaneous with the black out there is a total silence. The theater stays black and totally silent for 15 seconds then there is very low-level crowd murmuring in the dark for about another 45-50 seconds while the stage is cleared and set rearranged)

(END OF SCENE)

INTERLUDE

Before the next Scene opens a semi-transparent curtain, like a veil descends across mid-stage. Behind it, as lights come up about 20% a procession of 4 pallbearers with casket and 2 mourners is seen slowly traversing the stage from right to left. The casket is covered with three flags, one of South Africa, another of Palestine, and a third of Jamaica. A plaintive far off woman's voice sings "I'm gonna put on my long white robe, down by the river side, down by the river side, down by the river side. I'm gonna put on my long white robe down by the river side. Ain't gonna study war no more..." as the verse ends the group has disappeared off stage.

Scene 6

SETTING: *Zara's house as in Act I, Scene I. Peery, Thomas and Traskett on stage seated at the table.*

JIM PEERY

I can't get my head around it. They killed her. I still can't believe it. She's gone; her and Brenda too. And you best believe the bullet you took was meant to kill too. The bug Traskett planted: McIntyre's orders to Phillips. That son of a bitch sent Phillips to kill you.

(Peery is interrupted by a coded soft knocking at the back of the house. Thomas gets up and as he heads for the back hall says)

THOMAS

Shsss...you hear that? *(The knock repeats louder)* That's the Rev. *(he disappears, to return shortly with Simms disguised and wearing a bulky coat)*

SIMMS

Greetings, brothers. I figured after three days you might need some food so I brought you a few supplies *(and he opens his coat and unloads a substantial amount of food)*. Not gonna stay long, but I should probably stay a bit. *(panting)*.

PEERY

Sit down reverend. We are grateful for all you've done but you know they probably watching you.

THOMAS

I checked. Didn't look like anybody followed him.

SIMMS

I am moving in God's time son and like the most high I know how to be mysterious when it's called for. They watching and I am watching them watch me. So somebody else set out from the Church parking lot dressed like me, but headin the other ways fast and furious in my car. They following him alright. *(Thomas and Perry laugh)*. How's my disguise?

THOMAS

You all right Rev. Thanks for taking the chance and everything else you've done. When it's time to do right brother the righteous can't get left behind.

PEERY

We were talking about Zara and like I was sayin, Zara' shout out, my God, it's activated so many communities. Watching the news, there's not much there but I've got word from our people there's been 6 police stations occupied back East. And they marching in Boston, New York,

Phily, D.C., Charleston, Chicago.

TRASKETT

I heard Atlanta.

THOMAS

Tampa, Miami, Biloxi, Shreveport, St. Louis too.

SIMMS

Actually it's 43 cities so far that I know about but that was last night. It's liable to be more this morning. Don't know how they gonna shut it down this time...

PEERY

Thanks to Zara the genie ain't going back in the bottle with people demanding elected public committees to run police and sheriff's departments. I can't imagine McIntyre takin his orders from a publicly elected citizens committee.

THOMAS

Mama Zara done woke the dead. The people are sayin they determined to end all of it—the incarceration, the profitable private prisons with their slave labor, the death penalties and frame-ups, phony voting restrictions--- One of their slogans is: Awake now and we ain't goin back to sleep.

PEERY

But do you'all think they planned to gun down Phillips all along? That makes their story simple enough. Kill many birds with one fool stone by blamin us.

TRASKETT

The one lone rogue cop bit? Put those "armed and dangerous" warrants out on us, like it was a vendetta and we killed Phillips. I don't know. It sounds too pat to be believable.

THOMAS

I think t was that video got Phillips killed. They couldn't chance what he might say to save himself if they arrested him alive. He might of exposed the BOP network.

TRASKETT

Like you said, McIntyre and them knew all hell would bust lose if he lived. Obviously they don't want us to get a chance to talk either. Damn, Thomas, do you think it's come down to killing us too?

THOMAS

Maybe, but they got to find us to kill us. Like am saying: We sitting where they ain't looking. You know, when I think about it, we are armed and dangerous. We got that recording from that wire you put on Mac's phone (*shaking his head in disbelief*)—I can't even count them politicians, judges, police chiefs. That's a damned lynch mob wearing suits, just like the old South.

JIM TRASKETT

And on that line we've got bigots and bigshots—people invested in private prisons, guys who faked voter fraud and promoted voter restriction laws, people trying to close public schools, makin money off every which way of scamming the public. And even though they shut down that Ermaline shootin her mouth off, their chief—who ever he is—was talking plenty a bad shit.

THOMAS

It's a powder keg, Jim, but I just can't get my mind off losing the young brothers and Zara. It's only been a week and I miss Daniel, and Zara. I am trying to look at it through her amazing eyes but it's hard. It hurts in the heart. Cops being just cold blooded murderers. Man... I want them to pay for that, and that still won't be enough.

PEERY

Course, if we stick our heads up they will shoot them off, but one way or another they're going down Thomas. That's the future. Believe it.

TRASKETT

Well, I don't think all of guys on the force would shoot us. Some would, but I do believe there are some that won't shoot us no matter who gives the orders. MacIntyre and them will be playing with fire in that situation. Could cause a revolt. Meantime I guess we're just outlaws.

THOMAS

Traskett, your a friend, comrade, and almost a brother, but you don't live in this black skin to be saying that kind a shit. Don't put your money on them not shooting. Stayin out the line of fire is the best place for us to be at the moment. I know one thing – wherever Mama Zara at she is smiling and that helps me some.

PEERY

Smiling and organizing angles, be my guess.

SIMMS

Sounds about right brothers.

(lights begin to fade out as two conflicting musical offerings are heard from speakers at either side of the stage, first quietly then louder and louder. On one side the Jimmy Hendrix version of the Star Spangled Banner on the other side a full chorus version of "Lift ever Voice and Sing" (also called the Negro National Anthem). These pieces are to be tuned so that both are equally audible and distinguishable and neither blots the other out.)

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK) (END OF SCENE)

Scene 7

(blank stage except Zara's rocker, blue sky with clouds passing by in the background)

AT RISE: *Zara enters from the right; Alvin coming in from the left. Zara comes in with her walker, dragging her legs more than usual and she is a bloody mess. As she moves to the center she seems to grow in size and moves to the very front of the stage.*

ALVIN

Well, there ya are, Zara. We was wondering what was keepin you so long?

ZARA

Oh dear Alvin. Things haven't gone well at all, have they? But here I am anyway.

ALVIN

Now, Now. I wouldn't exactly say that its gone badly.

ZARA

Haven't I failed Dubois n Daniel, God knows, everybody else too. Why am I so tired Alvin? Aren't things here better off? What did I do wrong?

ALVIN

Don't fret now, Zara. Dubois is free. Ain't that something huge, even if he did lose his brother. And you just aks so many questions. S..s...ss..seems like you're always full of questions there. I can't keep up.

ZARA

How am I to understand if I don't ask questions?

ALVIN

H..h..hold on now. You'll understand soon's you get your sea legs. Don't be so impatient.

ZARA

Alvin, I need to talk to someone else. One of the women. You're not helping any.

ALVIN

Come now Zara don't make me cry. You know how my stroke made me sensitive to crying and feeling upset so easily. I'm just playin my part like I'm supposed. We all got a role to play Zara. *(he exists stage right).*

ZARA (*she calls after Alvin*)

I am sorry Alvin I just want to understand.

(before she can go further Brenda comes quickly and gayly in from the left. She's wearing a clean and colorful spring dress).

BRENDA

Here you are Ms.Zara I been waiting for you.

ZARA

Brenda, did you die wit me?

BRENDA

I went with you and I been waiting for you. Can I get you anything Ms. Zara.

ZARA

How I love your kindness Brenda. I'm glad to see you but I want to find out what's happened.

BRENDA

Well here comes ALVIN and Ms. ROSIE.

(Alvin and Rosie walk out onto the stage but don't yet see Brenda and Zara)

ROSIE

(hunched over as she walks in with difficulty mumbling incoherently for a bit....then audibly) And so do not take the name of the Lord in vain.

ZARA (*talking to Brenda*)

Then is ROSIE here the Lord's disciple?

ROSIE

(walking toward Zara) That's just a figger a speech, dear.

ZARA

Of course, but I thought..... *(doesn't finish)* Rosie is the whole thing coming out like y'all wanted? An where's my Daniel?

ROSIE

Oh, don't worry about Daniel. He's doing fine. But you've got a ways to go yet yerself to bring the picture into focus. See, we don't know what's gonna happen down there, til it happens. It's not like it's pre-ordained er something. And I wouldn't want to say that its worked out ok just yet. There's no way of readin the future. The ancestors is smart alright, but all's we can say is we doin our part.

ZARA

But won't the Lord take care of it? And where is the heavenly Host? Can't I get to meet him?

ROSIE

(giggling) So Alvin didn't come clean to ya, did he?

ZARA

What do you mean by that, ROSIE?

ROSIE

Did ya expect some old man on a throne with a big white beard running this show, did you? I guess I thought so myself back in the day. But it's all of us ancients together, you see. And those folks down there, they're part of it too, even when they don't know it.

ZARA

You mean there is a heaven but there's no God on high?

ROSIE

Now, now. I didn't say nothing about heaven, you know. But wouldn't it be kind of out of line for us to have a man God, just another person or such? How are we so special amongst all creatures? Why not a crab or a giraffe, eh? Back there in yer old country din't ya have the Myalman and Obeahman brought from Africa competing to make good and evil and then when things got really bad sometimes them two teamin up to help us poor frail humans? Jesus wasn't in that picture.

ZARA

That's so long ago, Rosie. I can't remember too much. But heaven's in the Bible, you know. Startin in from the beginning in the Garden. What about the Bible, and Jesus? Isn't this heaven?

ROSIE

Yes Bible's the good book. No women writers though. And we noticed some problems there. How long's it Methusala lived, 800 years? And didn't Solomon have 300 wives and kill thousands with his bare hands? Why'd a wise King who ruled justly do that? And we've never seen a white man on a throne anyplace. And why in the world did Eve et that Apple now? She would ha stayed right there in Paradise and that would have been the end of the story. I think it was some hackers that got in as administrators an come up with that one.

ZARA

Well who have I been prayin to then? Even now my prayers for Dubois have been answered, thank God..and what about Jesus, the Son of God? How can you just take Him away from me?

ROSIE

Zara we're all the ancestors, right here. The repository of human history. I can't take nothing from you. But we can't exist here without all of them what's still alive. We're part of their dreams, thoughts, imaginations and prayers. We're their past ain't we? And if they go, we're sure to disappear too. When we saw them kill Daniel and we saw all's they're doing against the earth on a grand scale, we were afraid for the living and the dead too. If no one calls our names that will extinguish the Ancestors, all the history too, like them that tore down the Buddhas in Ganistan and the ancient relics in Iraq, endin that histry. The nastiness is everywhere. We were all so afeared, that we elected to show you what happened to Daniel and Dubois before the rest knew it. We were of a conviction that your strong faith could matter; yer one of the strong, ya are because you'd cared for them and ya always cared for life an yer friends. We knew that you wouldn't let this calamity destroy you if you could help it.

ZARA (*grinning mischeviously*)

I suppose you were right about that. But I got a lot a help an support.

ROSIE

Yes, I think we were right about that. We didn't know; but we were givin it a try. So now it's kinda gone in the right direction....**for a while anyway.**

ZARA

"For a while"? You mean it's not near over? And again you're leavin out Jesus.

ROSIE

Oh, Jesus, he's the finest young fella here. Dark and handsome, like yer Daniel, ya know. And a course we listen to his every word; and try ta follow the best of em. Just now he's out back with your Daniel and Moses playin dominos. I'm sure you'll want to meet him. But on the other matter, oh, no, it'll never be over. It started back before any of us was born and on and on it goes, the history of our people. It just goes on and on, unless the ones left make too many fateful mistakes and end it all, and silence us along with themselves. Otherwise the joy and pain and suffering and beauty and ecstasy and trials and tribulations and the fight fer justice won't go away. The Bible stories and all the rest of the stories the people tell get added on, on and on; it's just endless even if.... Well, that's what its like, just endless.

ZARA

But we'll never get to Glory if we're stuck in this state of affairs; its like bein in a limbo?

ROSIE

Ah, but don't ya see Zara? Your faith is the Glory. Nothin limbo about that *(pause of several seconds while Zara looks intently at ROSIE, who is now glowing in a warm but bright yellow light. Zara scratches her head a bit, slowly, then smiles)*. Yer here, now, with yer friends and passed loved ones an all the Ancestors. It's just that simple, so rejoice and welcome home.

(ZARA smiles falls into her rocker and begins to sing) ZARA

I'm gonna put on my long white robe, down by the riverside, down by the river side, down by the river side, I'm gonna put on that long white robe...*(and just as her voice begins to fade, Lift Every Voice and Sing comes up slowly first in the background then growing louder and louder and the spotlight on Zara gets brighter and brighter until the end of the chorus)*

(LIGHTS OUT)

END OF SCENE, ACT, PLAY