Enough of Him
May Sumbwanyambe
Characters (4)

Joseph Knight, late teens
Ann ‘Annie’ Thompson, late teens
Sir John Wedderburn, mid forties
Margaret Wedderburn, mid twenties
One

Darkness.

The sound of leather whips being administered savagely against human skin, and a woman cries out for help and in anguish upon every vicious strike.

The lashes and the cries should go on longer than we are comfortable listening to. The whips keep lashing, long after the woman being lashed has stopped crying out in pain.

Two

Early 1770s.

Wedderburn is ringing an ornate bell. Enter Knight with a book in his hand.

Knight waits for Wedderburn to turn to him. When Wedderburn doesn’t move:

Knight You rang the bell, Sir John?

Wedderburn opens his eyes and turns to Knight, noticing the book in his hand.

Wedderburn Burning the midnight oil again?

Knight Guilty.

Wedderburn May I?

Knight gives Wedderburn the book, who skims it.

Wedderburn Ah, Plato! So you have finally turned your attention to the Greek philosophers?

Knight His ideas on the father-son relationship are fascinating to me.

Wedderburn I was separated from my father young too.

Knight stares at Wedderburn.
Wedderburn  What?
Knight   It’s nothing.

Wedderburn paces.

Wedderburn  Now let me see if I remember . . .

“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark, the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”

What do you say to that?

Knight   I haven’t got to that part yet.

Beat.

Wedderburn   Is something troubling you?
Knight   I’m just tired.

Wedderburn   You’ve not been sleeping well?
Knight   I’ve been sleeping fine.

Wedderburn offers the book back to Knight, who takes it.

Wedderburn   Tomorrow is a special day, you know.
Knight   Special how?

Wedderburn   It is the anniversary of the day you came into my service.

Knight   Right.

Wedderburn   You’ve been part of my household now for . . .

Knight   It’s been ten years.

Wedderburn   Look at everything I have achieved in that time. This great house restored, my family status restored.

Knight   You should be very proud.

Wedderburn   I am proud. Of many things. None more so than that I had the good sense about me to ignore all the many offerings Captain John Knight brought to port that day from the Phoenix and insisted on purchasing the quiet boy with the big brown eyes in the corner.
Wedderburn slaps Knight’s shoulders and laughs.

Wedderburn looks over his shoulder at the door and then turning back to Knight . . .

Wedderburn Did I not see past the tits and arses and muscles and find a diamond?

Wedderburn laughs at his joke.

Knight laughs too, with much less enthusiasm.

They settle, and Wedderburn sits. Knight stays standing.

Pause.

Wedderburn You may sit.

Knight Early day tomorrow, my Lord.

Wedderburn Right. Of course.

Pause.

Time to retire to bed.

Knight I think so.

Wedderburn doesn’t move.

Knight I expect her Ladyship will be waiting for you.

Wedderburn Right.

Wedderburn stands.

Wedderburn Good night then, Joseph.

Knight Goodnight, Sir John.

Three

The dining room. A table.

Enter Margaret and Wedderburn, behind them Knight and Annie stand out of the way.
Good morning. I trust you slept well?
Margaret I did. Thank you.

Pause.
Margaret About last night.
Wedderburn Yes. I –
Margaret I was expecting you.

Wedderburn I was talking with Joseph. We got carried away . . . the time, it was very late.
Margaret You should have woken me.

Wedderburn I didn’t want to disturb you.
Margaret Yes. I see. I wish you had woken me –

Wedderburn Shall we?

Wedderburn leads Margaret to the table before she can respond, and they both sit. Annie takes a jug of water and approaches Margaret’s side.

Margaret We’ve received a dinner invitation from the Ogilvy’s.

Annie Water, my Lady?

Margaret gestures for Annie to pour. Annie does so and then approaches Wedderburn.

Wedderburn Your uncle?

Margaret Yes.

Annie Water, my Lord?

Wedderburn does not respond. He turns to Knight.

Wedderburn Sit down, Joseph.
Knight  Sorry?

Wedderburn  I said sit down. Join us for breakfast.

Knight looks between Margaret and Annie. Pause.

Knight  Sir John . . .

Wedderburn turns to Annie.

Wedderburn  Make way so Joseph can sit down.

Annie stands back as Knight sits. Wedderburn looks at Annie.

Wedderburn  Come along. Pour Joseph some water.

Annie  Apologies.

Annie pours Knight some water.

Annie stands back. After a beat, Knight turns back to Annie.

Knight  Thank you.

Annie  You’re welcome.

Wedderburn  You must be hungry, Joseph.

Knight  Not really.

Margaret  John?

Wedderburn  I’m starving. What do you want for breakfast?

Knight  I’ll have whatever you think is appropriate.

Wedderburn  You will have what we are having then.

Knight  nods.

Wedderburn looks to Annie but before he can speak:

Margaret  John?

Wedderburn  Yes, Margaret?

Margaret  Don’t you think it would be less distracting if Joseph was to eat his breakfast with the servants?
Wedderburn  I have asked my boy to dine with us this morning.

Pause.

Margaret  Yes John, I can see that, but perhaps it would be less confusing for him. And for the other servants.

Wedderburn  turns to Annie and considers her for a beat. Pause.

Wedderburn  Stop gawking girl and bring some eggs for Joseph.

Annie  My Lord.

Exit Annie.

Knight, Wedderburn and Margaret linger on for a beat in awkward silence.

Four

Annie is washing clothes in a hand basin.

Enter Knight, who searches through several bags. Annie watches him.

Annie  Can I help you, my Lord?

Knight  I’m not a lord.

Annie  You’re a servant? Just like me are you? That’s funny. I guess it will be my turn to sit down and eat breakfast with his Lord and Ladyship tomorrow then?

Knight  keeps searching.

Annie  Are you looking for these fancy stockings, Joseph Knight?

Annie lifts a pair of stockings out of the washing basin. Knight extends his hand.

Knight  Give them to me.
Annie  I think you’ll ask nicely actually. Joseph Knight.

Pause.

Knight  Please.

Annie  There that wasn’t so hard, was it?

Annie  continues washing them.

Knight  I don’t have time for this.

Annie  Hold your horses. I’m nearly finished.

Knight  waits.

Eventually Annie wrings them dry, looking them over.

Annie  Maybe you are just like me.

Knight  What is that supposed to mean?

Annie  Stockings made from silk they may be, but when you look at them really closely, they have holes in them, just like mine.

Annie  laughs, but Knight remains stony faced.

Annie  You don’t like being teased do you, Joseph Knight?

Knight  Give me my stockings.

Annie  Too big and important to be teased by a lowly maid like me, is that it?

Knight  You don’t know anything about me.

Annie  I know your name. Joseph Knight. Do you know mine?

Knight  Thompson. Your name is Thompson.

Annie  I have a first name too.

Knight  Ann Thompson.

Annie  I prefer Annie.

Knight  Fine. Annie it is. When we’re downstairs.
Annie laughs to herself.

Annie ‘Only when we’re downstairs!’

Annie throws Knight’s stockings at him and Knight catches them / picks them up. Annie curtsies.

Annie It was nice talking to you. My Lord.

Knight makes to leave, but turns back after a few steps.

Annie Yes?

Knight stares at Annie.

Annie What’s the matter? Cat got your tongue?

Knight is still staring at Annie. Off stage a bell rings.

Annie Your master’s calling.

The bell rings again.

Annie resumes her washing, singing to herself as she does so.

Knight listens to her.

Annie looks back up at Knight. They hold each other’s gaze as she sings.

Knight That was beautiful.

Pause.

Annie Do you like to dance Joseph? I like to dance.

Annie dances, a few simple steps at first. She also sings.

Enter Margaret. She observes Annie and Knight for a beat.

Knight is unable to reciprocate, and stares at the floor.

Annie stops – it’s awkward.

Pause.

Margaret What is the meaning of this?

Knight and Annie look to the floor.
Margaret  This house is not a village hall, is that understood?
Annie   Yes, my Lady.
Margaret *turns her focus to Knight.*
Margaret  Is that understood?
Knight *looks at Margaret.*
*Pause.*
Knight   No . . . It is not a village hall.
*Pause.*

Five

Margaret, Wedderburn and Knight are sitting at the table eating in silence, with Knight sitting between Wedderburn and Margaret.
Margaret and Knight look at one another. *After a long beat:*
Knight   My Lord –
Wedderburn Yes, Joseph?
Knight   May I have your permission to travel to Dundee?
Wedderburn I don’t see why not. At the end of the week.
Knight   I would like to go tomorrow.
Margaret The maids have leave to go to Dundee tomorrow.
Knight   I know, my Lady. If it pleases his Lordship, I would like to travel with them.
Wedderburn What will you be doing in Dundee?
*Pause.*

You will tell me the nature of this pressing business if you wish to go.
Wedderburn looks up from his plate and stares at Knight.

Wedderburn Well?

Knight New stockings. I would like to buy new stockings for myself, my Lord.

Margaret Do the silk stockings he has already chafe too much?

Knight They do not.

Pause.

Forgive me, Lady Margaret. They do not. But they do have holes in them. The servants do not respect me.

Margaret I think he should be grateful for his special silk uniform. And be silent.

Throughout this exchange, Wedderburn continues to appraise Knight. Eventually:

Wedderburn You may go to Dundee tomorrow.

Knight Thank you.

Wedderburn and Knight resume eating, while Margaret stews.

Margaret I had to punish one of the maids today.

Wedderburn Did you?

Margaret She was absconding from her duties.

Wedderburn That won’t do.

Margaret Dancing, and singing, as matter of fact. In the washing parlour.

Knight stops eating.

Knight I could think of worse crimes.

Margaret She should have been doing her duties.

Wedderburn Quite right.
Margaret  So, you think I was right then. To punish the maid?

Wedderburn  The maid should have been doing her duties. A punishment seems only appropriate. This is a house of rules after all.

Margaret  A house of rules. Yes.

Beat.

I told the girl that for no less than two weeks, she should eat on her own in the library. Without the company of the other maids. And there will be no privileges, like going to Dundee. So that she might reflect on the importance of fulfilling her duties the way this house requires.

Knight  Two weeks?

Margaret smiles at Knight.

Wedderburn  Perhaps a week would have been enough for a first transgression.

Margaret  Was I too severe?

Wedderburn  No, two weeks is fine.

They all carrying on eating, Margaret and Knight still eyeing each other.

Margaret  The man she was dancing with. He should receive two weeks isolation also.

Wedderburn  That seems like fairness. The same punishment for all. Jamaican justice. Right, Joseph?

Margaret  She was dancing with Joseph.

Pause.

What will Joseph’s punishment be? He will be punished, won’t he?

Pause.
Enough of Him

Wedderburn Leave us now, Joseph.

Knight doesn’t move.

Wedderburn Must I always repeat myself?

Knight exits.

Margaret Finally. Just the two of us –

Wedderburn Do not presume to make a fool of me, woman. Do not presume.

Six

Margaret is resting on a bedside chair.

Enter Annie with a foot bath, which she places by the side of the chair and waits.

Annie Lady Margaret.

Margaret does not move.

Annie Your bath is ready, Lady Margaret.

Again, Margaret does not move. After a beat, Annie touches Margaret on the shoulder.

Annie Lady Margaret?

Margaret removes Annie’s hand from her shoulder. Annie steps back and waits.

After a beat Margaret sits up.

Margaret Is it warm?

Annie I heated the water myself.

Margaret Go on.

Annie kneels and takes Margaret’s foot in her hand. Margaret kicks out.
Margaret  What good is warm water if your hands are freezing cold?

Annie  cowers. After a beat:

Margaret  Give me your hands.

Annie offers out her hands. Margaret inspects them.

Margaret  God have mercy! These hands are filthier than a soldier’s feet.

Annie  No there naw.

Margaret  Excuse me?

Annie  Nothing.

Margaret  Never contradict your Lady . . . and never keep her waiting.

Margaret takes Annie’s hands in her own hands and rubs them until they are warm. Margaret releases Annie’s hands.

Margaret  There, that’s better isn’t it? See for yourself.

Margaret watches Annie put her hand on her own cheek to check.

Annie  Thank you.

Margaret gestures to the foot bath.

Margaret  Go on.

Annie bathes Margaret.

Seven

Margaret is in bed. Wedderburn is standing, staring at her.

Silence.

Margaret  The way you are looking at me.

Wedderburn  What of it?
Margaret  There is something about it. Something in your eyes. I find it unsettling.

Pause.

I’d like to know what you are thinking of?

Wedderburn  I’m not thinking of anything.

Margaret  You must be thinking of something.

Wedderburn  I’d like to talk about something else now.

Margaret  So talk. What do you want to talk about?

Pause.

Margaret  I feel like you are punishing me.

Wedderburn  I’m not punishing you.

Margaret  I feel like that is why you keep on inviting your slave to eat with us.

Wedderburn  I have no reason to punish you. Do I?

Margaret  No.

Wedderburn  Then it must be that I am not punishing you.

Pause.

Margaret  John –

Wedderburn  Turn your mind to something else.

Pause.

Margaret  What could make you look at me with such disgust?

Wedderburn  It was not disgust.

Margaret  Shame then?

Wedderburn  That’s what you think? That I am ashamed?

Margaret  Yes, that is what that looked like to me.
Pause.

**Wedderburn**  You are wrong. You could not be more wrong.

**Wedderburn** makes to exit but before he can leave:

**Margaret**  It is the correct time of the month.

**Wedderburn** turns back.

**Wedderburn**  I know.

**Margaret**  gestures to sit.

**Margaret**  Come and lie down. Let us try again.

**Wedderburn** sits. **Margaret** tries to seduce **Wedderburn**. **Wedderburn** allows her caresses for a beat but then his hands ball up into fists. He stands.

Pause.

**Margaret**  What more can I do? Tell me what I can do.

**Wedderburn**  Talk less. Try talking less, woman . . . You just keep talking and talking.

*Exit Margaret. Wedderburn sits, deep in thought. The light changes, taking us back to . . .*

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**Eight**

* A memory of 1760s Jamaica.

Bright yellow tropical sunshine, almost too bright and yellow and hot to be real. The distant sound of tropical birds.

**Knight** is reading. *His clothes are very simple.* **Wedderburn** contemplates him.

**Wedderburn**  I want you take the rest of the morning off.

**Wedderburn** takes the book off **Knight**.

**Wedderburn**  You have plenty of time to read in the evening. That is an order.
Knight *doesn’t move.*

Wedderburn  Joseph. What do you do to enjoy yourself?

Knight  I read.

Wedderburn *laughs.*

Wedderburn  One day Joseph, when I am old, and you are wise from reading every book that man has written, I’m going to free you. Then what will you do?

Knight  You would free me?

Wedderburn  Can you imagine it? What a sorry sight you would be. I would wager, the most miserable free man in the whole of Christendom. All that freedom and nothing left for you to read.

Wedderburn *laughs to himself, but Knight does not.*

Knight  How would I earn that freedom?

Wedderburn  Go for a walk.

Knight  How many years would it take?

Wedderburn  Walk the grounds.

Knight  Three years?

Wedderburn  Allow your mind to wonder.

Knight  Five years?

Wedderburn  Listen to the birds.

Knight  In five years I will be –

Wedderburn  Listen to the birds –

Knight  I will be –

Wedderburn  I said, go for a walk.

*Pause.*

Knight  Of course. Apologies.

*Exit Knight.*
Nine

Silence.

Annie is sat by a table eating.

Enter Knight, who watches Annie for a beat. Annie notices Knight and stands.

Pause.

Annie I can leave if you want—

Knight It’s fine.

Annie I don’t want to be in your way.

Knight You’re not . . . I left my book in here.

Knight points to a book on the table.

Annie picks it up and traces her fingers across the book’s cover.

Annie Sir . . . Will . . . iam . . . B . . . lack . . . sto . . . ne

Annie looks up at Knight.

Annie Don’t look so surprised. I received my church education just as every other girl did in the parish.

Knight I meant no offence.

Annie and Knight hold each other’s gaze.

Annie No offence taken.

Knight Good.

Annie offers the book to Knight.

Annie Here you go.

Knight doesn’t take the book, still looking at Annie.

After a beat, Annie puts the book down and collects her things to leave. As she does this:

Annie Well, I better be going then. I wouldn’t want to delay you from your dinner with the Wedderburn’s tonight.
Knight  Do you want to know what it says?  

Annie  stops.  

Knight  approaches Annie and takes the book to find a specific section. Knight gives it to Annie and points to the page. 

As Knight recites it word for word, Annie looks up at him.

Knight  ‘There is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination, and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property; or that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe.’

Pause.  

Annie  What other tricks can you do?  

Knight  I don’t do tricks.  

Annie  If I could do tricks like that –  

Knight  I don’t do tricks.  

Pause.  

Annie  I wouldn’t waste my remembering on boring things. Do you want to know what I’d remember? Things that make you feel in your heart. Not the things that hurt your head, thinking about. I don’t suppose you know any things like that, you being Mr. Serious all the time?  

Pause.  

Knight is silent for a long beat. Annie really watches him.  

Knight  I am a child, maybe four, five. The naked soles of my feet are pressed snugly into the white hot sand. My eyes are wide open, looking at the line, the line where heaven touches the earth. Everything is so clear, and the colours of the world feel more real somehow. The yellow ball of fire changes to hues of orange, and then something lighter than an orange, until it merges with the sky, like whiskey.
dissolving in a glass of water. I see the silhouettes of birds flying home across a sky that is now the colour of red wine; and the sun is half into the water, but its reflection in the lake makes it look complete. Hours pass, but it feels like just a moment until that big ball of yellow has set, giving way to a thousand other smaller dots in the sea of night. In Jamaica. For a slave. Like me. Dancing and singing, laughter even . . . all was forbidden.

**Annie** I thought it was because you didn’t like me. I thought you might have felt like dancing with someone like me, was beneath you.

**Knight** looks back at the door.

**Knight** To be caught doing those things was dangerous. What we could not do with our bodies, we instead learned to do with our minds. And when the sun went down and the masters slept. We told stories . . . stories ‘that made your hearts feel’, the same way dancing and singing might.

*Pause.*

**Annie** offers out her hand.

**Annie** I can show you. If you like?

**Knight** considers **Annie**, then takes her hand.

**Annie** slowly repeats the steps she showed **Knight** in the washing parlour, this time guiding him. **Knight** watches her, entranced.

**Annie** starts to sing as she dances.

**Knight** soon mirrors her movements – **Annie** leading as **Knight** follows. When they finish, **Annie** and **Knight** bow/courtesy.

*They hold each other’s gaze, before **Annie** exits.*

**Knight** sits, mind full of the past. The light changes like his thoughts and we are in . . .
Ten

A memory of Jamaica 1760s.

Bright yellow tropical sunshine, almost too bright and yellow and hot to be real. The distant sound of tropical birds.

Enter Wedderburn in simple clothing. He picks the book up off the table.

Wedderburn The privation of good.

Pause.

Wedderburn looks at Knight.

Wedderburn The privation of good.

Knight ‘The privation of good’, is a theological doctrine often attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo.

The doctrine states that evil . . .

Pause.

Wedderburn Continue.

Knight The doctrine states that evil, unlike good, is insubstantial, so that thinking of it as an entity is misleading. Instead, evil is rather the absence or ‘privation’ of good. In the way that dark is the absence of light.

Wedderburn So what does all that mean?

Pause.

Repeating words from a book back to me like a parrot is not the same as learning . . . One is a trick, the other knowledge.

Knight I know that –

Wedderburn It means, Joseph, that all perceptions are based on contrast, so that light and dark, good and evil, are imperceptible without each other. Darkness appears only when sources of light are extinguished . . . and the
relationship between light and darkness can also be used to frame an understanding of good and evil.

*Pause.*

**Knight**  Good and evil are the same as light and darkness?

**Wedderburn**  Yes.

**Knight**  Darkness is evil?

**Wedderburn**  And lightness is good.

**Knight**  How very convenient.

**Wedderburn**  *laughs*, as **Knight** looks at his Black skin.

**Knight**  So he was saying darkness cannot prevent light?

**Wedderburn**  Just as evil can offer no resistance to any source of good.

**Knight**  But –

**Wedderburn**  St. Augustine of Hippo believed that goodness cannot be actively opposed.

**Knight**  Yes. But by that logic . . . by that logic evil is normal, evil is always.

**Wedderburn**  *thinks this through for a beat.*

**Wedderburn**  Good, Joseph. Very good.

**Knight**  Good is an exception? An effort?

**Wedderburn**  Yes –

**Knight**  And without that effort, does that mean that evil will be created out of nothing?

**Wedderburn**  It is a very bleak view, I agree.

**Knight**  You cannot truly believe that . . . anymore than you can believe that a man who is dark may fall to sleep one night and, by sheer force of effort, wake up one morning and be white.
Wedderburn silences Knight by raising his hand. Knight obeys.

Wedderburn  It is just as important in life to know what you disagree with as to know what you agree with. Remember that.

Eleven

Two dressing rooms, either side of the stage. Margaret is being dressed by Annie. Wedderburn is being dressed by Knight.

They continue in silence until both are fully dressed.

Wedderburn stands in the mirror admiring himself.

Annie stops and looks up – Margaret is staring at her.

Pause.

Margaret  I’m going to ask you a question, Annie . . . I want you to answer honestly.

Annie  Yes, my Lady.

Margaret  Have you ever known a man?

Annie  I’m not married.

Pause.

Once. When I was younger.

Margaret  Tell me about that.

Annie  There isn’t much to tell.

Margaret  Please . . . Please.

Pause.

Annie  What do you want to know?

Margaret  What was it like?

Annie  I was very young. He was old. It wasn’t love.

Margaret  Did he enjoy it?
Annie  I think so.

Margaret  You’re sure?

Annie  nods.

Margaret  How are you so sure? He told you perhaps?

Annie  shakes her head.

Margaret  He never had to?

Annie  No, my lady.

Pause.

Margaret  Did you enjoy it?

Margaret  looks at Annie. Sees something in her eyes – hesitates.

Margaret  You didn’t enjoy it?

Annie  shakes her head. Almost in tears.

Pause.

Margaret  Did you have questions? Afterwards? After he had finished with you?

Annie  stares at Margaret. After a beat.

Annie  No, my Lady. I did not have any questions.

Pause.

Wedderburn and Margaret  step forward and we are in –

Twelve

Wedderburn  and Margaret  stare at each other – either side of a hallway. Behind Wedderburn  is Knight. Behind Margaret  is Annie.

Margaret  moves to leave.
Wedderburn  Will you not be joining us for supper?
Margaret stops.
Margaret    I shall not.
Pause.
Well, good evening then.
Wedderburn  Good evening.
Exit Margaret.
Annie     My Lord.
Annie exits after Margaret.

Thirteen

Knight is sat by a table reading.

Enter Wedderburn with two goblets. He places one by the table near Knight.

Wedderburn stays standing, staring off.

Wedderburn  Do you ever think about the past? About Jamaica, Joseph?
Knight    Sometimes.
Wedderburn    I wonder. Do you think a person can forget?
Knight    The past?
Wedderburn    Jamaica.
Knight    I don’t know.
Pause.

Wedderburn    I’ve been dreaming of it of late. Of the markets. It feels vivid, real. Like I was there again for the first time. All that energy, excitement. The smell of it even . . . Sometimes I see the faces of those poor bastards out
there on my brother’s plantation. Bodies stripped bare. Mutilated and left to rot in the sun.

Knight stops reading, his gaze on Wedderburn.

Wedderburn Do you ever have problems trying to do your duty?

Knight I do what I have to.

Wedderburn Happy, eh? To be a slave. To have no will. To make no decisions. Driftwood. How very restful it must be.

Pause.

Wedderburn looks again into empty space.

Wedderburn What now? What now?

Exit Wedderburn.

Knight tears a page out of his book.

Fourteen

A table.

Knight is putting the final additions to a toy raft woven together from tree branches. Enter Annie. She watches Knight for a beat as he takes the page from his book and turns it into a tiny sail.

Annie It looks like the beginnings of a boat.

Knight A raft, you mean.

As he carries on working:

It’s something I used to do as a child. I’d build these out of –

Annie Sugar cane?

Knight Do I look like I had a death wish?

Annie smiles.
Annie and Knight look down at the ‘raft’.

Knight So where are we sailing to?

Annie I don’t know, Joseph.

Knight The game can’t start until you decide where we are sailing.

Annie You decide. You can tell me all about it.

Knight I want you to decide.

Knight waits for her to think of an answer.

You decided, yet?

Pause.

Annie How about . . . everywhere?

Knight Everywhere isn’t a place. You have to be more specific. Try again.

Pause.

Annie makes to exit, but before she can Knight calls after her:

Knight Do you not want to play anymore?

Annie Is that what you’re doing? Playing? Is making me feel stupid a game to you?

Knight Making you feel stupid? How?

Annie I can’t imagine like you, Joseph.

Knight Of course you can.

Annie I’ve never been outside Perthshire.

Knight You can read. Anybody that can read can imagine.

Annie I can read, yes. But that doesn’t mean I’ve got big worlds inside my head like you.
Knight holds out his hand, and after a long moment, Annie takes it. Knight leads Annie over to the table. She sits. he places the raft in her hands.

Knight Close your eyes, Annie.

Annie does so. Knight is silent for a while.

Knight Have you ever seen the sea before?

Annie I’ve seen the River Tay, by Port Dundee.

Knight Try and remember the sound of it. The sound of the water moving, the crashing of the waves. Can you hear it in your head?

We hear the sound of the sea as Annie does – it is magical.

Annie I can hear it.

Knight Good. Hold on to that sound. That is what the ocean sounds like. It’s just water, just like the River Tay, but it’s bigger, so vast it might be everlasting. And crossing the ocean, can you see a wooden ship so small it seems it is travelling the length of the world? And that’s you on that ship, can you see yourself?

Annie I think so. What can I smell? What am I standing on? What’s beneath my feet? –

Knight Forget about the darkness below you . . . just look ahead of you. Right at the front of the ship, that’s where you are. You can see sunlight glistening on the waves like a promise of hope.

Open water is so beautiful, but you’ve been out at sea for so long now that you long to be on land again. And there it is, way ahead but drawing closer. A cheer goes up from the sailors behind you as the ship ploughs towards Kingston Harbour. It’s all tall masted frigates, and dock workers scurrying around like bees on a honey comb. The harbour has a bewildering beauty.

Annie opens her eyes, breathless.
Annie I wish I had seen half the things that you’ve seen.

Knight No, you don’t.

Annie Don’t I? When I close my eyes, I don’t see oceans and beauty. I see people living their small lives in small cottages, tilling their small patch of land. I see them with their dirty hands and old ragged clothes. I see the same burns, and the same tatty fields, that’s all I can see . . .

Knight It’s not all oceans and paradises in my head.

Fifteen

A memory of Jamaica 1760s.

Bright yellow tropical sunshine, almost too bright and yellow and hot to be real. The distant sound of tropical birds.

Wedderburn is standing in a simple shirt, covered in blood. He tries to wipe at the blood but it won’t come out.

Wedderburn Joseph.

Wedderburn calls out again but louder.

Joseph!

After a long beat, enter Knight, also dressed simply.

Wedderburn Joseph . . .

Wedderburn trails off upon seeing that Knight is here. They stare at each other.

Pause.

Knight Who was it this time?

Wedderburn The girl. Livia.

Knight exits, and returns with a bucket filled with water and a cloth, which he uses to clean the blood off Wedderburn.
Knight takes Wedderburn’s shirt off then dresses him with fresh clothes.

Pause.

Knight Will she live?

Wedderburn and Knight stare at each other.

Sixteen

Wedderburn and Knight sit facing one another over a chess board. Annie stands back, waiting to reset the table.

Wedderburn studies the board for a long time.

Wedderburn finally touches a pawn, considers moving it, and then withdraws his hand, thinking better of it.

Knight sighs.

Wedderburn Am I keeping you from some pressing matter, Joseph?

Wedderburn continues studying the board.

You have played tonight like a man who fears there will be no tomorrow.

Knight Yes, and you have played like a man for whom the day is ever endless and the night always at bay.

Wedderburn seizes a piece with intent and makes his move.

Wedderburn You place too much value on the lesser pieces.

Wedderburn looks up from the board at Knight and finally notices that he is distracted. He turns to see Annie.

Pause.

Wedderburn Am I boring you, Joseph?

Knight turns his attention back to the board.
Wedderburn  Perhaps you would have Miss Thompson come and take your place at the table instead?

Knight continues to focus on the table. After a beat he seizes a chess piece and makes his move.

Wedderburn assesses the table.

Knight  You once promised me that I could go free.

Wedderburn  I did?

Knight  You said after so many years.

Wedderburn  I did say something like that.

Knight  I was thinking perhaps we should make a contract. Write it down. You wouldn’t object to that, would you?

Wedderburn  Do you not trust me to keep my word?

Knight  Of course I trust you.

Wedderburn  Then why do you need a contract?

Knight  It’s the proper thing to do.

Wedderburn  Yes but why now?

Knight  I just want to know where I stand.

Wedderburn looks up from the board at Knight.

Pause.

Wedderburn  Your timing. It’s curious.

Knight  How so?

Wedderburn  I read a story yesterday in the newspaper about a slave called Somerset. Perhaps you have seen it also, Joseph?

Knight  I have seen it, yes.

Wedderburn  Ah.

Knight  What does that mean, ‘Ah’?
Pause.

**Knight**  The Somerset case is not the reason why I ask . . .

**Wedderburn**  Of course not, Joseph. It’s just an unhappy coincidence that your request coincides with this reckless reporting that Mansfield is going to side with the slave.

**Knight**  It is just that, a coincidence.

**Wedderburn**  thinks on this for a beat.

**Wedderburn**  His master, Charles Stewart won’t allow it to stand.

**Wedderburn**  holds Knight’s stare for a long beat.

Pause.

**Knight**  And if it was you in Stewart’s position? And me in Somerset’s . . . things would be different. Wouldn’t they?

**Wedderburn**  returns to assessing the table.

**Knight**  Wouldn’t they?

They carry on in this silence.

After a long beat, **Knight stands and exits.** **Wedderburn** leans back in his chair.

Pause.

**Wedderburn**  Thompson?

**Annie comes over to Wedderburn, and waits.**

**Annie**  My Lord?

**Wedderburn**  doesn’t respond for a long beat.

**Wedderburn**  I notice you have been spending time with Joseph Knight.

**Annie**  Not when I should be working.

**Wedderburn**  I’m told most nights. Am I under the wrong impression?
Enough of Him

Pause.

Wedderburn *sits down.*

Annie Some nights. After I have finished my duties.

Wedderburn What do you talk about?

Annie Books.

Wedderburn *laughs.*

Wedderburn Such as?

Pause.

Wedderburn *stands and gets in Annie’s personal space, looking at her for an uncomfortably long time.*

Annie We once talked about a Blackstone, my Lord.

Wedderburn William Blackstone?

Annie Yes, my Lord.

Pause.

Wedderburn And what else do you talk about with my Joseph?

Pause.

Annie We sometimes talk about the past. About his past. Never about you. Just about his past.

Pause.

Wedderburn Ah, you’re a clever girl, aren’t you? Careful not to say the wrong words.

Annie I wouldn’t know, my Lord. Can I please go back to my duties now?

Wedderburn You’ll resume your duties when I tell you to.

Pause.

Wedderburn *steps back from Annie’s space.*
Wedderburn Well? Let us hear it then. What does Joseph say about his past to lowly Annie Thompson?

Pause.

Speak, and you may return to your duties.

Pause.

Annie Lightning strikes. A storm thrashes. The ocean is all turmoil –

Wedderburn Damn you, woman! Speak up!

Annie regains her composure, becoming more fluent and confident as she continues.

Annie Lightning strikes. A storm thrashes. The ocean is all turmoil. The ship is tossed hopelessly but you feel safe from the storm, in this room. No one comes and goes, no one but the Captain. The door crashes open. It’s HIM. He takes off his coat and sits down on the bed. ‘Come here boy,’ he says. You walk over to him. He grabs hold of your wrists and pushes you down onto the bed. You start to breathe heavily . . .

Then the ship rocks suddenly, and he flies forward and bangs his head on the wall. He is dazed. You run out of the room, out into the storm – one sailor calls out to you, ‘Hold!’ just as you disappear beneath the deck. Below the deck now, you do your best to move beyond the naked bodies chained together; they cry and moan, huddled together in the dark.

A naked woman reaches out to you. Something about her reminds you of your mother. A disturbing stillness to her: ‘I will die out here,’ she says. You reach out to her, to comfort her. The sailor who shouted ‘hold’ is stood behind you now; he is carrying a whip. ‘There you are!’ he says and raises his hand. But before he can strike you, the captain comes down and shouts ‘Don’t!’

He comes to you as the sailor lowers his hand and hugs you to HIM. An act of kindness. It feels like kindness. The look
on the woman’s face has changed. He takes your hand and leads you back above deck; you go with HIM. On your way up, you see the look on every other slave’s face as you leave. It is the same as the woman: shame, pity, disgust. You know then that you’re not ‘one of them’.

*Pause.*

**Wedderburn**  You may go back to your duties.

**Annie** stares at **Wedderburn**.

**Wedderburn**  Move from my sight.

*Exit Annie. Wedderburn stares out into space.*

**Seventeen**

**Margaret** is sat on a chair brushing her hair with a beautiful ornate hairbrush. Enter **Wedderburn**.

*After a beat:*

**Wedderburn**  Tell me something, Margaret. Have I just seen Ann Thompson upstairs?

**Margaret**  She has been assisting me.

**Wedderburn**  Where is your usual chamber maid?

**Margaret**  Her child has taken sick. I gave her leave to her parents’ cottage in Dundee until the child is recovered.

**Wedderburn**  You have promoted Ann Thompson then?

**Margaret**  Are you unhappy with how I run this house?

**Wedderburn**  Far from it.

*Pause.*

**Margaret**  Will you be joining me this evening?

**Wedderburn**  No, I think not.

**Margaret**  It’s the correct time of the month.
Wedderburn  Well then. I guess that settles it.
Margaret  Please don’t sound too excited.
Margaret stops brushing her hair.
Pause.
Shall we then?
Wedderburn and Margaret start undressing, miserably.
Margaret  In Jamaica . . . I’m sure your life was very different in Jamaica –
Wedderburn  You have no business asking me about Jamaica.
Pause.
Margaret  So did you have relations then, with your slaves?
Wedderburn  When you became my legal wife you agreed to this understanding, not to discuss Jamaica. You have no business asking me about bedwarmers.
Wedderburn moves to exit.
Margaret  Is that what you were thinking about? When the way you looked at me unsettled me so much. Your bed warmers?
Wedderburn stops.
Wedderburn  God save me from such stupid questions.
Wedderburn turns back to Margaret.
Wedderburn  For the last time Margaret, I was not thinking of anything.
Wedderburn approaches Margaret. She retreats.
Wedderburn  Is that understood?
Margaret stares at Wedderburn.
Margaret  How many?
Tell me how many.
Wedderburn  Several. I had several bedwarmers. Are you happy now?

Margaret  I will be happy when we have done our duty and had our children.

Pause.

Did you ever have these . . . difficulties –

Wedderburn  I’m not having difficulties.

Margaret  – with them? With your . . . bedwarmers . . . in Jamaica . . .?

Wedderburn  I’m not having difficulties.

Margaret  stares at Wedderburn.

Wedderburn  No. No I did not.

Margaret  looks crestfallen.

Pause.

Wedderburn  Forgive me. You push too hard, Margaret. Why must you always push so hard?

Pause.

Margaret  Do I not appeal to you?

Wedderburn  You do.

Margaret  Tell me. What is it you did with them?

Pause.

Wedderburn  It was different. With different slaves.

Margaret  Yes, I’m sure that’s true. No one person can be exactly the same.

Pause.

There was nothing that you particularly liked?

Wedderburn  walks off.
Pause.

**Wedderburn**    Well . . .

I liked to watch them crawl upon their hands and knees. And I liked them to be silent. Deathly silent. I didn’t even like to hear them breathing.

**Wedderburn** stares at **Margaret**.

**Wedderburn**    I liked them to lick my feet.

One time I whipped a . . .

**Margaret**    Go on.

**Wedderburn**    The first time I whipped a female slave, I thought I knew how such a thing would make me feel. Sad? Disturbed, perhaps? But no. As the skin peeled off her flesh, I did not feel any of those feelings. I felt alive, I felt full of life and with every crashing whip, I felt aroused.

Silence.

**Wedderburn** sits down. Exhales.

**Margaret,** stunned, watches him for a long beat. Eventually:

**Margaret**    Look at me.

**Wedderburn** ignores her.

**Margaret**    Please look at me.

**Wedderburn** looks at **Margaret**. **Margaret** gets on her knees.

**Margaret**    Would it help. If you were cruel to me?

**Wedderburn**    I can’t do that.

**Margaret**    You mean you won’t?

**Wedderburn**    You do not know what you are asking of me.

**Margaret**    I am asking you to use me like you would them.

**Wedderburn**    I will not.
Margaret  Why not? Why not, John?
We have our duty as husband and wife.

Wedderburn  That I would use you as some Black bitch in Jamaica? Because I find the idea repulsive.
And you should find it repulsive too.

Eighteen

Annie’s bedroom

*Enter Knight and Annie.*

Annie  Lock the door, Joseph.
Knight  *considers this for a beat, then does as he is asked.*
Annie  Keep your back turned.
Knight  What?
Knight  *faces the door, waiting.*

Annie  *opens a cupboard door, standing behind it so Knight can’t see her. She takes off her cap. And ties a ribbon in her hair.*
Annie  I hope you’re not looking.
Knight  I wouldn’t dare.
Knight  *hears Annie approach.*
Annie  You can look now.
Knight  *turns to face her.*
Annie  Do you like it?
Annie  and Knight  *stare at each other for several long moments.*
Annie  There’s something I need to tell you Joseph.
Pause.
I’m with child.
Knight starts laughing, softly at first but then a much more full bodied laughter

Annie So you’re happy then?

Knight Happy? Am I happy? One day soon, Annie Thompson, when I am free and we are away from this house, I’m going to marry you.

Annie So you want to marry me now?

Knight sticks out his hand. Annie takes it.

Annie and Knight dance.

A bell rings somewhere else in the house.

Annie You better get going.

Knight I do. I do want to marry you.

The bell rings again.

Annie Don’t keep him waiting, Joseph.

The bell rings again. Knight and Annie finish, Knight steps back and takes Annie in for a long beat until –

Annie Joseph. Go.

The bell rings again and again and again. Exit Knight.

Nineteen

Wedderburn is sitting at the chess board, waiting. He has been waiting for some time. Just as Wedderburn is reaching to ring his bell again, enter Knight. He does not sit.

Wedderburn You’re late.

Knight If it pleases you, we might play another evening?

Wedderburn It doesn’t please me. Sit down, Joseph.

Pause.

I have moved. Rook to King, Bishop three.
Knight sits, but looks directly at Wedderburn.

Wedderburn Perhaps you might try looking at the table.

Knight continues to look at Wedderburn. Eventually, Knight moves and captures a piece of Wedderburn’s.

Wedderburn sighs.

Wedderburn You’re not improving.

Wedderburn makes another move quickly.

I would like to know the reason it took you so long to answer my call just now . . .

Pause.

Did you not hear the bell ringing?

Knight I heard it.

Wedderburn I rang several times.

Knight I lost myself in a book.

Wedderburn You were reading?

Knight That’s right.

Wedderburn You were in the library then?

Pause.

Knight No. I wasn’t in the library.

Wedderburn No, you weren’t.

Knight You sent a servant there to fetch me when I didn’t respond.

Wedderburn Not just to the library, Joseph.

I’ll only ask you one more time. The reason it took you so long to come to my call?

Pause.

Knight stands.
Wedderburn  Sit down.
Knight  I don’t want to play anymore.
Wedderburn  I said sit down.
Knight  sits.
Wedderburn  It’s because of that woman, isn’t it?
Knight  I don’t know what you are talking about.
Wedderburn  You will answer me. Or I will ask that whore myself.
Knight  sweeps his hand across the table so the pieces scatter everywhere, and the board falls to the floor.

Pause.

Wedderburn  stands, towering above Knight who is sat down; he looks every inch the Jamaican master, ready to dominate his slave.

After a beat Knight stands, looking Wedderburn in the eyes.

The two men square up to one another. If we didn’t know any better, we would be hard pressed to know which man played the role of the father and master and which man played role of the son and the slave.
Wedderburn  If we were in Jamaica, I would be obliged to punish you for those actions.
Knight  We are not in Jamaica.
Wedderburn  Do you have nothing more to say to me? No words of contrition? Do you not even have it in you to apologise?
Knight  I will not apologise.

Pause.
Wedderburn  Has it always been so unbearable for you to serve me?
Knight  Not always.
But it is unbearable for you now?

Pause.

You had me come to you once. Some months ago. To this room. I had just started reading the Greek philosophers. Plato. You remember?

I do.

You spoke to me of a common ground between us. That we had both lost our fathers at a young age.

This? This is why your life with me is so unbearable? Because of my generosity?

I looked in your face that day. I could see in your eyes as plain as I could read the words on the page, that you genuinely believe my loss and your loss are the same. Because of your generosity. I said nothing. I always say nothing. I’m so tired of saying nothing . . . We are not the same. We are not the same. Your loss of your father in war and my kidnap and enslavement and removal from my father are as different as night and day. To keep that part of me silent. That is what is unbearable. That is why I must be free.

Exit Knight.

The Wedderburn bedroom.

Margaret sits on the edge of the bed. Enter Annie.

Margaret takes out an ivory hairbrush.

Margaret My hair looks a mess.

Annie That’s a fine brush you have there.

Pause.

Margaret looks long and hard at Annie.
Margaret  It was my mother’s.

Margaret _hands over the ivory brush_. Annie _inspects it._

Margaret  You can brush my hair with it if you like?

Annie  Yes, my Lady.

Annie _brushes Margaret’s hair_. After a moment of this:

Annie  You said your mother left you it?

Margaret  When she died. She left me this brush, and certain responsibilities. Look after my father and his dogs.

Annie  That sounds like a lot.

Margaret  It was. My father was a handful.

Annie  They all are . . . Fathers, I mean.

Margaret  He was a solider. David Ogilvy. In his regiment, they called him ‘Le Bel Écossais’.

Annie  That’s got a nice ring to it.

Margaret  It means ‘the beautiful Scotsman’.

Annie  He must have been a great man. To have such a name.

Annie _and Margaret laugh together._

_Pause._

Margaret  Do you know what Jamaica is, Annie?

Annie  A place at the other side of the world.

Margaret  Yes.

Annie  A place that’s warm.

Margaret  That too.

_Pause._

Margaret  I think Jamaica is . . . a perfect Babylon.
46 Enough of Him

Pause.

Margaret  My husband went there at eighteen. Of course Joseph Knight became a man there too.

Annie *deliberately pulls the brush roughly through Margaret’s hair.*

Margaret  OW!

Annie  I’m terribly sorry, my Lady.

Annie *moves to brush Margaret’s hair again.*

Margaret  I think that will be enough brushing for one evening.

Pause.

Annie *moves to leave.*

Margaret  How is he with you?

Annie *stops.*

Annie  Who, my Lady?

Margaret *looks at Annie.*

Pause.

Annie  I don’t know what you mean, my Lady.

Margaret  These walls have ears, Annie. Secrets never keep.

Annie  I don’t know what anyone has said, my Lady but –

Margaret  Your child will need providing for. Your child with Joseph.

Pause.

I would see a better outcome for you, Annie. Not this sad, miserable –

Annie  I’m not sad like you.

I’m sorry, my Lady. I know you are sad. And there is not a day that goes by that I do not pity you for it. But I am not.

Pause.
Annie  I know you think you mean well, my Lady, but I would not be so desperately cleaved to some unkind benefactor the way Joseph is to his Lordship.

Margaret  You call me unkind?

Annie  See now how your beady eyes stare at me for saying a simple truth – that what you want is not what I want.

Margaret  I just want you to be happy –

Annie  Big people like you, you only understand the happiness of small people like me if their every breath is one of gratitude to your generosity. I’m touched by your offer, my Lady. But I shall not be parted from Joseph.

Pause.

Margaret  If you are right about him, then I envy you Annie Thompson . . . I envy you so very much.

Annie  I am right.

Margaret and Annie stare at each other but Annie looks away first – a hint of doubt. Enter Wedderburn. Margaret notices him.

Wedderburn  Leave us.

Annie faces Wedderburn.

Margaret  We are not finished.

Wedderburn  I will not ask again.

Pause.

Margaret backs down. She hugs Annie.

Margaret turns to leave the room.

Annie  Lady Margaret.

Margaret stops and Annie offers Margaret the brush.

Margaret  No, you keep it. It’s yours now.

Exit Margaret.
Pause.

**Wedderburn** You may sit.

**Annie** I would rather stand.

**Twenty-One**

A bare table.

*Enter Knight, who looks around the room he has spent so much time in, both happy and sad.*

Knight picks up Wedderburn’s bell and sits at the head of the table – Wedderburn’s usual seat.

Knight rings the bell and waits. Silence.

Knight rings the bell for long this time. No response again. Knight rings the bell without stopping this time.

Enter Margaret. Knight sees her but keeps ringing. Wedderburn finally enters.

**Wedderburn** What is the meaning of this?

Knight is still ringing the bell. Wedderburn takes it from him.

**Wedderburn** Have you lost your mind, boy?

Pause.

**Wedderburn** Have you lost your mind?

**Wedderburn** puts the bell down.

Pause.

**Wedderburn** Fine. Fine. Let us all return to bed. We will discuss this in the morning –

**Knight** All my life you have seemed so very big to me, do you know that? Today all I see is a small, bitter, ugly, mean person. You dismissed Annie?
**Wedderburn** I have made a generous offer. Your bastard . . . your child will be provided for.

**Knight** You promised me that I could go free. I ask you now to honour that promise.

**Wedderburn** Not today.

**Knight** I am to be a father in six months.

**Wedderburn** Whose fault is that? Did I tell you to lie with that woman?

**Knight** Sir John, you don’t mean ‘not today’. You mean: ‘just not for her’.

**Wedderburn** Do you call me a liar now? In my own house, you call me a liar? You ungrateful bastard!

*Pause.*

Am I missing something here, Joseph? Have I not been a force for good inside your life?

**Knight** Listen, John –

**Wedderburn** Enough now, Joseph. Go to bed. Go to bed before you say something that can not be taken back.

**Knight** does not move.

*Pause.*

**Wedderburn** I have always tried my best not to ever treat you like a slave. No honest man could accuse me of treating you as low as that. Not since we came back here to Scotland. And no other man has ever treated you as a slave. Because I haven’t let them, Joseph. I have protected you. And this, this is my reward? John? Who are you to address me as John?

**Knight** I am a man. My name is Joseph. And your name is John.

**Wedderburn** You’re not a man, Joseph. You’re a slave. You’re my property. That can not change.
Pause.

**Wedderburn** walks off to compose himself. After a beat:

**Margaret** What if he asked for less than freedom?

**Wedderburn and Knight** turn to **Margaret**.

**Margaret** The unused servant’s cottages, the ones in disrepair. Annie could stay there permanently. Joseph could continue his service –

**Wedderburn** And in this arrangement, my providing a lifelong home for Annie Thompson and her child, on my grounds, this would be what?

**Knight** A gift. A generous gift.

**Wedderburn** No, Joseph. Not a gift. A price for your loyalty. You would be bought then like a common whore?

**Knight** A price worth paying for my child.

**Wedderburn** So it is a fee that you are asking for now? You think I should pay for your loyalty? Have I not been generous enough? All these requests, they come from her instruction. Yes, I see your mouth moving, but it is that woman’s voice I hear coming out from those Black lips.

You think that I don’t know what you feel? Yes, I know. You felt the veins and flesh and warmth between a white woman’s thighs and the irony is, she has made a slave out of you where I had made you free.

**Margaret** John –

**Wedderburn** My answer is no.

**Knight** Free or not, I will marry the one I love.

**Wedderburn** laughs. He laughs and laughs.

**Margaret** Stop this.

**Wedderburn** Don’t be so ridiculous, Joseph. People don’t marry for love.
Margaret  Stop this.

Wedderburn  They marry for position, they marry for status, they marry for security. Is that what you think, that she loves you?

Wedderburn laughs again.

Margaret  STOP THIS MADNESS NOW.

Silence.

Nothing good can come from this.

Wedderburn  I have been a good man to him.

Wedderburn turns to Knight.

Wedderburn  To you. I have been a good man. Why can you no longer recognise that?

Margaret  He does recognise that. Don’t you? Tell him that you recognise that, Joseph . . .

Knight says nothing.

Wedderburn  That woman will not be staying in the disused cottages.

Pause.

I mean, how can I accept such a thing. After she has betrayed this house?

Knight  What betrayal do you speak of now?

Wedderburn  Some valuable items of Margaret’s have gone missing. An ivory brush.

Wedderburn looks to Margaret, as does Knight.

Knight  Annie is no thief.

Wedderburn  Do not badger my wife.

Knight  You owe her her more than this.

Pause.
Well then –

Annie Thompson is not a thief.

Margaret –

She is not a thief, John.

This has clearly been a trying episode for you to witness. Perhaps you might retire to your room.

I will not. And I will not stand false witness against my maid. She is a good and honest woman. She is not a thief.

Margaret, you have forgotten yourself.

No, I have found myself.

You are my wife. And you will obey me and be silent.

I am your wife. But it is not me but you who has forgotten themselves.

slams his hand on the table.

Go to bed. I command you to go to bed.

slams her hand on the table right back at him.

You go to bed.

This conversation is over. Over! Finished! We are done with this!

Silence.

Sir John –

grabs Knight by the throat. Knight stands his ground.

Do not mistake my kindness for weakness.

realises himself and releases Knight. A long pause.
Wedderburn  Look what you’ve made me do . . . Look what you’ve made me do.

*Exit Wedderburn.*

Pause.

Margaret approaches Knight, but he raises his hand to stop her.

Knight  Do not touch me.

Pause.

Margaret  He’ll never understand.

Knight and Margaret really see each other.

Margaret  What will you do now?

Knight  straightens his jacket.

Knight  Run.

Margaret  Good luck, Joseph Knight.

*Exit Margaret.*

Knight  carefully takes off his silk uniform, and changes into very simple, much less ornate clothing and sings.

*As he does so, we hear some clips of the words that will eventually be the famous decision of Sheriff John Swinton. Sounds of a chaotic and busy courtroom.*

Swinton  It is a great question. Does a Black, the moment he sets foot upon British ground, become immediately free?

During this case, I have considered a number of authorities put forward in support of the opinion that slavery was no new thing; that the Romans, those great friends to liberty, understood it well; that even in Scotland in the year 1258 slaves and their children were conveyed from one master to another; in the same manner that sheep and horses are now.

(Steely-eyed.) Let me be clear, it is this court’s opinion that slavery at this day is authorised by the legislator of Great Britain.
In such Jamaican circumstances, our law is transparent and unequivocal.

To quote authorities from the practice of ancient nations, or even from that of our own country in the more early periods of her history, any advocate could have no difficulty in producing an equal number of authorities in support of every one crime of which human nature is capable.

*He raises his voice over the sounds of a chaotic court.*

The presumption of law must be in favour of liberty.

Several courts of justice in Europe have rejected the claim of slavery with indignation.

The great Judge Holt had said well ‘that English air was too pure for a slave to breathe’, and Lord Mansfield has given a liberal decision in the famous case of Somerset.

It is my opinion that the state of slavery is not recognised by the laws of this kingdom, and is inconsistent with the principles thereof. Further, that the regulations in Jamaica concerning slaves do not extend to this kingdom. I find in favour of the Pursuer and overturn the decision of the lower court.

*SUDDEN CHANGE LIGHT And we are in . . .*

**Twenty-Two**

*Dundee, 1775.*

*Outside a small cottage.*

*That beautiful Scottish light that comes just before dawn, perfectly in between the true dark of night and the full light of day.*

**Knight** stands looking out into the dark.

**Annie (offstage)** Joseph. Joseph, where are you? Joseph?

*After a beat, enter Annie, trailing off as she sees him.*

**Annie** Joseph.
Annie stands some way behind Knight. She looks beyond him for a moment, and then turns to leave.

Knight Don’t go.

Annie stops.

Annie It’s too early, Joseph.

Knight I know. I’m just –

Annie Being stupid?

Knight I’m trying to say I’m so –

Annie You’re sorry.

Knight Maybe if you let me speak.

Pause.

Have you ever noticed how dark it is?

Annie What?

Knight Out here in Dundee. It’s darker somehow. And Colder. At the Wedderburns’ . . . it was never dark, was it? There was always something, some candle or fire in the hearth.

Annie kneels to pick up some leaves from the ground and smell them. It’s nice – she did this as a young girl.

Annie God, this place.

Knight What about it?

Annie Being back out here. I sometimes forget how every corner of this place reminds me of my father. Him drinking. Agitating for a fight, following me around the place the way he always did. Last time I saw him, just before I left for Ballindean, I told him to go and fuck himself. And he says to me, ‘go out into the woods and find a stick. And it better be a big stick. A strong stick’. ‘Why?’ I asked? ‘Why do you want a stick, father?’ ‘Because I’m going to kill you with it’.
Knight  What did you do?
Annie  I went out into the woods.
Knight  You actually got the stick?
Annie  I gave him the biggest piece of wood I could find and I said to him, ‘Go on then’.

Pause.

Knight  I’m sorry I wasn’t there with you then.
Annie  Me too.

Pause.

Sir John always reminded me of him, my father. That condescending look in his eye, like I had disappointed him by just daring to breathe the same air:

Knight  Is that why you hated him so much?
Annie  I hated him because of what he did to you, Joseph.

Knight considers the papers in his hand.

Knight  He wrote to me. Margaret Wedderburn has passed away.

Pause.

Annie  Did he say how she died?

Knight  There were some complications after the birth of their son.

Annie  Oh.

Did she suffer?

Knight  It doesn’t say.

Pause.

I have this picture in my mind of him roaming around those hallways, lost and alone and angry and sad. With no one there to be there for him.
Annie  Are you that broken, that everything has to be about him?

Knight  You know I’m tired –

Annie  Yes, well, I’m tired too –

Knight  I’m tired of you . . . I’m tired of you feeling sorry for me. Like I had it so bad! I didn’t have it so bad. Definitely not in Jamaica. Plenty of people had it worse. But in his house, in Ballindean, I had respect, and I never wanted for nice things –

Annie  Nice things? You were his nice thing.

I’m tired of all this standing outside on your own in the dark. Joseph, we have lost too.

Knight looks at Annie.

Knight  I wanted you to have that baby so much.

Anne  I know.

Knight  I wanted to be a father as much as you wanted to be a mother.

I wanted it so much. I wanted it so so much.

Annie  I know Joseph. I know.

Pause.

I don’t know how to make you happy anymore, Joseph.

Knight  It’s not your fault.

Annie  Some days I wake up in a cold sweat, and I roll over, and you’re not there next to me. And I ask myself is this the day that he just walks away. I mean, I’ve got nothing to offer you.

Knight  You’ve got plenty to offer me.

Annie  Then why are you so restless?
Knight Maybe I am broken. Maybe that’s why I stand out here in the dark. After everything we’ve been through, after all these years, I’m stood out here and all I can think of is some stupid thing he said to me once when he was in Jamaica about listening to the birds. It’s like however far or fast I run, this chain will run with me. Even if the courts of law have said I am free, free to go how I please, free to be with who I love, I’m not free inside here. I look around myself and I want to scream because it feels like nothing has changed.

Pause.

I don’t want to feel like I wish I never met you. I want to look upon your face and just feel good, you know? But I’ve been robbed of that. That simple pleasure.

Knight stands there, helpless.

Annie tries to go to him, but he puts his hand out to tell her to stop – as he tries desperately to hold it together.

Annie talks as she edges closer to Knight.

Annie For so many years I felt like I’d been waiting, waiting for some crystal clear moment, when all the grey clouds overhead would disappear. The day I moved out of this cottage, I still felt it inside. That pain. And then I got the job in Ballindean. Still nothing. And then my father died, and I was sure that, that would be the day that I would feel better. Still nothing. And then I met you.

Knight Why can’t I be free? Why can’t I just be free?

Annie holds him close.

Knight holds her right back.

As they stand there together and the sun starts to rise, we hear it nearby – the sound of Scottish birdsong. The notes are simple yet somehow hold so much.