

Enough of Him
May Sumbwanyambe

methuen | drama

LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

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**.*

4 Enough of Him

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.

6 Enough of Him

Margaret Good morning.

Wedderburn Good morning, Margaret. 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?

8 Enough of Him

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.

10 Enough of Him

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** curtseys.*

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.

14 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 . . .*

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?

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.

Wedderburn But it is unbearable for you now?

Pause.

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

Wedderburn I do.

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

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

Knight 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.

Twenty

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.

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 more than this.

Pause.

Wedderburn Well then –

Margaret Annie Thompson is not a thief.

Wedderburn Margaret –

Margaret She is not a thief, John.

Pause.

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

Margaret 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.

Wedderburn Margaret, you have forgotten yourself.

Margaret No, I have found myself.

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

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

Wedderburn *slams his hand on the table.*

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

Margaret *slams her hand on the table right back at him.*

Margaret You go to bed.

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

Silence.

Knight Sir John –

Wedderburn *grabs Knight by the throat. Knight stands his ground.*

Wedderburn Do not mistake my kindness for weakness.

Wedderburn *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.