

THE MUSIC THAT MAKES ME DANCE

A Play in Two Acts

by

Terence E Jackson

Cast of Characters:

Antonio African-American mid 20's to mid 30's

Marcus African-American mid 20's to mid 30's

Mother African-American

Oscar Wilde Caucasian male

The Children Mixed ages. They will also take on the characters of the Spectators, Society, Judas Iscariot and Her)

Time

Present

Place

An urban city

The Set

Only two items are permanent. The bed that remains center stage and a large scrim UPSTAGE that runs the length of the entire stage which will serve as a projection screen throughout the play.

In order for the play to be believable it must move freely between surrealism and a dreamlike ephemeral mood.

SCENE 1

SETTING: The grave site/Bedroom/

AT RISE: Darkness. A photo montage of Black gay couples begins to appear on the scrim accompanied by Nat King Coles' song "Too Young." A bed, CENTERSTAGE can be made out. There are two bodies underneath the covers of the bed. The images fade as the music comes to an end.

The image on the scrim changes into the stained glass window of a church. Slowly we begin to hear the sound of African-American (organ) church music. The intoxicating smell of incense burning fills the air. The CHILDREN reverently enter in darkness.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Chanting in unison, then repeated individually until their voices begin to overlap one another)

In nómine Patris, et Fílii, et Spíritus Sancti. Amen.

(The CHILDREN grow silent as they kneel to pray. Their heads are down and hands palms up in front of them. The image of the stained glass fades as the scrim begins to glow. Eerily words begin to flash on the screen)

LOVE, HATE, LIFE, DEATH, LUST, FAMILY, SHAME, HETERO, PRIDE, HOMO, FEMME, SEXUAL, FELLATIO, GUILT, BUTCH, PAIN, TRANSGENDERED, RACISM, ASEXUAL, FEAR, POWER, FAGGOT, TRANSEXUAL, PENETRATION, STIMULATION, TOP, HIV, BOTTOM, SIN, POSITIVE, ANGER, CUNNILIGUS, SOCIETY, BEARS, S&M, MORALITY, AIDS, DADDIES, FORNICATION, PANSEXUAL, DYKE, RELIGION, GENDER, QUEER, MASTERBATION, LESBO, DENIAL, REJECTION, DECRIMINATION, VIOLENCE.

(The words begin flashing so fast that eventually they lost their individuality, becoming one long unrecognizable stream of consciousness. The sound of a gong being struck brings everything to an abrupt halt)

(In the silence, moonlight can be seen coming in through an open window. We can now see the beautifully beaded and painted bodies of the CHILDREN. We are in ANTONIO's bedroom. Besides a bed, the room contains a nightstand, chest of drawers, large wall mirror, art work and a large armchair. Upstage left is a doorway that leads to a bathroom. Downstage left there is another doorway. A digital alarm clock rests on the nightstand along with a table lamp. Men's clothing can be seen scattered about the room. The radio is on a classic R&B station and 'The Five keys' 'Close Your Eyes.' can be heard playing. The figures underneath the covers begin to move and moan. They are making love away from prying eyes. The CHILDREN rise and quietly walk over to observe the lovers. Frozen, the CHILDRENS positioning come to resemble Caravaggio's 'Nativity with Saints Francis and Lawrence.' The sound of the radio softly begins to fade as the CHILDREN begin speaking, lost in their own reverie)

CHILDREN 1

There comes a time when one just knows. There comes a time when one just knows who one is. What one is! ...And you either deal with it or you don't deal with it... that is! It really is as simple as that. I mean, either you like boys or you don't.

CHILDREN 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Randomly overlapping)

Ashe!

CHILDREN 2

I think the first time I realized I liked boys/men, I was in the second grade. Mrs. Srydale was out sick and we had been told that we were waiting for a substitute teacher to arrive. Then the door opened. ...And baby... In he walked. Mr. Prince! ...And what a prince was he. Six foot four... Lean... With skin the hue of caramel chocolate. Damn, damn, damn!

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Randomly overlapping)

Ashe!

CHILDREN 3

It wasn't the sway of her hips when she walked into the room. It wasn't the way her smile seemed to catch my stare. No... It was her smell... The scent of she that would come to me at night lingering upon my bedsheets like sweet honey do drop. How so very strange it was. But that is how it began... Not with a word or a touch but with a scent. To this day, I still can remember how she smelled.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 4, 5 & 5

Ashe!

(The CHILDREN slowly rise-up, gently pulling the covers off the bed, exposing MARCUS and ANTONIO's nakedness as they make love. The moonlight coming through the window casts a beautiful blue hue upon their brown naked skin. The CHILDREN, the beautiful ones that have passed, are not invisible to them. The CHILDREN are remembering the warmth of lovemaking)

CHILDREN 1

The ritual as old as time itself has begun. Let them come.

CHILDREN 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 2

Let them come for all of us.

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 3

Yes, let them love. Let them love for us all until they are full and their pleasure runneth over.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 4

Let them release their life seed without guilt or without shame for all of us.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6

Ashe!

*(MARCUS and ANTONIO moan in ecstasy
as the sound of seductive tribal drumming
begins to surround them)*

CHILDREN 5

Let them do with their bodies as they wish. ...Away from the prying eyes of those who would judge them. ...Judge this moment as unholy.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 6

And may they come tonight freely...

*(The CHILDREN begin dancing around
MARCUS and ANTONIO. Charged by the
intensity of their lovemaking, the blue light
grows stronger and stronger as the lovers
move closer and closer to climax)*

CHILDREN 1

Finding strength in their oneness.

CHILDREN 2

In their acceptance...

CHILDREN 3

May they come...

CHILDREN 5

To be...

CHILDREN 6

To love...

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Overlapping)

Ashe! Ashe!

(MARCUS and ANTONIO cry out in their ecstasy as the blue light begins to fade and the drumming stops. The CHILDREN return to their previous positions, silently transfixed upon the two naked lovers now lying exhausted in bed. Robert and Johnny's 'We Belong Together' comes on the radio. The song ends and as the weather forecast begins. ANTONIO leans over and turns the radio off)

CHILDREN 4

Time as we know it has become unstoppable. Unbeatable... I never wanted to die. Never thought I would die. Did any of us?

(Addressing the other CHILDREN)

Funny how one comes to believe that one can live forever.

CHILDREN 5

...At least in flesh. ...And when I found out I had it. It! I was mad! Mad at everyone and everything. ...And my anger could not be stopped. ...Fore I was like a ravenous dog and the anger I felt would not be appeased. A vampire I was... Draining the very life out of those who loved me the most.

CHILDREN 4

When I found out... I could have snapped that doctor's ass back 400 years. Snapped him back for bringing me here, enslaved in the first place. ...And for giving me the news that I had contracted AIDS. (*Pauses*) But instead, I tucked my hands deep in to my mouth, trying hard to grab hold of that someone who had long ago been buried deep inside me. Grab hold of that other me who I secretly believed was deserving of this gift. That was the person who use to say "Who cares if I live or die?" ...And I did died. Died alone... Haunted by the voices of the sagrada familia. They had warned me, "Nothing good can would of this." My unholy desire.

CHILDREN 5

Come... Let us take solace in the fact that we are indeed changed and heaven must be near...

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6

(Overlapping)

Heaven must be near.

CHILDREN 5

Fore we have come here tonight having removed the shackles of religion. Coming as spirit and as prayer... Anointed we have come and entered this, the house of the holy. ...And just like them, we too have been spewed from deep within the creator's loins.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3 & 6

(Overlapping)

Ashe!

CHILDREN 5

Heaven must be near, for is this not the warmth of our memories for the ones we have loved falling like rain upon us tonight? (*Pauses*) Let us not be said for change is indeed sweeping through the land.

CHILDREN 4

We have come filled with the power of pink afro's and kinky cherry curls. We who be spirit entering thee... Having come of age in this hostile society... Mystic waters from the centuries come... Come like rain down upon us. Bringing with you a love that is everlasting.

CHILDREN 5

Yes, love, come and fall down upon thee. Sweet like the lemongrass that grows along the banks of the Mo River in Togo. Let us come... Changed... Unafraid... Out front and out loud.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6

Ashe!

*(CHILDREN 4 goes and puts out their candle,
then returns to their former position by the bed.
MARCUS AND ANTONIO kiss)*

CHILDREN 5

The revolution is in the kiss. The mirrored image of our touch... The revolution is found in the ritual of our daily dance.

*(CHILDREN 5 goes and puts out their candle
and returns to their former position by the bed)*

CHILDREN 6

The dance we do in order to hide our true selves away from their despising eyes. Protected by the power of the pink afro's and kinky cherry curls. ...And what is one to do with this?

*(CHILDREN 6 does the same. Then returns to
former position by the bed)*

CHILDREN 2

What is one to do in this hostile God fearing society, when one comes to the realization that one liked boys... Men?

CHILDREN 3

(Interrupting) That she likes she!

CHILDREN 2

(Fervently)

It was only then, having found myself looking straight into the eyes of this quandary that I truly came to understand the ways of those boys who were trying to be men. ... And what I can tell you for certain is that no one wept for me. Not as long as I continue to follow a God that refuses to acknowledge that he or she made me. Must I sit wide eyed and watch as they position the heavy stone across the entrance to the tomb that they have eagerly made for me and my kind? Tell me oh great Jehovah, where I should run and surely I will take flight away from the sting of their poisoned tongues. Or at least tell me where I might hide my face far from their accusing eyes?

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

*(The CHILDRENS replies overlapping
as once more African-American church
organ music pierces the air)*

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Amen brother!....
Preach, preach..!
You better speak!
Say it, say It!
Yes, Yes!

*(Overcome by the Holy Ghost, the
CHILDREN begin to sway back and forth,
moaning. Church is in full session)*

CHILDREN 5

For many are the house of our white brothers and sisters. ...Are brothers and sisters who are indeed like us, descendants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Many are their houses barred to me; Fortified by the same shortcomings and prejudices as those who claim to despise us all. But yeah I say unto thee my children. Let us weep no more for we the children who are indeed darker than blue. Let us come of age. Far... Far away from the prying eyes!

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Amen!

CHILDREN 2

Far... Far away from the maddening crowds. I and others like me have had to come of age. Here in these dark crevices far away from society's hostile eyes. The ritual ancient and foretold has begun...

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Still caught up and overlapping in words)

Ashe! Ashe!
Yes, yes!
Ashe!

CHILDREN 3

(Softly)

...I can still remember her scent. The revolution in her... Our kiss. The revolution passing in spirit from me to her and back again.

(Lit only by the soft glow of the moonlight, the bedroom is quiet now. MARCUS and ANTONIO are still lying in each other's arms)

MARCUS

Was that a gunshot earlier?

ANTHONY

I didn't hear anything.

MARCUS

I thought I heard a gunshot.

(ANTONIO's body language says "I didn't hear anything")

CHILDREN 3

(Quietly begins to sing)

We are climbing Jacob's ladder.
We are climbing...

CHILDREN 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6

(Joining in)

... Jacob's ladder
We are climbing Jacob's ladder
Soldiers of the free.

Every rung goes higher and higher
Every rung goes higher and higher
Every rung goes higher and higher
Soldiers of the free.

We are climbing Jacob's ladder
We are climbing Jacob's ladder
We are climbing Jacob's ladder
Soldiers of the free.

*(Vevers to Papa Legba begin magically
drawing and redrawing themselves on
the scrim)*

CHILDREN 1

*(Moving away from the bed CHILDREN 1
speaks as if in a trance. The plaintive
sound of a jazz flute is heard)*

They have killed him my lover today and yet I can still hear the music. They have killed my lover today for sport. Food for their folly... They have killed him, my beautiful black man. They have riddled his body with bullets because to them, we are invisible and their targets are simply the night air. They have killed him and left me alone to ponder who among them shall help me hold up the sky? The sky is indeed falling and he was a light. A light that no longer shines...

*(The jazz flute is replaced by the sound of
an African agogo and drumming.
CHILDREN 1 begins the calling of the
Gods by dancing)*

CHILDREN I con't

A light that no longer has the power to lead me towards the dance... Our dance... ... And how shall I grief here in this darkness? For I have no expectations when it come to being received. We chose to live out our lives not in the warmth of the sun but in the cool night sky. We chose to move phantom like in secret places always away from prying eyes. Never imagining that one of us might be left behind... Never imagining that one of us, would be forced to become a scavenger within this wasteland of sorrow. Forced to carry the awful weight of this secret to our graves... A secret that now seems to beat down upon me like ten thousand fists exploding against my brain.

(THE CHILDREN form a loose semi-circle behind CHILDREN I who overcome by the descending of the Gods dances more and more aggressively, even bumping and falling into the other CHILDREN who keep him from falling to the ground. ANTONIO and MARCUS again make love)

They have killed him and others like him. Strong... Defiant... They have killed him in Chicago... Detroit... New York... They have killed in Philadelphia... In D.C. ... And in Cleveland... Weep... Weep... Weep for me that I may find the strength to enter the very temple which condemned us? Us, who possess the secret of the dances that are as ancient as the Nile it's self... O' where shall I turn? Should I go to the men shroud in my funeral garb and inform them that they have killed him, my lover? Shall I go to the women and show them that I to have placed a veil across my face for surely my grief is no less greater than their own? *(Pauses)* Or shall I tell them how in my loss I have covered the windows with ash... That I have turned all the pictures in the house around and covered the mirrors and the television sets so as not to stop his spirit from ascending... Or should I simply inform them know that I to have burned myrrh and frankincense for seven days over the bed at which he and I often made love and love it was. Thus is the depth of my grief and they have killed the black messiah and in his place seated a charlatan who eagerly drinks from silver cups and dines from the golden plates. Oh how my heart does ache and longs to lie in his arms once more because I loved him. I loved him more than anyone I've ever known and that scared me. That scared him. Yes, scared him so bad that he began to construct a wall around his heart that became so thick that I found it to be impenetrable. ...And near the end it stood so high that not even he could climb back over it.... For no one told us. ...And there are no classes being taught that speak about the beauty of falling in love with someone of the same sex. No! What they teach people like me is the sin of it. The rotting stench of it! Drilling us day in and day out until finally we take up the cause of becoming martyr's unto ourselves. Slashing away at flesh that be our own *(pauses)*. So no... No one told me that Black men could love that way... That strong! That tight! I just pray that I get the chance to say these things to him one day in that land where they send those of us who belief that we are unlovable. For when I arrive in that place where it is possible to love with that much realness, I promise I won't be afraid, for that is how I'll know this was all worth it.

(Still dancing, CHILDREN 1 collapses exhausted just as ANTONIO and MARCUS climax with the final beat of the drums. The other CHILDREN rush to help CHILDREN 1 to his feet. They slowly move back towards the bed where they once again take up their vigil. ANTONIO and MARCUS are once more quietly laying in each other's arms)

MARCUS

(Looks over at the clock radio on the nightstand)

Oh shit!

(Jumping up from the bed. Looking around for his clothes)

Baby... I got a go.

(Getting dressed)

I'm gonna be late for work. Damn!

(MARCUS moves towards the door. ANTONIO get up and starts looking around for his underwear)

MARCUS con't

Baby go on back ta bed. I'll let myself out.

(ANTONIO walks towards MARCUS. They passionately kiss before MARCUS exits the bedroom downstage left)

I'll call ya!

(ANTONIO having heard the door close, lingers for a moment at the bedroom doorway looking in the direction of MARCUS's exit then slowly turns and walks back to bed)

*(Sitting down on the edge of the bed,
ANTONIO once more turns on the radio.
A radio drama is on. Realizing they are in
for a long night, the CHILDREN make
themselves comfortable around the bedroom)*

RADIO ANNOUNCER

(We are in the middle of the program)

... And now we return to 'A Boy Like Me...'

MALE RADIO VOICE

Why mother, we all know that I've always been an adult. Even when I was a child, I was an adult. Responsible I mean for my own actions. Now I am pretty sure that there are a lot of your friends out there who were more than a little uncomfortable last night.

FEMALE RADIO VOICE

Darling, what do you expect? These things take time. You can't expect any of us to just be ok with it.

MALE RADIO VOICE

...And yet you and your friends in all your uncomfortableness somehow had no problem listen there through the door. ...And I know for a fact that there were a few of your friends who discreetly placed one hand on the arm of the person they were with when we can out of the room.

*(Slowly becoming engrossed in the radio
drama, ANTONIO picks up the crumbled
sheets from off the floor and crawls back
into bed)*

FEMALE RADIO VOICE

I don't understand why that should matter?

MALE RADIO VOICE

I'll tell you why it should matter. It matters because it were as if they were subliminally saying "Don't get to comfortable, because we won't be doing THAT night!"

FEMALE RADIO VOICE

Oh Jonathan, don't be ridicules!

(The CHILDREN are hanging on every word)

MALE RADIO VOICE

Ridicules! I'm being ridicules am I? You and your conservative friends can't stand it that I would have the nerve to appear to be happy...

FEMALE RADIO VOICE

Now you really are being ridicules. No one cares if you're happy or not... It's just just... It's just that we raised you differently. And he you come with... With...

MALE RADIO VOICE

My lover... He's my lover, mother. ...And that is what you can... Your friends can't stand. After all, we all know that it is an abomination before GOD! ...And to think... Your little Jonathan would have the audacity to ruin your little soiree by coming here and flaunting the fact that I'm in love with another man and happy. To waltz through that door last after making love to Tony with a smile on my face. That's what really gets your goat. The fact that I enjoy being gay. The fact that I enjoy the way his arms fit round... Sliding down between his... And the way his legs feel when I am going down...

FEMALE RADIO VOICE

Ohh! Ohh! Jonathan... I beg of you... Please... Please!

(FEMALE RADIO VOICE sobbing)

MALE RADIO VOICE

You're right mother. I don't have to say a thing because I already know what you and your friends are thinking. I am the incarnation of the love that dare not speak its name. Let's just thank God that we weren't out in public making out or holding hands. Lord knows, I wonder where one might get an idea like that from...

MALE RADIO VOICE

So let's just keep it real this weekend mother! You and I both know the reason for the sideway glances. For the hushed snickering as we pass by. Your little boy loves dick! ...And that... Is what I am condemned for... We're condemned for...

RADIO ANNOUNCER

(The radio music is once more heard)

Tune in tomorrow for another episode of 'A Boy Like Me...'

ANTONIO

(Turns volume down. Ruth Brown's 'I Don't Know' comes on. ANTONIO snuggles into the bed listening. The song ends and random commercials can be heard. The CHILDREN move back into their kneeling positions to pray as at the start. Once more words begin to eerily flash across the scrim)

LOVE, HATE, LIFE, DEATH, LUST, FAMILY, SHAME, HETERO, PRIDE, HOMO, FEMME, SEXUAL, FELLATIO, GUILT, BUTCH, PAIN, TRANSGENDERED, RACISM, ASEXUAL, FEAR, POWER, FAGGOT, TRANSEXUAL, PENETRATION, STIMULATION, TOP, HIV, BOTTOM, SIN, POSITIVE, ANGER, CUNNILIGUS, SOCIETY, BEARS, S&M, MORALITY, AIDS, DADDIES, FORNICATION, PANSEXUAL, DYKE, RELIGION, GENDER, QUEER, MASTERBATION, LESBO, DENIAL, REJECTION, DECRIMINATION, VIOLENCE.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

The revolution is in our kiss. Man to man... Woman to woman.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

The revolution is in the mirrored image and we have come tonight to exorcise the demons that have the power to haunt. The ritual has begun and tonight we shall remove the shackles that confine. We are calling to the heaven as spirit and as prayer.

(The words slowly fade away)

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

We have come here anointed. We have come here entering this house having been spewed forth from deep within the loins of the creator. We who are neither he nor she... Come as ancient as the Nile itself. The revolution is coming fore heaven must be near. Blazing in thy own glory. Conquering them by the blood of the Lamb and the word of thy testimony, for we should not love our lives in the face of death.

ANTONIO

(Lying in bed ANTONIO is prayer out loud)

... For I am the fruit and the bread. ...And if he should come to me he will never be hungry and if he should believe in me then he shall never be thirsty...

(Getting sleepy)

For I shall love him... I shall love him more than anyone I've ever known.

(ANTONIO falls fast asleep)

CHILDREN 1

(Looking over at the sleeping ANTONIO)

Children, let us say Amen!

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Sung)

Aaaahhhh mmmeennn!

(The commercials end and we can hear the start of Rufus featuring Chaka Khan's 'Tell Me Something Good'.)

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE I

SCENE 2

AT RISE:

Front porch. Hot summer night.
The teenaged ANTONIO can be seen sitting on the steps of the porch (bed) fanning himself with an old church fan. Black men can be seen walking (DOWNSTAGE right) home from work. Their dungarees are dirty or ripped from working. Some have taken their shirts off.

ANTONIO's mother can be heard humming from inside the house. Night sounds of the insects adds to the allure of the evening. The men have their own music made up of hushed conversations and laughter. An image of a house in the woods can be seen projected on to the scrim.

ANTONIO

I knew that I liked boys... men by the time I was ten. ... And as a teenager, I would sit on the steps of my grandparents' house. We would come here each summer after school let out. My mother and I. Come to visit her parents. My grandparents on the maternal side of the family and I would sit out here on these steps in the sweltering night air. Had to constantly keep my hands in motion in order to stop the gnats from resting around my mouth. There I sat like a panther. Waiting... Eager... Anxious to see the first sign of skin coming from up over the yonder and like magic they would appear in all their glory. They were like gifts sent from the Gods to remind me of who I was and what I was. Gay... A faggot... One of them sissy's. They knew it and I knew it. Yes, even back then I knew what I liked. (*Pauses*) Sitting there on the front porch steps I waited, listening to the rough hue of their voices coming through the trees. Watching for a sign. Any sign... A smile or a wink... It was here that I came to understand the encrypted codes used by boys that had changed into men. Sitting here watching and waiting. Swaying back and forth, intoxicated by the heady scent of musk and dirt mingling together. And then they would appear. Some of them would be shirtless. Having taken them off and slung them over their beautiful dark brown shoulders that glistened even in the moonlit night. ...And I knew what I liked as I watched the sweat fall like delicate pearls from the kinks in their hair to their necks. ...And I know what I liked as it watched eager and full as the tiny pearls traveled methodically down, past the slender chests only to disappear within the cover of their torso's. I knew who I was. A was a boy. A boy who most definitely knew what he liked.

(The Staple Singers 'Let's Do It Again' begins to play. The MEN who are the CHILDREN enter)

(One by one the MEN stop in front of ANTONIO. Their movements are those of strippers. Eventually ANTONIO chooses one of the MEN to be his lover. Each time this happens, the other MEN exit. Once alone, they do a dance of intercourse. After the first of the MEN has had his fun, The MEN resume coming from work until ANTONIO is down to the last of the MEN. This last MAN lays ANTONIO on to the ground. ANTONIO and the MAN bumping and grind as the music comes to a close. ANTONIO's mother can be heard calling from inside the house)

MOTHER

Ant..! Ant..!

(The Man jumps up and runs off leaving. ANTONIO is still on the ground puckering and gyrating as his mother's voice comes closer and closer)

MOTHER

Ant..! Ant..!

(Entering upstage left with a dish towel in hand)

Antonio? Boy what on earth are you doin? Didn't you hear me callin' you?

ANTONIO

(Jumping up)

No ma'am!

(The MEN once more begin their evening walk home. ANTONIO nervously looks on)

MOTHER

Boy! Get on in this here house. It'll be bedtime soon enough and I ain't seen you do a lick of studying tonight. They done told you that you got to bring up your math grades if you want to graduate with the rest of your class next year. Boy do you hear me?

ANTONIO

Yes, ma'am!

MOTHER

Then get on in there!

(ANTONIO runs into the house downstage left. The MEN are once more making their own music out of their hushed conversations and laughter. ANTONIO's MOTHER turns to go back into the house but stops. She looks at the porch steps and then towards the fading voices of the MEN. She has thought something but dares not speak it out loud. Shaking her head she slowly takes back up the tune she was humming from with the house. She walks over and retrieves ANTONIO's church fan which had fallen on to the ground. Picking it up, she gives it a peculiar look. Then, fanning herself, she slowly walks back into the house as the laughter of the MEN can be heard in the distance followed by the natural sound of insects filling the air.)

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

AT RISE:

The bedroom. The lights come up on a tableau of Caravaggio's Adoration of the Shepherds.

ANTONIO is sleeping. The CHILDREN have maintained their silent vigil from the end of scene 1. The spirits of the CHILDREN can be seen swaying to and fro upon on the scrim. CHILDREN 2 gently take up a melody.)

CHILDREN 2

I been in the storm... so long,
I been in the storm... so long children,
I been in the storm... so long... Oh... Give me little time to pray

I been in the storm... so long,
I been in the storm... so long children,
I been in the storm... so long... Oh... Give me little time to pray

Oooh... let me tell you mother... just how far along... Oh... Give me little time to pray
With a hung down head and an aching heart... Give me little time to pray

I been in the storm... so long,
I been in the storm... so long children,
I been in the storm... so long... Oh... Give me little time to pray

Oooh... let me tell you elder... just how come along... Oh... Give me little time to pray
With a hung down head and an aching heart... Give me little time to pray

(The atmosphere slowly begins to perceptibly change as the sound of African percussive rhythms once more begin speaking)

I been in the storm... so long,
I been in the storm... so long children,
I been in the storm... so long... Oh... Give me little time to pray.

(The rhythm seems to be have an effect on the sleeping ANTONIO. His body becomes overtaken by the Gods being summoned by the pulse of the rhythm. The CHILDREN once more assemble themselves in a semi-circle around the bed. Shifting their weight from one foot to the other in time with the rhythm. The composition suddenly stops only to begin speaking in a different rhythm. CHILDREN 2 breaks away from the circle moving downstage where he stand immobile, looking out into the nothingness. ANTONIO, having become possessed by the rhythm lets out a sharp cry. Rising, he staggers out of bed dizzy and trembling and begins spinning around until he is in also downstage.

CHILDREN 2 begins muttering incomprehensible syllables. ANTONIO and CHILDREN 2 both become lost in ecstatic spasms. The other CHILDREN one by one come forward to blow the smoke of their breath into ANTONIO and CHILDREN 2's faces .While holding on to their hands, the CHILDREN each lean forward whispering into ANTONIO and CHILDREN 2's ears which seems to have a calming effect before returning to their place in the semi-circle.

The composition once again takes up a different rhythm. CHILDREN 2 bursts into laughter as ANTONIO's arms begin to wildly beat the night air. CHILDREN 2 begins speaking to an invisible other. As if they were now one, ANTONIO begins a grotesque dance that seems to somehow be a mime of CHILDREN 2's dialogue)

CHILDREN 2

What was there to learn in the music? In a melody so twisted I almost couldn't recognize it. But I did, 'round the same time that I began to recognize them. The black... The white... The Asian... ...And the sexy Latino ones. The men I mean. ... And I was changed. I was changing... I and we... Expanding our horizon. ...Overcome by the adoration of blood and the divination of the spirt. Opening myself up to be made new and whole in the true image of the creator. Our creator...

CHILDREN 2 con't

...Freely pressed myself against the rough bark of the tree of life in order to shed the dry and crackling skin of my former self until I emerged like a moth a new. Changed I was... My hair, my dress, my outlook. Changed by the pain I had to bear. Having given birth while still in the womb to the duality of God and the universe... The she of him and the he of she coming through. Making me whole as I looked up and away from the self-condemnation of my past. Determined to succeed in forging new ground where my ancestors had failed. I was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit having embraced the duality that had always existed within me. I was whole for I was neither he nor she... I was made whole through the acceptance of my gayness that flowed like honey from the eyes of the divine. ...And I was changed as the gates of Eden once more revealed themselves to me. Yes, I was changed. No longer would I be a nigger I was black man... Proud. ...For I was no longer a homosexual... A faggots... A sissy... Yes, I was gay and was proud. Proud to have been born this way!

*(ANTONIO'S dancing becomes intensified
as he moves like a disjointed puppet)*

...That being the summer of my first love. The beginning of that which would become my end... That summer that came to swung my soul towards he. That being the summer in which I had proclaimed myself to be a thing of beauty. I heard his voice calling. Babba... There in the wilderness. That was what was to be learned in the music. In the melody so twisted I almost didn't recognize it. Scattered as it was among the black... Scattered as it was to become among the white... ...And he came to me, babba... Giving me my first taste of the cruelty of love. The ritual gone awry. I found pleasure in their pain... In their determination to kill that which was the sweetness in me. That being the summer in which I first become aware of the many different types of fun men could have. I became aware of the power men felt as they found their voices buried deep within their acts of degradation and humiliation. I who came to eventually offer the only thing of value I had. My body being the only sacred thing I had. Offer there in the temple of their familiar. He, who was the creator of the whore that I became. That summer when he take comfort in cataloging the various degrees of shame he could inflect upon me until I did come to bear on my body the marks of Jesus and the sweetness that dripped like sap from my very pores. Look at your son as he lay naked there... Having allowed them... The men to leave only their tainted seeds buried deep within me. That being the summer of my first love... When the ritual began... At dusk... When the women were in the kitchen... You who can into my room to discover me lost in my innocence... Dripping with a sweetness that permeated the air... You who found me alone with an open book.... That is when the deception began. The bond that would not be broken, no matter how many times I tried to stop the ritual from beginning anew.... Like clockwork at dusk, when the women were away. You came... Bull whip in hand to enter me, hot and eager as the word faggot tumbled from out of your mouth and into my ears. It was you who came and left the hairs on the back of my neck singed as my muffled protests leaped from my mouth into your burning hands. Yes, it was you who tried to train me into believing that this was the consequences for allowing the sweetness to come out in public.

CHILDREN 2 con't

My sweetness you said forced you to force me down... Down to that place between your legs where there was only bitter sweetness. Where there was no air... Only word of a storm approaching... The shame too painful to hold... For it is tattooed across my heart. A melody so twisted that I almost couldn't recognize it. Recognize you... My father... My love... My rapist... Oh how long is this going to last... The shame of it, that is..? That summer you decided that the sweetness had to be eradicated? Yes, that was how the ritual began. Running as it were parallel to that which one could call sanity. You had become haunted by the shadow of my melody. Ignited by the flame of my acceptance of who I be. You, who grew more and more ashamed. You, who eventually came to hate the fact that it was your seed that had been responsible for bringing this sweetness into the world. ...And yet how could I blame you? Gorilla, by love... The truth of the matter was that in spite of everything, I believed you when you said you loved him... You the creator of the whore that I became... I loved you... More than anyone I have ever known. You who was my father and my rapist... It was you who taught me the consequences for embracing the duality that had always existed within me. Breaking open that which once had been made whole... Yes, I was changed that summer. I was no black man... I was a nigger, a faggot, a sissy. ...And I was proud of it.

(CHILDREN 2 looking around finds a rope and jumping on to the bed hangs himself)

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

(Rushing over to the trembling body as it goes lifeless. A silhouette of the hanging body can also be seen on the scrim)

No!

(The CHILDREN remove the rope from CHILDREN 2's lifeless body and carry it off stage. CHILDREN 2's dangling body can still be seen swaying back and forth on the scrim. The rhythm of the percussion drives ANTONIO back towards the bed where exhausted he collapses)

(LIGHTS BLACK OUT)

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

AT RISE:

Sterile hospital room. The scrim
glows bright white.

ANTONIO is still sleeping in the bed
but is clearly still tossing and turning
from the nightmare of scene 3.

The DOCTOR enters carrying a chart.
He silently sits down and begins
studying the chart. ANTONIO awakes
with a start. See's the DOCTOR looking
solemnly at him. They begin to talk but
we cannot hear their conversation. On the
scrim we begin to see the latest HIV/AIDS
statistics concerning people of color.
At first, ANTONIO seems devastated.
He quickly gets a hold of himself.
ANTONIO and the DOCTOR's
conversation finally become audible.

ANTONIO

Well I'm not going to allow this thing to ruin me. My hopes... My dreams. It's just going to
have to take a back seat.

DOCTOR

I fully agree with you Mr. Johnson. Today, with what all we now know about the disease and
with proper treatment.... Being HIV positive doesn't mean the end. It's what you make of it.

ANTONIO

Being HIV positive doesn't mean the end. It's what you make of it... Make of it... Make of it...

*(Circus music begins. The white scrim
morphs into a carnival backdrop.
The DOCTOR removes his white coat to
reveal an ANIMAL TAMER outfit underneath.)*

(The DOCTOR now the ANIMAL TAMER walks offstage only to return with a whip, chain and collar which he places around ANTONIO'S neck. The SPECTATORS arrive)

ANIMAL TAMER

Ladies and gentleman. Boys and girls. Step up and have a look at this exotic creature. Imported all the way from the jungles of Africa. Notice the beauty of is skin and how graceful he moves.

(Cracking his whip. He parades ANTONIO around. The SPECTATORS clap and laugh. Some even throw peanuts and popcorn which ANTONIO quickly bends down to eat)

ANIMAL TAMER

Up! Up! Around!

(ANTONIO carries out his commands)

Now vogue... Vogue!

(House music replaces the circus tune as ANTONIO begins voguing. The ANIMAL TAMER removes his collar. The scene grows dark until only a spotlight remains on ANTONIO. Everything and everyone seems to disappear except for the bed which also has a spotlight on it. The sound of a door being opening and closed. MARCUS' voice is heard calling out)

MARCUS

(Off stage)

Ant..! Ant..!

(ANTONIO collapses onto the floor. MARCUS enters but doesn't see ANTONIO)

Babe! Where the hell are you?

MARCUS con't

(Turning on the light. Suddenly sees ANTONIO lying on the floor)

Oh God! Oh God!

(Rushing to ANTONIO. Touches his hand for a pulse. ANTONIO begins coughing. MARCUS picks ANTONIO up and places him back into the bed)

God, you scared the shit out of me. I mean... What happened?

(ANTONIO try's to speak)

Never mind... Don't try and talk. I'm calling an ambulance. Where the hell is my cellphone.

(MARCUS runs offstage to call the call)

Yes, that's 2634 Hartwell... Apartment 4. I don't know how long he's been like this. I've been out of town for a the past week. Can you hurry please! Thank you.

(MARCUS comes back into the room and begins cradling ANTONIO.)

ANTONIO

Hey baby...

MARCUS

Shhh! The ambulance will be here soon.

ANTONIO

Baby I wish you could have been here. The children came while you were gone. They threw me a party.

MARCUS

A party? Baby you're really hot. I think you must be delirious... Your birthday party was last month, remember?

ANTONIO

No, no, you should have seen how beautiful everyone looked. ... And Doctor Bauer was there... He had a whip and he asked me to vogue for everyone.

MARCUS

Babe, you're not making any sense? (*Pauses*) You should'ah gone ta da doctor before... How long have you been sick?

ANTONIO

I'm fine. They wouldn't let anything happen to me.

MARCUS

Who? What are you talking about?

ANTONIO

The children! The ones that asked me to vogue.

MARCUS

Shhh! Shhh!

(To himself)

The children..! Jesus Christ, what's taken them so long to get here.

CHILDREN 4

(Entering)

I stopped hearing the music that summer I came out of the closet... Oh it was hard... I mean I had been frontin' for so long. I even got a kid out of it that I don't see. ...His mother us to beg me for my melody. A melody so twisted... that I was surprised that anyone even heard it. That you heard it... I mean I wasn't the best kid growing up... ...And Lord knows the best way to describe the men on my side of the family are as selfaholics. Look out for self, first they'd always say... I was sixteen when she got pregnant and I just stepped... I'd always been taught bro's before hoes. Ashamed that in my ignorance I'd told her to get rid of it... Then, when I did come to know better, I was ashamed that I hadn't been man enough to help her hold up just one half the sky. You see, mine had truly fallen long before I'd met her and there was no light...

CHILDREN 4 con't

Only this overwhelming sense of darkness. I mean it's hard enough jus' trying to get through your adolescences... So just image what it's like if you're gay? Yo! It was hard. Now don't get me wrong... I mean... I think everybody struggles with sex and their sexuality but being gay? I mean... Hey, I don't know what to do wit it at first. I mean... *(Pauses)* It's not exactly a subject black folks talk about at da dinner table. So yeah, I had no role models... And from what I'd seen on tv or at da movies... Dat was some white shit. Besides, I thought they were all flamboyant and shit. Hold-up... Don't get me wrong. I love me a sexy little femme nigger. I'm just tryin' to let you know where my head was at at dat time in my life. I respect them just as much as the rest of us. I mean, coming out is a lifelong process. And it damn show ain't easy for no mutherfucker out there. God knows everybody jus' wanna be happy. It's jus' dat simple. ... And I've had to work hard at losing this hardness and all the will striving to make my back strong. ...And somehow in the process, I found him. I found you. ... And it was you that helped me make that change. I fell in love with you. ...And my sins which hadn't really been my sins but the sins of the fathers began ta be washed away. Takin' with them all traces of da hate dat had lived in me...And I loved you. Loved you more than I loved my own momma. Loved you more den life itself. That why I come here... To dance in praise of somebody else's better tomorrow and in honor of you and the love dat fail upon me. ...

*(The smell of fresh incense burns again.
Just like at the start of the ACT
CHILDREN 4 randomly lights a candle as
CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6 quietly enter)*

I say a pray for you!

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6

Ashe!

(CHILDREN 1 randomly lights a candle)

CHILDREN 1

I say a pray for thee!

CHILDREN 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 2

(CHILDREN 2 randomly lights a candle)

I say a pray for them!

CHILDREN 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 3

(CHILDREN 3 randomly lights a candle)

Let us say a pray for all of us!

CHILDREN 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 5

(CHILDREN 5 randomly lights a candle)

I say a prayer in remembrance of all those we have loved!

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6

Ashe!

CHILDREN 6

(CHILDREN 6 randomly lights a candle)

...And all those who have we have loved and loss. In honor of those of us who have passed on,
may our peace be still!

*(The CHILDREN slowly gather around the
lovers once more recreating Caravaggio's
'Adoration of the Shepherds') ANTONIO
and MARCUS are in the pose of Caravaggio's
'Saint Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy')*

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4 5 & 6

(Overlapping)

Be still!

(Aretha Franklin's 'Heavenly Father' begins to play as the sound of the ambulance can be heard coming through the open window.)

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

AT RISE:

The hospital room. Early Morning.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 have kept vigil throughout the night. ANTONIO sometimes stirs in the bed.

CHILDREN 1

Lord knows I remember nights like this one... The pain that came over me... Why it was like a thief in the night robbing me of what little sleep I could get.

CHILDREN 2

Yes, yes... Sometimes it seemed as if my pain was reminder of all the pleasure I'd known. Laying their eager and wet. Allowing the men to run wild and free. Leaving only their tainted seeds buried deep within me. I can remember it as if it were yesterday... That summer I became infected. We didn't know what they know now. Back then, getting the package was the same as getting the kiss of death.

CHILDREN 3

Amen!

CHILDREN 1

Even in death one had to pray they could find a funeral home that would touch the body. Oh, to have come of age at such a hostile time. ...And yet, what has been truly learned from our passing? For we still continue the dance that hides our true selves...

CHILDREN 6

Even as the rates of infection among us grows?

CHILDREN 1

Yes! Even as the rates of infection among us grows.

CHILDREN 6

Oh... Where would we be today had this great calamity not befallen upon us? For it is as if they care not. It matters little... Wither it be by disease, famine or gun. We are falling all around them... Show wish I had a drink.

CHILDREN 5

(Overlapping)

Whom are you speaking of, the north or the south?

CHILDREN 1

The white..? The Asian..? The Latino..? There is no one to help hold up the sky. ...And yes, we are falling all around them. Yet no one weeps for the black man. ...For the black woman. The black Children... Not even we... The blacks!

CHILDREN 4

That's true! Our hands are indeed still wet with guilt. We, who have aided and abetted in the killing of the black messiah because we be too proud to air our dirty laundry in public. Oh how triumphant we are in our stance as we refuse to speak about the things that are really going on. Yet we dare cry foul play each time a black man is gone. Swallowed whole into a penal system some have come to call their home. Yet, we have killed the black messiah and in his place we've ushered in the charlatan eagerly to eat and drink from our silver cups and gold plates. Oh what secrets we do keep. While our babies keep having babies and our young men die each day in the streets. We are killing ourselves and for what I say... The satisfaction of knowing that our family secrets have been hid for another day?

CHILDREN 6

Come... Let us not speak in hast amongst ourselves simply because they failed in the forging of new ground. Fore we their ancestors have failed as well. Having turned our faces away, as not to see our own nakedness... Thus is the depth for which I am grieving from the grave.

CHILDREN 2

Oh how I use to throw my head back and laugh at the moon. Like the jackal, I was wild... I was free...

CHILDREN 1

...Like a thief in the night. Like the wolf to my lamb...

CHILDREN 2

Reminding me of the pleasure... The pain... Payment for....

CHILDREN 1

...the pleasure I had known. The joy I had known.

*(ANTONIO begins to stir again. CHILDREN
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 return to their bedside vigil)*

CHILDREN 1

Buses are a-comin', oh, yes
Buses are a-comin', oh, yes

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6

Buses are a-comin'
Buses are a-comin'
Buses are a-comin', oh, yes

Better get you ready, oh, yes
Better get you ready, oh, yes
Better get you ready
Better get you ready
Better get you ready, oh, yes

Buses are a-comin', oh, yes
Buses are a-comin', oh, yes
Buses are a-comin'
Buses are a-comin'
Buses are a-comin', oh, yes

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE I

SCENE 2

AT RISE:

Still the hospital room.
The light immediately comes back
up. ANTONIO is still stirring in his
sleep. The CHILDREN are gone.
With a moan ANTONIO awakes to
find himself alone.

ANTONIO

(Looking around. Begins calling out)

Marcus! Marcus!

MARCUS

(Rushing in)

Yeah babe? I'm right here.

ANTONIO

I woke up and...

MARCUS

I jus' went ta take a leek, that's all... How ya feel?

ANTONIO

How do you think I feel? I feel like shit. But besides, that... Ok I guess...

(Pausing)

They were here again.

MARCUS

Who... The doctors?

ANTONIO

No!

MARCUS

Who? The Nurses?

ANTONIO

No! The children!

MARCUS

Baby, not dat again. The doctors told you the one of da side effects of da drugs is hallucinations.

ANTONIO

*(Throws the magazines of the table on
to the floor)*

Why won't you just believe me when I tell you something?

MARCUS

Babe!

ANTONIO

I am not some god damned child imagining things. Now god dammit I'm telling you they were here.

MARCUS

(Picking up the magazines)

Alright! Alright! I don't wanna fight. I believe you. I know you wouldn't lie to me.

ANTONIO

Thank you! It means a lot to me that you believe me. Did you go get tested?

MARCUS

Uhhh... No not yet... But I will.

ANTONIO

Marcus!

MARCUS

I am...

ANTONIO

You told me you would...

MARCUS

Babe... Come on now... I mean... I do you. You don't do me...I've never bottomed. Besides, the doctors already told you that they thought you probably had been infected before you met me... Your viral load must've been undetectable?

ANTONIO

(Concerned)

Yeah... But you and I both know we lie when the doctors asked us if we had been using protection. We never use protection. ...And we both know it doesn't matter whether someone is a top or a bottom...

MARCUS

(Real sexy)

Baby what can I say? I love the way it feels when I slide up in you natural.

ANTONIO

(Serious)

Marcus, this shit ain't funny. Look at me. I'm HIV and I love you. But I need to know that you're ok. I need to know that we're ok!

MARCUS

Ok! Ok! I'll make an appointment at the clinic today... Promise!

ANTONIO

Thank you! It means a lot... You mean a lot to me.

(MARCUS climbing in bed with ANTONIO)

What are you doing?

MARCUS

(Super sexy voice)

I think it's time for your physical...

ANTONIO

Marcus... what are we gonna say if somebody walks in here?

MARCUS

(Kissing ANTONIO passionately)

I'll tell'em I'm conducting an anatomy class.

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 2

SCENE 3

AT RISE:

Flashback. The Bedroom.
ANTONIO and MARCUS have just
finished making love.

MARCUS looks over at the clock and
realizes that the time has gotten away
from both of them.

MARCUS

(Kisses ANTONIO who is still underneath him)

You're welcome... Listen, I've got about 30 minutes to shit, shower and shave...

*(Jumping out of bed naked MARCUS exits to
the bathroom. ANTONIO sits up in bed.
Takes a magazine off the nightstand and
begins flipping through the pages)*

(From offstage)

Baby..? Did you remember to pick up my suits while I was gone?

ANTONIO

Ummm yeah. I got 'em. Oh all except the grey one.

*(MARCUS comes out of the bathroom.
He has a towel wrapped around his waist)*

MARCUS

Babe..? That's my favorite suit.

*(MARCUS goes back out to get clothes from
the closet)*

ANTONIO

There was a still a stain on it. So I sent it back. I also took the liberty of matching your suits with the right tie and socks while you were gone. Now all you have to do is reach in the pocket and...

MARCUS

(MARCUS laugh as he comes back in to dress)

...Wow! Baby you didn't have ta do all dat. Kinda makes me think you might be plannin' on goin' somewhere without me?

ANTONIO

(Placing along)

Well, I hadn't planned on it. But then again, you never know. Besides, it really did make me cringe every time you stepped outside... I mean... The way you dressed before...

MARCUS

Befo' what?

ANTONIO

Before I came along of course...

MARCUS

...Of course! ...An what was wrong wit da way I dressed, may I ask? It couldna been too bad? 'sides, it got you didn't it?

ANTONIO

Baby... *(pauses)* Believe me when I tell you it wasn't your fashion sense that got me.

MARCUS

(Slowly walking very sexy towards ANTONIO)

Oh yeah!

ANTONIO

(Blushing)

Yeah!

MARCUS

Oh Yeah!

*(Now at ANTONIO'S bed side MARCUS
begins to tickle him)*

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 3

SCENE 4

AT RISE: Fades back into the hospital room.

MARCUS

(Sitting on the side of the bed. Kisses ANTONIO)

Ok! I gotta go. I'm gonna be late. Don't forget your mom said she'd drop by later.

(Kisses ANTONIO again before heading towards the door)

I'll see you when I get off. Is there anything you want me to bring you?

ANTONIO

You!

MARCUS

Baby you already got that! *(Pausing at door)* Oh and one other thing... For my sake... Would you mind not telling your mom about the children?

ANTONIO

What?

MARCUS

I just mean... Not just yet. Ok? I mean she's just coming to grips with the whole HIV thing and us. I just think it'll be too much.

ANTONIO

(A little annoyed)

Sure... Whatever!

(Takes remote off stand and turns on the television)

MARCUS

Baby..? Try and get some rest... Maybe tonight we can do something besides watch TV.

ANTONIO

Out!

MARCUS

(Turning on the charm as he exits)

What happened to whatever?

ANTONIO

Out!

(MARCUS exits. ANTONIO smiles to himself)

MARCUS

(Pops his head back in)

I'm takin' that to be a yes!

ANTONIO

Out!

(Exits with a wink and a smile)

I'm goin' ... I'm out here!

*(MARCUS' fading voice can be heard
whistling as ANTONIO shaking his head
in disbelief falls back in the bed laughing
at how lucky he is to have MARCUS.)*

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 4

SCENE 5

AT RISE:

Dream: Foggy dusk in a public park. ANTONIO sits on a park bench with CHILDREN 6 who is looking into a hand mirror. CHILDREN 6 has long natural hair that flows on to her shoulders. The hair serves as a distraction from his HIV status.

SOCIETY promenades through the park. Occasionally they stop and stare at ANTONIO and CHILDREN 6. Some even touching CHILDREN 6's hair.

CHILDREN 6

Oh just look at my hair. Look at how long and beautiful my hair is. Why when I walk down the street people stop...

(SOCIETY freeze then continue on their way)

...Amazed at the sight of my long luxurious hair.

SOCIETY

(With disdain)

Oh your hair. Charming...

ANTONIO

(Paying them no mind)

I can't wait for Marcus to see your hair.

CHILDREN 6

It has power you know. My hair! It has the power to make a man crazy.... So I've been told. It has power... My hair... To turn a man on... And once we get in bed...

CHILDREN 6 con't

Well baby, let's just say I've got the power to turn him out. I mean just look at these hip... These delectable chocolate thighs. A face... Beat for the Gods.

(ANTONIO not really interested)

Honey I'm trying to school you on being a woman. That's how you make trade stay.

ANTONIO

I'm sorry. Maybe I should go?

CHILDREN 6

Stay... Marcus loves so what do you have to worry about? *(Pauses)* Please... I'm sorry. I know I can be a bit much and it gets so lonely here... So don't mind me. You see, I've always tried to be open about everything. *(Pauses)* That's not true. True, I try to be open with people when it comes to my sexuality. But that hasn't always been so. I mean for many years I lived my life with this very important piece of me hidden. ...And trust me when I tell you... that will kill you. The denying of a thing that is. Whatever that thing be that is basically apart of what makes you who you are. I mean... it had gotten to the point that I wasn't sleeping. Afraid someone had seen me out the night before. I'd jump every time the damn phone rang frightened someone who'd knew my family was calling to drag me out of the closet. Now that's realness for you. So you just sit right here and take all the time you need. Ok? *(Pauses)* Lord, will you get a load of me. I guess what dey say is true?

(ANTONIO looks at CHILDREN 6 puzzled)

That part of being a woman... Is admitting when you've been wrong.

(Silence for a while)

ANTONIO

I use to believe that love was enough. But now, dealing with this I just don't know if it's going to be enough. ? Oh I know he says he loves me and that it doesn't matter. My status I mean... But I just don't know. It's as if I'd lost my mojo... My swagger since learning I was positive. When I look in the mirror sometimes it's as if I don't recognize myself. As if I were no longer the person he fell in love with. Lord knows I don't want him to feel as if he now has to stay with me. Trapped!

A MEMBER OF SOCIETY

(Pipes in)

Well, if you love him the way that you say you do then you really should set him free.

CHILDREN 6

Chile, you think I don't know what you're feeling. What you're going through? You know I can still remember that say I walked in and got the news. It was intense. The way they looked at me. It was bad enough I was gay. But how dare I commit the greatest sin of them all. How dare I deny them... The whites... The blacks... Access to that which dangled between my legs. That think that some loathed and others loved. Yes, they looked at me as if to say "You got what you deserved... Didn't you? They looked at me as if I was lower than the gays. But look is all they could do. Because before they know what had hit dem. Mother began speaking in tongues. High ya-ya-yigh-ya. Begin speaking in my old deep slave voice. Ohhhh joveh...! They became frightened... They became frightened of my power of feminine glow. When I did finally leave out dat clinic. I left with my head held high. Baby they didn't know me... Hell I had already had to deal with the humiliation of trying to get a job. Having to explain to potential employers why I'd written in other next to the boxes that asked me to identify were I was male or female. Then there are the times when you just tryin' to go on 'bout your day and carry yo'self like the lady you are and here come some motherfucka' high on testosterone yellin' out to every Tom, Dick and Harry... As if their only purpose in life was to act as a spotlight for putting us... Me on blast! (*Masculine*) "Dis motherfucker a goddamn man. Dis fuckin dude got a dick..." Praying you don't become a statistic of those who are found beat to death in dark alleys. Oh how they can make you lose all of your pose and get real gutter like.... "Motherfucker, I'm a drag queen like your mamma! (*Pauses*) Yes, with luck on your side you are simply brutalized... Teeth knocked out and your eyes black and blue because their ain't no Andy Warhol willing to take a photo of your black ass. ...And as you sit there in the emergency room... Dress torn, weave torn out, face... literally beat down. You sit there. ...Waiting and wondering. Wondering and waiting for just one brotha to come along who's brave enough... Who's man enough to lay soothing words on your aching head. Strong enough to take some of this burden of being different than even the gays off your shoulders. And if you're lucky when it gets late that same brother will take you in his arms and make love to you and in the morning not claim that what you had experienced was just sex between to strangers. Oh if you're lucky that brother becomes the hero you'd been looking for your whole life. Can you understand that..? Can you understand what I'm trying to say to you?

ANTONIO

Yeah I think so. Thank you!

*(CHILDREN 6 intensely looks at the SOCIETY
as they promenade through the park)*

(The SOCIETY still occasionally stop and stare at ANTONIO and CHILDREN 6)

CHILDREN 6

Just look at the way they look at me. ... At us. They love me. ...Us! They love my beautiful hair. *(Pauses)* Oh who am I kidding? They stop me on the street because I am a drag queen. They are roll their eyes at me. ...You! You do know that they wish to cut my hair... They believe that I have taken one of their own away from them. That is why the hate me. Us!

ANTONIO

When the truth of the matter is that one knows what one likes or doesn't.

CHILDREN 6

Exactly! They hate us out of their own fear of being alone. Its' really a psychotic way of thinking if you really asked me. To think that we have the power to take something that belongs to them... *(Laughs)* Preposterous! That is why they hate me. He could have had any one of them but he chose me. Me... A dark skinned, think lipped ass switching color boy from Mississippi. Baby, these kids are jealous and most definitely tired. You see, he knew that I could had any man I wanted out there because Miss Thang... I was beat I tell you! But I wanted him. ...And that is why their jealous. ...That is way they want so desperately to cut my hair. Because like Samson there is power to be found in these locks. There is indeed power in our pink afro's and kinky cherry curls.

(Pausing to look into the hand mirror)

...And away from the prying eyes. I tell you, the revolution was in the kiss.

(Stands up to demonstrate. Snaps fingers and dance music is heard.)

Ohhhh! ...And when we would go dancing... I would sling my hair from side to side. Baby... I tell you I danced for the Gods for there was indeed power in my hair and as we dance through life we were no longer two but one. ...And it was here in this very garden that he said unto me, Herefore God hath joined us together, let not man put asunder.

ANTONIO

Do you when he was speaking of God he could have meant the Gods who are themselves as old as the Nile themselves?

CHILDREN 6

(Dancing)

Why yes! You do understand after all!

TWO MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

(*Applauding Overlapping*)

Go ahead Miss Thing!

You better work bitch!

CHILDREN 6

(*Sits back town with ANTONIO on the bench*)

Honey... I worked their last nerves. (*Pauses*) But alas, they got to him my lover, Judas Iscariot. They got to him... And it is here that he betrayed me with a kiss. In this very garden... Betrayed be with her...

(*JUDAS ISCARIOT comes and bows before CHILDREN 6. Taking his hand they stroll off arm in arm. Silence. The sound of drumming is heard. ANTONIO sensing that something is wrong gets up in order to follow behind the lovers. He is quickly accosted by the SOCIETY. CHILDREN 6 runs back in followed by JUDAS ISCARIOT and HER*)

(*A dance of the betrayal of CHILDREN 6 begins. From the dance it becomes clear that JUDAS is torn between his love for CHILDREN 6 and his love for HER which represents society. The dance end with CHILDREN 6 catching JUDAS and HER kissing in the garden. JUDAS sees that CHILDREN 6 has caught them*)

CHILDREN 6

You would use a kiss to betray me?

(Strobe lights begin flashing and a cacophony of sound rushes about the scene as the SOCIETY now move towards CHILDREN 6. The scene recreates a live action version of Caravaggio's 'The Taking of Christ'. CHILDREN 6 is ushered off stage away from prying eyes. Evening has fallen. The sound once again subsides and the sound of the drum once more can be heard but this time the rhythm has become foreboding. ANTONIO no longer sure what to do sits back down on the park bench as he watches HER standing alone. Regal and erect, her gaze is fixed in the direction of where SOCIETY and JUDAS exited with CHILDREN 6. HER'S facial expressions tells us she is anticipating something. A blood curdling scream is heard and then another. ANTONIO is frightened while HER seems to be ecstatic. The drumming as stopped and is replaced with Verdi's Triumphant March from Aida. CHILDREN 6 slowly crawls in on all fours. His hair has been brutally cut from his head. The SOCIETY slowly promenades back in. They walk towards HER in single file. Bowing to one another they come to stand on either side of HER. ANTONIO rushes to CHILDREN 6'S side. CHILDREN 6 having been savagely attacked is helped to her feet by ANTONIO. They go back to the park bench. JUDAS is the last one to enter. On the closing notes of the March, JUDAS bends before HER as if to propose. His head lowered, he offers HER the cut off hair of CHILDREN 6. The SOCIETY applauds in approval of the union. The Triumphant March from Aida once again begins. JUDAS ISCARIOT rises and takes HER hand. The lovers slowly walk off stage followed by SOCIETY. ANTONIO and CHILDREN 6 are left alone. CHILDREN 6 is badly hurt and traumatized)

CHILDREN 6

(To no one in particular)

They ran their fingers through my hair... *(Pauses)* Do you know what we said my lover? There away from the prying eyes... He called me vile names as they kicked and punch me. He called me vile ...And then he said he was going to kill me. But first he said he was going to cut my hair. My hair which some had called a thing of beauty.

(Pauses and for the first time addresses ANTONIO who has been holding him in his lap since they got back to the park bench)

Did you know that I have known men who have kissed my hair as we made love. There was power in my hair. *(Pauses)* ...They tore the sequins from my dress. They have pulled like animals at my hair. They have sat their fists upon me tender flesh. my dress, pulled out my hair and as they beating me down and then I heard him say that he was going to kill me.

ANTONIO

...And what did you say?

CHILDREN 6

What could I say? *(Pauses)* Judas, how could you betray me your lover with a kiss? ...And the swish of the blade I did hear as I cried out "Judas, do what you are here to do." But it was not the blade that did pierce my side. No it was his boot. They had somehow found mercy in their hearts. For I do not know which of them it was but a voice I did hear say "We shall not be accused of being murderers." ...And just like that it was over and he cut off my hair.

(CHILDREN 6 dies from injuries. ANTONIO weeps. The CHILDREN slowly enter carrying a large bowl of water and rags to wash the body for burial. CHILDREN 6 is undressed. The other CHILDREN begin to sing as they washed and wrapped CHILDREN 6's body in a white cloth.)

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

I've been buked and I've been scorned
I've been buked and I've been scorned
Children, I've been buked and I've been scorned
Tryin' to make this journey all alone

You may talk about me sure as you please
Talk about me sure as you please
Children, talk about me sure as you please
Your talk will never drive me down to my knees

I've been buked and I've been scorned
I've been buked and I've been scorned
Children, I've been buked and I've been scorned
Tryin' to make this journey all alone

(The scene comes to resemble Sisto Badalocchio's 'Christ Carried To The Tomb.' The CHILDREN exit with the body quietly humming the melody of the Negro spiritual. Alone, ANTONIO sees the hand mirror of CHILDREN 6 still lying on the ground. He goes and picking up the mirror returns to the park bench where he begins to gaze at himself in the mirror.)

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 5

SCENE 6

AT RISE:

Lights immediately come back up. ANTONIO has fallen asleep. Morning begins to break. We are in a public park in foggy London. ANTONIO is awaked by the deep sound of deep two-step music. the CHILDREN have coming to bury the body of CHILDREN 6. They enter in a state of grace. They are adorned with giant feathers that move to and from with their every step. Their beautiful brown bodies glisten in the early morning light. They come to rest at the other side of the stage having recreated Sisto Badalocchio's 'The Entombment of Christ.' Having laid the body down they each take turns dancing through their grief. Their bodies popping and locking to the hypnotic rhythm. Eventually they return to the body of CHILDREN 6 and begin to pray in silence.)

CHILDREN 3

*(Rising to step away from the other
CHILDREN)*

I heard you calling me from within the melody of the music. For your love was in there. ...And no, it wasn't the sway of your hips as you walked into the room. No it wasn't the way your smile seemed to catch my eyes. It was your smell. That encoded scent that came to be. ...Ancient and melodious... Came telling me that somehow it was gonna be alright. You're touch forever stroking the eternal fires of the revolution that secretly burned deep within my heart. That was how it began... With a kiss and the revolutionary embers that quietly passed from me to and back again. ...And I loved you. I loved you because you helped me to step up and away from my rage. My rage... That had come to be born out of the womb of their indifference towards any one like us. Like me! Yes, I loved you for helping me to understand that we were not savages. We who are the children darker than blue. I loved you for helping me to understand that our ways were ancient and true. For we were women and we were holy. ...And we were overcome by the blood and the lamb as we made love in the cool night air. We... The women who are the descended daughters from the island they call Lesbo. You helped me accept the fact that I was gay and that when it came down to the struggle against injustice we were all sisters and brothers. That was how it begin... On a day like any other day that I came to know the duality of our dance. A dance of black consciousness... Feminine consciousness... Gay consciousness.... A dance... Our dance... As ancient as that endlessly flowing river we call the Zambezi.

*(CHILDREN 3 rejoins the other CHILDREN.
The morning light begins to give way to darkness.
Once more deep two-step music is heard as the
body of CHILDREN 6 slowly begins to show signs
of life. The CHILDREN begin a powerful dance.
They are resurrecting CHILDREN 6 who slowly
begins to rise. CHILDREN 6's hair is once more
long. Even more beautiful than before.
CHILDREN 6 begins to dance under the spell
of the CHILDREN. Strobe lights begin flashing
to the sound of the music as the fog starts to
become thicker)*

CHILDREN

(In unison the CHILDREN shout at random times)

Yo!

*(With each shout from the CHILDREN,
CHILDREN 6 seem to fall deeper and deeper
under the spell of their strange incantation.
The CHILDREN slowly begin to beckon
CHILDREN 6 to follow them. They are crossing
over to the land of the immortals. Once they
have all left the stage, the music and the strobe
lights cease. Sunshine once more begins to
appear as it begins to gently snow.)*

ANTONIO

Look... Snow. How beautiful. All most as beautiful as her hair was. I wish I was holding her hair so that I could wash it with the snow.

*(ANTONIO is playing with the snow when
OSCAR WILDE enters dressed in Victorian
Dress. WILDE is reading a book. He haughtily
eyes ANTONIO before sitting down on the bench.)*

Oh my god! I know who you are...

OSCAR WILDE

(Looking up briefly from his book)

Why everyone knows who I am. That would not be an unusual thing!

ANTONIO

(Bursting with excitement)

Oh shit! Oscar Wilde... Damn I wish Marcus was here to see this. Why you're my idol... My hero... The world's greatest advocate for same sex love.

*(Attempts to shake WILDE's hand
who seems puzzled)*

Mr. Wilde it is indeed an honor to meet you.

OSCAR WILDE

(Looks around to see if people are watching)

How very strange this is. ...And who might you be might I ask?

ANTONIO

Antonio Jenkins. ...And can I just truly say that I'm a big fan of your words...

OSCAR WILDE

..And what words are those pray tell? Besides, I was under the impression that you people couldn't read?

ANTONIO

No... No you don't understand. The times they have changed. I hold a M.B.A. in English Lit.

(WILDE turns away)

Besides, this is a dream. This is my dream. ...And anything can happen in a dream can't it.

OSCAR WILDE

Well I wish you would keep your dreams to yourself... Why can't you people keep to your own kind?

ANTONIO

...And in my dream I too am drawn to things of beauty. She was beautiful. Her hair was beautiful. ...And yet they killed her because of her beauty. They are killing us because of the sweetness of our beauty.

OSCAR WILDE

Surely you are not talking about that wretched thing that just left here? That which was neither he nor she. You dare to call that a thing of beautiful?

(Laughs)

ANTONIO

But this is my dream I tell you... And she was beautiful. We are beautiful. ...And her hair, was it not beautiful? My hair, is it not something beautiful to behold? Come, touch it!

(Bending his head down for WILDE to feel)

OSCAR WILDE

(Touches hair but pulls back as if he had been cut)

You call that beautiful? That vile mop of a thing you dare to call hair. There is no greater crime than to be confronted by something so repulsive. Shoo! Get this blackness far away from me.

ANTONIO

(Reaching his breaking point)

Girl... Don't make me come for you!

OSCAR WILDE

(Feeling insulted WILDE jumps up)

What could you possibly do to me? I, who am already among the dead, surely someone with your intelligence must remember that it was I who said, a dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world. I am dead and glad of it, for it is truly a blessing that I did not have to live to see the likes of this day.

ANTONIO

Have you forgotten that it was you who claimed that each man kills the thing he loves?

OSCAR WILDE

(Somewhat taken aback that he is quoted)

Don't you people ever stop talking? Now, my good man, did it ever occur to you that maybe this isn't your dream? Maybe it's mine? Maybe that's why you feel the need to give me so much grief when I simply wanted to spend the day reading my book. That would surely explain why I have come to find myself in such a nightmare as this. A nightmare for which you, are the phantom that has come to haunt my peace of mind. *(Pauses)* ...Seeing that this is my dream. Let me ask you something?

(Sits back down)

OSCAR WILDE

How funny that you should quote me. I must hand it to you... You are correct when you said that each man kills the thing he loves. So my question to you is... Was that what landed you in that hospital?

ANTONIO

What do you mean by that..?

(WILDE realizes ANTONIO has bitten the bait)

OSCAR WILDE

Oh, nothing really... I mean... you're not one of those bug chasers you hear tell of... Are you?

ANTONIO

No!

OSCAR WILDE

Really?

ANTONIO

Really!

OSCAR WILDE

Well I'm just trying to figure out, how a smart boy such as yourself could convince yourself that it was alright to have unprotected intercourse. I mean when a man tells you he wants to take his wrapper off... Well in this day and age it does seem as if one would take off and run.

ANTONIO

Brother..., I'm warning you...

OSCAR WILDE

Well I'm just saying... You weren't born yesterday were you?

ANTONIO

... Course not!

OSCAR WILDE

...Surely you were aware of the risk you were taking?

ANTONIO

Yes... But...

OSCAR WILDE

But what..? What could you possibly say that could make it alright?

ANTONIO

I'm human! That we're human! ...And as humans people we make mistakes when the mind and the emotional response of the body get clouded...

OSCAR WILDE

Oh dear boy... How you do seem to have all the answers tied up in such a pretty little box. *(Pauses)* Let's keep it... one hundred! That is the correct term one uses today isn't it?

ANTONIO

Man... Whatever!

OSCAR WILDE

I wouldn't say we were talking about whatever. No... I would call a spade a spade. ...And what we're really talking about is sex... Copulating... Screwing... Bareback fucking! You see... It really isn't that hard to tell the truth.

(Laughs)

...and you see, there is nothing you can do to me because I'm already dead. ...But you? Huh... An M.B.A. in English literature? Oh, love how very careless you are...

(WILDE looking around. Lights dim)

Come on! Where are my boys? Let's give him a little public service announcement.

(The CHILDREN rush in wearing bow ties, carrying a sequined robe and a large stripper fan. They quickly dress WILDE and take their places behind him. We are about to watch a 1940's nightclub act)

Let's hit it boys!

(Eartha Kitt's version of 'Careless Love' begins and WILDE and the CHILDREN perform)

OSCAR WILDE

Love, oh love, oh careless love
You've fly through my head like wine
You've wrecked the life of a many poor girl
And you nearly spoiled this life of mine

Love, oh love, oh careless love
In your clutches of desire
You've made me break a many true vow
Then you set my very soul on fire

Love, oh love, oh careless love
All my happiness bereft
You've filled my heart with weary old blues
Now I'm walkin', talkin' to myself

Love, oh love, oh careless love
Trusted you now, it's too late
You've made me throw my old friend down
That's why I sing this song of hate

Love, oh love, oh careless love
Night and day, I weep and moan
You brought the wrong man into this life of mine
For my sins, till judgment I'll atone

*(The CHILDREN exit as the scene returns
to normal)*

ANTONIO

What are you trying to say?

OSCAR WILDE

Nothing really... I just find it strange that someone of your caliber hadn't considered that maybe this was his plan all along...

ANTONIO

His plan..? What the fuck are you talking about?

OSCAR WILDE

I mean, maybe your beautiful black man is really a breeder. There are men out there that get off on that you know. I mean... neither one of you were born yesterday. So did you ever stop to consider that maybe it was him that gave you the bug? Your beautiful black man... So eager to... Maybe willing is a better word... So willing to plant his seed deep down inside of you.... Besides... You and I both know that you lied to the doctors about using protection. I think it would be safe to say that the two of you never used protection.

(ANTONIO has tears coming from his eyes)

Darling, cheer up..! You look like one of those deer's when the highlights get caught in their eyes. Come on... Don't look so shocked. It's a dream remember? ...And we both know that there are no such things as secrets in a dream. Why that's what makes them so scary. Yes, my sweet child, darker than blue. It's a dream. My dream! ...and in a dream, anything can happen.

(WILDE laughs)

ANTONIO

...And you will always be fond of me. I who represent to you all the sins you never had the courage to commit.

OSCAR WILDE

*(WILDE is visibly stunned by this last quote.
He again jumps up.)*

Why you black bastard! Police..! Police..!

(Running off)

I demand someone lock this creature up. Police..! Police..!

ANTONIO

(Yelling)

Now whose dream is it bitch!

*(ANTONIO laughs but is quickly silenced
by the thought of WILDE's accusation
about MARCUS)*

*(ANTONIO shuts as the snow once again
begins to gently fall.)*

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 6

SCENE 7

AT RISE:

The bedroom. Daylight is coming in through the open window. The digital alarm clock is softly playing music. ANTONIO is asleep. An announcement comes on the radio that the US Supreme Court has ruled that gay marriage is constitutionally protected and legal. A door is heard opening and closing. MARCUS runs in with a basketball and jumps on the bed. He is wearing gym clothes and is sweaty.

ANTONIO

(Startled and groggy)

What the fuck?

MARCUS

Baby... Did you hear the news?

ANTONIO

What..? Your sweaty...

MARCUS

Ohh, I'm sorry. It's jus' that I ran all the way. Baby... You don't know?

ANTONIO

(Confused)

Know what! Ohhh...

(MARCUS turns the radio off. Looks around for TV remote. Finds it and turns on the television)

MARCUS

Shhhh!

(The News announcer can be heard talking about the announcement by the US Supreme Court upholding gay marriage)

ANTONIO

What?

(Quickly become conscious)

MARCUS

That's what I've been trying to tell you.

(Kisses ANTONIO. They are holding hands)

Baby, you must've slept through the hold thing... I should take a shower... 'Cause we're goin' out and celebrate.

(Kisses ANTONIO again and heads to the bathroom. MARCUS can be heard singing in the shower. ANTONIO get up to get some clothes for MARCUS)

MARCUS

(From in the shower)

Babe?

ANTONIO

(Places the clothes on the bed and walks over to bathroom doorway)

Yeah?

MARCUS

You hear from your moms today?

*(ANTONIO lingers then goes and sits
back down on the bed)*

MARCUS

Babe?

ANTONIO

Yeah, she came by earlier.

MARCUS

*(MARCUS comes out of the bathroom with
a towel wrapped around his waist)*

Well... How was it?

*(See's ANTONIO has laid some clothes on
the bed. Walks over and puts on underwear
and removed towel to finish dressing)*

ANTONIO

The usual shit. I told her I didn't want to hear it. I don't need it. I told her I was sick of her crap.

MARCUS

(Sitting down on bed)

Damn! You talked to moms like dat?

(Laughs)

You becomin' one a' dem militant lil' niggers.

ANTONIO

Yeah, I guess some of your ways are starting to rub off on me.

MARCUS

Ohhh, no you didn't put dat on me. Moms definitely ain't likin' me now. ...And what you mean some of my ways rubbed off on you?

ANTONIO

You know what I mean. You tend to let yourself get really upset.

MARCUS

What da ya mean? Me? Upset?

ANTONIO

Need I remind you that less than a week of me knowing you...

MARCUS

(Overlapping)

Alright I hit the guy!

ANTONIO

Hit the guy? You knocked out two of his teeth.

MARCUS

...And I told you I wasn't proud of how I handled dat situation. But he was dancing upon me too close. You heard me tell 'em to back off my ass.

(They both laugh)

Alright, I got a temper... But when you grow up like I did you get use to saying shit with your fists. But dat ain't me no more...

(Finishes getting dressed)

ANTONIO

Baby, You know I'm just paying with you.

(Kisses MARCUS long and hard.)

Speaking off fists... Are we still on for the fight next Monday?

MARCUS

Yeah, I'll meet ya at work. That way we can catch a bite to eat first. I can pick up the tickets on my lunch break tomorrow.

ANTONIO

Speaking of lunch breaks... My mom said she saw us last week having lunch.

MARCUS

And...

ANTONIO

She thinks you are taking me away from her... From the family.

MARCUS

What?

ANTONIO

Yeah, she said that you've turned me against her and the family.

MARCUS

Ok... ...And what did you say?

ANTONIO

I told her to mind her own business and leave you out of it. ...And that she knew darn well that we've been somewhat distant ever since I'd decided to fully come out.

MARCUS

Your mom would rather you settle down with a white dude than settle down with me.

ANTONIO

Marcus!

MARCUS

What? You know yo' family is boosie as hell and you mamma so nuff expected her little gay ANT to at least find himself one of them Morehouse or Howard niggers if he wasn't gonna be chasing no pussy.

ANTONIO

Damn!

MARCUS

You know yo' mamma wanted you to get wit one of dem brainy motherfuckers.

ANTONIO

You're right...

MARCUS

I know I'm right! Da way yo' momma look at me... Da way yo' family look at me.

(Gives look of disdain. They laugh)

ANTONIO

...And that's why I told them they've got to respect my choice. Besides, our family as always had a weird dynamic and my being gay as nothing to do with you. I've always been gay.

MARCUS

...And I've always been in da closet. That is until I met you. You helped me understand what I really wanted.

ANTONIO

I did?

MARCUS

Yeah, you did. I mean... You know I never been with somebody like you. I mean... I'm from the streets. I always had it hard. So you're not exactly the type of person I became friends with.

ANTONIO

Gee thanks!

MARCUS

See what I mean... Who in the hell uses the work gee? No body I know. Come on now, you done met my family and my friends.

ANTONIO

Yes! ...And they were all wonderful to be. Unlike my family and friends.

MARCUS

All I'm saying is you know the type of people I come in contact with. I love 'em to. What I'm saying baby is... It and it is what it is. You come from a good home. You went to the best schools. You don't know what it's like to sometime make it and most times not. What do you know about drugs or being late on your rent?

ANTONIO

Wow! You make it seem like something out of a book.

MARCUS

Naw baby...

ANTONIO

Marcus, I understand. Really I do. Besides, I'd like to think that we've both learned a lot from being with each other. My vocabulary has definitely increased beyond my wildest expectations.

*(They laugh and play tick on the bed.
Sitting back up. Takes remote and mutes
the television sound)*

I haven't been completely honest with you. You see that wasn't all my mom had to say about seeing us at lunch the other day.

MARCUS

Ok?

ANTONIO

Yeah... She said she saw how you looked at me... The way you looked at me.

MARCUS

...And what look is that?

(The scene illuminates into a park scene)

MOTHER

(ANTONIO and MARCUS are silently talking to each other. MOTHER enters)

...Like you were the only man in the world. I know that look. I use to look at your father like that when he would talk to me about how he had grown up. He loves you Antonio and I'm jealous. There I've said it. Your mother is jealous of this thing that has come between us. My baby, imagine that... I'm jealous of how he looks at my little boy.

(Ashamed, she composes herself)

Fine... But you mark my words. You're gonna be sorry. Men like that... He;s gonna hurt you baby. He's gonna break your heart because you love him. ...And I can't bear to sit around and watch that.

(Exits as park scene fades)

MARCUS

...And what did you say? Are you in love with me? Because ever since you learned you were positive... Things haven't exactly been the same. We haven't been the same.

ANTONIO

I know... Yes! I told her yes. I love you. But I don't want you to feel as if you have to stay with me. I couldn't bare it if you felt sorry for me simple because I was positive. I'm not sorry. I knew the risks I was taking.

MARCUS

....And I can't go on deceiving you either. It's just not right...

ANTONIO

(Turning away)

Oh... I see... Oh love, my careless love.

MARCUS

I love you too. It didn't start out dat way but it happened. I kept tellin' myself. We'll jus' be friends. You know? But something happened.

(ANTONIO is surprised by MARCUS's honesty)

I don't even know when it happened. It was like, one day I jus' looked over at you an everything was different. After dat, it was like every day I had to see you. ...And about my not getting tested. I lied. Ok? I lied.

ANTONIO

You lied?

MARCUS

I always make it a point to get tested whenever I start messin' around. ...Then you got sick and... ...And I didn't want to make you feel bad about it. You know? ...About us not having used protection, I mean. Then my test came back negative and I just didn't know how to tell you without making you paranoid that I might split on you. It was wrong I know. *(Pauses)* Baby I love you so much.

(ANTONIO quietly sits back down on the bed)

Baby say something. Say anything.

ANTONIO

I love you... I love you to!

MARCUS

Hey, we better get goin' if we're gonnna get something to eat.

ANTONIO

Yeah, I just gotta put on some shoes.

MARCUS

Oh snap... I almost forgot... I got you something.

(Runs into the bathroom. MARCUS comes out with his gym shorts. Reaching into the pockets)

Ta da!

(MARCUS pulls out a roll of flavored condoms)

ANTONIO

Condoms!

MARCUS

Yeah but not just any ole condoms. There flavored... I mean... If you're really serious about making me wear a hat.

(Pushes ANTONIO down onto the bed then jumps in)

Look..! Apple, Orange...

ANTONIO

(Looking at the pack)

Island punch... Banana split..? Chocolate Strawberry!

MARCUS

Baby..? Are you thinkin' what I'm thinkin'?

ANTONIO

What are you thinking?

MARCUS

I think we should try'em out to make sure they're good.

ANTONIO

But what about us getting something to eat?

MARCUS

*(Pulling ANTONIO close MARCUS grabs
hold of his ass)*

Baby, that's exactly what I'm planning to do.

(They both laugh and then kiss)

You know... I was thinking... If you're a really good boy I's let you give me some a dat chocolate strawberry.

ANTONIO

(Surprised)

Marcus, Aare you serious? I mean. I know...

MARCUS

(Overlapping)

Yeah... I am...

ANTONIO

But you told me you would...

MARCUS

(Overlapping)

I know... I do you. You don't do me... Fuck what I told you! I love you baby. ...And I know having a partner that is versatile really matters to you. Besides, I guess it ain't fair dat I'm getting all da ass. You cool wit dat?

ANTONIO

Yeah... I'm cool with that!

*(MARCUS and ANTONIO kiss as they
begin slowly removing their clothes)*

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF SCENE 7

SCENE 8

AT RISE:

The bedroom. Evening. Moonlight is coming through the open window as in the start of the play. The intoxicating smell of fresh incense burning fills the air. MARCUS and ANTONIO bathed in blue light have just finished making love.

CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 quietly pierce the darkness with their lighters in order to place fresh candles randomly around the graves of the beautiful ones that have passed away. The CHILDREN eventually come to kneel in prayer.

ANTONIO

Whooh!

MARCUS

(ANTONIO leans over and turns the television volume back up. Once more we here commentary about the US Supreme Court ruling)

Damn baby..! That was intense.

ANTONIO

I guess those condoms work.

(Quietly laying in each other's arms, they watch the news)

MARCUS

Guess we better think about gettin' something delivered.

(Their idea is stopped by breaking news on the television. Another black male has been killed by the police. The two lovers are in disbelief at the news.)

CHILDREN 5

(Quietly starts to sing)

Well don't you think it's 'bout time Lord
That we all be free

Don't you think it's 'bout time Lord
We all be free

(CHILDREN 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6 join in sing as they slowly gather around the lovers once more recreating Caravaggio's 'Adoration of the Shepherds')

Oh well don't you think it's 'bout time Lord
That we all be free

Don't you think it's 'bout time Lord
We all be free

(MARCUS takes the remote from ANTONIO's lap. Kissing ANTONIO neck and chest)

MARCUS

(MARCUS points the remote at the audience)

I think it's time for something else, don't you?

(Pushes off button)

(FADE TO BLACK)

END OF ACT II