**LOVE and ANARCHY**

by

Dan Friedman

*Dedicated to Judith Malina, who lived for both.*

*3/17/20-* v3

**CHARACTERS**

*(In Order of Appearance)*

Dan Friedman (on DVD)

Beauregard Piccard

Albert Parsons

Reverend William Chesson

Frederick Müller

Lucy Gonzales

Oliver Gathering

Tillie Madison

Carlos Ochoa

Hille Worth

**Prologue**

Hi, I’m Dan Friedman. I wrote the play we’re about to see. Some of you know me, most of you don’t. In either case, you’ll know more about who I am when the performance is over. The play is a love story involving two very political people, Lucy and Albert Parsons. Some of you may have heard of them, most you haven’t. In either case, you’ll know more about them, or at least my version of them, when the performance is over.

Lucy and Albert Parsons were a married couple. They were both leaders of the labor movement in Chicago in the 1870s and ‘80s. He was white, she was black. They had two children. Their daughter died when she was still a child. Their son grew to adulthood.

That was a time when millions of immigrants from Europe and China were pouring into the United States to work in our new factories, mines, railroads, and slaughter houses. People worked 15 to 16 hours a day, six or seven days a week for starvation wages and no benefits. Depressions came every few years throwing millions of people out of work. Tens of thousands of people were homeless and hungry.

Many of those immigrants, particularly in Chicago, were from Germany. They brought with them from the old country radical ideas of socialism, communism and anarchism. All of those were versions of reorganizing society to take care of the needs of poor people. They were visions of a world where the people who did the work had the power. A world in which everyone had enough food to eat, a decent place to live, free health care, and free quality education. The way we would be able to have all that, the socialists, the communists and the anarchists believed, was that instead of a boss, a chairman of the board, an owner, getting rich from our work, we together would decide what to do with the wealth we created.

Lucy and Albert Parsons were anarchists. I know that’s a scary word to lots of you. We’ve been taught that anarchists are violent and crazy, that they want to sow disorder and chaos. In fact, anarchists are simply people who think we don’t need government at all, that ordinary people can run the world cooperatively and peacefully without bureaucracies and bosses, without courts and cops, without prisons and armies. You may not agree with that vision, or you may think it’s a naïve dream, but our two main characters in this play are passionate anarchists. Maybe, as you get to know them, you’ll come to feel that passion, even if you don’t agree with it.

This is the kind of play where it’s helpful to start at the end. Knowing what happened to Lucy and Albert Parsons, what they wound up doing with their lives, how they died, and how they impacted on American and world history will, I’m pretty sure, help make the beginning of the story much more interesting.

In the spring of 1886 the country was roiling with strikes and demonstrations for the eight-hour day. It was won in some cities and some industries. In Chicago, where the labor movement was lead primarily by anarchists, the workers at the McCormick Reaper works had been locked out since February. On May 3rd, the police fired on the strikers picketing the factory, killing six. To protest the killings, the labor movement called for a protest rally at Haymarket Square the following evening. Thousands filled the square, the police, armed with rifles, surrounded them. Albert and Lucy helped to organize the rally and Albert was among those who addressed it. As the peaceful demonstration was coming to an end, someone, to this day no one knows who, but most probably a police provocateur, threw a bomb into the crowd. The police took that as a cue and fired into crowd. Some of the demonstrators were armed and fired back at the police. Seven policemen were killed and a much larger number of workers. We know at least 60 were wounded, but most of the dead and wounded were carried off by their families and friends, so we’ll never know for sure how many died.

The authorities used the incident to launch a reign of terror against the labor movement. The establishment press said the bomb was the beginning of an attempted revolution. Anarchist and socialist newspapers were closed down, people’s homes were searched without warrants, hundreds were arrested—and the eight anarchist leaders of the rally, including Albert Parsons, were charged with conspiracy to throw the bomb into the crowd of their own followers. Albert managed to escape to Wisconsin and probably would have made it to freedom in Canada, but on the day of the arraignment he appeared in court to stand trial with his comrades.

Despite a national and international campaign to acquit them, all eight were convicted and sentenced to die. On November 11, 1887, four of the condemned men, including Albert, were hung. The Illinois governor later commuted the sentences of remaining labor leaders. Three years later, in 1890, the Socialist International declared that in honor of the martyred anarchist leaders and the Eight Hour Movement of which they were a part, May First, May Day, would henceforth be International Workers Day. The holiday was taken up by workers in virtually every country in the world and is still celebrated today. So, while many of us grew up thinking May Day was a foreign communist holiday, it actually began here in the good old USA.

Lucy Parsons continued to be a radical national and international leader of the labor movement. In 1905, she was one of the founders the Industrial Workers of the World, the most radical union America has ever known. Later, in the 1920s and ‘30s, she was a leader of the International Labor Defense, which worked to free political prisoners and victims of racism. She died in 1942 at the age of 89 when her apartment in Chicago caught fire. Upon her death, her library of 1,500 books on socialism, communism and anarchism and all her personal papers were seized by the Chicago police and disappeared, probably burnt. She remained a militant enemy of the establishment to the end—and they knew it.

So that’s the end of the story. Now you know what Albert and Lucy Parsons did with their lives, how they died and the impact they had on our history.

I’ve known about Albert and Lucy since I was a kid. I grew up in a communist family that related to them as important American heroes. In the early days of the Castillo Theatre, we used to stage May Day demonstrations in Union Square at which everyone dressed up as radicals from different times and places. We would march back to our first theatre on East 20th Street and have a big May Day party. I would always host the party performing as Albert and Pam Lewis, who for many years was a leader of the All Stars, would perform as Lucy.

Recently, I began wondering about how they got together. It seems very unlikely. They met in Waco, Texas right after the Civil War. They were in their late teens. He had been a Confederate soldier. She had been a slave. How, given that history and the intense racism of that time and place, did they meet, fall in love and become anarchists? I began trying to imagine myself into their world, and this is what I imagined…

[*Two African American women. Tillie Madison and Lucy Gonzales, sitting in a tailor shop.*]

Tillie – Have you heard the word?

Lucy – The word?

Tillie – The good news.

Lucy – You talking about the Bible?

Tillie – No, the Union League.

Lucy – The Republicans?

Tillie – Everybody talking.

Lucy – That they are.

Tillie – What you think?

Lucy – Oliver’s going.

Tillie – Is he now?

Lucy – He is.

Tillie – You?

Lucy – I thought I’d support my man.

Tillie – Could be dangerous.

Lucy - What isn’t for a colored woman?

Tillie – It could make things worse.

Lucy – Might.

Tillie – Might.

Lucy - I don’t know why, but I got hope.

Tillie – Always good to have hope.

Lucy – Not always, but things do seem to be changing for the better.

Tillie – That they do.

Lucy – Might be that we really can get equality. It just might happen. If we try.

Tillie – Can I go with you and Oliver?

Lucy – Of course.

[*Two young white men, late teens or early 20s, sitting at a crude table in a beer garden, each with a stein of beer. Beauregard is covered with lint. Albert’s fingers and forearms are ink stained. They are both tired from a long day’s work, but buoyed by the energy of youth*.]

Beauregard

Damn, it’s good to get out of that mill.

Albert

[laughs] Seems half the cotton followed you out.

Beauregard

[*picking at the lint*] Yeah, well, it gets hot as hell in there and it just sort of sticks to you.

Albert

Like you tarred and feathered.

Beauregard

Sort of. Glad these Germans keep the beer cold here.

Albert

Hey, Beauregard, you know that German guy at work I told you about?

Beauregard

Your manager at the newspaper?

Albert

Yeah, Frederick Müller. He invited me to come to the Union League meeting on Thursday night.

Beauregard

Oh shit, Albert, you don’t want to get mixed up in that.

Albert

I don’t know.

Beauregard

You don’t know what? You know they’re a front for the Republican Party, you know they working to get the coloreds voting. You know what your brother and his friends think of them.

Albert

Yeah, I know all that. Wondering if they aren’t on to something.

Beauregard

On to what? Getting themselves killed?

Albert

Well, the war is over. The colored are free. Slavery isn’t coming back, no matter what my brother says. Union League might be the future.

Beauregard

It might be I suppose, but you really want to get mixed up with all those darkies?

Albert

At the print shop I work with Frederick and Carlos, he’s Mexican.

Beauregard

You don’t say? Carlos is Mexican, is he?

Albert

Shut up, Beauregard. We’ve been talking at work and Frederick and Carols been saying poor whites, poor Mexicans and poor colored got more in common than poor whites and rich whites do.

Beauregard

That seems odd to me Albert. How can a white man and a colored man have much in common?

Albert

Hard work.

Beauregard

Well, that I reckon.

Albert

Not enough to eat.

Beauregard

That too, I suppose.

Albert

Those things count.

Beauregard

[*pointing to the skin color on is arm*] This counts too. It’s counted more than anything else all my life.

Albert

Yeah, but, Beauregard, hasn’t the war changed that?

Beauregard

Did it now?

Albert

Albert and Carlos say it’s has, and the Union League’s moving that along.

Beauregard

Sounds like you got yourself convinced you’re going to that meeting.

Albert

I’m curious.

Beauregard

You’re loco.

Albert

Maybe. You want to come with me?

Beauregard

Now I know you lost your mind. No thank you. I don’t want to get myself shot at. But I will drink to your curiosity.

[*Holds up his glass. They clink. Light out.*]

[*First African Methodist Episcopal Church, 103 First Street. Beside the lectern is a wooden table. On the table are a copy of the Declaration of Independence, the Bible, and a large hammer. The Reverend William Chesson at the lectern. Frederick stands behind the table.*]

Reverend Chesson

Good evening, brothers and sisters. For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Reverend William Chesson.

Frederick

And I am Frederick Müller, typesetter and president of the Waco branch of the Union League.

Reverend Chesson

Welcome to the First African Methodist Episcopal Church and welcome to the third meeting of the Union League of Waco, Texas. It’s great to see so many of you, and wonderful, indeed, that so many of you are here for the first time.

Please join me in prayer. Lord, as you know, the Union League has grand and glorious, and yes, dangerous work to do. We aim to register every colored man in McLennan County, build a strong Republican Party and ensure that the gains of the terrible war just completed are never lost. Please bless and protect our members and organizers. May you walk with them and talk with them as they go into the streets of Waco and travel the roads of McLean County. Guide us, Dear Jesus, as we gather into our flock all who hate oppression and love the United States of America. And please, Lord, hasten the day that the words of the prophet Amos come to pass, “Let judgment run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.” Amen.

Frederick

[*Holding up the Declaration of Independence*.] After our prayer, we read from the Declaration of Independence to remind us that the struggle for liberty has a long and painful history. This Declaration was written almost a hundred years ago in the struggle to free our country from British colonialism and it was in the heart and on the lips of the brave soldiers in blue who fought and died that no man should be a slave. Would someone who can read please come up and let us hear the words?

[*Lucy raises hand from audience.*]

Yes, young lady. Please come up.

[*Lucy comes on stage.*]

What’s your name?

Lucy

Lucy Gonzales.

Frederick

Your first time at a League meeting?

[*Lucy nods yes*.]

Welcome, Lucy Gonzales.

Reverend Chesson

Blessings on you and yours.

Frederick

[*Handing Lucy the Declaration.*] Please read what’s underlined.

Lucy

[*reads*] “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Those are beautiful words.

Frederick

Yes, they are, Miss Gonzales, and they remind us of the task ahead. Having abolished the slave government of the Confederacy, having destroyed the compromise with the devil that our forefathers made at our nation’s birth, we are now building the foundations of a new America with liberty and justice for all.

Reverend Chesson

Amen!

Frederick

Miss Gonzales, you see before you the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, and a hammer. Why the hammer? Because the hammer is a tool. At our next meeting we may have a sickle or an anvil. We start every meeting of the Union League with a tool. A tool is an emblem of labor and the Union League stands with and for those who labor in field or shop or factory.

Lucy

I labor in a dress shop.

Frederick

Next meeting, please bring your needle and thread and they will be our tools to honor.

Lucy

Thank you, I will.

Reverend Chesson

Our Lord Jesus Christ was a carpenter. The poor shall inherit the earth.

Frederick

Yes, if they fight for it.

Reverend Chesson

And the best way to fight for it, to fight to reclaim the world for all the Lord’s children, is for every colored man at this meeting to step forward and register to vote. We are all now citizens of the United States of America and we have the right under the 13th Amendment of the Constitution to exercise the franchise. It’s only by registering and then voting for the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln, that we can stop the former slave owners from reversing the gains of the Great Civil War and insure that the United States of America will, at last, be a democracy for white and black and Mexican. For as our Declaration of Independence says, “All men are created equal.”

[*Oliver steps out of the audience.*]

Oliver

I’ll sign up, Reverend.

Reverend Chesson

And you are, brother?

Oliver

Oliver Gathering.

Lucy

He’s my man.

[*Lucy takes his hand. Frederick hands Oliver the registration form to sign. Oliver signs, hands it back to Frederick. Frederick and Oliver shake hands.*]

Reverend Chesson

Oliver Gathering, you are now not only a free man, you are a voter of the United States of America. Congratulations. [*To the audience*.] Who’s next?

[*Lights fade.*]

[*Tailor shop, Waco, Texas. Two African-American women working on a dress as they talk. As they speak, Lucy Gonzalez, who younger, is handing Tillie Madison pins to hold different folds in an elaborate gown.*]

Tillie

Ain’t you something, girl? Getting up there and reading the Declaration of Independence like you a politician.

Lucy

Politics isn’t just for the politicians any more. It’s for all of us. Power spreading all over.

Tillie

I guess so. I didn’t even know you could read.

Lucy

My father was Mexican. He taught me to read.

Tillie

You read Mexican too?

Lucy

No, but I can speak it some, German too?

Tillie

I didn’t know I worked with such an educated gal.

Lucy

I’m not as educated as I’d like. I’d never read the Declaration of Independence before.

Tillie

My goodness, child, those words were beautiful.

Lucy

I think I’m just lucky to be born mixed up in a mixed-up world.

Tillie

Yeah, and it’s getting more mixed up all the time.

Lucy

Isn’t it wonderful? I mean, there were white people at that meeting too.

Tillie

Making my head spin.

Lucy

It’s like we’re living in a big tornado. No telling where we’ll land when it’s over, but it’s got to be better than where we started.

Tillie

That’s a fact. And I must say, Miss Lucy, I am impressed not only that you can read so well, but also that you had the courage to step up to the front of that church last night in front of all those people.

Lucy

That meeting moved me, Ms Tillie, it really did.

Tillie

It moved you onto the stage.

Lucy

I’m asked myself, if we don’t step up now, when will we?

Tillie

Amen!

Lucy

When the time comes, it seems to me you’ve got to seize it.

Tillie

Talking about time, Lucy, we need to get his dress ready for Ms Worth by tomorrow morning at ten.

Lucy

You hear that Frederick fellow say I should bring a needle and thread to the next Union League meeting?

Tillie

Indeed, a new day is dawning, Lucy Gonzalez, a strange and wonderful new day.

[*Lucy and Tillie go back to sewing. Lights fade*.]

[*Albert, Carlos and Frederick at the beer hall.]*

Carlos

It was a great turn out. I counted 474 people. And 67 freedmen registered. Things are looking up in Waco.

Albert

I’ve never seen anything like it. Never saw so many people gathered together, except, I guess, on a battlefield to kill each other. I’ll tell you one thing for sure, I’ve never seen so many colored people in one place.

Frederick

How’d that make you feel?

Albert

Feel? I don’t know. Scared. A little. A lot of colored don’t like white people.

Carlos

Can you blame them?

Albert

No, I understand.

Carlos

Nobody gave you any trouble, did they?

Albert

Not at all. Everybody was very friendly.

Frederick

Once folks realize you really are willing to fight for liberty and justice for all, they’re grateful.

Albert

You really think that’s possible, liberty and justice for all?

Frederick

Yes. That’s what my whole life is about.

Carlos

Frederick fought in the Revolution of 1848 back in Europe. He’s a ‘48er, fled here for his life. Ain’t that right, Frederick?

[*Frederick nods yes.*]

Albert

As I hear it, a lot of you Texas Germans are 48ers.

Frederick

Some. When Texas succeeded from the Union, that was a test. Some of my countrymen kept their mouths shut. And there were some Germans who fought with the traitors, but most of us, especially the ‘48ers, I’m proud to say, resisted the slavocracy and spilled our blood to save the United States and bring freedom to our colored brothers and sisters.

Carlos

Frederick was at the Nueces Massacre. You heard of it?

Albert

Everyone in Waco heard about it. There was a bunch of Tejanos and Germans trying to get to Mexico to join up with the Union. But the way I heard it, everyone was wipped out.

Frederick

A lot died that night. But a few of us escaped. We rode hard for a week, made it to Mexico and then to New Orleans where we joined the Union Army. I helped keep the supplies flowing into New Orleans.

Albert

And now you’re a big shot.

Frederick

Like you, I’m a typesetter.

Albert

Yeah, and you and Reverend Chesson are leading the Union League. The article we typeset for the paper this morning said you’re also with the International Workingmen’s Association. I like the sound of that, mind if I ask what that is?

Frederick

It’s sort of like a Union League for working people all over the world.

Albert

For real?

Frederick

Very real. It’s just a few years old and already we’re active in Europe, North and South America, and soon, we hope, Africa and Asia.

Albert

Fighting for voting rights?

Frederick

Voting rights, yes, and also for economic rights, the right to have a job and a living wage and decent working and living conditions. But not just fighting for rights from the rich, the International Workingmen’s Association is organizing so that working people together own the factories and the mines and the ranches, and yes, the newspapers, and run them democratically not for profit but for what’s good for everyone.

Albert

Working people together owning everything? No private property?

Frederick

Property is thief.

Albert

Wait, what, “Property is thief”?

Frederick

The human race collectively creates all wealth; collectively we should decide what to do with it.

Albert

Frederick, no disrespect, but that’s just crazy.

Carlos

Why?

Albert

Why? Because, I don’t know, because it is. Without property how would anything hold together?

Frederick

It would hold together with cooperation, instead of exploitation.

Albert

Slow down, I’m not sure what you’re talking about.

Frederick

I’m talking about a world where not only are there are no slaves and no masters, there are no workers and no bosses. Where everyone works and everyone shares the fruits of their labor. Where all men are really equal. Not just in terms of voting, that’s important, yes, but also equal in terms of income and opportunity.

Albert

It’s hard to imagine.

Carlos

Not so hard. I can see you imagining it now.

Albert

Frederick, before we go any further, I have to tell you that two of my cousins were with the group that ambushed you.

Frederick

That war’s over. There’s new battles to fight.

Carlos

[*to Albert*] You coming to the next Union League meeting?

Albert

I reckon.

Carlos

[*Carlos hold his glass up.*] To the new battles.

*[They all toast. Lights fade.]*

[*Union League Meeting at* Waco’s *First African Methodist Episcopal Church*

*Reverend Chesson at podium. Frederick seated at the table which holds the bible, the Declaration of Independence, and a spool of thread and a box of needles.*]

Reverend Chesson

[*At the podium*] It’s good to see so many new brothers here tonight. I know many of you have traveled long hours to be with us, to learn about your right to register and vote. Here to tell you more, is Lucy Gonzales, who has taken the lead in registering our brothers.

[*Lucy moves the podium. Reverend Chesson sits*.]

Lucy

Thank you Reverend Chesson and Chairman Müller for inviting me to speak to the Union League this evening. It is an honor to do so. And it’s an honor to have this needle and thread up here representing our commitment to those who labor. I’m proud that these tools, these needles and threads come from the dress shop where Sister Tillie Thompson and I work. Whenever in the history of our country have the tools of colored women held a place of honor?

Has there ever been a time like this?

I think not.

Slavery has been swept away.

The prison of the plantation

Razed to the ground.

That ground fertilized with the blood of so many

Is now rich with possibility.

The poisoned well has been cleansed.

The bitterness of centuries has been spit out,

And we can drink from the clear waters of hope.

The spring has sprung.

The dogwood is blooming.

Birds and insects fill the sky.

Tillie

Praise the Lord!

Lucy

Praise the Lord if you want.

I praise human beings.

Frail, blood stained men and women.

Sweating, grunting, shitting human beings.

Oliver

God is great!

Lucy

God is a beautiful idea.

God was our light in the endless darkness.

But I ask you now: Where was he during our centuries of suffering?

Tillie

I got a home in Beulah Land, outshines the sun!

Lucy

Yes, and now I have a home in Texas too.

I have a home in Waco.

This city, this state, this nation is not just white now.

It is black and brown too.

As I see it now, as I live it now,

God didn’t liberate us.

We did.

Human beings, as selfish, as evil and as mean as we are.

Human beings built the prison.

Human beings have torn it down.

Oh, history of shame and fear,

We have washed you away.

Frederick

Step up, brothers. Step up all and register. Register into the party of freedom. The party of Lincoln. The Republican Party.

Tillie

Praise the Lord.

Lucy

Praise you all.

[*Lights out*]

[*Lights up on Albert and Carlos at the back Waco’s First African Methodist Episcopal Church or on the street outside.* *The meeting at which Lucy just spoke has just ended.]*

Albert

That Lucy Gonzales is something, isn’t she?

Carlos

Dios mio! Too bad women can’t be preachers. The way she preaches puts Reverend Chesson to shame.

Albert

I’ve never heard anyone talk about the war, and freedom, the way she just did. “The prison of the plantation razed to the ground. That ground fertilized with the blood of so many

Is now rich with possibility. … Human beings built the prison. Human beings have torn it down.

Oh, history of shame and fear, we have washed you away.”

Carlos

You remember it word for word?

Albert

It stuck in my head, in my heart, I guess.

Carlos

It was beautiful.

Albert

Carlos, can I ask you something?

Carlos

Sure. What’s on your mind, jovencito?

Albert

Frederick tells me you fought for the Union too.

Carlos

Proud to say I did.

Albert

That because you’re Mexican?

Carlos

I suppose it is. I grew up down in Zapata County. That’s right on the border. When Texas started getting ready to join the Confederacy, my uncle, Antonio Ochoa, he organized a militia and I joined it.

Albert

Your uncle was Antonio Ochoa?

Carlos

Sure was. You heard of him?

Albert

Damned right I did. He wasn’t too popular around here.

Carlos

Glad to hear that. We tried to give the Sucesihs hell. First thing we did, we took over most of the county including the county seat to stop the county officers—with our guns—from pledging their support to the Confederacy. Then Judge Isidro Vela, a big rancher who was close to all the rich Anglos, called in Confederate troops from Webb County. They ambushed us at Rancho Clareño, my uncle’s ranch. I lost my two closest friends in that fight. A few months later, when we regrouped, we got hold of Judge Vela and hung him. After that we had to hightail it to Mexico. We harassed the Secessionists all up and down the border for two more years until my uncle was killed. Then I made my way back to Texas and joined up with the Union’s Second Texas Cavalry, fought at Galveston Island and the battle of Sabine Pass. Don’t know how, but I came out of it all without a scratch.

Albert

How’d you know it was the right thing to do?

Carlos

To fight for the Union?

Albert

Yeah.

Carlos

I don’t guess it was much of a question among my people. We didn’t like it one bit when you Americans came into our country and turned it into fucking Texas.

Albert

I guess I never thought much about that.

Carlos

Albert, think about this: we didn’t have slavery here when Texas was still part of Mexico. Sure, there were rich traitors like Judge Vela, but for most of us, we were dirt poor and it was pretty clear who our enemy was. Hell, most of us Tejanos were just getting used to being part of the United States and then they come along and want us to be part of the Confederate States? No way.

Albert

Carlos, I’m sort of ashamed to say this, but I fought for the Confederacy.

Carlos

Hell, everyone knows that, Albert.

Albert

When I think on it, I’m not really sure why.

Carlos

Probably the same reason I fought against it—your folks. Everybody you knew thought it was the right thing to do.

Albert

But it wasn’t.

Carlos

You know that now, but how old were you when you joined?

Albert

Thirteen.

Carlos

And from what I hear, your brother William was a Confederate Colonel.

Albert

Led the Fourth Regiment Texas Volunteer Cavalry.

Carlos

There you have it.

Albert

I think I’m trying to figure how I changed. I hope it’s not just that I’m going with the winners.

Carlos

It’s not at all clear who the winners are down here yet.

Albert

I suppose that’s right.

Carlos

I think you’re just beginning to see what your—our—Declaration of Independence says, “All men are created equal.”

Albert

Said the same thing before the war.

Carlos

True, I guess now you’re getting to know some other kinds of men, like me for instance, and seeing that we are, in fact, men not so different than you.

Albert

During the war when I was in East Texas there was a whole bunch of Jayhawkers holed up in the Big Thicket, that’s this huge forest and swamp on the border there with Louisiana. They were white Texans who fought against the Confederacy through the whole war. One time we captured some of them. I asked one this one, Warren Collins was his name, why they did it and they told me it was a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight. Said he wouldn’t fight for the rich men. He told me he knew what would happen if the slaves were not freed. He said the men who had money to start any kind of business would buy slaves to do the labor and poor whites would have nothing. It seemed pretty sensible to me.

Only rich men owned slaves, why were so many poor folks fighting to preserve it? I think I been carrying that question around with me ever since.

Carlos

As I hear it, that’s just about exactly what Frederick’s saying. Those East Texas Jayhawkers, they got it right.

Albert

Yeah. And Collins and those boys managed to escape. I wonder what they’re up to now.

Carlos

I wouldn’t doubt if they wind up joining the International Workingmen’s Association.

Albert

Neither would I.

[*Lights fade on Carlos and Albert.*]

[*Lights up on* *Hille Worth, a white woman in her late 20s standing in the dress shop, wearing in the new gown created by Tillie and Lucy who stand on either side of her*.]

Tillie

It fits perfectly, Mrs. Worth.

Hille

Yes, it’s beautiful.

Lucy

It definitely shows your figure to advantage.

Hille

Thank you both. You are true artists.

Tillie

You are very welcome. Mr. Worth will be proud.

Hille

Yes, this is our first formal ball since we’ve returned to Waco. It means a lot to him.

Lucy

If you don’t mind me asking, Mrs. Worth, do I detect a German inflection in your voice? Bist du Deutshcer?

Hille

Yes, Ms Gonzales, ich bin.

Lucy

Are you by any chance a 48er?

Tillie

Lucy, that’s none of our business.

Hille

Tillie is right, Ms Gonzales, it is not any of your business. However, I don’t mind saying, yes, I am. My first husband and I fled Germany after the revolution of 1848.

Lucy

Your first husband?

Hille

Yes. Mr. Worth’s first wife died in childbirth and my first husband died in the war.

Lucy

May I ask which side he fought on?

Tillie

Lucy, that is really none of our business.

Hille

He was fleeing Texas for Mexico so that he could travel to New Orleans to join the Union Army. He was killed at the Nueces Massacre.

Lucy

I’m sorry.

Hille

I am comforted knowing he died fighting for what he believed in.

Tillie

Praise the Lord!

Hille

I don’t know about the Lord, but I do know that what’s done is done and we must carry on, mustn’t we?

Tillie

The Lord works in mysterious ways.

Hille

I suppose He does, and, as Mr. Worth would say, we all have our cross to bare.

Tillie

Amen.

Lucy

Mrs. Worth. As a former slave, as you may imagine, I am grateful to all who died for the cause of freedom. May I ask your late husband’s name?

Tillie

Please, Lucy, leave Mrs. Worth in peace.

Hille

His name was Frederick Müller.

Lucy

Frederick Müller?

Hille

Yes, may he rest in peace.

Tillie

Lucy, let’s help Mrs. Worth undress and package her dress.

Lucy

Yes, of course.

[*Lights out.*]

[*Lights up. Hille is gone. Manikin bare center stage. Tillie and Lucy alone in the dress shop.*]

Tillie

You can’t tell Mr. Müller about this.

Lucy

I have to. That’s his wife.

Tillie

That was his wife.

Lucy

He thinks she’s dead.

Tillie

Yes, and she thinks he’s dead. Let’s keep it that way. The dead should stay dead.

Lucy

She’s married to the richest man in the county.

Tillie

And I would guess she wants to stay married to the richest man in the county. Leave this alone.

Lucy

Leaving it alone isn’t fair to Frederick

Tillie

Opening your big mouth isn’t fair to her.

Lucy

He’s going find out one way or another.

Tillie

Maybe, maybe not. But this is white folk’s business.

Lucy

He should learn about it from his friends.

Tillie

He shouldn’t hear it from anybody. It can only lead to trouble. We’ve got enough trouble and sure as hell don’t need to get caught up in this.

Lucy

Tillie, Frederick’s my comrade.

Tillie

Oh Lord, child, he’s your what?

Lucy

My comrade in the Union League and the Republican Party and that makes this my business.

Tillie

Lord have mercy!

[*Lights down on Tillie and Lucy.*]

[*Lights up on* *Union League meeting, First African Methodist Episcopal Church. Reverend Chesson at the pulpit.*]

Reverend Chesson

Brothers and Sisters, on his way to our meeting Brother Oliver Gathering was fired upon. Praise God, he was not hurt.

Oliver

[*comes to podium*]

I’m fine.

Tillie

[*from the audience*]

We’re here with you, Oliver.

Oliver

Thank you, Sister Tillie. I don’t know how I heard them before they shot, but I did. I was able duck around the corner.

Reverend Chesson

Could you see who they were?

Oliver

Three white men wearing kerchiefs. One rifle, two pistols.

Reverend Chesson

In response to this attack, we have posted armed guards surrounding the church.

Tillie

[*from the audience]*

Praise the Lord, we now have our own guns.

Reverend Chesson

Yes, we now have our own guns. And we have an even stronger weapon. We have love. Jesus has taught us that our strongest weapon is to love even those who hate us. Hate begets hate. Only love can stop hate. Only love can be light among the darkness. Only love can stop the blood from flowing.

[*Albert enters from the audience.*]

Albert

Reverend Chesson, Brother Oliver, do I have your permission to I speak?

Reverend Chesson

Brother Albert, please speak your heart.

[*Albert takes the podium.*]

Albert

I rise, brothers and sisters, to speak of love.

Tillie

[*From the audience*]

Speak, Brother Parsons.

Albert

It’s a lovely word, love.

Short, subtle, slippery.

Oh, so slippery.

I love the word, love.

I love the feeling, love.

I’m filled with it right now, with love.

Tillie

[*from the audience*]

It’s the Holy Spirit, Brother Parsons, the Holy Spirit.

Albert

It’s not simple, love.

It’s a mystery, this love, a confusion.

In the recently concluded war I heard a lot about love.

Love of country,

Love of the Lone Star State,

Love of the Sweet Sunny South.

It all sounded so beautiful.

It sounded like the war was a great and passionate romance.

I was caught up in that romance like a prairie dog in a trap.

So were some of you.

The word love is seductive.

I was seduced. Many of my white brothers were seduced.

It was grotesque.

When the politicians said, “Love the Sweet Sunny South”

What they were really saying was, “Love slavery.

Love it and go forth to kill and die for it.”

What can it mean to love something so hateful?

“Love slavery.”

I choke on those words.

Can you love evil?

You can.

Millions did.

Millions still do.

So why praise love if love is so malleable, so slippery, such a confusion?

Because we all want it,

We all need it,

We all need to give it,

We all need to get it.

Love can feel like a warm sun on an April afternoon after the rain.

It’s too beautiful, too powerful to waste on the hateful.

So, let’s love what deserves love.

And what deserves love?

Not those men who shot at Brother Oliver.

What deserves love is you.

Democracy deserves love.

One man, one vote deserves love.

Forty acres and a mule deserves love.

The Union League deserves love.

Tillie

[*From the audience*]

Speak to it, brother.

Albert

Let’s all speak to it. And you know how to speak to it? You show your love for democracy and for your brothers and sisters by registering to vote.

Reverend Chesson

Amen!

[*Oliver shakes Albert’s hand. They embrace. Lights down.*]

[*Lights up on a busy street in downtown Waco. Albert Parsons approaches Lucy Gonzalez. He sweeps off his hat and bows at the knee.*]

Albert

Excuse me, Madam, might I have the honor of introducing myself?

Lucy

Why, yes, of course.

Albert

I’m Albert Parsons, typesetter by profession, radical Republican by politics.

Lucy

It’s a pleasure, Mr. Parsons. I’m Lucy Gonzalez.

Albert

Yes, Miss Gonzalez. I know who you are. I’ve heard you speak at the registration rallies. You are a beautiful speaker

Lucy

I must confess, Mr. Parsons, I know who you are as well. You’ve been at every Union League meeting I’ve attended. You are quite the passionate speaker yourself. Your testimony to love at the last meeting, well, I must say I loved it.

Albert

Coming from you, Miss Parsons, that is a great compliment.

Lucy

I assure you it was so intended.

Albert

A compliment I will treasure and not soon forget.

Lucy

You are, if I may say so, quite the gallant, Mr. Parsons.

Albert

I try, Miss Gonzalez. Despite my politics, I am a son of the South.

Lucy

Yes, and since you have mentioned your background, Mr. Parsons, will you allow me, at this early moment in our acquaintance, to ask you what is perhaps a difficult question?

Albert

Of course.

Lucy

Your brother was a Confederate colonel and is currently, or so rumor has it, active in the Golden Triangle, an organization seeking to invade Mexico and establish slavery there.

Albert

Yes, I come from a very political family.

Lucy

My question is, how have you come to believe so differently?

Albert

It is, indeed, a difficult question. I’m not sure I know the answer. I have, however, come to despise the old slave system and the racism that justified it. I have come to see how it organized physical and emotional violence against honest and hard-working people to make a few rich. As a workingman, I have come to feel a bond with all who toil. Living here in Waco I have met and worked with people of all colors and nationalities and learned to respect them. And I met Frederick Müller, a German revolutionary, who has taught me a lot about how the world works.

Lucy

And your brother?

Albert

We keep our distance.

Lucy

Thank you, Mr. Parsons for your thoughtful response. I hope, going forward, that we will not keep our distance.

Albert

A hope I share, Miss Gonzalez. [*Again, taking off his hat, bowing at the knee and kissing her hand*] It has been my honor to make your acquaintance.

[*Lights down on Lucy and Albert.*]

[*Lights up on Frederick, Carlos at the church, before a Union League meeting. Lucy and Tillie enter*.]

Frederick

Good to see you again, sisters.

Tillie

I couldn’t miss a Union League meeting. For me it’s like church.

Lucy

You do get filled with the Republican Spirit.

Tillie

We’re building the Holy Ghost Building.

Carlos

Where’s Oliver?

Lucy

He isn’t coming. He’s bone weary, needs to sleep.

Frederick

We’ll miss him.

Lucy

He sends his regrets.

Frederick

Carlos, since we’re asking after loved ones, where’s Ligia?

Carlos

She’s home. A rally’s no place for her.

Tillie

Why not?

Carlos

She’s a woman.

Tillie

Wait just a damned minute. Ain’t we women?

Frederick

Carlos, look around. There were lots of women there.

Carlos

Maybe, but not Tejano women. Mexican women, they take care of the family. Men do the politics.

Lucy

Is that a fact?

Carlos

Ligia would be lost here. She can’t even speak English.

Lucy

Algunos de nosotros hablamos español.

Carlos

Ligia can’t help the Union League, and I need her at home.

Frederick

Carlos, women are half the world, maybe more than half now that so many men were killed in the war. They need to be organized too.

Carlos

Ligia is organized. Organized to run the family. As you know very well, Frederick, we have a little one, Lordes, and another on the way. Ligia needs to be with them.

Lucy

I thought you were a radical Republican.

Carlos

I am.

Lucy

Except at home.

Carlos

Home is home. It has nothing to do with politics.

Lucy

As I see it, home has everything to do with politics.

Tillie

You’re lucky to have a home, Carlos. Slaves had no home. Home was the master’s privilege.

Lucy

It sounds like you won’t let Ligia off the plantation.

Carlos

Basta! I am not a master. I fought to overthrow the masters.

[*Carlos exits in a huff.*]

Tillie

I didn’t mean to set him off like that.

Frederick

I’ve been trying to get Ligia involved for a long time. It’s good for him to hear from some political women.

Tillie

I’m just talking common sense.

Lucy

What’s common sense to a woman, isn’t always common sense to a man.

Frederick

I guess that’s right.

Lucy

Frederick, since we’re talking about wives….

Frederick

We are?

Tillie

Don’t go there Lucy.

Lucy

Were you married before the war?

Frederick

I was. Why do you ask?

Lucy

We just might know you wife.

Frederick

That’s not possible.

Lucy

How do you know that?

Tillie

Lucy, he knows what he knows.

Frederick

Because I looked for her when I got back to Waco. She’s vanished. I figure she must be dead, or moved north.

Lucy

I think she’s reappeared. Is her name Hille?

Tillie

Lucy, please.

Frederick

How could you know that?

Lucy

I’ve met her. We met her. Tillie and I made her a gown.

Frederick

A gown?

Lucy

Hille is now married to Clayton Madison Worth. We made her a beautiful dress for a ball.

Frederick

That can’t be. She would never marry a slave owner.

Lucy

She did.

Frederick

She’s a 48er.

Lucy

She did.

Frederick

I have to talk with her.

Tillie

You can’t. I mean, you shouldn’t.

Frederick

Why not?

Lucy

She thinks you’re dead. Killed at the at the Nueces Massacre.

Frederick

I need to see her.

Tillie

I don’t think you should, Frederick. It can’t help anything.

Frederick

Lucy, in the name of love, you have to help me.

[*Carlos re-enters.*]

Carlos

Frederick, Reverend Chesson is looking for you. He wants to start the meeting.

[*Lights out*.]

[*The following is a sequence of short conversations, each one in a different part of the stage defined by light.*]

[*Lights up on Frederick and Albert.*]

Frederick

I have heard many fine orators, Albert, back in Germany. But your speech last week, your Love Speech at the League meeting, that was nothing short of great.

Albert

Thanks, Frederick, I was just speaking from my heart.

Frederick

Everyone could tell that. But not everyone can speak their heart so well. It was almost like a poem. Words like music, like an accordion. And people like you. You’re becoming a leader.

Albert

Thank you.

Frederick

That’s why you have to learn more.

Albert

Learn more what?

Frederick

More politics, more economics, more history.

Albert

Alright.

Frederick

I’m organizing a group to study.

Albert

To study what?

Frederick

Karl Marx, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikail Bakunin, the great thinkers of the working class.

Albert

A bit a heavy lift for a Texas boy like me, don’t you think?

Frederick

Not at all. Millions of Texas boys—and girls—need to learn from them, especially leaders like you.

Albert

Who else is this study group?

Frederick

Just Carlos and me right now. You’re the second person I asked.

Albert

We going to do this reading at work?

Frederick

Of course not, we’d get fired. We’ll meet at my house and I’m going to ask other folks.

Albert

Like who?

Frederick

Lucy Gonzales.

Albert

Lucy Gonzales? That’s interesting.

Frederick

She’s a wonderful speaker like you and she’s been registering a whole lot of voters.

Albert

How about Beauregard, could I ask him?

Frederick

If he wants to come, of course.

[*Lights down Albert and Frederick, up on Albert and Beauregard*]

Albert

You were real good at reading when we were in school.

Beauregard

That was before the war. I haven’t opened a book in six years.

Albert

It’s not like school. It’s folks from the Union League learning more about changing the world. As I understand it, we read out loud together.

Beauregard

Who’s we?

Albert

Frederick’s leading it. There’s Carlos and Lucy Gonzales.

Beauregard

That pretty colored gal?

Albert

Yes, her, and others. I don’t know everyone yet.

Beauregard

Why the hell not? I can always quit if I don’t like it.

[*Lights down on Albert and Beauregard. Lights up on Lucy and Tillie.*]

Tillie

A study group? I don’t know how to study. I barely know how to read.

Lucy

We’re going to do it together. Frederick says a group is much smarter than anyone of us alone.

Tillie

How does he know that?

Lucy

He knows a lot from being in the revolution back in Germany. He says only groups are smart enough to change things. When we stay separate, we stay stuck and nothing changes.

Tillie

That makes sense.

Lucy

Yes, and he says we can make each other smarter and better revolutionaries.

Tillie

Revolutionaries like George Washington?

Lucy

I think he means more like the poor people who made those revolutions in Europe in 1848.

Tillie

Like him?

Lucy

Like him and like us. He says overthrowing slavery has been a great revolution, and that it’s not over yet.

Tillie

If you’re going, I’ll give it a try.

[*Lights down on Lucy and Tillie. Lights up on Lucy and Oliver.*]

Oliver

Carlos already talked to me about it.

Lucy

What do you think?

Oliver

Lucy, as you know, I’m just learning to read over at the Freeman’s School. I’m not sure I could keep up with you all.

Lucy

Oliver Gathering, you’re as smart as anyone I know.

Oliver

Lucy, you know as well as me they wouldn’t let us read for 200 years. Most of us coloreds got a lot of catching up to do.

Lucy

That’s just why we need to go and learn. We need to know everything we can.

Oliver

I’ll tell you what I know. I know I have to work hard every day to keep this roof over our heads. I know I got to keep building the Republican Party. I’m not sure I need to learn what Carlos is calling Marx’s theory of surplus value. I’d rather get a good night’s sleep.

Lucy

Oliver Gathering, stop being so contrary. You know damn well this more important than two hours of sleep.

Oliver

Sleep is sweet.

Lucy

Not as sweet as liberation.

Oliver

Lucy Gonzales, how can I say no to you?

Lucy

You can’t.

[*Lights fade.*]

[*Study Group. Frederick, Oliver, Lucy, Tillie, Beauregard, Tillie, Carlos, Albert. They are reading Chapter 2 of “Wage Labor and Capital” by Karl Marx.*)

Tillie

(*reading*) “Wages, therefore, are not a share of the worker in commodities produced by himself. Wages are that part of already existing commodities with which the capitalist buys a certain amount of productive labor-power.”

Lucy

So what that means, Tillie, I think, is that we don’t have any stake in the dresses we make. Mrs. Austin, she pays us for our labor power …

Tillie

… our considerable skills …

Lucy

… but the dress we make is all hers. We make the dresses; she makes the money.

Frederick

Beauregard, why don’t you take it from there?

Beauregard

Uh, okay. (*reads*) “Consequently labor-power is a commodity which its possessor, the wage-worker, sells to the capitalist. Why does he sell it? In order to live. But the putting of labor-power into action, i.e. …

Fredrick

That’s an abbreviation for “id est” Latin for “in other words.”

Beauregard

Okay, “…But putting labor-power into action, in other words, the work—is the active expression of the laborer’s own life. And this life activity he sells to another person to secure the necessary means of life. His life-activity, therefore, is but a means of securing his own existence. He works that he may keep alive. He does not count the labor itself as part of his life; it is rather a sacrifice of his life.”

Albert

I never thought of that before. That’s why we say, “making a living,” right? We’re selling our time and our work in order to live, but it’s not life itself.

Oliver

I don’t see the problem. If the boss pays me for the work I do, that seems fair.

Tillie

I’d say it’s a thousand miles better than slavery. We don’t own the dress, but we sure as Heaven own ourselves.

Frederick

You’re right, Oliver, no more slavery. But now they got another way to exploit you; that’s what we’re reading about.

Oliver

Sorry, Frederick, but this selling our labor power doesn’t seem so bad. It seems better than this sharecropping that’s starting up, where the farmer who does the planting and the nurturing and the reaping and then has to give most of everything he grows to the damned landlord.

Tillie

And the landlord is the self-same slave owner we knew all too well before the war.

Frederick

What the slavocrats are trying to do is set up feudalism like in the old country.

Carlos

Feudalism you call it? Sounds like the haciendas where my parents grew up.

Frederick

Yes, just like that. Those haciendas are New World feudalism. The peons aren’t slaves …

Carlos

… Not exactly

Frederick

… Not exactly, but you aren’t exactly free either. The haciendada, he doesn’t own you. He owns the land and you’re chained to the land.

Lucy

What I’m hearing is that the rich got lots of ways to keep us poor.

Tillie

That’s about right.

Oliver

What I’m saying, is that me getting a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work seems like the best deal around.

Albert

What makes it fair? The boss would have nothing without our work. Why should he have any of the wealth we create?

Carlos

Because he owns the shop, the ranch, the tools we use. We couldn’t create the wealth without them, could we?

Albert

We could, if we took over the shops, the ranches, the factories …

Lucy

… the way we’re doing with the plantations.

Tillie

I don’t see any plantations being taken over.

Oliver

I don’t have my forty acres yet nor any mules. Do you?

Carlos

The rich never give up anything without a fight.

Beauregard

A lot of folks don’t like it, and not just the planters and ranchers, plenty of working people also think owning private property is, well, a right.

Lucy

They said the same about slavery.

Oliver

Now Lucy, you know damn well that owning people is nowhere the same as owning a ranch or a factory.

Lucy

Not the same, but another way to keep the rich rich and the poor poor.

Albert

Oliver, you’re saying you’re satisfied with a fair deal. What Marx is saying, I think, is that it’s not fair at the root; we have to tear it up by the root. We don’t have to make any deals. No owners to negotiate with.

Lucy

No boss at all. We can have everything.

Albert

Right, working people create all wealth; all wealth should go to working people.

Oliver

All due respect, Albert, but that sounds, well, it just sounds downright impossible.

Beauregard.

Impossible? Shit, it’s inconceivable!

Tillie

It’s all inconceivable to me, and I love it.

[*Lights fade on study group*.]

[*Albert and Lucy after the study group on the sidewalk outside of Frederick’s house*.]

Albert

Ms Gonzales, that was quite a gettogether, wouldn’t you say?

Lucy

I certainly would, Mr. Parsons. I have never experienced anything near like that study group. And given that we are studying together, you may call me Lucy.

Albert

I thank you for your permission, Lucy.

Lucy

I loved what you said, Albert, about “tearing it up by the root.”

Albert

I loved what you said, Lucy, “No boss at all.”

Lucy

We do seem to share a passion for radical politics.

Albert

Yes, we do, Lucy, we do, and given that, um, passion, I’m wondering, that is to say, I admire the work you’re doing in the evenings going door to door to register voters. I’m thinking that having a team of colored and white, in this case, a team of you and me, working together could have an impact. Seeing that a white man was willing to do this too, in the colored community, that it might, well, it might inspire, folks to register.

Lucy

Why, Albert, I think that’s a grand idea.

Albert

Do you fear our working together might cause some uneasiness?

Lucy

I’m quite certain it will. However, as the uneasiness of the new, I am also quite certain it will lead Waco forward. I go out every night except Thursday, when we hold our League meetings, and Sunday, when, I do believe, people should have their day of rest.

Albert

I can make myself available.

Lucy

That is splendid.

[*Enter Oliver and Tillie.*]

Oliver

There you are.

Lucy

Yes, here I am.

Tillie

We should walk back together.

Albert

[*to Oliver*] You have a gun?

Oliver

[*touching his pocket*] Of course.

Tillie

Good evening, Mr. Parsons.

Albert

[*Taking off his hat and bowing farewell.*] It is, indeed, a good evening, ma’am. See you on Thursday?

Tillie

Of course.

[*Lucy, Oliver and Tillie exit one direction, Albert in the other*. Lights down.]

[*Lights up on Lucy and Hille*.]

Lucy

Thank you for coming Mrs. Worth. This means a lot to Frederick.

Hille

Thank you, Ms Gonzales, for arranging this meeting. You seem to have a kind heart and it’s clear you’re a good friend to Frederick. But as you know, I’m at all not sure I should be here.

Lucy

I understand this is hard.

Hille

Nothing can come of it. We can’t go back. The river keeps flowing.

Lucy

I think Frederick knows that. I believe he’s just looking for some kind of peace.

Hille

Isn’t that what we’ve have now that the war is over, “some kind of peace”?

Lucy

I suppose it is, Mrs. Worth. All I can say, as I wrote in my letter, is that Frederick misses you and is hurting something awful.

Hille

The whole world is hurting, wouldn’t you say Ms Gonzales?

Lucy

I know it takes courage for you to come here under the circumstances, and so does Frederick. But if you’ve changed your mind, I’ll send him away.

Hille

No. I’m here. I suppose I’m looking for some kind of peace too. But I need you to stay in the room. I can’t be alone with him. [*She fixes her hat, smooths her dress.*] How do I look?

Lucy

You look lovely. [*She goes to door.*] Frederick, you can come in now.

[Frederick enters*.*]

Frederick

Hille.

[*She says nothing.*]

“You’re a sight for sore eyes,” as the Americans say.

Hille

It’s nice to see you too.

Frederick

That’s all you’ve got to say?

Hille

What do you want me to say?

Frederick

Hille, it’s me.

Hille

Yes, and it’s me. All these years. It’s strange.

Frederick

Yes, we’ve traveled a long rocky road together.

Hille

That road came to an end.

Frederick

I know and I forgive you.

Hille

I don’t need your forgiveness.

Frederick

Yes, you do. You never unmarried me.

Hille

Unmarried you? Ms Gonzales, is there even such a word in English?

Lucy

I wouldn’t know about that, Mrs. Worth. My people weren’t allowed to marry at all.

Frederick

Hille, how could you?

Hille

I thought you were dead. Everyone said you were killed at the Nueces Massacre.

Frederick

But I wasn’t.

Hille

You were gone a long time, Frederick, a terribly long time.

Frederick

So were lots of men. It was a war.

Hille

How was I supposed to know you weren’t dead?

Frederick

You couldn’t know, but you could have hoped.

Hille

Hope was pretty scarce around here.

Frederick

The Union Army was your hope.

Hille

The Union Army was a long way off.

Frederick

So you married a Confederate? One so rich he didn’t even have to serve in his sticking rebel army?

Hille

Listen to me; try to hear this. I thought you were dead. I had no money. I couldn’t find a job. Clayton is a decent man.

Frederick

How can a slave owner be a decent man?

Hille

He’s decent to me.

Frederick

So you whored yourself.

Hille

That’s what women have to do, Frederick. When it suits your purposes you call it marriage, when it doesn’t you call it whoring. I didn’t see anyone, Unionist or Secessionist, fighting for my freedom. I did what I had to do.

Frederick

You didn’t have to…

Hille

Didn’t you hear what I just said?

Frederick

I heard that you betrayed me.

Hille

And what did you do? You left me all alone in this strange land, in Waco, Texas with no way to put food on the table.

Frederick

I’m a socialist, Hille. I had to heed the call to fight for freedom.

Hille

Well, you got your fight and I got abandoned.

Frederick

You got to fuck a slave owner and live in big house.

[*Hille slaps Frederick*.]

Hille

Thank you for trying, Ms Gonzales, but this was a bad idea.

[*Hille exits.*]

Frederick

Lucy, did she ever love me?

Lucy

The way I see it, love is easy to talk about, especially if you’re a man, but it’s hard to live, especially if you’re a woman.

[*Lights fade on Lucy and Frederick.*]

[Lights up on *Carlos, Albert and Frederick*]

Frederick

Munson wants to sell the paper.

Carlos

I can’t blame him. The windows shot out in May, the fire set in the basement last month.

Frederick

He’s tired of the fight.

Albert

But Waco needs a Republican paper.

Carlos

Not to mention we’ll be out of work.

Frederick

Slow down. I said he wants to sell, not to close. He offered it to me for next to nothing.

Carlos

You can afford it?

Frederick

I’ve saved some since I got back. The bank, as you know, is run by Jeremiah Galway, a Unionist, and he’s agreed to lend me the rest, and, like I said, Munson’s being generous.

Albert

Are you going to buy it?

Carlos

Aren‘t you listening? Of course, he is.

Albert

Are we going to get raises?

Frederick

Of course not, we’re barely making enough to keep the paper open.

Albert

Spoken like a real capitalist.

Carlos

Albert, this isn’t a joke. What this means is that Frederick Müller of the International Workingmen’s Association will be the publisher and editor of the Republican weekly newspaper in Waco.

Frederick

It also means more work for all of us. Munson, of course, did most of the writing and took care of the bookkeeping. I’ll be doing that now. Carlos, you’ll take my job as managing editor. Albert, we’ve got to find someone to apprentice with you in typesetting.

Albert

How about Beauregard? He hates his job at the cotton mill.

Frederick

Beauregard. Yeah. Good. He’s a smart boy.

Carlos

When does all this happen?

Frederick

My loan from the back should be approved next week.

[*They take a moment to let it sink in. Frederick goes to cabinet takes out a bottle of snaps and three glasses. Pours three shots.]*

Here’s to keeping the voice of Texas Republicanism alive.

[*The clink glasses and drink Lights fade on Frederick, Carlos and Albert.]*

[*Lights up on Albert and Lucy*]

Lucy

Frederick owning the paper now, that’s good news, right?

Albert

It means that Waco doesn’t lose its Republican press.

Lucy

Munson wasn’t much of a Republican.

Albert

He True, he vacillated now and then, but he’s a good man.

Lucy

Frederick doesn’t vacillate.

Albert

No, Frederick is solid as a rock.

Lucy

Maybe we can start can start a column on anarchism.

Albert

That’s a bit much for now. We want people to read the paper, after all.

Lucy

It’s our job to be a few steps ahead of history. Wouldn’t you agree, Albert Parsons?

Albert

I would, Lucy Gonzales.

Lucy

So, that column is coming down the track.

Albert

I suppose you’re right.

Lucy

And pretty soon the paper can be the voice of the International Workingmen’s Association in Waco.

Albert

If a train goes too fast, it can jump the tracks.

Lucy

As you know quite well, I’m very impatient.

Albert

Yes, you are.

Lucy

And I have good reason to be.

Albert

Yes, you do.

Lucy

We’re living in a time of glorious possibilities and I don’t want us to miss our chance.

Albert

You are so damn radical, Lucy Gonzales.

Lucy

Thank you, Albert Parsons.

Albert

And I’m right there with you.

Lucy

I know, that, Albert, and it’s quite grand to have such a comrade.

Albert

Lucy, please forgive me in advance if I’m being inappropriate, if I’m going too far, if I’m wrong about this, but I think, I feel, I need to say that you are, to me, a truly beloved comrade.

Lucy

And you to me.

Albert

There is no one else like you and no one else like me.

Lucy

And there is no other fit.

Albert

Like ours.

Lucy

Albert Parsons, I do believe you are right.

Albert

Lucy Gonzales, may I kiss you?

Lucy

Albert Parsons, you may.

[*They kiss. Lights fade.]*

[*Lights up on* *the home of Lucy Gonzalez and Oliver Gathering. Oliver is sitting in a chair staring into space. Lucy enters.*]

Lucy

What you doing?

Oliver

Thinking.

Lucy

Thinking about what?

Oliver

About you.

Lucy

What about me?

Oliver

Everything. Everything about you. Your lips, your hair, your breasts, your smile, you frown, your sassiness, your confidence, where you come from, what you’re doing. Everything.

Lucy

That’s sweet, Oliver.

Oliver

I can’t seem to take you all in. You’re too complicated.

Lucy

We’re all complicated.

Oliver

You’re more complicated than most. You think bigger and deeper than anybody I ever met. I’m trying to find my way around and about, over and under and inside of you.

Lucy

Oliver, you’re talking strange.

Oliver

Is thinking about you is strange?

Lucy

No.

Oliver

Isn’t that what you’re supposed to do when you love someone?

Lucy

Why, Oliver, you never been romantic before.

Oliver

Is that what I’m doing?

Lucy

I think it is. You never said you loved me.

Oliver

Didn’t think I had to say it. I thought it was clear, clear as daybreak on a cloudless morning.

Lucy

Oliver, you’re talking like a poet.

Oliver

How can that be? You know I’m just learning to read.

Lucy

You’re sound like one though.

Oliver

Is that pleasing to you?

Lucy

It is.

Oliver

I’m glad of that Lucy, because there isn’t much I do seems to please you these days.

Lucy

That’s not true; you please me fine.

Oliver

Why you stay away so much then?

Lucy

You know why. I’m building the Republican Party, getting colored men registered to vote. We got a nation to reconstruct, this time with liberty and justice for all.

Oliver

Yes, and spending a whole lot of time with a particular Republican.

Lucy

Oliver Gathering, I do believe you’re jealous.

Oliver

Of course I am. He’s white. He can read and write easy as breathing. He’s full of that that radical politics you all excited about. I can’t compete with any of that.

Lucy

It’s not like that.

Oliver

Lucy, it’s your business what you do with your politics and with your pussy. But it hurts.

Lucy

I haven’t had sex with Albert.

Oliver

But you’re thinking about it.

Lucy

We all think about a lot of things.

Oliver

Like I said, I’ve been thinking a lot about you.

[*Lucy lays her head across Oliver’s lap*]

Lucy

I’m here, Oliver, I’m here.

Oliver

Lucy, please don’t lie to me.

[*Lights fade.*]

INTERMISSION

*[Lights up on* *tailor shop. Tillie and Lucy*]

Tillie

You seeing that white man?

Lucy

Why you saying it like that? You know him and you know his name.

Tillie

You free now, sugar, you don’t have to sleep with no white man.

Lucy

I don’t have to, I want to.

Tillie

You want to say why?

Lucy

I love him.

Tillie

Oh do you now? Love? Since when we got anything to do with love?

Lucy

Since we’re free. We got the right to vote and the right to love.

Tillie

Voting I understand. It means something. I’m not sure about this love.

Lucy

Not sure about what?

Tillie

To my way of thinking, love is one of those make-believe things the white folks carry around with them when it’s convenient and then drop like a hot potato when it gets in their way.

Lucy

Haven’t you ever been in love?

Tillie

Love my children

Lucy

That’s different. Never loved a man?

Tillie

Never had a choice like that. That kind of love, if it exists, and, like I said, I’m pretty sure it don’t, but if it exists, it means choosing your man, don’t it? A slave can’t choose.

Lucy

You’re not a slave any more.

Tillie

That’s a fact, and I have come to see that a woman, even a free woman, even a white woman, doesn’t have much choice either. She has the children, love or no love there’s no way around that. It helps to have a man, especially if he’s got a job, but I don’t see much choice there.

Lucy

I’m choosing to love Albert.

Tillie

He’s a pretty white man, I’ll give you that. But how can you choose to love a white man? White men kept us slaves for as long as any of us can remember. That doesn’t go away.

Lucy

You know Albert, he’s a good white man.

Tillie

I think he’s a great preacher, but a good white man? You really think there can be such a thing?

Lucy

I know Albert’s good.

Tillie

Didn’t you tell me he was a scout for the Confederates?

Lucy

He was 14 then. When I was 14, I was a slave.

Tillie

All of four years ago, which is what I’m saying.

Lucy

What are you saying, exactly?

Tillie

Slave and Reb, white and colored, ain’t no love there. Hundreds of years don’t evaporate over night.

Lucy

Look what we’re doing in the Republican Party white and colored working together.

Tillie

Some whites, not many.

Lucy

Albert’s one of the whites who’s working with us.

Tillie

Politics is one thing, maybe. Sex is another.

Lucy

The world changes; we’ve seen it change. When the world changes people change.

Tillie

Do they? Look around you. These Confederates just changed their uniform. Now they wear sheets.

Lucy

Look at us. We’re working for wages. Some of us got our own homes. We’re building the Union League and the Republican Party. We’ve lived through big changes.

Tillie

We’ve lived through Hell.

Lucy

Well, I’m leaving Hell.

Tillie

On a white man’s arm?

Lucy

Tillie, there’s no talking to you.

[*Lights down on Tillie and Lucy. Up on Albert and Lucy.*]

Albert

Lucy Gonzales, I reckon I love you.

Lucy

Love, that’s a fancy word. You use it a lot. What exactly do you mean, Albert Parsons, when you say it to me, here in Waco, Texas in 1869?

Albert

Well, you’re beautiful.

Lucy

That might be, but that’s not love. That’s something else.

Albert

And I like being with you. All the time.

Lucy

All the time?

Albert

Yes, all the time. And, well…

Lucy

Well?

Albert

Well, I keep thinking about you and me, you know…

Lucy

I’m not sure that I do.

Albert

You and me spending our lives together.

Lucy

Like married?

Albert

Yes, married. That’s what folks do, isn’t it?

Lucy

Is that even possible for us?

Albert

Is now. Now you’re free. Black and white and Mexican we’re all equal under the law now.

Lucy

The law from Washington is one thing. What people around here willing to accept is another.

Albert

The law from Washington is the law of the land. We’re one land now. That’s what the war was fought for, don’t you think?

Lucy

I do I hope so, Albert Parsons, but I don’t know how strong that law is yet.

Albert

It’s as strong as we, and the federal troops, can make it.

Lucy

I guess that’s right. But law or no law, federal troops or no federal troops, people have a hard time changing how they think, and an even harder time changing how they feel.

Albert

I know how we feel, and people are going to have to get used to it.

Lucy

Slow down, Albert, I’m not even used to it.

Albert

But you like it, don’t you?

Lucy

Of course, I like it. I’m singing and dancing in my head most all the time. What we got is joy. And it scares me. Ought to scare you as well.

Albert

I guess…

Lucy

You guess? There’s no guessing about it. What we got— you and me and this thing you’re calling love–it’s a combination that can get us both killed.

Albert

This is a new day. You know that. How much blood has flowed to bring forth this day? How many never lived to see it? Why cower in the shadows of yesterday? We are bringing our love into a benighted world! It’s taken almost a hundred years, but we’re about to bring into being Tom Jefferson’s dream of a world where all men—and women—are equal.

Lucy

Albert Parson’s you are a beautiful preacher, a beautiful man with a beautiful voice and a most beautiful vision. All I’m saying is nothing’s for sure yet, nothing seems settled.

Albert

Except one thing: I love you.

Lucy

Love, whatever exactly it is, is not all there is.

Albert

No, but it’s something we can have.

Lucy

That, I think, remains to be seen.

[*Lights down on Lucy and Albert, up on Albert and Beauregard.*]

Beauregard

She’s pretty, Albert, I’ll give you that.

Albert

And smart.

Beauregard

Yeah, she seems smart.

Albert

And brave. She’s registering colored into the Republican Party faster than anyone else. You know that takes guts.

Beauregard

She’s brave, I ain’t arguing.

Albert

She’s pretty and smart and brave. What more could you want in a woman?

Beauregard

But Albert, she’s colored.

Albert

And Mexican.

Beauregard

Okay, and Mexican. Point is, she ain’t white.

Albert

Why Beauregard, you think I don’t know that?

Beauregard

I know you know that. I’m just saying.

Albert

Saying what?

Beauregard

You two walking up and down the streets of Waco together.

Albert

Organizing people to vote.

Beauregard

And holding hands.

Albert

We’re in love.

Beauregard

Yeah, well, that’s the problem, ain’t it?

Albert

Don’t we Republicans stand for equal rights?

Beauregard

‘Course we do, Albert, equal voting rights, equal rights to own land, equal rights in the courtroom.

Albert

How about equal love rights?

Beauregard

See, that’s a hard one Albert. It’s way too soon for equal love rights.

Albert

Why’s that?

Beauregard

It makes people, you know, sort of crazy.

Albert

Not Republican people, not Reconstruction people.

Beauregard

Yes, even some, even most, Republican people, if they’re white.

Albert

Why’s that?

Beauregard

Damn it, Albert, you know very well why. Sex, children, family. It’s a hard line to cross.

Albert

It wasn’t hard for the masters, was it?

Beauregard

No, I guess not, but that was different.

Albert

The difference is, Lucy’s no slave and I’m no master. Me and Lucy are equal. That’s why it’s love. Not rape.

Beauregard

You’re a good talker, Albert, you almost got me agreeing with you. But you making out like love and family and all is political.

Albert

Of course, it is.

Beauregard

Seems more, I don’t know, more basic than that.

Albert

Politics is not just laws and government. Politics is organizing how we live together. All of it.

Beauregard

Albert Parsons, you’re too radical for the rest of us.

Albert

Is that a problem?

Beauregard

I don’t rightly know, but I fear it is.

[*Lights down on Beauregard.*]

[*Lights up on Lucy and Reverend Chesson in his office at the church.*]

Reverend Chesson

Thank you for accepting my invitation, Lucy.

Lucy

I was honored, and surprised, to hear that you wanted to talk, Reverend Chesson.

Reverend Chesson

Why surprised? You’re doing great work for the League and the Party and I thought we should get to know each other better.

Lucy

What would you like to know about me, Reverend?

Reverend Chesson

Many things, Lucy, you’re a fascinating woman.

Lucy

Thank you.

Reverend Chesson

Fascinating and brave and, if I may be so bold, beautiful.

Lucy

I appreciate your appreciation, Reverend, but surely you didn’t ask me here to flatter me. Or did you?

Reverend Chesson

Forgive me, I had not met you until that night at the League meeting. When did you arrive in Waco?

Lucy

Like most of us, right after the war.

Reverend Chesson

And before the war?

Lucy

I mean no disrespect, Reverend Chesson, but why do you want to know this and how is it any of your business?

Reverend Chesson

I try to get to know all the members of my congregation

Lucy

Reverend, I am not a member of your congregation. I’m a member of the Union League and of the Republican Party. I am not a member of the African Episcopal Methodist Church.

Reverend Chesson

Fair enough, Lucy. And my question, also fair, I think, is why is it that you never come to church?

Lucy

I come every Thursday evening for the League meetings.

Reverend Chesson

You know very well that I’m referring to Sunday. Given who you are in the community, it’s setting a bad example.

Lucy

I don’t attend services on Sunday because I’ve come to the firm conclusion that there is no God.

Reverend Chesson

Lucy, you can’t mean that.

Lucy

I mean it with all my heart. If there is a God who controls the universe and he allows all the suffering—the violence, the rape, the hunger, the humiliation—to continue, then he’s evil and I rebel against him, just as I rebel against the violence, the rape, the hunger and the humiliation of the world he supposedly controls. But, in truth, Reverend Chesson, there is no God. There is just us human beings. I take comfort in that because we built this world and we can re-build it.

Reverend Chesson

Lucy Gonzales, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has been a comfort to our people during their long years of suffering, which, I fear are far from over. How can you deny him?

Lucy

If he’s our comfort, why did he let slavery go on for two hundred and fifty years?

Reverend Chesson

The Lord has his reasons.

Lucy

What possible reason could he have to let so many people suffer such violence and humiliation for so long?

Reverend Chesson

I don’t presume to know the ways of the Lord.

Lucy

Isn’t that what you presume every Sunday?

Reverend Chesson

I didn’t expect such hostility.

Lucy

You may call it hostility if you please. I call it righteous anger. Not at you personally but at the myths you help perpetuate that hold so many of our people in thrall.

Reverend Chesson

Lucy Gonzales, I do believe your think yourself better than the rest of us.

Lucy

Not better, Reverend, but less superstitious. People are going to believe what they want to believe. If it makes people feel better to come and pray with you on Sunday, I don’t deny them that comfort. That doesn’t mean I have to believe it too.

Reverend Chesson

What do you believe, Lucy?

Lucy

As I’ve already told you, I believe in human beings and in our ability to change the world we have been born into.

Reverend Chess

That is Frederick Müller and Albert Parsons talking through you. They have filled you with these blasphemous ideas.

Lucy

Frist of all, Reverend, I’m keeping company with Albert Parsons.

Reverend Chesson

I know that Lucy. You left an upstanding colored man for him. All of Waco knows that.

Lucy

And secondly, Reverend, I resent your assumption that a colored woman can’t think for herself.

Reverend Chesson

Frederick is a preacher of these atheistic, anarchist ideas, is he not?

Lucy

Of course, he is, and all of Waco knows that as well. I assure you, Reverend Chesson, that I was familiar with the ideas of Christianity long before I met Frederick and his atheism and anarchism. I was very happy to learn I didn’t have to spend the rest of my life on my knees fearing hell and praying to an invisible white man in the sky, that I, as a colored woman, I could stand up and do something about the hell we live in.

Reverend Chesson

We’re all doing something about it, Lucy.

Lucy

Yes, we are—Anarchists like me and Christians like you, and let’s keep doing it. You with your God and me without.

[*Carlos and Beauregard enter carrying Albert, who’s leg is broken and who has been beaten up.]*

Beauregard

Reverend, we need you help!

Lucy

Oh my God, what happened?

Carlos

Albert was closing up the newspaper and they bushwacked him. Threw him down the stairs. His leg is broken.

Lucy

Put him down carefully.

[*Carlos and Beauregard lower Albert to the floor.]*

Reverend Chesson

Could you see who?

Albert

As always, they were wearing masks.

Carlos

We should never have let you close up alone.

Albert

Well, we won’t make that mistake again, will we?

Lucy

Reverend, who’s that Unionist doctor?

Reverend Chesson

Dr. Moore.

Lucy

Send someone to fetch him.

[*Reverend Chesson exits.*]

Lucy

And, Beauregard, find Frederick, tell him what happened and have him get an armed posse here, fast.

Beauregard

Yes, ma’am.

[*Beauregard exits.*]

Albert

Carlos, both you and me got through the war without a scratch, now this.

Carlos

As Frederick says, Albert, this war isn’t over.

Lucy

[*Cradling Albert’s head in her lap*] Albert, you keep still ‘till Dr. Moore gets here.

[*Silence as lights fade.*]

[Lights up on *study group at Frederick’s house. Albert, is leg in cast, crutches on the floor next to his chair, also Lucy, Beauregard, Carlos, and Frederick]*

Carlos

I love this part here: “From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.” That sums it up, for me.

Beauregard

That sounds glorious, you know, like Heaven, but how could that even be possible down here?

Carlos

If all the poor people of the world shared the wealth that we created then we could do whatever we wanted to do. It’s that simple.

Beauregard

Nothing’s that simple.

Frederick

It’s not simple, but it’s true. There is enough for everyone, Beauregard. There is. If the rich people didn’t keep so much of it for themselves everyone could have what they need. No one would have to be hungry. No one would have to sleep out in the rain. Think about it.

Lucy

It’s a beautiful thought.

Albert

Yes, it is Lucy.

Lucy

I once could only work and eat and work and sleep and work and eat. Now I see new worlds.

Frederick

Yes, a new world is coming. If we build it.

Lucy

In the world we envision everyone has enough to eat, everyone has a home, everyone works because they love each other, not because they need money to pay the rent.

Frederick

Money is shit. Who needs money? When there is enough for everyone, money will disappear.

Lucy

In the world we envision there is no black or white no Mexican or Indian no German or Anglo. The same red blood courses through the veins of the whole human race.

Beauregard

That’s a wonderful vision, Lucy, but seeing that the capitalists and the landlords have all the wealth and all the power, how we ever going to get this sharing thing to work?

Albert

The same way we got rid of slavery. Isn’t that right, Frederick?

Frederick

Yes, blood must flow!

Beauregard

Haven’t we had enough blood?

Albert

I don’t know, Beauregard, millions are still living in poverty. Is that not violence? Millions still working 17 hours a day to feed their children. Is that not violence? Millions still illiterate, with no access to the knowledge and beauty that we humans have created. Is that not violence?

Lucy

In the world we envision there are no borders, no need for police no need for armies or courts or prisons. We will tear down the prison walls and plant gardens.

Frederick

The international working class will be the human race.

Lucy

In the world we envision men and women are friends and comrades, not husbands and wives, not prostitutes and johns.

Albert

Love burns deeper and longer and sweeter among equals. Oh passion, oh burning lust. Lust for the flesh and lust for justice. I’m in love with revolution and sex and Lucy. The more I make revolution, the more I make love. The more I make love, the more I make revolution.

Lucy

In the world we envision, work will be play and play will be our art.

Beauregard

You all moving way too fast for me. Anarchism? Socialism? I have a hard-enough time being a Republican.

[*Lights out.*]

[Light up slowly and faintly on *Oliver’s home after dark. Oliver is seated at a table bent over a book, reading intently by the light of a lantern. There’s a rifle mounted on the wall. There is a knock at the door. Oliver stands, takes the gun off the wall.*]

Oliver

[*Standing carefully to the side of the door frame*] Yes?

Frederick

Oliver, it’ me, Frederick.

Oliver

[*Leans the rifle against the wall, opening the door*.] Frederick, it’s good to see you.

[*They embrace.*]

Would you like a little schnapps?

Frederick

You have schnapps?

Oliver

It’s one of the things I’ve learned to appreciate from you.

Frederick

Yes, I’d love a little nip.

[*Oliver takes bottle and two small glasses out pours them drinks.*]

Thank you.

Oliver

To what do I owe the honor of this visit?

Frederick

You’ve missed the last three study groups.

Oliver

Yes.

Frederick

May I ask why?

Oliver

I have a few acres of my own now, and I hire myself out as a carpenter. I’m getting a lot of work. Then there’s the organizing for the Union League and the party.

Frederick

We’re all very busy, Oliver. Why haven’t you come?

[*Oliver doesn’t answer.*]

Talk to me, Oliver. Why’d you stop coming?

Oliver

Because, Frederick, I find it difficult, I find it hard, I find it painful, very painful, to be in the room with Lucy and Albert.

Frederick

Ah.

Oliver

They always sit next to each other. They’re always making eyes. They might as well be fucking right there on the floor.

Frederick

Let’s not go there.

Oliver

I’m sorry, Frederick. I know they’re your friends, but they’re so damn smug, and he took my woman, Frederick.

Frederick

Yes, Oliver, he did.

Oliver

I know Albert’s an important leader. I know he can give a speech like no one else in Waco. I know he’s putting his life on the line for us Black folks. But he took my woman.

Frederick

I’d be angry too, but I think you need to get past that. You can be an important leader. We need you active in the International Workingmen’s Association.

Oliver

I love her, Frederick. And just can’t stand to think of her with him.

Frederick

Ja.

Oliver

And, Frederick, I know we’re all brothers and sisters now. I’ve listened to everything you and Mr. Marx say about us all being a part of this big international working class. But, shit, I was a slave a few years ago and I can’t forget and I can’t forgive. What I mean is, he’s white and that makes it worse.

Frederick

History doesn’t go away.

Oliver

White men have always taken what they want from my people, including our women.

Frederick

Ja.

Oliver

I know he’s a good man. I even know he didn’t “take” her. It’s not like that, I know. She wants him, that’s obvious, too damn obvious. If anything, she took him. We’re free now, free to choose. They call that choice love, right?

Frederick

I don’t know.

Oliver

I thought you knew everything.

Frederick

Not about this, not about love. It seems to me there isn’t anything to know about it, you can only feel it.

Oliver

Maybe, but I know it’s got something to do with freedom. Slaves never had much choice about anything, including who we had sex with, so love was hard to come by.

Frederick

My wife, my ex-wife, Hille, she left me for another man too. He was a Confederate politican.

She said she had no choice.

Oliver

Then it wasn’t love, was it?

Frederick

Whatever it was, it hurts just the same. I think.

Oliver

Any way, that’s why I haven’t been coming to study group—and why I won’t be coming back.

Frederick

We’ll miss you.

Oliver

I’m still reading though.

Frederick

The world is full of women.

Oliver

Yes, but is the world full of love?

[*Lights out.*]

[*Lights up. The church before a Union League meeting. Tillie is seated on a bench eating from a basket. Oliver enters, approaches*]

Oliver

May I join you, Ms Tillie?

Tillie

Why, Oliver, of course.

Oliver

[*Sitting next to her*] You’re here early.

Tillie

I knew we had to work late today, so I fried me some chicken last night. Would you like a leg?

Oliver

Thank you. I ate before I got here.

Tillie

You’re early too.

Oliver

Yes, well, I wanted, fact is, Ms Tillie, I was hoping to see you.

Tillie

See me? You see me every Thursday her at these meetings.

Oliver

I’m not always so good with words, Ms Tillie. I meant to say I was hoping to talk with you.

Tillie

What about?

Oliver

About, well, I was thinking, feeling maybe is a better word, I was feeling that we’ve got, well, we’ve got some history.

Tillie

It been good getting to know you, a little, Oliver, in the study group and here at the League.

Oliver

Yes, well, you’re like a friend. I don’t have many friends.

Tillie

Why, thank you, Oliver, I consider you a friend as well.

Oliver

As I see it, we have a good deal in common.

Tillie

Do you now?

Oliver

Sadness for one thing.

Tillie

We have that in common with most colored folks, I imagine.

Oliver

We’re solid Republicans, but, as I see it, we’re both a little put off by all the anarchism and communism and such swirling around.

Tillie

That’s sounds right. And we both got a home in that Rock, praise Jesus.

Oliver

Yes, we’re both washed in the blood of the lamb.

Tillie

Amen.

Oliver

Main thing, though, I think, I feel, is we’re both solid.

Tillie

Meaning?

Oliver

We’ve got our feet on the ground. Our eyes on the horizon, but no hurry to get there. I need that: solid and steady.

Tillie

Unlike Lucy?

Oliver

Lucy and I were no match, buy that’s not the point. The point is, friends are to come by.

Tillie

I suppose that’s true.

Oliver

I like you, Tillie Jackson, a lot.

Tillie

I like you a lot, as well, Oliver Gathering.

Oliver

You think, maybe, I hope, if you don’t mind me asking, but do you think, do you feel, maybe we could keep company?

Tillie

I think maybe we could.

[*Lights fade.*]

[Lights up pm *study group at Frederick’s house. Frederick, Lucy, Carlos, Beauregard. There is an empty chair.]*

Frederick

It’s not like Albert to be late to a study group.

Beauregard

Or to anything.

Frederick

We should get started. Tonight, we’re continuing our reading of Marx’s letter to Lincoln congratulating him on his re-election back in 1865. Carlos, can you begin where we left off?

[*Carlos picks up the document and begins reading.*]

Carlos

“While the workingmen, the true political powers of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor, or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation; but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war.”

Lucy

“The Red Sea of civil war.” The man really has a way with words.

Carlos

He continues, “The workingmen of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Antislavery War will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world.”

[*Albert enters.*]

Albert

Get your guns.

[*Carlos puts down the document, picks up the rifle resting on the floor near his chair.]*

Lucy

What?

Albert

The women coming out of Wednesday night Bible study have been attacked.

Lucy

Oh my God. Tillie’s in that group.

Frederick

What exactly happened, Albert?

Albert

They were walking together, along First Street, just about to turn onto Elm, when the Klan came out of the shadows with clubs, knives and guns. They beat them, ripped their clothing off, took whatever little money they had, and, and defied two of them. They would have done more if Reverend Chesson hadn’t gotten a posse together and chased them off.

Lucy

Do you know if Tillie…?

Albert

No, I don’t. They brought them back to the church but I didn’t see her. Reverend Chesson sent word to the Freeman’s Bureau. They’re sending doctors.

Lucy

I need to get to the church.

Frederick

Not by yourself, you’re not. Albert and Carlos, go with her.

[*Albert and Carlos with guns and Lucy exit*.]

Beauregard

Lord have mercy. It’s enough. I don’t think I can…

Frederick

What’s going on, Beauregard?

Beauregard

## Last year they castrated little Billy Scruggs. In January, they raped and murdered Sally Thompson. Jesus God, she was only eight-years-old. In April, they burned down Clarence Brown’s home in Hewett when he was holding a Union League meeting there. Eighteen colored Unionist burned to death. In August, Marta Smith’s father and brother shot dead because she’s registering men to vote. And now this. I don’t have to tell you all this, Frederick. We all know this. You’ve written about it all in the paper. I’ve set the type on these atrocities.

Frederick

Beauregard, you’re not doing yourself or anyone any good talking like this.

Beauregard

It’s not my talking, it’s what they’ve done. They never get arrested and when they do, they’re acquitted.

Frederick

That’s why we have to win the majority in Austin, get new judges.

Beauregard

It’s too much, Frederick, too much for me.

Frederick

These are the last battles of the war.

Beauregard

And we’re losing.

Frederick

No, we’re winning because we’re continuing to register Republicans and build the Union League. They’re desperate and they’re cowards, attacking women.

Beauregard

They’ll be coming after white Republicans next.

Frederick

They already are. Look what they did to Albert.

Beauregard

I can’t, Frederick.

Frederick

Let’s go to the church.

Beauregard

I can’t.

Frederick

Why not?

Beauregard

Because I’m a coward too.

Frederick

[*Picking up his gun*] Lock the door when you leave.

[*Frederick turns and exits. Lights fade on Beauregard.]*

[*Lights up on Oliver’s and Tillie’s home.*]

Oliver

I am a storm.

I wreak havoc.

I thunder vengeance.

I hail down hate.

I bring them to their knees.

I wash them away.

Tillie

Hush, Oliver.

Oliver

I’m so sorry, Tillie.

Tillie

You have nothing to apologize for.

Oliver

I apologize for not being there to protect you.

Tillie

You couldn’t have stopped them.

Oliver

I could have killed at least some of them.

Tillie

Before they killed you. Then you’d be gone and I’d be alone.

Oliver

[*Starts loading his gun.*] It can’t keep going on like this.

Tillie

I need you alive, not swinging on a cottonwood. You’ll have to keep that storm inside you.

Oliver

For how long?

Tillie

Forever.

[*Oliver begins to cry. Tillie comforts him. Lights fade.*]

[*Lights up on Albert, Lucy, Carlos and Frederick*]

Albert

[*with envelope in his hands*] I got a letter from my brother.

Lucy

It was slipped under our door.

Frederick

What’s it say?

Albert

Says if I don’t leave Waco, and soon, alive, I’ll be leaving it dead. And it says worse than that awaits Lucy.

Carlos

Your brother hates you. He’s just trying to scare you.

Albert

No, I don’t think he hates me. This is a love letter.

Carlos

Love letter? He’s threatening to kill you and rape Lucy.

Albert

No, it’s his friends. He wants us to get out alive. That’s why he wrote it. His silence would be death.

[*They sit in silence, looking at the envelope.*]

Lucy

I don’t want to run.

Frederick

I’m not sure we have choice. The federal troops are sitting on their hands, letting the Klan run wild.

Albert

That’s a fact.

Frederick

It looks to me like the Republicans are about to make a deal with the Democrats to pull the troops out of the South altogether.

Carlos

Fuck them!

Lucy

We’re Republicans.

Frederick

Yes, but the leaders of the party are Northern capitalists and they have more in common with the old slave owners than they do with poor people.

Lucy

Especially colored poor people.

[*They sit in silence, looking at the envelope.*]

Frederick

Albert, I don’t have to tell you that you’ve been elected to represent Travis County at the convention of Radical Republicans in Philadelphia in August.

Albert

Yeah?

Frederick

You should go. And not come back.

Albert

I’m not leaving Lucy alone.

Frederick

Of course not. She’ll take a train a few weeks later and meet you there.

Lucy

I don’t like running away from these bastards.

Carlos

We should arm ourselves and reign terror down upon them like John Brown did in Kansas, like my uncle did on the border.

Frederick

Folks around here aren’t ready for that, Carlos. They’re weary from the war.

Albert

And we’re out gunned.

[*They sit in silence, looking at the envelope.*]

Lucy

Albert and me, we’re fighters.

Frederick

Dead fighters don’t help anyone. You need to live so you can fight again.

Lucy

Waco is our home.

Frederick

The world is your home. Do you think I wanted to leave Frankfort? You think I wanted to run half way around the world to this crazy country of slavery where I didn’t even speak the language? If I had stayed in Germany I would have been arrested, tortured, probably killed. There was nothing more I could do there. There is nothing more you can do here.

[*Lucy begins to weep silently.*]

There are millions of immigrants from Europe pouring into the cities of the North. There you can do something. There you can live and lead.

Lucy

[*pulling herself together*] We will live and we will lead.

[*Lights fade.*]

[*Lights up on Tillie and Lucy.]*

Lucy

Tillie, Albert and I have to leave.

Tillie

Of course you do, girl.

Lucy

I don’t want to.

Tillie

You don’t want to be dead either.

Lucy

Right.

Tillie

Right. And we don’t want you dead.

Lucy

I’m sorry.

Tillie

You got nothing to be sorry about. You’ve done what you could do. Now they made it clear what they’re going to do. There’s no question what you and Albert need to do.

Lucy

I wish all colored folks could leave Texas.

Tillie

Lucy Parsons, I don’t believe what’s coming out of your mouth. Haven’t you been preaching that we colored folks—and the decent whites—have to change Texas.

Lucy

Yes, that’s why I feel so bad about leaving.

Tillie

You know I don’t like how you did Oliver, and I don’t like this atheism you’ve taken up with, but I know you got something special. People, colored people, poor people, even poor white people, listen to you, they follow you, they love you. Shit, I love you. You need to be someplace where you can use that something special without getting raped and killed for it.

Lucy

Thank you, Tillie.

Tillie

No need to thank me. Stay safe and stay angry.

[*Lights down on Lucy and Tillie.*]

[*Lights up on tableau: Albert and Lucy in an embrace, surrounded by Tillie, Frederick and Carlos. Hesitantly, Albert and Lucy disengage. Tillie and Lucy exit stage right. Albert, Frederick and Carlos exit stage left. Lights slowly fade.*]

Friedman

Albert went on to the convention of radical Republicans in Philadelphia and then, stopping in number of cities along the way, to Chicago. A few months later, Lucy joined him. She set up a dress shop. He got a job as a type setter. [*Engraving of Albert appears*.] This is the last image of Albert. He was 39 years old when he was hung by the neck until dead by the state of Illinois. [*Image of Albert fades, photo of Lucy as an older woman appears*.] This is the last photo of Lucy. As I said at the start, she remained a working-class organizer and leader until she died at the age of 89 in 1942. Their love never cooled, nor did their passion for a better world.

America, this is a little bit of your history. It always helps to know some of where you come from.

THE END