

GROWING FLOWERS ON THE MOON

by R. T. Bowersox

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NOTES ON SPECIAL TEXT MARKINGS:

A SLASH (/) means the character with the next line of dialogue should begin their speech at the point of the slash

A DASH (--) means that the character with the next line of dialogue should cut off the current speaker sharply by beginning their next line

AN ELLIPSE (...) means a slight pause, or in the case of a phone call, listening

A WORD OR WORDS IN ITALICS (like this) means that word or words should be given a slight emphasis

A WORD OR WORDS IN ALL CAPS means that word or words are given a STRONG emphasis.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

HELEN MACMILLAN.....Female, 75, and still with it; wealthy; has lived in Cargill House since her 20's; a woman with deep emotional scars she has carried with grace for over 50 years; there is a longing in her she knows will never be fulfilled; cultured but not pretentious; smart but not arrogant; caring and present but somehow sadly hollow.

FLORA ANTHONY.....Female, 70's; African-American; has been Helen's friend and companion for over 50 years; practical, satisfied with life as it is...as long as she's had her Bible, her garden, and her kitchen, that's all she's needed.

DAVID CARGILL.....Male, mid-20's; African-American; the scion of the Cargill family; arrives at Cargill house expressing happiness to finally be home and with his lover and fiancé, Helen; but how can he be who he claims to be? How does he know so much about Helen and Flora? What is he really there for?

DOCTOR SYLVIA REYNOLDS...Female, 40's; a psychiatrist; proper, a bit controlled, but not without empathy; what brings her to Cargill House this night?

DETECTIVE JIM OGDEN...Male, 30's-40's; detective at the Savannah Police Department; accommodating what he feels are unfounded whims of Reynolds; all business, though not sure what that is this night.

PLACE:

Cargill House, a grand old Southern estate house in Savannah

TIME:

February 8, 2018. It is evening, say around seven o'clock.

*“Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind...”*

-- William Shakespeare

The set is an opulent living room. It is a space that looks like the clock stopped half a century ago -- a dated décor of plush furniture, artifacts, books, and small statuary.

Center on the Upstage wall are two wide windows, almost floor to ceiling, with heavy, velvet drapes hung over them and slightly open. On either side of the windows, covering the rest of the upstage wall, are floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, packed with all manner and sizes of books, with framed photos and small etcetera interspersed throughout.

Set into a nook on the Upstage Left wall is a large desk, with lamp, calendar on February 8, 2019, a clock, some books, and a mahogany box about the size of a small cigar box. Downstage of that is a long sideboard, with framed photos, small statuary and a large bowl, maybe some flowers in a vase, and a landline phone. Downstage Left is an arched doorway leading into a dining room.

On the Upstage Right wall is a door that leads to an unseen hallway and the entry foyer of the house. Downstage of that is a large fireplace with a mantel, on which are a framed photo and two colonial-style chamberstick candelabra. A large landscape is hung above the mantel.

Center Stage is a large, plush sofa/couch with a coffee table in front of it. Stage Left of the sofa is an armchair, with a floor lamp and small table nearby. Stage Left and slightly downstage of the sofa is another chair of that type. A large, plush rug sits under most of the centerstage area.

PRE-SHOW: The empty set will be lit as it will be during the production, though a bit dimmer. Two to three times in the 15 minute span before the play begins, a thunder SFX, with accompanying lightning flash in the windows, will occur. Each time the stage lights will dim and flicker, as if about to go out, then come back full.

PLAY OPENS.

Lights to full as designed.

*Evening. A low fire snapping in the fireplace.
Rain spitting outside.*

*HELEN MACMILLAN, shawl warming her
shoulders, coming through the USSR Foyer door.
Poking up the fire, then to the bookshelves.
Searching for a specific book, finding it. Taking
it to the DSL chair, sitting, reading for several
beats to the light of the floor lamp.*

*Loud thunder and lightning flashing again
through the partially-drawn drapes. The lights
dim and flicker, almost going fully out this time,
then coming back. A look to the windows, a
shiver, the shawl drawn closer around her.*

*A beat later, her lifelong companion, FLORA
ANTHONY, entering through the dining room
archway, carrying a silver tray with a china
teacup, matching teapot, and a small plate of
cookies.*

FLORA

Nasty night blowing out there.

HELEN

Yes, isn't it. Almost lost the lights again.

FLORA

Shoulda had that old fuse box replaced years ago. Hope I don't have to go down there again tonight...cobwebs and mice, and who knows what else.

Noticing the tea tray...

HELEN

What's this?

FLORA

Oh, you know. Some Mister Earl Grey to warm the blood a bit.

Her book to the coffee table as Flora sets the tray on the coffee table.

HELEN

You always know, don't you? I never have to say a word.

FLORA

Not hard to read a calendar, Missy.

HELEN

(a knowing smile, then...)

You'll join me?

FLORA

Maybe one of these shortbreads. You know tea sometimes keeps me up.

HELEN

Always has, hasn't it?

FLORA

It has, indeed. Strong stuff, that Mister Earl.

Flora at the windows now, looking through the drapes at the uncharitable night.

FLORA

Nasty, nasty, nasty. Wouldn't want to be out there tonight.

HELEN

I was expected at the Foundation board meeting this evening.

FLORA

They can do without you. Night like this, catch your death.

HELEN

It wasn't that so much. Just didn't feel right. Not tonight.

FLORA

No. Not tonight.

HELEN

I'm sure one of them will say something, though.

FLORA

They should say 'Thank you', you don't mind my saying...all the money they get from us. They can do without you this one time.

(shivering, pulling the drapes)

Whew! Chilly in here. Maybe we should get a fire going.

HELEN

Maybe. But come sit for now.

FLORA

Maybe just a bit.

She moves to the couch. Helen pours the tea.

HELEN

You sure you won't have some?

FLORA

This will be fine.

A cookie, sitting back, a small bite. After a beat....

FLORA

(carefully)

You were reading something there.

HELEN

Nothing special.

FLORA

Uh-huh. Nothing special.

HELEN

Just passing the time on an...unfriendly...night. You know...

FLORA

I know I know that book, Helen. Seen that cover many times.

HELEN

Have you?

FLORA

Mm-hmm. Book of poetry.

HELEN

It is, yes.

FLORA

Let's see...this time you're reading...I'm gonna say...John Keats.

HELEN

Shelley, actually.

FLORA

Shelley. Knew it was one or the other. Usually is.

HELEN

Yes.

FLORA

You read that book every year this day.

HELEN

Every year.

FLORA

No other day. Just February 8th. Every year.

HELEN

And every year, we drink Earl Grey.

FLORA

Yes we do.

HELEN

And every year on this day, we have this conversation.

FLORA

That we do. Sad to say.

HELEN

Yes. It is sad. Every year more so, I think.

Helen rising, taking the book to the bookshelves, fitting it into its empty slot, then moving to the desk. Picking up the small mahogany box. Opening the lid slowly. A longing look inside.

HELEN

Fifty years today.

FLORA

Fifty. Lord. A lifetime....

HELEN

Still feels like yesterday to me.

FLORA

Does to me too, sometimes, truth be told.

Gently closing the box, setting it back in its place on the desk.

HELEN

I realized this morning that I've only counted those years by these days, Flora. Fifty of them. Fifty February eights. That's all. There's nothing between them I can touch in my memory.

FLORA

Oh, now, the sun came out now and again.

HELEN

Maybe, but all those days -- like this one -- they alone stand out. Just those fifty days. In this house. Fifty very long days.

FLORA

Maybe you ought'n dwell on it tonight. Let it go this one time.

HELEN

Now, you know I won't do that.

FLORA

S'pose I do.

HELEN

It's all we were left.

FLORA

Mm-hmm.

HELEN

A long time together in this house. Do you regret it?

FLORA

Don't you worry none about that. I've not been much for the world either. I've had my Bible and my garden and my kitchen. That's all I've needed.

HELEN

Well, I'm grateful we've stayed together, Flora. You didn't have to.

FLORA

Where else would I have gone? This has been my home too.

(lifting the teapot and her cup)

Shall we warm that up and talk again about Dav--

*A door chime -- loud , intrusive, unwelcome --
somewhere in the house.*

HELEN

Now, who would that be this time of night?

FLORA

Who's fool enough to be out in a night like this is what you should be asking.

Another chime. Two. Insistent.

FLORA

(rising)

I'll see to it.

*Flora through the USSR door to the Foyer,
closing it behind her.*

Helen crossing to the fireplace.

*Reaching up, taking down the large, framed
picture of a young man in uniform, standing in
front of a limousine. He's smiling.*

*Helen and the photo, locked together several
beats, then...*

HELEN

Fifty years, David, my love. I've missed you every single moment of them.

*Kissing her fingers, touching the face in the
photo, slowly setting it back on the mantel.*

Back to the desk. The teacup.

*The sound of a heavy door opening from the
foyer. Muffled conversation.*

DAVID (O.S.)

(muffled, distant)

Oh, thank you, Flora! Thank you! I was getting worried you and Helen may not be home and I'd get soaked to the bone!

FLORA

Now you just wait a minute!

DAVID

Oh, but my God, little sister, look at you! So good to see you! There's nothing like coming home to family, is there?

FLORA (O.S.)

Excuse me? I don't think--

DAVID (O.S.)

(picture him taking off his raincoat)

Good to be home, too. Could have picked a nicer night to travel though. Very disagreeable weather. We should hang that coat somewhere to dry.

FLORA (O.S.)

Mister, you can't --

DAVID (O.S.)

Sure hope you have one of your pot roasts going. I've been dreaming about one, if you can believe that.

FLORA (O.S.)

Now you just wait a minute--

DAVID (O.S.)

(picture him moving toward the foyer door)

Helen in by the fire?

FLORA (O.S.)

Where you think you're going? Helen...!

Footsteps drawing closer...

FLORA(O.S.)

Mister! You can't go in there!

The door bursting open. DAVID CARGILL, a young African-American man, rushing in. A suit and tie, a mix of confidence and anticipation. One hand holding a bouquet of gardenias, the other a small candy box.

Flora grabbing his arm.

FLORA

I said you can't come in here!

Ignoring Flora's hand, his face brightening as his eyes find Helen.

DAVID

There you are! Lovely as ever! This weather is more like your childhood Cotswalds than our American south!

(moving toward Helen, offering the gifts)

But we'll brighten it up. I've brought your favorites, my love...gardenias and truffles...scents and sweets...a peace offering for my tardiness.

Helen recoiling. What's happening?

HELEN

What?! Who are...?! Don't! Stay where you are!

DAVID

(a little confused)

Darling...?

HELEN

I mean it!

David stopping, looking from Helen to Flora and back again.

FLORA

You need to leave, mister! Now!

DAVID

You two. Very funny. If I didn't know it was you, I would think--

HELEN

There is nothing funny about this. Who *are* you...?

DAVID

(still thinking it's a joke)

Who am I? Darling..

HELEN

Don't call me that. Whoever you are, I wish you to leave. Now.

DAVID

Leave? Why would I (leave)...?

HELEN

I've asked nicely, sir. Please. You're frightening us.

DAVID

Oh, come on. Frightening you?

HELEN

Yes. You are.

DAVID

What is this?

*Flora crossing quickly past David to the
sideboard.*

FLORA

(pointing to David)

You stay where you are.

(to Helen)

I'm calling the police.

DAVID

The police? There's no need for that. *(Flora stops)* My God, Helen...Flora...it's me...

HELEN

I don't know you, young man--

DAVID

Don't know me...?

HELEN

No. I do not.

*Looking at her...not knowing what to
say...confusion rising in him...*

DAVID

What's going on here?

HELEN

Exactly my question. I do not know you...we have not been introduced...in my memory...and even if we had been, it is highly inappropriate for you to call this time of night without prior notice. Certainly unsuitable to force your way in like this.

DAVID

Force my way--?

HELEN

Now, please, if you would just leave. Before anything more serious occurs--

DAVID

All right, this has gone on long enough. It's been an enjoyable little amusement--

HELEN

Sir, it has not been an amusement and there's nothing enjoyable about it--

DAVID

Where's father? He's not part of this game too, I hope.

Helen and Flora exchanging a concerned and bewildered glance. David catching it...

DAVID

What?

HELEN

Your father?

DAVID

Yes, of course.

HELEN

Why would your father be here, young man?

DAVID

Why wouldn't he be?

Helen, a questioning glance at Flora, then back to David.

HELEN

Your father isn't--

DAVID

At the club, is he? When will he return? I have much to tell him.

FLORA

There's no one here but us three, and one of us shouldn't be.

HELEN

Who is your father? How would we know him?

DAVID

(frustrated)

Seriously? My father -- Walter Cargill. We're standing in his house.

A long beat, hanging like a weight. Then...

HELEN

(quietly, gently)

I find it highly unlikely he would be your father. But that aside...Walter Cargill is dead--

DAVID

Dead?! He...he can't be...My God! When? When did this happen? Why wasn't I told?

HELEN

Walter Cargill died forty-nine years ago, long before you were born.

DAVID

No. No, that's not poss--

Looking at them, reading the truth in their eyes.

DAVID

Oh, my God.

David setting the flowers and candy on the nearby bar. Moving toward the fireplace...obviously distraught.

DAVID

What happened?

FLORA

Mister, I don't know what you think you're up to, but--

DAVID

Please, Flora. What happened to our father?

Another glance between Helen and Flora.

HELEN

The man you referred to -- Mr. Cargill -- took his own life...long ago...if you must know.

DAVID

He what? No! He would never--!

HELEN

He was destroyed by his son's death.

(a glance to Flora)

As we all were.

DAVID

But I'm obviously not dead. Who would have told him such a thing? My God...

*David sitting in the chair closest to the fireplace,
his face buried in his hands, weeping.*

DAVID

My God...my God...

Weeping silently for several beats.

HELEN

Young man...

(nothing, so more firmly...)

Young man.

*David straightening, wiping his eyes, trying to
pull himself together.*

DAVID

I'm sorry. I just...I can't believe this. I hope you weren't here when it happened.

HELEN

I...

(a look to Flora)

...we...have been here fifty years, sir. Mr. Cargill left us this house in his will before he...before he passed. I was engaged to his son. Flora and I are here by his kind graces. But I don't see how any of that is your business.

DAVID

My business? He was my father!

HELEN

That is simply not possible. Now, you are obviously upset, but we are not the ones to help you with whatever it is. Whoever you are, wherever you are from, it is not from here and it has nothing to do with the Cargill family or us. So please--

DAVID

No, I--My God, what is going on here? Helen, please--

HELEN

All right. Enough of this. Flora, please call the police.

DAVID

Wait! Wait. I think it's important that we--

HELEN

Important enough to get yourself arrested, young man?

Looking at her, straightening, then calmly...

DAVID

Yes. Under the circumstances, I think it is.

HELEN

Well, then you may just get your wish.

(to Flora)

Flora. Please call.

Flora starting to tap in the numbers.

A sudden, aggressive step toward her.

DAVID

Don't do that! Put the phone down! Put it down!

*The volume and stridency in his voice
frightening Flora. She, slowly setting the
receiver down, moving cautiously toward Helen.*

FLORA

Missy...?

DAVID

(calming himself)

Please. You don't want to do that.

HELEN

And why don't we?

DAVID

Look...I obviously seem a stranger to you -- God knows why. But please believe me. It's me...David.

HELEN

David? David who?

DAVID

(as...it's obvious)

David.

HELEN

Dav...David? Not...my...David...

*Helen's eyes shifting to the picture of the young
man in uniform on the mantel.*

David taking a step toward her.

DAVID

Yes. That David, Helen.

At the sound of her name, Helen's anger rising.

HELEN

Stop this! Who the hell are you?!?

DAVID

My God, how do I answer that? If you say you don't know me...

HELEN

I do not, sir.

DAVID

...then I'm at sixes and sevens here...I don't know how--

FLORA

Sixes and sevens?

DAVID

What? Oh...yes, sixes and...YES! Sixes and sevens! Dad...He used to say that to us when we were kids...remember, Flora? About being confused. He would say--

FLORA

Mr. Walter Cargill used to say that, yes, but not to you and me, sir, because we could never have been children together. I'm old enough to be your grandma, son.

(to Helen)

We need to end this foolishness.

DAVID

Please, we can figure this out. Just give me ten minutes...

HELEN

I will not--

DAVID

Five minutes, then. Just five minutes. Please...for me...that's all I ask.

FLORA

You've had your chance.

Flora dialing. A pregnant beat, waiting for the connection. Helen considering the distraught young man in front of her. Then...

HELEN

Perhaps you should hang up, Flora.

FLORA

Hang up?

HELEN

Yes.

FLORA

Why? In God's name...

HELEN

Please, Flora.

The receiver slowly back in its cradle.

FLORA

You know what you're doing, Helen?

HELEN

(to David)

The police will be here in two minutes if she calls back. I will give you your five minutes to say whatever piece you think you must. Then you will leave.

FLORA

No, Helen. Let me call and then maybe-

HELEN

We'll give him his say, Flora. And then he will leave.

(to David)

Yes?

FLORA

This is wrong, Missy. This is way wrong.

HELEN

Maybe. We'll see. But it's a kindness I'm willing to extend.

Indicating the chair near the fireplace. David sitting again. Helen to her chair, sitting.

HELEN

Two minutes. And not one minute more.

*A three-second silence that feels like ten hours,
then...*

DAVID

I'm really not sure where to begin, to tell you the truth. It's hard for me to believe that...Helen, you don't know who I am?

*Looking around the room as he speaks, at the
doors, the windows, the desk...remembering?
...reacquainting? ...familiarizing ... planning?*

DAVID

Look, I apologize for not letting you know I was coming in late, but...I just made the train and I didn't have time to find a phone before boarding--

HELEN

You're tap-dancing. Get to it. What did you say about my David? Who are you?

DAVID

(frustration)

Helen. My love. It's me. David.

Helen rising, her temper barely in check.

HELEN

You will not say his name again! How dare you come into my house...on this day...and say that to me. How dare you!

*David opening his arms, sitting forward as if to
rise.*

DAVID

Helen, please...!

HELEN

Don't! Stay there!

FLORA

Helen, this man is crazy. If you're not scared, I sure am. Let me call--

Speaking quickly to stop her...

DAVID

All right. You're angry with me. I can see that. But if we could all just calm down a moment and...and...and talk. 'No one wins when passion and disquiet overwhelm patience and repose.'

HELEN

(a beat, stunned)

What did you say?

DAVID

What? Say what?

HELEN

That last...about....What you just said, about passion and disquiet...it--

DAVID

It overwhelms patience and repose. Yes.

HELEN

My David used to...He used to...

DAVID

I say it a lot, yes. It's one of my favorite quotes. Remember? I wrote it to you in a card once when we had a small spat--

HELEN

How do you...? Stop! Please stop!

(beat, quietly)

What is this?

Helen suddenly unsteady...can't take her eyes off the man in front of her.

David cautiously moving to the couch near Helen, slowly sitting. Reaching out toward her --

DAVID

Darling--

Flora swiftly swatting his hand away.

FLORA

Oh, no. No, sir, mister. You keep your distance.

(to Helen, taking her hand)

If he won't leave, then we should, Missy. Right now.

HELEN

No. Wait a moment...Just give me...

(quietly to David)

Please. Tell me your real name. Perhaps we can help you in some way.

David, quiet a moment, then...

DAVID

(just as quietly)

I've told you.

HELEN

What you've told me is preposterous. You cannot be--

FLORA

ID. Show me some ID. Prove what you're saying.

DAVID

(patting his pockets)

I...I don't have--

FLORA

A driver's license? A Costco card? Anything? Show us something or I call.

DAVID

I just have this...

Pulling a few rumpled bills from his pocket.

DAVID

The cab from the station took most of it. I seem to have lost my wallet somewhere, so my ID...but...please, believe me. What I've told you is true.

HELEN

This is ludicrous. You can't just come here and claim--

DAVID

Where else would I go? This is my home. Our home.

HELEN

Oh, for the love of--

DAVID

Everything I feel, think, see...every thought I have...I know I am David Cargill. The same way you know you are Helen MacMillan, and she knows she is Flora Anthony.

Considering him a beat or two, then...

HELEN

(quietly, calmly)

The man you claim to be -- David Cargill -- was killed in 1968 in some godforsaken place called Hue, in that senseless Vietnam War, fifty years ago. Fifty years ago today, in fact. He was twenty-five years old. Which means, if you were he, you'd be my age. You are not seventy-five years old, young man.

DAVID

I don't know. Maybe it's...some twist...some horrible trick of the universe, but I know who I am.

(beat)

I can say, though...lately there are times where I've felt that I've been in places, but not of them. Does that make any sense?

FLORA

Lots of us feel that way, sad to say. Doesn't mean we can just be somebody we're not.

DAVID

I can't explain whatever this is. I mean, why do I have the memories I have...

(to Helen)

...of you...

(to Flora)

...of you, Flora? Memories of conversations, people, moments in my life that are as real to me as this table--

FLORA

We all have things floating in our minds that have no business being there, son. I used to play like I wasn't me when I was little, before my daddy died. Close my eyes, imagine myself all done up in a pretty pink dress, in a big car, going to a party, riding a pony. Doesn't mean I was gonna wake up the next day and be Princess Diana. It doesn't work that way. It just means I was a poor little black girl wishing things were different.

DAVID

I know it sounds crazy. But...why would I know so much about this house? That out to the left of that door is the foyer and entranceway. And to the right is a hall that connects to a dining room that has a mahogany dining table and high-back Queen Anne chairs, and sideboards filled with antique blue and white china? And beyond that, a kitchen with a big island over which hang a dozen copper pots with blackened bottoms? And up stairs, six bedrooms, all with ten-foot ceilings, and high casement windows with velvet drapes, and four-poster beds--

Helen raising her hands, turning away...it's too much.

HELEN

Stop!

(turning back to him)

What you are saying is impossible. You might as well be telling me you can grow flowers on the moon.

DAVID

I know it seems that way, but maybe...Wait! I can show you! How would I know that...

Quickly to the desk, pointing to the mahogany box.

DAVID

There. In this box. There's a pink rose, with a white ribbon around it. And tied into the ribbon are two gold wedding rings...*our* wedding rings...the ones we never got to use. We put them there the day I left for Vietnam.

HELEN

Oh, my God...!

DAVID

How would I know that if I wasn't David Cargill?

Helen's eyes to Flora, then back to David.

HELEN

Oh, my God...

FLORA

Don't believe him, Helen. There's all kinds of ways he can know that. He could have come in here some day we were out...

(moving for the phone)

It's time we got this man out of this house--

A sharp move toward Flora.

DAVID

Don't do that!

Helen quickly between them.

HELEN

Don't touch her!

DAVID

All right, all right. I just--

FLORA

(almost pleading)

Missy...Don't be listening to this man!

DAVID

Helen, please--

Helen -- torn between them -- her eyes still on David, like if she looks away, the possibility of him will disappear, like she's questioning her own eyesight, questioning reality. After a moment...

HELEN

Flora, perhaps you could give us a minute. I think I should talk with him a bit more.

(carefully)

In private.

FLORA

No. I will not leave you here with him for a second.

HELEN

Please, Flora. It will be all right.

(turning to David)

It will be all right, won't it?

DAVID

I'm not here to harm anyone.

FLORA

(to David)

How do we know that?

(to Helen)

Helen --

HELEN

It will be fine, Flora. Look, I think we need to check that the front door is locked, and that there's no one else on the front grounds. That's something that needs to be done, don't you think? Will you do that, take a look?

(looking at David)

We're just going to talk a moment while you do that. Please?

Flora, looking into Helen's eyes, worry in her own. Helen nodding.

HELEN

It will be all right.

FLORA

I won't be long. You holler if--

HELEN

(guiding her to the Foyer door)

I will. I promise.

Flora exits.

Helen and David, staring at one another a long beat. Finally...

HELEN

I haven't made a mistake, have I?

DAVID

I told you. I won't hurt you. I couldn't.

HELEN

Then what is it you really want, young man? We don't have money here. Some jewelry upstairs, but not much...

DAVID

My God. I'm not here for any of that. I've just come home--

HELEN

This is not your home!

(calming herself...and her voice)

You're...confused, I can see that. Perhaps something happened to you -- a bump on the head, maybe, or--

DAVID

I was right about the box, wasn't I?

HELEN

That box has been there for years. A dozen people could have known about it, young man.

DAVID

Call me David, will you, please?

HELEN

I will not. There is no way you are...my David.

David moving to the desk, picking up the box.

DAVID

All right. If I'm not David, then...

HELEN

Don't touch that, please.

But David opening the box, lifting a dried pink rose with the white ribbon and the rings.

DAVID

...how would I know about this if I wasn't--

HELEN

Leave that alone!

Helen crossing to him quickly, trying to take the rose from David's hand.

But he, grabbing her hands in his, holding them tight.

DAVID

(desperate)

You have to believe me!

Helen's eyes snapping to his, something passing between them in the touch of their hands...an electricity...something.

A small, short scream from Helen. She appears near fainting, her body going limp. The rose dropping to the floor.

David pulling her to him, supporting her, keeping her from falling.

DAVID

Darling! Are you all right?

HELEN

(allowing him to guide her to the couch, but her eyes never his)

Yes, I...I don't....

DAVID

Sit a moment.

David guiding her to the nearby couch, lowering her to sitting. Then he moves quickly to the bar, pours a glass of water. Helen watching him every step.

DAVID

Do I need to call--?

HELEN

(quickly)

No. I'm all right. You frightened me, is all.

DAVID

(handing her the water)

I told you, Helen...I'm not here to harm you. You have my word.

HELEN

It's that word of yours that's in question, I'm afraid.

Helen setting the water down, rising, picking the rose from the floor, crossing to the desk, the rose delicately placed in the box.

HELEN

You shouldn't have touched this. It's very important to me.

DAVID

To both of us.

Helen looks at David, then sets the box on the desk. Then moving toward the bar cart.

HELEN

Perhaps we could use a drink.

DAVID

No, thank you. You know I don't drink. I never have.

Helen stiffening -- another true thing.

HELEN

He never liked the taste of alcohol. Said it tasted like how...

DAVID

...ether smelled.

HELEN

...ether smelled.

Head turning and staring at David a long beat at that, then moving to the edge of the couch.

HELEN

How am I supposed to take this? How would you know these things?

DAVID

I don't know. This feels more surreal to me than it must to you.

HELEN

Surreal doesn't begin to define it. I feel like this is a nightmare I'm going to wake up from at some point.

(sitting on the couch)

Put yourself in my place, if you can. You are asking me to accept the impossible.

DAVID

How do I explain...?

(rubbing his eyes)

I'm very tired. I haven't slept...

(indicating her chair)

May I?

Helen nodding, he sitting...

HELEN

Let's forget for a moment who you say you are. Let's start with this: How did you get here? To my house?

DAVID

I came on the train, like I said.

HELEN

Where were you coming from?

David looking at her a moment, then...

DAVID

Nowhere I wanted to stay without you.

HELEN

That's not an answer.

David sighing deeply.

DAVID

Does it matter where I've been? I simply wanted to get home. To you. When I got to Savannah Station, I took a taxi. I couldn't find my key for some reason, so I rang the bell.

HELEN

You have a key to my house?

DAVID

Well, no more, obviously. I must have lost it with my wallet, but why wouldn't I have one?

HELEN

If you did, you shouldn't have.

Moving to the mantel. The picture of the young man in uniform.

HELEN

This was David Cargill, fifty years ago.

She, handing the photograph to David. He, staring at it, brow furrowing, as if confused about what he's looking at. Then...

DAVID

I don't...know--

HELEN

(kindly, gently)

You are not the man in this picture. It's impossible. I can get a mirror, if you'd like.

DAVID

I don't look like him, yes, but why do I know everything of his life? If I am not David Cargill, then how do I remember --

HELEN

Remember what? How can you remember what you never lived?

DAVID

How do I answer that? Somehow, I am here again, Helen. I don't know why. I don't know how. Whatever this is, it's...But look...I know it all...

David jumping up, crossing to the windows. A drape pulled back, a look into the night.

DAVID

It was right there. In the drive, right there. My father's old limousine, remember? Gerald drove me...How is Gerald, by the way?

HELEN

Gerald died twenty-two years ago. David would never have known.

DAVID

I'm sorry to hear that.

HELEN

Nor would you.

A long look between them. A sigh, a look out into the night again.

DAVID

I can tell you everything about that evening. It was...

(speaking as if reciting a poem)

...just at dusk, the sky dark as French burgundy above, the reddish glow of the sunset on the horizon, like a slash of incandescent lipstick across the upper lip of the earth...you stood in this very window, looking out at me in the drive, by the car, my leather satchel -- my father's leather satchel -- at my feet. You wore a yellow dress, with a high, white collar. You were holding a cat...

HELEN

(breathless)

How do you know--?

DAVID

...That was the last beauty I saw...that sky...

(turning to her)

...and you...before the hell of...

(shaking off a personal memory)

...remember?

(smiling then)

You wanted a big wedding...the church, the flowers, a dozen bridesmaids, a white silk and crinoline gown covered in pearls. You and Flora were laughing--

HELEN

Stop this! How do you--?

DAVID

(pushing on)

You wouldn't kiss me goodbye that day. You said you were afraid it would be a last kiss...that if you saved it, I would have to return safely to collect it. I promised I would...

*Helen turning from him, one hand to her heart,
the other to her mouth.*

HELEN

Oh, my God...

DAVID

I guess it's taken me fifty years to fulfill that promise.

*A long beat. Helen not moving, her hands
trembling, a mix of fear and confusion washing
her face.*

*David approaching her, his hands gently to her
shoulders.*

DAVID

Darling, I--

HELEN

(spinning from him)

NO! This cannot be happening! I don't know how you know these things...these private things!

Approaching her again, handing her the picture.

DAVID

I don't know how, Helen. I don't know what. But somehow, in some way, I *am* David, and I am here, and I want--

HELEN

Why are you doing this?!?

Flora entering from the Foyer, seeing Helen's distress. She carries a raincoat.

FLORA

Helen...?

HELEN

It's all right. This is all just...a bit unsettling, that's all.

FLORA

Unsettling? How is it even possible? Heaven and earth have either turned upside down or this man is a liar, and I think I know which it is.

(to David)

What's in Laplace, sir?

DAVID

What? La-what?

FLORA

Louisiana. Laplace, Louisiana. Where you came from, isn't it?

DAVID

I don't...no, I...

HELEN

What are you talking about?

Flora moving to Helen, handing a small piece of paper to Helen.

FLORA

Thought I'd check the pockets of this coat while I was out front. Found that in one of them. It's a bus ticket from Laplace, Louisiana to Savannah. Two days ago.

HELEN

(to David)

I thought you said you came by train.

DAVID

I..I did. I don't know what that is.

FLORA

It was in your pocket, mister. In the coat you wore in here.

DAVID

I..I found that coat at the station when I arrived. Someone must have left it on a bench. It was raining, I needed something to stay dry. I didn't want to show up here soaking wet.

FLORA

That's a fool's story. Nasty weather, nowhere to go, you needed someplace to get warm and dry, maybe five-finger-discount a little this'n'that while you're there? You just pick us out of the phone book?

DAVID

I've told you why I came here, whether you believe me or not. And I guess it had to be tonight.

HELEN

And how is that?

DAVID

Because whatever brought me back here, for whatever reason, it did it on the anniversary of my death...God! That sounds insane! How can I have died in 1968 and be standing here now?

FLORA

Because you are not Mr. Cargill, plain and simple. You can't be. Besides, even if you could be, that's not how God designed things, son. When you go sit at His right hand, you do not get to come back. You wouldn't want to. So, you are not him, and what you are doing is a sin against my God, and an affront to Miss MacMillan here. So don't be looking for sympathy where none is deserved.

DAVID

You have always trusted in that God of yours, haven't you, Flora?

HELEN

Only thing in this world she does trust in, judging by what I've seen.

FLORA

Amen.

DAVID

I think I knew that the day you came to live with us --

FLORA

I did not live with *you*, sir --

DAVID

You brought the beliefs your daddy instilled in you. I remember his church...a beautiful little house of God -- First Bible Baptist, not six miles from here.

FLORA

(to Helen)

How does he know--?

DAVID

Your daddy -- Tamarius Anthony, wasn't it? I remember him as a nice man, Flora. My father always called him a godly man, admired his ministry. He gave each of us kids a new Bible, remember? Right before he died. You still have yours?

FLORA

How...how can you know that?!

DAVID

I was so happy when you came to live with us after your daddy's passing. I was no longer an only child. I had a sister to play with, grow up with.

FLORA

How do you know any of that?!

DAVID

I was there, Flora. I--

FLORA

You were not there! You were not!

Another bright flash of lightning, an even louder, deeper clap of thunder. The lights dim and flicker. Another lightning flash, another clap, and the lights immediately going out.

FLORA

Oh, Lordy. Lordy...

The only light in the room now coming from the fireplace.

In that dim light, Flora moving to the mantel...

FLORA

Every time God sends the rain...

Taking down a chamberstick, picking up a twig from among the stack of logs nearby, lighting it in the fireplace, then touching the candle alive. Turning to Helen.

FLORA

You all right, Missy?

HELEN

Yes, fine. But I think that fuse is gone again.

FLORA

One of these days, this old house needs to grow up. I'm tired of going down in that basement on nights like this. Makes my skin crawl.

HELEN

(turning to David)

I'm sorry about this...

But he's not there...not in the room at all.

HELEN

Young man?

(no answer, then to Flora)

Where did he go? Young man!

(a beat, then...)

David!

FLORA

You know better'n to be calling him that. He is not our David. And don't believe that story about the ticket.

HELEN

Maybe he did find the coat, like he said.

FLORA

We shouldn't be looking for excuses for him, Missy. He is not who he says he is. He can't be. And that's enough to make me worry something mighty.

HELEN

He doesn't seem to be a threat, Flora. He just seems to be...confused...a little.

FLORA

You willin' to trust that? Where'd he go? What's he up to now?

(going to the Foyer door)

He leave?

(opening the Foyer door)

Mister? Mister, you out there?

HELEN

You think he might have gone upstairs?

FLORA

He's in this house somewhere, Helen, and I don't like it we don't know where.

HELEN

Or maybe he left.

FLORA

Maybe we should, now we got the chance. Go out to the car, get away from here until someone can come out here who--

The lights flickering, coming back on.

Helen and Flora looking at one another, then surveying the room.

FLORA

Least we can see now. Please, Helen, let's go.

HELEN

I don't know, Flora. Maybe--

DAVID (O.S.)

That basement is as dank as I remember it. And more cobwebs than it's ever had.

(entering through the archway, a bottle of wine in his hand)

We should give it a good cleaning, Flora.

(to Helen)

And that was the last new fuse, love. We'll need to get another box. But I did find this for you in the racks. A fine old port. ..one of my father's favorite vineyards, I believe. Perfect for a night like this.

HELEN

You went to the basement?

DAVID

Of course I did. Had to change that fuse. Again. Every storm, it seems, doesn't it?

(moving to the bar)

Would either of you care for a glass?

HELEN

No. No thank you. But...I appreciate your fixing the lights.

Setting the bottle on the bar, turning to them...

DAVID

Nothing I haven't done a hundred times.

Flora noticing, pointing to David's head.

FLORA

You're bleeding.

David touching his forehead, where a trickle of blood snakes down.

DAVID

So I am. Hit my head pretty hard down there. Harder than I thought, I guess. I forgot how low those beams are.

HELEN

Or you didn't know.

A stare between them, then...

DAVID

I knew how to get there, didn't I? Where the fuse box was.

Ignoring him, Flora pulls a tissue from her sleeve, hands it to him, pointing to his head.

FLORA

I'll get you something for that.

(points to couch)

Sit there.

DAVID

(as she's moving away)

Thank you, Flora. We've always taken care of one another--

FLORA

(spinning to him)

No, sir, we have not. Not one bit. And don't be mistaking human kindness for acceptance, young man. I don't know what's going on here...

HELEN

Flora--

FLORA

...but I won't let you leave here bleeding. Wouldn't be Christian.

(to Helen as she's moving to the archway)

I'll be right back. Maybe you should come with me.

Stopping Flora with a touch to the arm...a softer voice...

HELEN

I'm sure it will be fine. Now, God works in mysterious ways -- you've said that to me many times. Maybe God has sent this young man here for a reason.

FLORA

The Bible also tells us to 'be sober and be vigilant, for the Devil walks about.'

HELEN

I doubt he's the Devil, Flora.

FLORA

We'll see.

Exiting through the archway.

DAVID

She's always loved you, you know. From the first second she met you. Thought you were the most beautiful thing she'd ever seen. Told me so many times.

HELEN

I don't think I'd have stayed without her. She's always been the sister I never had.

DAVID

I get that. I wouldn't stay here without you.

HELEN

Please. Don't say things like that.

DAVID

Why? It's the truth--

HELEN

Because it can't be true. As much as you or I may want it to be...

A long look between them at that...what did she just say? He indicates the couch.

DAVID

Sit with me a moment. Please.

HELEN

I'm fine right here.

DAVID

I'm not sure what we do here.

HELEN

There's no *we*, young man. There's never been a *we*, you and me. There very much *was* a David. And for so many years, I have lived with his no longer being in this room, no longer in my arms, no longer whispering his love to...

(emotion steals her voice...a long beat)

I have managed by letting the love I still feel for him every day surround the pain of his loss and hold it at bay, not letting its grief overwhelm me, as it most assuredly could. And the only reason I could do that was not letting possibility feed hope. And now you...Can you see what you are doing?

DAVID

I can't explain why I am who I am. How does one do that? But the possibility of my being here again...now...with you...*that* is the hope that has sustained *me*. Can we both not embrace whatever gift this is?

HELEN

I...

Flora returning, a small bottle of hydrogen peroxide and a bandage in her hands. Pointing to the couch.

FLORA

Sit there.

David moving to the couch. Flora cleaning and dressing his wound. Silence as she does.

When she's finished, she picks up the raincoat and holds it out to him.

FLORA

Here's your coat.

HELEN

(quickly)

Flora, it's...It's still raining out. And like you said, it wouldn't be Christian, now would it--turning him out on a night like this? I think we can wait a while.

Flora trapped in her own sense of right. Sighing, moving to Helen.

FLORA

I don't know what you're doing, Helen. This goes against nature and the order of things.

HELEN

He doesn't seem to be a danger, does he? And he's certainly been a help...

(a decision)

Look, it's getting cool in here, dear. We can use something warm.

(picking up the tea tray, handing it to Flora)

Some more tea, perhaps? I would like some. Would you mind getting some for all of us?

FLORA

You're treating this man like a guest, and we don't know--

HELEN

We cannot let fear overtake our sense of propriety, Flora. "A guest in our house will always--"

DAVID

"-- find family at his side."

Helen and Flora looking up at David... another quote they remember....

Flora breaking from Helen, beelining into the archway. A quick turn back...

FLORA

You want us to believe you're a nice young man, son. You look like you could be. Someone I maybe would have liked to have met myself fifty years ago. But looks can deceive. And what you're doing here -- whatever it is -- it feels like an abomination, and I cannot forgive you for the pain you are visiting on my friend. If you will not leave on your own, I will call the ones who will see to it you do.

(to Helen)

You want tea, Missy, the kettle's still warm. But I will not serve this man further. God forgive me for acting uncharitably.

And she's gone.

HELEN

Flora! Please...!

Helen moving to the archway.

HELEN

Can I leave you here a moment without worry? I need to...

(indicating Flora)

DAVID

Yes, of course.

The archway empty now.

David watching her go, then a turn, a lean against the mantel, a look up at the picture of David Cargill.

Rubbing his eyes, hanging his head, as if very, very tired. A violent shaking of his head, then...

DAVID

(a whispered moan)

No, no, no...

Crossing quickly to the desk. Opening the drawers, rifling through each, a furtive glance toward the archway now and again as he does so. The sideboard next, pulling out papers, quickly looking through them, replacing them.

Stopping, taking a deep breath, hanging his head.

Moving slowly to the bookshelves, perusing the book spines...no, no, no, yes! This one. Pulling it from the shelf, opening it, reading. A smile flowering on his face just as...

Helen entering, carrying a small tray-- two china cups, a small teapot.

The tray on the coffee table, sitting in her chair.

HELEN

I hope Earl Grey is all right.

DAVID

It's always been our favorite.

Helen looking up at him, watching him closely as he's moving to the couch, carrying the book, sitting.

DAVID

How is Flora? She all right?

HELEN

She's upset. You make her anxious.

The book on the table.

DAVID

But not you...not anymore, it seems. Why is that?

Considering him, pouring the tea, handing him a cup, taking her own.

HELEN

I don't know why, but you no longer frighten me. This doesn't mean you haven't upset me, however. These are old wounds you've opened. Painful, dark memories, unhealed for so many years. What purpose can this possibly serve?

DAVID

My only purpose was to come home to you, Darling.

HELEN

Please. Don't call me--

DAVID

Would it be better if I called you Kitten?

Her teacup rattles, a sudden wash of emotion on her face.

HELEN

How...? It's not possible that you...

Setting his teacup down. A calm, gentle voice...

DAVID

That first time I met you, remember? An afternoon party at your father's place out along the Wilmington River near the Sound. It was July fourth, nineteen sixty-six.

He rising, almost as if performing. Helen, transfixed.

DAVID

I was the guest of a guest...I forget who. I'd even thought about not going, but then I figured, why not? It was a nice day to leave the city. Much cooler out there. Your father was very gracious to a young stranger, welcoming me without question. I wandered the grounds for a while before coming around to the terrace on the back of the house. I stood there looking at the water, then noticed something across the lawn toward the trees...a flash of blonde hair cascading across a bright blue dress, sitting in the green grass in front of a large gazebo. I thought I was looking at a Monet painting. I wandered over, stood near you. You were playing with a pair of bright orange, bobtail kittens. You were unruffled by the presence of a stranger, much like your father. You immediately patted the ground, and when I sat, you handed me one of the kittens. You said, "Treat her right and..."

HELEN

"...she'll love you forever."

DAVID

Yes.

(beat)

And you have been my Kitten ever since.

A deep silence. Eyes locked. Her teacup to the coffee table, her hands to her lap.

HELEN

It's not possible a stranger would have knowledge of any of that.

DAVID

Because I am not a stranger, my love. You know who I am. You feel it, I know you do. That is why you are no longer frightened of me.

Helen rising, but nowhere really to go.

HELEN

What I feel is the world turning upside down. I've never seen you before. You come here unannounced and unexpected, claiming to be the most important person in my life...the only man I have ever loved...loved so deeply not another person or thing has entered my heart since...a man who has been dead for fifty years. You know private things only he and I would know. You are stretching the limits of not only credibility, but possibility. Are you implying a spiritual possession of some sort? A reincarnation?

DAVID

Is that what this is? Maybe. Why not? All I know is what I feel, what I've told you. And I haven't been wrong, have I? About us meeting, about my leaving, about Flora, our wedding plans...

(pointing to the desk)

...the rose and rings.

(picking up the book from the coffee table)

And this. Remember this? Romantic poets. I read Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley to you...sitting on a blanket right out there...

(pointing to an unseen area on the property)

...by the pond...your head on my lap, smoking cigarettes and feeling wicked and sexy for doing so. How would I know all this if I wasn't David Cargill?

HELEN

It can't be...

DAVID

However I am here, darling, I am here. What more can I do to help you believe that?

Her head shaking, hands wringing. A woman who wants to believe with every fiber of her being, but the absurdity, the impossibility, holds her back.

David to the desk. The mahogany box. Carrying it to her.

Opening the lid. The rose with the ribbon and rings between them.

DAVID

Ask me why I gave you this.

No words.

DAVID

Ask me what I said to you when I did.

HELEN

(small, almost childlike)

You said...I...can't...

Too painful.

DAVID

I said, "These rings circle my heart, my love, and will keep me safe, as long as you keep them near. I will be back for them...and for you."

(the rose out to her)

And now I have kept that promise, my love. I am here.

Her eyes to his eyes...nothing else exists...

HELEN

How...How are you...?

DAVID

Because in your presence, my dearest Helen, I *am* David Cargill.

The dam bursting. Falling weeping into him, arms tightly around him.

Both weeping now, locked, unmoving, holding so tightly to one another they dare not breathe. Ten seconds. Twenty. Time no longer has meaning.

Finally, David guides her to the couch. They sit.

DAVID

Are you all right now?

HELEN

I don't know. This is all so...

(looking up at him)

I can't tell you how many nights I cried to the heavens...cursed whatever God may be up there for taking you, for tearing my life apart in such an ugly way.

DAVID

I'm so sorry, my love.

HELEN

I cursed myself for letting you go that day. I wondered endlessly if you thought of me in your last moments. It was torture. Fifty years of longing so deep and overwhelming, I no longer wanted to be a part of a world that could take you away...leave me alone...

A shiver.

DAVID

You're shaking. Are you cold?

A nod.

He drapes her shawl around her. His arms follow, holding her to himself.

DAVID

That better?

HELEN

It's...yes....

(her head to his shoulder)

Yes, yes, yes.

(beat, closing her eyes)

It feels like the years...have evaporated. Like a lifetime of wishing has magically lifted them. I'm afraid to breathe.

A moment's consideration, then...

DAVID

You asked if this may be reincarnation of some kind. I don't know much about that kind of thing, but...when I was over there -- Vietnam -- There were places I could go that were safe. I came across a monastery one day -- Buddhist monks -- and I spent many an afternoon there. One of the monks -- his name was Tenzin -- we talked of many things -- life, man's purpose on this earth...death. He mentioned reincarnation. What I remember...he said that certain things -- devastating traumas, resentments...

(looking to her)

...great loves -- can pass from one life to a new life if they needed to find resolution in some way. Maybe...I don't know...but maybe...

(touching her cheek)

Does it really matter now?

HELEN

No. No, it doesn't.

A long gaze, a pregnant beat, a profound quiet...

...Suddenly cut by the sharp sting of a door chime, the thudding clunk of a door knocker.

Their gaze holding, but a second chime and knock break it.

Flora emerging through the dining room archway.

FLORA

This better not be another--

(seeing Helen and David on the couch)

No, Helen. No.

Helen sitting forward, straightening herself.

HELEN

It's all right, Flora.

Another knock. Insistent now.

HELEN

Did you call the police?

FLORA

No. But I should have.

HELEN

(to David)

Is whoever that is, connected to you?

DAVID

No. I came alone.

FLORA

What are you doing, Helen? How can you--

HELEN

(to Flora)

We should answer that.

No movement from Flora. Maybe a little judgment.

HELEN

Could you...?

A shaking of the head, a moving to the Foyer door, and Flora's gone.

HELEN

I'm a little worried about who else might be coming through that door.

A shared smile.

DAVID

Well, whoever it is, I'll let you attend to it and take the opportunity to step away, use the....

HELEN

Yes....

(points toward the door)

It's through the dining room, before you get to the kitchen.

DAVID

(a gentle smile)

I know where it is.

Helen watching him go, then...

Flora returning, escorting two people: one a stocky DETECTIVE JIM OGDEN, suit too big, tie too tight.

The other, DOCTOR SYLVIA REYNOLDS, her demeanor as professionally starched as her clothes and posture. Carrying a leather portfolio.

FLORA

(to Helen)

It's Jim Ogden, from the Savannah police.

(to Ogden)

You know Miss Helen.

OGDEN

I do. Evening, Miss MacMillan. Nice to see you again.

HELEN

Detective.

(to Flora)

I thought you said you didn't call...

FLORA

I didn't.

OGDEN

Sorry to disturb you this late at night, and there's probably nothing to it, but I'm here on a matter brought to me by Miss--

Her hand interrupting like a knife stabbing forward.

REYNOLDS

Doctor. Doctor Sylvia Reynolds.

A tentative, uncertain handshake.

HELEN

A detective *and* a doctor.

FLORA

I told them we were otherwise engaged...but this one...

(indicating Ogden)

...insisted.

OGDEN

Yeah, well...like I said, I wouldn't normally have come this time of night, but it seems I wasn't going to be given a choice...

The glance to Reynolds says it all...

REYNOLDS

I didn't think it prudent to wait until tomorrow, under the circumstances.

HELEN

And what circumstances might those be?

REYNOLDS

(indicating the couch and chair area)

May we?

A nod from Helen with a glance at the archway where David had disappeared moments before. Moving to the couch area...

HELEN

I don't want to be rude, but Flora was correct. I am engaged in something.

OGDEN

Then I'll get right to the point and leave you to your evening. Has anyone you don't know come to your home in the last day or two? A stranger, not from around here?

Helen and Flora -- a glance. Ogden and Reynolds catching it.

OGDEN

Someone has, then?

REYNOLDS

It would have been a young African-American man --

OGDEN

(clicking into cop mode)

When was he here?

FLORA

(looking to Helen, concern rising)

Missy, maybe we --

OGDEN

He's still here? Because if he --

HELEN

(quickly cutting him off)

What does this pertain to, Detective? You indicated it's something pressing.

OGDEN

We believe it is, yes, if the man is still in this house --

HELEN

Perhaps you would explain it, then, before you get us any more unsettled.

Ogden takes a breath, holding down the frustration that she doesn't see the urgency he does.

OGDEN

I don't mean to unsettle anyone, Miss MacMillan. But this has become a matter of concern, that's all. Miss Reynolds here--

REYNOLDS

Doctor.

OGDEN

Doctor...Reynolds here appeared at the station this afternoon, insisting I help her.

REYNOLDS

(a sharp glance at Ogden)

I didn't insist.

(back to Helen and Flora)

I asked professionally for help in finding you.

HELEN

Me?

REYNOLDS

Well, not you, specifically--

OGDEN

She just had the name Cargill. Wanted to know if I was familiar with it, if I knew whose it was, which of course...

(he shakes off the obvious, gets to it)

She indicated that one of her patients -- a, uh...

(looking at a page in a notepad)

...Darryl--

REYNOLDS

Darius, Detective. Darius Arthur.

OGDEN

Yes...Darius Arthur. African-American male, age 24. About six foot, hundred-eighty or so pounds. Brown eyes, short hair.

FLORA

Oh, Lord...

OGDEN

It appears he's been missing from the institution where the doctor works.

HELEN

Institution?

A business card.

REYNOLDS

I'm the Chief of Psychiatry at River Place Behavioral Hospital in Laplace, Louisiana.

FLORA

(a glance at Helen)

Mm-hmm. Laplace.

REYNOLDS

Yes. Mr. Arthur has been under my care for several years now.

HELEN

So he's a patient of yours?

REYNOLDS

Yes. Since he was eight years old. Almost sixteen years now.

FLORA

This hospital...it's for crazy people?

REYNOLDS

We don't refer to our patients that way. They each have different mental issues we address with various protocols.

FLORA

Lord, Lord, Lord...

REYNOLDS

In Mr. Arthur's case we combined psychiatric therapies with educational protocols. He is quite intelligent, despite his condition.

HELEN

May I ask what this Mr. Arthur is being treated for?

REYNOLDS

I'm not at liberty to discuss a patient's personal information, Miss MacMillan--

HELEN

You've come here this late at night, as you have indicated, because you didn't feel it -- "prudent" is the way I believe you put it -- to wait until tomorrow. This sounds serious, and as such, I think a little candor is in order.

OGDEN

(to Reynolds)

She has a point, Miss....Doctor. Under the circumstances, and given that you had no problem sharing some of the details of Mr. Arthur with me earlier, I think you need to let these two ladies know exactly what they may be dealing with.

REYNOLDS

I understand, but there are regulations on patient privacy...

OGDEN

That didn't stop you from running it down for me this afternoon, Doctor.

REYNOLDS

That was professional courtesy, Detective. There are state and federal protocols that I must adhere to outside of that arena.

OGDEN

Well, this is my state and my jurisdiction, so if you're not comfortable with sharing the information, I'll be happy to--

REYNOLDS

All right. No. He's my patient.

(considering a moment, then...)

Mr. Arthur suffers from a dissociative mental condition...a pretty severe case, in fact, brought on by prolonged violent trauma as a young child.

HELEN

Trauma? What kind of trauma?

REYNOLDS

Racially-motivated violence, I'm afraid.

FLORA

Sweet Jesus.

HELEN

Where was this?

OGDEN

Back woods Louisiana. A dark little speck called Donner.

REYNOLDS

There was regular, prolonged abuse and violence -- daily confrontations, threats, beatings. It escalated over time, until...one night...he and his parents were taken from their home and...

(this is not easy for her)

...Darius was forced to watch his parents tortured and lynched in front of him.

HELEN

Oh, no....

REYNOLDS

From what I was told, Darius was found the next morning sitting against the tree where his parents still hung. He was in a virtual catatonic state.

Helen slowly lowering to the couch, her face revealing the shock she's feeling.

REYNOLDS

He was taken in by an aunt and uncle in Laplace, but the prolonged trauma and...that night...had done its damage. His condition worsened and he was ultimately sent to us, where his specific disorder was diagnosed.

HELEN

What is this disorder you mentioned?

REYNOLDS

Dissociative Identity Disorder. It's complicated, but it involves a patient being so traumatized by their own life that they simply can't be themselves anymore. They grab onto another identity, another personality altogether. In Mr. Arthur's case, his dissociation proved to be quite severe.

The room suddenly ice cold.

FLORA

Why would this man come here?

A small book from her portfolio-- maybe seven inches high, three inches wide -- old, weather-beaten.

REYNOLDS

Does this book look familiar to you, Miss MacMillan?

Turning it over, but not opening it.

HELEN

I don't think so. What is it?

REYNOLDS

Look at the inside cover, if you would.

The book opening, a look inside. A gasp of a breath.

FLORA

What is it?

Gently taking the book from Helen's hands, reading...

FLORA

"David Cargill, Savannah, Georgia."

(looking at Helen)

Oh, my sweet Lord.

OGDEN

You recognize the book? Never seen it?

(off her head shake)

Is that Mr. Cargill's handwriting?

FLORA

I believe it was, yes.

REYNOLDS

Do you recognize any of the entries? Are they something Mr. Cargill may have written?

Flora trying to hand the book back to Helen, but she won't take it. Flora opening the book, thumbing a few pages, then reading...

FLORA

“No one wins when passion and disquiet overwhelm patience and repose.”

HELEN

Oh, my God...

Another couple of pages, reading again.

FLORA

“...I miss every atom of home...every detail. I can see in my mind the mahogany dining table with those damned uncomfortable high-back Queen Anne chairs, eating Flora's intoxicating pot roast on mother's old blue and white china...”

HELEN

No, no, no...

Another couple of pages, reading again.

FLORA

“...the sky was dark as French burgundy above, the reddish glow of the sunset on the horizon, like a slash of incandescent lipstick across the upper lip of the earth.”

Helen's face falling into her hands. One last turn of the pages...

FLORA

“I said to her, ‘These rings circle my heart, and will keep me safe, as long as you keep them near...’”

HELEN

(weeping now)

Stop. Please stop....

REYNOLDS

Are you all right, Miss MacMillan? Should we--?

OGDEN

Miss MacMillan? This book *is* familiar to you, then?

HELEN

No...yes...I...

FLORA

Where did you get this? What is it?

Reynolds takes the book from Flora...

REYNOLDS

It was found in Mister Arthur's room after he went missing. It appears to be a detailed diary. The dates run from August, 1967 until February, 1968. The last entry is February seventh of that year. It reads, "I just want to go home." I think that's what Darius thinks he is doing. As David.

HELEN

This can't be happening...

OGDEN

You are mentioned a great deal, Miss MacMillan. As are you, Miss Anthony. Detailed descriptions of this house and grounds, incidents and occurrences, conversations. This guy knows an awful lot about you. You can see why we might be concerned.

Reynolds sees Helen's distress, sits next to her.

HELEN

Yes, I'm...Please...continue.

REYNOLDS

Mister Arthur rarely let this book out of his hands. It seemed very important to him. We didn't challenge him on it -- patients often have talismans that anchor them in some way. After he disappeared, I found it under his mattress.

FLORA

My brother David was gone long before this Darius was born. How would that book get into his hands all the way down in Louisiana?

OGDEN

I wondered the same thing. A quick search for the name David Cargill turned up his death certificate and other records of his military service. On the list of the men in his unit was the name Kendis Arthur, who turns out to be Darius Arthur's uncle.

REYNOLDS

It's highly probable the two men got quite close, as men at war often do. Mr. Cargill was killed over there, wasn't he?

HELEN

Yes. Yes, he was.

OGDEN

Not a big stretch to assume the uncle kept the book, maybe intending to get it to your family, but never did. The young kid probably found it, latched onto it.

REYNOLDS

And the life described in the diary was the escape he needed. Mr. Arthur's condition grew more chronic over time, despite my best efforts. I just couldn't break through. I found a note the night he slipped away. It said simply, "I'm going home." He signed it "David".

HELEN

He just thinks he's David?

REYNOLDS

No. He believes it. Completely. To him, he is David Cargill.

DAVID/DARIUS (O.S.)

I am David Cargill. Is there something I can do for you?

David, now identified as DARIUS ARTHUR, at the archway. All eyes swinging to him.

Helen rising, Reynolds with her.

Ogden looking to Reynolds. She nods.

Darius crossing, looking hard at Reynolds -- recognition? -- shaking it off, moving to Helen.

DARIUS

Sorry, darling. I hope I'm not interrupting.

Helen paralyzed...not so much out of fear, but out of conflict...her desires and her sense of reality incapable of resolving...

DARIUS

Is there a problem?

REYNOLDS

(calm, professional)

Hello, Darius. I've been worried about you.

DARIUS

(a frown)

I'm sorry...

(extending a hand)

I'm sorry. My name is David. Have we met?

Reynolds unmoving...only a smile and calm tone...

REYNOLDS

It's Doctor Reynolds, Darius. You remember. From River Place.

DARIUS

No, I don't think--

REYNOLDS

I have something for you. You forgot it when you left.

The diary.

Darius immediately grabbing the book, like a child grabbing a toy from another child. Tucking it into his chest, as though protecting it, stepping away from Helen, but it's more putting space between himself and Reynolds.

Turning his back on the others, his face a mix of confusion and fear, his voice an overtone of desperation.

DARIUS

Where did you get this?

OGDEN

(stepping toward Darius)

So you're saying the book *is* yours.

DARIUS

(blurting out)

Yes!

(then a quick...)

I mean, it's...

OGDEN

And that you *are* Darius Arthur.

DARIUS

NO! No, I am David Cargill! I'm...I'm...

Looking to Helen, then Flora, then Ogden and Reynolds.

Reynolds seeing something in Darius she doesn't like...he's in trouble.

REYNOLDS

It's all right, Darius. No one's going to --

DARIUS

(exploding)

NO! Don't call me that! I am David Cargill!

(turning to Helen)

Please, Helen! Tell them who I am!

(to Flora)

Flora! You've known me all my life! Tell them!

Silence.

Ogden moving to Darius, reaching for one of his arms.

OGDEN

Perhaps we should discuss this calmly somewhere more appropriate, Mr. Arthur.

REYNOLDS

Detective, that's not--!

Too late. Darius slapping Ogden's hand away, then shoving him hard, moving further from him, behind the couch. Things spinning out quickly.

HELEN

Please! Let him be! Don't hurt him!

FLORA

(moving to Helen, holding her)

No, Helen! Let them take him!

REYNOLDS

It's alright, Darius! No one's going to hurt you!

DARIUS

I am not Darius Arthur! I am David Cargill! Get out! Get out of my house!

REYNOLDS

Darius, please! It's Sylvia!

Ogden. On Darius now, twisting an arm behind his back, pushing him across the back of the couch, pulling out cuffs...Darius screaming.

Helen, breaking from Flora's grasp, moving to Darius, throwing herself across him, swatting at Ogden.

HELEN

Leave him alone! He is who he says he is! He is David Cargill! He is my fiancé!

Everything freezing. A heavy silence, a pregnant couple of beats....

Reynolds moving quickly to Ogden, backing him away from Darius and Helen.

REYNOLDS

Detective! This is not helping.

OGDEN

The man is getting violent, Doctor. I can't just--

REYNOLDS

And the harder you push, the worse it will get. Trust me. You don't want to be the reason this all goes to hell, do you? Let me handle it.

Ogden is not happy, but he backs off, his hands displayed in front of him. Not the way he would handle things, but...

Helen embracing Darius, she and Flora helping him stand upright.

REYNOLDS

Darius, why don't we--

HELEN

(flash of hard eyes directly at Reynolds)

NO!

(then to Darius)

It's alright, David. They're leaving now.

(another look to Reynolds and Ogden)

They're leaving.

(to Flora)

Please, Flora, show them out.

FLORA

Oh, Missy, I don't think that's a good idea. Let's let them--

HELEN

Flora. Please. For me. Please.

Fifty years of everything familiar passing between them in an instant. Fifty years of pain, fifty years of loneliness, fifty years of grief, companionship, understanding...fifty years of love....

FLORA

Yes. All right.

Flora reaching up, touching Darius's shoulder, kindness in a softened voice sliding through a smile.

FLORA

You all right, young man?

Darius looking at Flora, nodding slowly.

FLORA

You're safe now. I'll see to it.

Flora looking to Ogden and Reynolds, gesturing toward the door.

FLORA

Maybe you better.

*Reynolds nodding, picking up her portfolio.
Ogden replacing his cuffs on his belt as he's looking to Helen bringing Darius around the couch.*

OGDEN

This is not a good idea, Miss MacMillan. I really think you should let me--

REYNOLDS

(quietly, to Ogden)

I think we need to give them some space, Detective. I think there's more going on here than we were initially aware of.

OGDEN

Meaning what?

Reynolds nodding toward a preoccupied Helen...

REYNOLDS

There appears to be more than one clinical issue here.

OGDEN

I don't follow.

REYNOLDS

I know you don't. It's called *folie au deux*. It's not something I can address in this moment. We'll discuss how to proceed outside.

Ogden nods, obliging, but as he's walking toward the door where Flora waits...

OGDEN

We're not going anywhere, Miss MacMillan. When Mr. Arthur has calmed down, we'll come back, and--

Flora taps his arm.

FLORA

Please, Detective.

Ogden and Reynolds exit. Flora stepping back to Helen and Darius.

FLORA

I'll be outside with them. Take as long as you need, Helen...

(looks to Darius)

...David.

HELEN

Thank you, Flora. We'll be right here.

Flora smiling at Helen, touching Darius's shoulder gently, smiling at him, then moving to the door. Looking back to Helen and Darius, now sitting together on the couch. A sad smile, then gone...

Helen linking her arm through Darius's, the diary still held tightly in his hand. A long beat...

HELEN

I've kept everything the same. Did you notice?

DARIUS

I smell warm tea, old wood.

HELEN

Yes, it is old, isn't it? Flora was always teasing me that the house and I were starting to creak the same way...but I didn't want to change anything.

(a small, light laugh)

I was afraid that someday, someone would come in and find her and me sitting in these chairs, covered in dust. I'm glad you got back before that happened.

How she said it...the tone of it...the import of it...

DARIUS

Then...you...believe that I'm...?

HELEN

I'll tell you what I believe. Fifty years ago, this night, my life ended. The moment yours did. The world disappeared. Time stopped. The man I loved, whose every heart beat and every breath may as well have been my own, was gone. I know you understand that kind of devastation.

(reaching out, taking his hand)

What you have given me tonight is a gift beyond any I could ever have hoped for, what I've wished for, for fifty years. Tonight...you... you...have brought me back...my David.

He, beginning to respond, but she, touching a finger to his lips.

HELEN

I don't care how. I don't care why. I don't care what. None of that matters.

A nod toward the door where Ogden and Reynolds just exited.

HELEN

And whatever they say, whatever they do...it doesn't matter to us, right here, right now, this moment. It simply does not matter. Because right now, here with you, my heart beats again, my dearest. You being here has breathed life into me again. My David -- for however long it may be -- has returned home to me.

A sob catching in his throat. Helen then pulling his hands to her lips, kissing them with feeling for a long beat.

DARIUS

(quietly, sadly, the weight of truth)

But they will take me away.

HELEN

(touching his cheek gently, with great tenderness)

Yes. They will.

(recovering, with a smile)

But that doesn't concern us now. We have something else we must do.

DARIUS

What, my love?

Helen rising, crossing to the desk. Picking up the mahogany box, returning to the couch.

Opening the box, lifting the rose and rings. The rose on her lap, gently untying the ribbon, removing the rings.

HELEN

As we agreed, I've kept these for us until your return, my love. It's time we used them.

Sliding the smaller ring onto her left ring finger, taking Darius's left hand and sliding the larger ring onto his ring finger. Then, both his hands in hers.

She leans to him, gives him a tender kiss on the cheek. They look into one another's eyes a moment, then Helen picking up the book of poetry, handing it to him.

HELEN

Read to me, my darling. Like you used to by the pond.

DARIUS

(smiling, opening it)

What shall I read? Coleridge? Wordsworth?

HELEN

Some Shelley, I think. Find us something that speaks of the timeless nature of love.

*She, nestling her head onto his shoulder. He,
paging through the book.*

DARIUS

Ah, here's a good one.

Lights into a slow fade to black as he reads...

DARIUS

“See the mountains kiss high heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower will be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea;
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me...?”

FULL BLACKOUT
THE END