

CHARACTERS:

LINCOLN (A DOG), ANY RACE, ANY GENDER, ANY AGE

SOJOURNER TRUTH (ISABELLA VAN WAGENER), BLACK WOMAN

PUFFY COTTON, BLACK RAP STAR

HALF & HALF, MIXED RACE GIRL (ANY MIX)

DAVID DANK, WHITE MALE POLITICIAN

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A large stage empty except for an elevated statue of a stereotypical Black-faced Lawn Jockey, circled by four wooden chairs. The statue has a rusty iron chain around it's base hooked to one of the chairs.

A colossal but dirty, tattered and partly burned American flag serves as an upstage scrim.

A sound tape of James Cagney singing 'I'M A YANKEE DOODLE DANDY' POPS ON, loud and energetic.

All five characters rush on and race around the statue in a whirlwind.

The MUSIC STOPS, four of the five smash desperately into the chairs. Half & Half is left standing. She looks at the others, envious, angry.

Lincoln, the Dog, suddenly scratches himself savagely.

LINCOLN (A DOG)

My skin itches. My skin, my skin.

Lincoln scratches. Half & Half marches over to him, slaps the dog out of his chair.

HALF & HALF

You're in my seat, you flea-bitten slut.

CONTINUED:

LINCOLN

(from the floor, snarling)

I warn you.

(patiently)

And you don't listen. That's our relationship. I can't make you pay attention, but I advise you anyway. So.

MUSIC SNAPS ON AGAIN. They all run around.

MUSIC OFF, Puffy's left standing. Violently, he slaps Half & Half out of her chair. She hits the floor, scrambles away from him. He sits in her chair, content with himself.

PUFFY COTTON

We slapping the bitch tonight.

HALF & HALF

I know nothing. Less than yesterday.

She curls into a ball.

MUSIC ON. They all run around, except Half & Half. Sojourner rouses her, gets her back into the race.

MUSIC OFF.

David is caught short. He slaps Puffy, who slaps him back. David, enraged, but steely, takes a step back and speaks with perfect diction.

DAVID DANK

(smugly, to Puffy)

Down, nigger.

Puffy stares him down, then stands up walks away as if he doesn't care. David sits down.

Everybody looks at Puffy, he glares back, has nothing to say. Puffy snaps his fingers at the Sound Booth and the MUSIC STARTS UP. They run.

MUSIC OFF. Sojourner is left without a chair.

She slowly walks up to David and slaps him. He falls from his chair, easily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He stares up at Sojourner like a  
frightened child. She doesn't sit.

She touches the lawn jockey, address  
him as if he were Frederick Douglas.

SOJOURNER TRUTH

Frederick, is god dead?

She picks up her chair and walks away  
from the vicious circle.

Half and Half stands in front of her  
chair, addresses the audience.

HALF & HALF

I put my whiteface on and dance for you  
Shuffling so the bounce pleases  
Jiving a grin so wide the sun rises in my mouth  
A lipstick titty minstrel hoofin' for her master.

SOJOURNER TRUTH

The smoke of my mother's ashes rises behind me  
The fragrance of my daughter's bloom lingers in my hair

Movement sequence begins, involving all  
the characters.

SOJOURNER TRUTH (CONT'D)

Stop

Stand

Still

Your eyebrow arches

Breath

Held

My legs thicken  
Drive through the floor  
Sink into the mud  
Spread and root  
The pelvis juts, widens  
Rocking, rocking on the pillars of my thighs  
My trunk grows in spheres  
Deeper and broader with every thought, every shiver  
The leathery bark of my skin stretches  
Up, Up  
My branches lift the roof

Ah, Air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALL THE CHARACTERS  
(not simultaneous)

Ah, Air.

SOJOURNER TRUTH

I am too big for this room.

Angling my leaves to the sun  
I see her sprouting one garden over  
Not forced to wear a building as I am

My master climbs me yet...

The others, one by one, repeat that  
last line, except Lincoln, who  
scratches his skin. As if the  
scratching was contagious, the others  
scratch, too.

DAVID DANK

My master climbs me yet

HALF & HALF

My master climbs me yet

PUFFY COTTON

My master climbs me yet

SOJOURNER TRUTH

Claiming my height.

Lincoln hurries to the front of the  
stage, insists Half & Half introduce  
him to the audience. She does.

HALF & HALF

Ladies and gentlemen, Abraham Lincoln.

LINCOLN (A DOG)

(tips his hat, bows, then...)

'The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea.'

SOJOURNER TRUTH

The Father of Waters...

HALF & HALF

Again goes. The Father of Waters again goes...

PUFFY COTTON

Unvexed. Unvexed.

DAVID DANK

To the sea. Unvexed...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

To the sea.

PUFFY COTTON

Suddenly the MUSIC BLASTS ON. They all turn, wanting to stampede for the chairs, but hesitating...

Sojourner turns away from them. They barely move, profoundly ambivalent...

END OF PLAY.