

ACT I
SCENE 4

SETTING: Outside slave quarters, Benjamin is headed back home

Lighting: Downstage right only - Lights, same as previous scene, outside at dusk

Projection: Early in da Mo'nin'

AT RISE: MASSAH PENBROOK enters the scene. He is looking around his plantation and smugly taking in all that is his. BENJAMIN walking deep in thought about his conversation with his mother and encounters MASSAH PENBROOK.

Evening boy.
MASSAH PENBROOK

Suh.
BENJAMIN

MASSAH PENBROOK
Reckon you finished for the day, have you weighed in?

Yessuh.
BENJAMIN

MASSAH PENBROOK
(pretending to care)
Now see here, if you negras would just do your work like you s'posed to, won't be no need for another scene like we had the other day. You think I enjoy seein' my slaves get whipped don't you? Well I don't. I hate those scenes just as much as you negras do but when you decide you gonna do something different than what we tell you, then it becomes necessary. There ain't no need for you questioning my folks. You understand me boy?

BENJAMIN
I does.

MASSAH PENBROOK
You know your mama was born and raised right here on this plantation. (Thinking to himself)Grew up to be quite comely. Yes indeed a real looker that Cassie if I had to say so myself (A

beat, smiles to himself, then remembers who he is talking to)
You all are one of my favorite families, done been here for generations, so I don't want no trouble between us. I don't want you to go and make the same mistakes your Papa made.

BENJAMIN

(bothered by MASSAH PENBROOK'S statement but tries not to show it)

Yessuh, well if you don't mind suh, I be getting on home now.
(BENJAMIN STARTS to walk away).

MASSAH PENBROOK

Jes a minute boy, now that's what I'm talking about - I wasn't finished talking and I aint dismissed you yet.

BENJAMIN

Suh?

MASSAH PENBROOK

Now... how is your family getting along these days?

BENJAMIN

(trying to go along)

We doing fine and (sarcastically)uh thank you for askin...suh.

MASSAH PENBROOK

Now your sister, what's her name?

BENJAMIN

(turning suspicious as to why he is asking about Olivia. Speaks slowly)

Her name Livia suh.

MASSAH PENBROOK

Ah yes, Olivia - she's growing into a handsome young girl. Remind me of Cassie when she was younger -what is she bout 12, 13 or so?

BENJAMIN

She bout that age ... can I know why you be asking bout Livia suh?

MASSAH PENBROOK

(lying)

Well... my wife, uh, well uh she needs someone - a young girl to help her around the house, keep her company and to do her hair and, and things like that and I was thinking Olivia was about the right age.

BENJAMIN

(Understanding what's being implied)

Oh no suh, my mamma have Livia doing so many thangs - she couldn't bear to part with her right now and Livia don't follow directions too good suh, she wouldn't be good at helping the Missus...

(sadly)

...she too young suh.

MASSAH PENBROOK

Did I ask for your opinion boy?

BENJAMIN

No suh, I jes was...

MASSAH PENBROOK

You sassin me boy?

BENJAMIN

(upset)

No suh.

MASSAH PENBROOK

Then you best be getting home to your ma. Go on now.

(BENJAMIN turns to walk away but walks back to try to reason with MASSAH PENBROOK.)

BENJAMIN

Massah Penbrook....Suh?

MASSAH PENBROOK

What is it boy?

BENJAMIN

It would break my mama heart if you took Livia to the big house.

MASSAH PENBROOK

(dismissive)

Good Evening BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN

(dejected)

Evening suh. (BENJAMIN starts to walk towards home and runs into Eli one of the overseers who shared in whipping him the night before. He is sitting on a tree stump, whittling)

Lighting: Fade on Massah Penbrook, now lights up on downstage left

ELI

(Teasingly but doesn't look up) It would break my mammas heart if you take Livia Massah.

BENJAMIN

(Irritated) Eli, is dere sumpin you be needin from me? Else I be getting myself on home.

ELI

(arrogantly, now standing) You finished boy?

BENJAMIN

Huh? I say I be getting on home...

ELI

You sho dat's all you got to say to me boy? Don't foget who I is.

BENJAMIN

(bows head) I guess I be getting on home...suh.

ELI

(Claps his hands) Ahhhh yes very good, very good BENJAMIN. You ain't as dumb as you look. I woulda thought you'd be nursing your wounds after that whipping you took the other day. Dumb thang you did talkin' back to the fo'man. Ain't you learnt nothin by now? But, you a strong negra, thank you clever too. Ain't that right, boy?