

EDITH. (*Quietly*;) – That’s enough—

DEBBIE. “—an’ come an’ pray t’ me, an’ I will listen t’you. You will seek me—”

EDITH. – Deborah, stop.

DEBBIE. “—an’ find me when you seek me with all yer heart—”

EDITH. – I said STOP! He’s not listenin’. God is not here. A child is lyin’ in a pine box. Right here. My child. Where is God? We are all starvin’ an’ dyin’. Where is He? God has turned ‘is back on this place.

ALVIS. (*From off*;) Where is he?!

WINNIE. (*Trying to calm her*;) Shhhhhh . . . s’okay, Edith.

DEBBIE. But Ma, we’re still here with ya. He didn’t take US. There is still goodness—

EDITH. There IS no goodness to be found. NONE!

START

ALVIS. (*Obviously not in his right mind. To LLOYD*;) You. You kilt him. You kilt Gary Ray.

LLOYD. (*Trying to calm him down*;) Alvis, don’t do this . . . This ain’t th’ right place or time.

ALVIS. (*Shoves LLOYD off him*;) Don’t touch me. Another dead body under yer belt, ole Pops?

EDITH. Alvis!

ALVIS. Git outta my way, Edith.

EDITH. Don’t you dare talk to yer ma that way.

ALVIS. You’re not my ma. He kilt her, too.

(Some of those gathered begin to disperse out of fear or embarrassment.)

~~CUFFY. Michael Lee, take Tim an’ Debbie on ahead. They don’t need t’see this. Winnie, will you go with ‘em?~~

~~WINNIE. Cimon. Let’s go.~~

~~DEBBIE. Ma~~

EDITH. Go with yer brothers. Frank—

ALVIS. Don’t look at Frank t’ do nothin’. Frank’s ‘bout as useless as Pops, iddn’t he? Failin’ outta school, can’t pick a boll a’ cotton t’ save his lousy life.

(The children exit.)

FRANK. Shut yer crazy mouth, Alvis.

ALVIS. Yer first wife's dead. Yer kids are dyin'. Yer stupid cotton farm's dead, too. Boy, have you got th' golden touch, Pa.

FRANK. (*Defending his family:*) GET OUTTA HERE!! GONE ON! Yer crazier than a bedbug.

~~**CUFFY.** Both o' ya need t' calm down! This ain't th' place for this.~~

(*To the family and friends still remaining:*)

~~Cease us, folks.~~

ALVIS. (~~*Stops up on the casket.*~~) Shows over, folks! Nothin' t'see here!

(*Others leave.*)

EDITH. Alvis! Look at what yer doin'! (*Completely grief-stricken and broken:*) Wherever you been hidin', please juss go back there an' save us another heartache.

ALVIS. What!? What is it?? You don't WANT me here, Eeeeeedith!? You ain't my ma but I AM part a' this family! Or have ya already buried me, too?

(*Realizing where he is and the gravity of his outburst:*)

Oh. Ohhhh, Ma. Oh Ma, I'm so, so sorry. I didn't mean t'—

LLOYD. — Leave her be.

ALVIS. (*Struggling to understand himself:*) — But I didn't know— (*Tapping his head:*) They're INSIDE— They told me t'—ya know—oh no—they were tellin' me t'—ya havta know it wasn't me—they said—

LLOYD. —Alvis, you're my boy . . . but you cain't be here no more. You gotta go, son.

END

~~(*Beat.*)~~

Cuffy, can you—?

ALVIS. Ma, I AM sorry. Gary Ray didn't deserve this. Neither d'you.

(*CUFFY gently takes ALVIS away. LLOYD stands for a moment with EDITH.*)

LLOYD. Edith, I'm gonna head back to th' house. Winnie and Lula brought over some supper. (*Lovingly:*) Take yer time.

(*He kisses her on the forehead and exits.*)

EDITH. (*Furious tears, looking to the heavens:*) You. You did this . . . an' I . . . I can't fix it. Look at this place. Dirt an' dirt an' dirt fer miles. Where is th' hope ya promise? Wadin' through knee-high drifts a' grit an' sand . . . an' filth . . . an' death. Fillin' up th' house. Rattlin'