

In the Wake of the Graybow Riots

A Back Porch Blues Play

By

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*(Excerpt)*

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## Characters

Lydia a domestic and field worker, late 20s

Cantwell (Cant) Walters, a tinker, 30s

Martin “Alligator” Walters – an itinerant man, 30s

Vera Arnold, late 20s, a young mother

Percy Arnold, 40s, a landlord, and real-estate agent, a little bit bloated.

Mrs. Darla Christian, 30s, wears blinders, turns well the other cheek

Policeman (played by actor who plays Alligator)

Knot/Cole - lost boys (played by one boy)

Musicians:

An Upright Bass

A guitar

Percussion

There is no separation between the play and the music. If any of the actors are also musicians, or if the musicians act, all the better. The feel of a porch jam: Hot night, bugs, sweat. Anything is possible.

Time: 1912-14

Place: Poplarville, Mississippi  
Opelousas, Louisiana

... Equals a moment of rest or speechlessness

“They are seeking, in the words of the Diggers of 1649, to make ‘the Earth a common treasury for all ... not one lording over another, but all looking upon each other as equals in the creation’.”

George Monbiot

Sympathy for the devil has always been a productive mood for an artist,

David Denby, *The New Yorker*

Without mystery, there is nothing.

Renee Magritte

He is a very sad person...more like a cheat in the night. He steals your boots and never even sends them back. What a crook.

Anonymous

**Act 1 Scene 4**

ALLIGATOR and Darla meet in a field as she's walking home. She wears the brooch she just stole from Vera.

ALLIGATOR

Madam? May I have a word with you?

DARLA

Do I know you?

ALLIGATOR

Are you on your way to church?

DARLA

Actually. No. Thank you. Just coming from Bible study. (Points) Over there.

ALLIGATOR

You're a servant of the Lord.

DARLA

Aren't you?

ALLIGATOR

...

DARLA

You look vaguely familiar. Are you a preacher?

ALLIGATOR

Of a sort. Yes. You look lovely this evening.

DARLA

Have I met you before. Which parish. Beauregard?

ALLIGATOR

I'm from Venusia. A peripatetic.

DARLA

A paraplegic?

ALLIGATOR

We study by walking. Ancient practice. Would you like to join me?

DARLA

I'm not that kind of woman.

ALLIGATOR

Not the kind of woman to study the bible with a preacher from another parish? But also not on your way to church on a Saturday evening. What kind of woman are you?

DARLA

Are you scolding me? Or flirting with me?

ALLIGATOR

Both.

DARLA

...

I don't know what to say.

ALLIGATOR

That's a lovely brooch you're wearing.

DARLA

Thank you.

ALLIGATOR

Goes with your eyes.

DARLA

So I thought!

ALLIGATOR

You're so cute I'd like to bite your head off.

DARLA

Excuse me?

ALLIGATOR

Just a saying. Where I'm from.

DARLA

Where's that?

ALLIGATOR

Venusia.

DARLA

Never heard of it.

ALLIGATOR

Some towns die. Just disappear and you never hear of them again.

DARLA

I thought you said you were from the next parish over and that's...you're so ...

She puts her hand out as if to touch him but touches only air.

As if you aren't even there.

ALLIGATOR

What were you studying today in bible study, Mrs. ...?

DARLA

The Gospel according to Mark.

ALLIGATOR

Ah. Mystery.

DARLA

You know it?

ALLIGATOR

Sure. A time when Jesus did not reveal who he was. Just a suffering servant. You married?

DARLA

Yes.

ALLIGATOR

Hesitation?

DARLA

My husband is much older than me. He is paralyzed on one side.

ALLIGATOR

I'm sorry to hear that.

DARLA

We have help so it's no trouble for me.

ALLIGATOR

Must be. Lonely.

DARLA

I didn't say that.

ALLIGATOR

Well, half a man though.

DARLA

I don't think that way.

ALLIGATOR

Some halves work fine on their own. One eye of two diminishes field of vision. One deficient nostril, can't keep you from smelling. But some parts just can't do with the one half trying to make up for the other.

DARLA

I guess that's true. I never thought of it that way.

ALLIGATOR

So that's why you're studying Mark and out here waiting for a mysterious stranger to present himself to miraculously heal you.

DARLA

My husband. Needs healing.

ALLIGATOR

Really Mrs....?

DARLA

...

ALLIGATOR

You think that could happen nowadays? A savior, wandering the counties, healing folks, always disguising himself, not letting on who he is?

DARLA

I am a believer, Father- do their say "father" in your church? So, of course, I think miracles can happen.

ALLIGATOR

Miracle like a man getting feeling and motion back in his paralyzed side?

DARLA

...

ALLIGATOR

Or a different kind of miracle?

DARLA

...

ALLIGATOR

You're blushing! My goodness. Mrs.... You haven't told me your name.

DARLA

Darla.

ALLIGATOR

Darla. Let's pretend. Miracles can happen. Right now. Let's close our eyes. And imagine.

DARLA

...

ALLIGATOR

Come on. Close your eyes.

She does.

Darla. You look so beautiful with your eyes closed.

DARLA

You're supposed to have your eyes closed.

ALLIGATOR

I do.

He steps towards her. He kisses her. She leans into the kiss. It's delicious. It's kind of a miracle, kissing someone you just met in the woods. They open their eyes. They look into each other's eyes.

ALLIGATOR

...

DARLA

...

ALLIGATOR

Do you feel. Healed?

DARLA

I.

ALLIGATOR

Don't forget that. It's your Mystery. But don't tell anyone you saw me. It was just for you.

DARLA

Thank you?

ALLIGATOR

Thank you. Now. I must go. Good-bye.

He exits. She puts her hand to her chest. The brooch is gone.

DARLA

O.

...

Easy come, easy go, I guess.

End Scene 4