

**Produced as part of Station Hope: <http://www.cptonline.org/performances/seasons/2017-2018/station-hope-2018/>

Northern Bound

A Play

By Colleen O'Doherty and Michael Oatman

Characters

Ellen

William

Parsons

Browning

Attendant

Setting

Train Station

Train Car

Synopsis

A slave couple poses as master and slave to escape the bonds of captivity.

Movement One

(At Rise: The lights come up to reveal Ellen and William waiting on train.)

William

You're sweating.

Ellen

It's hot out here.

William

You look nervous.

Ellen

I know.

William

Remember, you in charge.

Ellen

Okay.

William

Nothing to be nervous about.

Ellen

Slave woman dressed as a white man . . .

William

. . . It's gon be fine . . .

Ellen

. . . Least little slip . . .

William

. . . Calm yourself . . .

Ellen

. . . We like bleeding sheep in a pack of wolves.

William

We dun practiced plenty. We wolves now too. *[Beat.]* Sir, what's your name?

Ellen

Uhhh . . . umm . . .

William

. . . What's your name?

Ellen

Winston.

William

Winston who?

Ellen

Mr. Winston Craft II.

William

And your reason for the trip?

Ellen

Celebrating.

William

Celebrating?

Ellen

Yes . . . the holiday with family . . . in Savannah.

William

And if you need to sign anything . . .

Ellen

. . . My writing hand suffered a terrible injury. My left-handed signature is quite illegible. My apologies sir.

William

It's gon be okay. [*Beat.*] You're my brave flower. [*William suddenly looks away.*]

Ellen

What's wrong?

William

Parsons, the slave catcher.

Ellen

He see you?

William

Dunno.

Ellen

Since when does he travel this far south?

William

Not sure.

Ellen

He looking for us?

William

Not sure.

Ellen

Is he's travelling on this train?

William

Can't say.

Ellen

Pray he ain't . . . At least it's not one of Smith's men. They'd know us in an instant. [*Sounds of the train. Shouts for all to board.*]

William

Time to board. [*Ellen and William board the train.*]

Ellen

Please take my nigger to storage.

Attendant

Yes, sir. [*William is led away. Ellen takes a seat. Parson and Browning boards behind them.*]

Parsons

Browning. What an unexpected pleasure.

Browning

Parsons. Never thought I'd catch you on a train to Savannah this time of year. Busy season for you I'd imagine.

Parsons

I won't be travelling. Just checking the train looking for two runaways.

Browning

You don't say.

Parsons

Two of Major Smith's slaves are in the wind. I have it on good authority they're traveling together.

Browning

Somehow I don't picture them traveling in such fine accommodations. The underground train station is down the road I hear. [*Browning issues a hearty belly laugh.*]

Parsons

Just a precaution.

Browning

Smith is a dear friend, but I've often told him he's too lenient on his Negroes. He gave that house slave, that woman, far too much slack. If the leash is too loose, they become strays.

Parsons

Couldn't agree more.

Browning

I don't want to tell you your business, but I think you might have more success searching in steerage if you looking for Negras.

Parsons

Indeed. [*The train whistles blows.*]

Browning

Another time then . . . you're more like to find them strays down by the river.

Parsons

Of course. Do excuse me. Sir. [*Tips his hat to Ellen.*]

Browning

Best of luck. Is this seat taken?

Ellen

Well uhh . . . [*Browning takes a seat.*]

William

. . . Please God. I convinced her we could do this. Please let us make it. Our father in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . . [*Continues praying under the following dialogue.*]

Browning

Finally. Macon may be the heart of Georgia, but Savannah is the heat in its blood. Quite the mess of bandages. However did that happen? Did you hear my question? Difficulty hearing?

My dear friend's son lost most of his after a bad fever caught him. Oh. What a fool I seem. You can't hear a blessed thing. You do look familiar, though. Well, suppose it will come to me.

William

Strengthen us in the power of Your might, O God. Dress us in Your armor so that we can stand firm against the schemes of the devil. We know that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. [*Dixie Plays as Browning lights his pipe and smokes. The attendant arrives and fetches William. William and the attendant enter.*]

Attendant

Sir. Your nigger. [*Ellen nods.*]

Browning

Good luck.

Ellen

We made it. Savannah.

William

Plenty more miles left.

Ellen

I know. [*They exit.*]

Fin.