

# Pressed but Not Crushed<sup>1</sup>

## The UT Saga of Barbara Smith Conrad

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to 2 Corinthians 4:8.

# CAST

**Last Year** we had 61 scenes, and 14 actors. There were 4 males and 10 females. Last year's cast assumed 24 characters: 7 were male, and 16 female. **This proposal** envisions 49 scenes. 14 actors again: There could be 5 males, and 9 females. The 2018 cast would assume 20 characters: 9 would be males, 11 females below. There is also a need for 2 extras.

## **The Barbara Group (African Americans):**

1. Barbara Conrad
2. Father: Conrad Smith
3. Mother: Jerrie Lee Smith
4. Sister: Connie.
5. Cindy Chavez: Good College Friend, Roommate.

## **The Anti Barbara Group:**

6. Representative Joe Chapman of Sulphur Springs
7. Mrs. H.E. Howard, Chapman Donor. Moral Guardian.
8. Bo Angstrom. White Troublemaker #1
9. Ron Whitehead White Troublemaker #2
10. White Diva Rival #1 Martha Ann Kelly
11. White Diva Rival #2 Carol Cold
12. Reporter (Female).

## **The University Group**

13. Tom Sealy, UT Board of Regents Chair
14. John Silber, Visiting Philosophy Professor
15. Logan Wilson, UT President
16. Arno Nowotny, Progressive Dean
17. H.Y. McCown, "Apocalyptic HY." Dean of Student Services
18. Edra Gustafson: White Woman Professor who first acts "Strange"

## **Student Activists:**

19. Maurie Suttle: Chair of Desegregation Committee
20. Joann Thompson: President of the University Religious Council

## **Ancillary Roles (extras):**

21. Ticket Takers TWO.

## Part I: The Sending

### Scene 1: The Theme

INT. BLACKSCREEN – CONTINUOUS

SCREEN shows Bible verse in white text.

NARRATOR (unseen)

*2 Corinthians 4:8. “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair.”*

### Scene 2: Center Point (Camp County) Home of Barbara Smith Conrad

INT. Start in BLACKSCREEN, SCREEN first shows text: *Kitchen of Center Point Home of Barbara Conrad in Camp County, 1956. (Miss Sadie’s Room in Carriage House at Jefferson has kitchenette.)*  
FADE IN. CAMERAS take reaction footage of Barbara Conrad and parents for CROSSCUTS. Barbara is sitting. Conrad across from her. Jerrie is working.

JERRIE LEE SMITH, MOTHER<sup>2</sup>

*Jerrie is trying unsuccessfully to stuff (“press”) some towels in a small drawer in the kitchen, by rapid re-folding. Her frustration in this endeavor symbolizes her fears.*

Child, you is not goin to Austin.

BARBARA CONRAD

*Presses<sup>3</sup> her hands against her head. At this point, exasperated and demonstrative.*

Momma, what is you so AFRAID of?

JERRIE LEE SMITH, MOTHER

*Pouting and pleading.*

We can’t afford it. And . . .

*Jerrie retrieves newspaper from table.*

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<sup>2</sup> The mother according to Barbara Conrad was a “nervous wreck” the three years that Barbara went to Austin.

<sup>3</sup> This is an allusion to the title of the film.

have you seen the University of Texas tower cartoon in the *Dallas Express*?<sup>4</sup>



*Father and Daughter both sit together to look at it, and then Camera does cut-away to the image above:*

BARBARA

*Becoming defiant and more sure of herself.*

Well a Negro<sup>5</sup> paper is going to tell us what is wrong at UT, so we kin make it better.

*Stands up. Walks halfway to mother, gesticulating.*

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<sup>4</sup> The African-American newspaper of Dallas until 1970.

<sup>5</sup> This was the proper term used by both blacks and whites to describe blacks in the 1950s. As late as 1964 a black organization at the University Texas, used the adjective, "negro." I think it is appropriate to use this word which had widespread circulation before 1965. As there is another n\_\_\_\_\_ word, however, with more explosive connotations, I have tried to find a way to delete that term's use.

And I WILL have to walk longer to campus . . . from a Huston Tillotson<sup>6</sup> dorm,  
since the UT dorms won't take us in.

*Starts helping Jerrie with kitchen work, loading dishes into cubboards. Speaking more softly.*

JERRIE LEE

*Skeptically*

And why is that?

BARBARA

Because its going to take a while for things to *change*. And I'm fine with it.

CONRAD SMITH (FATHER)

*Still sitting.*

Mama . . . the Girl's right. This is an amazin chance. Our Barbara's a prodigy, an  
this is the first negro class ever. We NEED to make the sacrifice . . .

JERRIE LEE

*Arms akimbo. Eyes darting with anger into Conrad's. With the words, "run off" she emphasizes the  
point by going back abruptly to her folding.*

That's your solution isn't it—run off to God knows where, and we'll be all better for  
it . . . Leave Mama alone, workin!

*Starts folding towels again.*

The family jes means nothin until it means everythin!

### **Scene 3: Turning the Corner**

*INT. Bedroom, Jerrie Lee sits on the bed. Conrad is coming in from another room. They are already  
engaged in a heated discussion, and both seem tired/exasperated. Conrad has only an undershirt on top,  
and pajamba shorts. He walks with a limp. Jerrie Lee is fully dressed*

JERRIE LEE

If you had no disability, your veteran's check *might* be helpful.

CONRAD SMITH

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<sup>6</sup> A historically black university in Austin that housed the first African-American students attending the University of Texas.

I know what you're goin to say.

JERRIE LEE

*Shakes finger at him. Becoming fired.*

Its not jes the expense I'm talkin about . . . Now listen, you know that our little girl at Prairie View had people who cared. There's goin to be none of that in Austin; and you—who thinks nothing of leavin us for a few years, are encouragin this. . . .

CONRAD SMITH

*Effort to calm things.*

Sweetah . . .

*He moves beside her sitting on the bed*

JERRIE LEE

*Jerrie Lee won't let him get too close. Lengthens sitting distance.*

Don't you "Sweetie" me.

CONRAD

You and I know too that I HAD to leave you and Queen City for a while.

JERRIE LEE

*Gets up, gets a cigarette, dangles it in her mouth, looks past him. She now assumes the position of an interrogator. Her voice trembles.*

There's times you have made my life awful hard, Conrad—can you tell me why?<sup>7</sup>

CONRAD SMITH

Contritely.

I think . . . that . . . all folks take pride in somethin. But when they are on the bottom of life, they take pride in things they shouldn't.

JERRIE LEE

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<sup>7</sup> Jimmy Smith, of Center Point, who we have interviewed now, twice, was the offspring of an illicit union between the father, Conrad, and one of his black students in Queen City Texas. This affair was successfully hushed by Jerrie Lee, and the family for some time. At some point, perhaps in the early 1970s, Barbara and her sister Connie, revealed to Jimmy that they were his half-sisters, and they were close after that.

An you couldn't take pride in me and the kids?

CONRAD SMITH

You know we weren't makin much more than rent in Queen City, teachin in the Negro school. I made some bad choices. But would you all have done better if I had been lynched?<sup>8</sup>

JERRIE LEE

*Looks without seeing into the distance.*

CONRAD SMITH

So we need to send Barbara off, so she kin take pride in the right things.

JERRIE LEE

*Puts a cigarette in her mouth, and peers off into the distance, as if she is thinking, and even moderating her position.*

#### **Scene 4: the Progressive University. May 1956.**

*INT. Boardroom. Though it could be a more informal meeting room. Establishment shot, even if stationary, of the real UT Tower. Scene includes: Logan Wilson, UT President, Arno Nowotny, Progressive Dean, H.Y. McCown, "Apocalyptic McCown." Assistant to President; Maurie Suttle: Chair of Desegregation Committee; Joann Thompson: President of the University Religious Council.*

WHITE TEXT ON DARKSCREEN

University of Texas at Austin, May 1956. Meeting of the University's Desegregation Committee.

DEAN ARNO NOWOTNY<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> According to Barbara's sister-in-law Rosie Smith, who speaks for Barbara's brother, Howard, now with dementia--Conrad Smith was threatened by Queen City whites after he formed a black cooperative. Jimmy Smith corroborates the fact that Queen City was a very racist town where blacks had to sit in the back of a Texarkana-bound bus even after Martin Luther King's victory over segregated bussing in Montgomery. But Jimmy never got to know his true father, Conrad, and did not know the specifics of why Conrad left his family for many years.

<sup>9</sup> Nowotny, one of the most vigorous supporters of integration at UT in the 1950s, had a name that indicated his family may have had Jewish-Czech roots. He was born in a log cabin near New Braunfels, Texas in 1899, and graduated from UT with a law degree in 1925 and a Master's in 1932. He was for many years, the Dean of Student Life at UT, and a popular figurehead of the university. He was known as "shorty" and could be counted on to lead cheers at all major UT sporting events. Notwotny initiated many long-term organizations and events, such as the "Texas Cowboys in 1922," a unique service-student-alumni group that continues to this day, and yearly Honors Days. He died in 1982.

*Fingering glasses:*

Our university's oil money could secure a globally superior faculty and a vibrant, international student body. . . .

*Holds his finger out. And then spreads his arms out at the word 'communism'.*

But as we live in a day where the iron curtain of communism. . . <sup>10</sup>

Suppresses intellectual liberty

So have at home here, a corn-pone curtain . . . that deprives the freedom of expression to millions.

*Builds to a crescendo*

We. . . cannot follow Old Miss, and Alabama with their small hopes, and racist outlook;

We. . . at the University of Texas . . .

*Holds out a "number one" sign, or pointing signal with his index finger.*

can point the way to better South. . . a better America. We can point the way to an intellectual excellence that can save the world from communism.

PRESIDENT LOGAN WILSON

That's mighty well said . . .

*Wilson beams, as if he is proud of the diversity of his administration.*

But remember, Dean Nowotny . . . (pause)

*This reminds Wilson of something else. Suddenly he appears to be multi-tasking. He glances at something else, and tears up a memo.*

in Europe . . . the Nazis were beaten.

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<sup>10</sup> The Cold War is particularly intense during the time of this film. The Soviet Union will launch Sputnik to gain an edge in the Space Race in early October of 1957.



Down South here, nobody yet has put down the Citizen's Councils, the Kluxers, and jes your ordinary Texas racists . . .

*Leans forward*

Now, if the Supreme Court in *Brown vs. the Board*<sup>11</sup> is goin slow . . .

*Eyes everyone in the room with a look of authority:*

we've got to be slower. And . . . smarter.

H.Y. MCCOWN

I shudder at what the future could have in store for us.

*Tests a pencil as if to almost break it. Mild Southern Accent.*

Black ticketholders protestin their placement at Longhorn football games. . .

White students not comin to class because of a few Negros. . . .

*Puts pencil down.*

I say we let those few Negros into our graduate and law school as the Supreme Court has ordered but . . . at the undergraduate level . . .

*Pause, resting elbows on table and pushing each cheek with two fists for a moment.*

its not goin to work, and we can't risk shoving this integration thing down our people's throats.

MAURIE SUTTLE

I am shocked that in a nation dedicated to freedom and equality, we should still have reservations like this.

*Knocks her fist against the table, but feebly.*

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<sup>11</sup> The Supreme Court case in 1954 that ordered Southern schools to desegregate, thus reversing Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) which had allowed for separate but equal.

Everyone knows in their heart, it is right to start admitting Negroes into our undergraduate classes.

JOANN THOMPSON

Wasn't it Hitler, Dean Nowotny, who wanted to deprive the Poles of their education?

DEAN NOWOTNY

*Visibly Weighing the reaction of Wilson, and McCown.*

Joann . . . you are absolutely right.

H.Y. MCCOWN

Angry.

We in Teksis are not deprivin anyone of their education!

MAURIE SUTTLE

*Sarcastically*

If you kin equate Prairie View Academy with the University of Texas, then I guess yer right.

PRESIDENT LOGAN WILSON

*Gives a huge smile of recognition to Maurie Suttle—as if she is the ultimate brilliant one.*

What I'm thinkin is that a new system of aptitude tests will vindicate the brilliance of our students, and shift this whole debate.

DEAN NOWOTNY

Not if the tests are discriminatory.

H.Y. MCCOWN

*Angrily eying Nowotny:*

What makes me upset about yer agenda, (spits out the following word) Dean . . . is when we try something that is far (fair). . .

You pounce on it as discriminatory!

PRESIDENT LOGAN WILSON

The Board of Regents Chair, Tom Sealy and I, have been back and forth on this. And I appreciate everything you all have said here, because I see the lines of argument. . .

*Wilson gestures with his arms showing two skewed lines roughly pointing to the same endpoint.*

however skewed, pointing to same general area. We, at the University of Texas are goin to find

*Makes hand motions where the hypothetical meeting area is:*

that crossroad, that star at the center, to make things work.

*Looks at Nowotny. Pointedly ignores Joann.*

We may not have the number of Negroes you would like Dean, but

JOANN

*Mumbles*

We need more Negroes, not less

*Joann at this point is moaning, and raising her hand. It is clear she thinks that blacks deserve more opportunity. But Wilson ignores her.*

*Turning to H.Y. McCown. Ignoring Joann and her raised hand.*

We are goin to bring some Negroes in as undergraduates into the University of Texas. We are goin to be the first Southern university, to stand up for merit against race.

*Looks around. Stares at Joann while talking putting his finger to his mouth as if to quiet her.*

We are goin to change the debate . . . make the Longhorns great, so help me God.

*Concludes with another big, and now almost flirtatious smile in Maurie's direction.*

MAURIE SUTTLE

*Ambivalent, but cowed by the power of the office, and the authority of Wilson.*

President Wilson . . . . I believe . . . you will have the students on your side.

*Wilson beams.*

JOANN THOMPSON

*Finally exploding with a chance to speak.*

I'm just not sure you have God on your side.

### **Scene 5: Tom and Logan**

*EXT. Outside a restaurant, or home that looks like one. Unofficial meeting, not on campus.*

*Out. Wheelchair and camera move forward and men walk forward.*

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

Logan, I'm glad we've got you in. You are a reasonable man who understands the state.

PRESIDENT LOGAN WILSON

Well I appreciate the sense I think we both have. We've got a conservative state, and the chances for a great university.

*Pauses, and decides to go ahead and appeal to the macho, power-tripping nature of this encounter.*

Sometimes its not a matter of what one learns in Sunday School, but what's judicious, what can be done.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

A great university cannot function in a culture of doubt. Our second-last President, Homer Rainey . . .

*Shakes his head, and Logan Wilson joins him.*

My wife called him, the “Clarksville Cracker. . .”

*Chuckles. But then gets more strident.*

He was practically born in Oklahoma. If the Red River had meandered just a little more South, we might never have had that thorn in our flesh.<sup>12</sup>

*Pauses, getting angrier.*

Rainey jeopardized everyone by battling the business interests.

*Jabbing finger in the air.*

He upset the whole state without doing a damn thing.

LOGAN WILSON

Academic freedom is the one ideal you don’t want to have to fight about.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

And then we had Dr. Theophilus Painter, who I hope I can say will be our last Scholar President.

*Pauses.*

He didn’t attend to details, and I knew his time had really come to the end, when the scientific community spotlighted that he had counted the wrong number of chromosomes in the human body!

LOGAN WILSON

The rush to publish is one of our greatest pet sins.

*Sealy acts like he’s not listening.*

TOM SEALY

The promise of UT is too great to be pursuing some half-assed, half-truth while tryin to steer the ship.

The only thing that worries me, Logan, is this desegregation bullshit. I don’t mind givin more rights and privileges to the Negro, you know that. But somehow the issue reminds me of a time I was drivin between two trucks that on both sides of me were

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<sup>12</sup> Rainey, the most embattled President in UT history ran for Governor in 1946 to vindicate his espousal of academic freedom. He was fired as UT President when he tried to defend economics professors who Governor Coke Stevenson, and the Trustees deemed to have communist sympathies. The online *Handbook of Texas* notes that Rainey was originally from a poor farm family, living on the outskirts of Clarksville, Texas, just north of us.

trying to wedge ahead of me into two lanes at once . . we're between a rock and hard place.

*Pulls out a cigarette. The two men pause.*

It's a mighty bad issue.

LOGAN WILSON

Tom, I'm confident that admitting just a few Negro undergraduates, and then slapping on the aptitude tests will work.

*Wilson now initiates the walk forward. Sealy begins to take drags of his cigarette.*

We will cross the segregation barrier, and at the same time, build a bulwark of excellence. The wall will be so high, only the best Negroes will come across.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

You think that will solve things?

LOGAN WILSON

If we admit only the outstanding class of Negroes, whites will get used to them.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

And then we will win a national victory for integration?

LOGAN WILSON

*Excited.*

Tom, we will do this. We will be the One Southern school that pointed the way!

### **Scene 6: Barbara Singing**

*INT. HOME. 8PM Evening. Barbara is singing in operatic mode in the shower. We see only her silhouette, and the music. She is otherwise not in scene. Opera Sound Track. Or singing in background. Mother is doing dishes. Connie is making light of Barbara's singing to mother, Jerrie. Eyes where sound is coming from.*

CONNIE SMITH

The boys at Queen City used to call that “hollerin!”<sup>13</sup> But I guess my little sister is goin to take over the University of Texas, being an opera diva.

JERRIE LEE

*Sorting laundry.*

Connie, I’m still not sure how thankful I am that that Miss Luce coached Barbara as she did at Queen City.

CONNIE

You didn’t like Ms. Luce, did ya.<sup>14</sup>

JERRIE LEE

*The question causes hesitation with the sorting of socks. Jerrie’s voice indicates she is far from convinced.*

Well Barbara’s got a music scholarship now, So your Daddy and Barbara are all excited.

*Barbara’s singing reaches a climax.*

CONNIE

Its funny that Barbara, is . . . well . . .

*Whispering*

So extreme.

*Connie tries an innocent chuckle. Singing tapers down and stops. Jerrie looks daughter, Connie, in eye.*

JERRIE LEE

Her goin to Austin for opera reminds me of the time when you were at Center Point with granny Cash and Barbara got lost by Butler Creek . . .

CONNIE

*Impatient.*

How many times have you told this story?

JERRIE LEE

*Unfazed with her daughter’s knowledge of what happened.*

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<sup>13</sup> A term Jimmy Smith says was used by those in the early days who did not appreciate her singing in an operatic style.

<sup>14</sup> Connie became a nightclub singer, and moved to New York. According to Jimmy Smith, there was a Queen City teacher who inspired Barbara to train as an opera singer. Barbara Conrad never acknowledged this teacher.

there were water moccasins, an everything else, an she was all bitten, . . . her eyes were so bugged out. . .

*Begins to cry.*

And I'll ner forget-- her body was trembling so!

*She grips a substantial garment and lets her own emotion cause the garment to vibrate.*

I hugged her an couldn't even make it stop!

*Throws clothes down in frustration*

I'm sick with worry about yer sistah.

CONNIE

Jes what are you worried about?

JERRIE LEE

Have you seen this?

*Jerrie rushes over to a table to retrieve paper and shows Connie the above newspaper cartoon. Camera again does cutaway to the image, and lingers there through half of Jerrie Lee's discourse.*

Barbara thinks that's a little ole crow, but it has the beak of a raven!

When your papa and I attended Center Point Academy<sup>15</sup>, we had to work in the fields. . . .CAN peaches . . . !

*Finally attempts a smile. She has ceased working on the laundry.*

But they was good to us. We worked together. Prairie View was good for Barbara. There was love.

No one kin do things by themselves. They need people around them that care!

*Slumps.*

Barbara's goin to get all bitten up and lost again.

*Starts again at the laundry. Starts to cry*

She doesn't know what she's up against . . . !

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<sup>15</sup> At one time, Center Point Academy in Camp County drew blacks from all other the nation. It was a highly regarded "colored" school in 1937 had 600 high school students, many living in dorms. Some of these buildings are still there, but they are wasting away.



## Scene 7: Barbara and Mother

*INT. By entranceway. Preferably a morning Scene. Suitcases are lined up by the door.*

JERRIE LEE

Is my baby goin to survive?

BARBARA

*Determined, Professional.*

Moma, stop it.

JERRIE LEE

*Fetches umbrella she has laid out, and holds it up.*

Now thar's one other thing, I want you to bring and that's our UM'brella<sup>16</sup> . . .

BARBARA

*Smiles, in a full southern lilt.*

I don't need no UM'brella. And its your only one, so keep it.

JERRIE LEE

Barbara Louise, you are staying over a mile from campus. You keep this UMBrella with you!

BARBARA

*Perhaps a little too worldly wise.*

Moma, there's no way that I'm gonna have a locker. I can't take an UMBrella along with all my books to school each day. If it rains, I'll do what I've always done—run, and duck under trees!

JERRIE LEE

Child you think what yer doin is goin to be a walk in the park. It's not goin to be so easy!

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<sup>16</sup> The Umbrella will become a symbol for the Negro community that Jerrie believes Barbara needs to protect her from the outside. We will try to give this a distinctive African-American Southern pronunciation of UM-brel-ah, with the accent on the first syllable.

## Part II: Arrival

### Scene 8: Logan and Tom

*INT/EXT. Could be lounge area or patio by table. August. Begin with white text on blackscreen. They are at Sealy's home. There are wine or cocktail glasses and drinks out.*

WHITE TEXT ON DARKSCREEN

Austin Home of Regents Chair, Tom Sealy August 1956.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

*Drinks a robust amount of wine, and comments.*

Its amazin Logan, how Governor Shivers,<sup>17</sup> and the people of Mansfield<sup>18</sup> are standin up to the Supreme Court, and their desegregation order.

LOGAN WILSON

*Holding drink.*

I'm impressed that their vigilante committee is stopping cars on all the entranceways to town, keeping out the big-city journalists, camera-men. The level of organization is . . .

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

Texas might well be the place that stops rather than starts desegregation.

*Looks anxious. Looks at painting. Production could arrange cut-away image of Robert E. Lee or Confederate symbol to appear.*

Well what would that mean for us?

LOGAN WILSON

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<sup>17</sup> 1950s Texas Segregationalist Governor who got on the cover of *Time* magazine for his conservative impact on the Democratic party, and resistance to Brown v. The Board of Education, the pro-integration Supreme Court decision in 1954. Pronounced with short 'I' as in that shaking that happens *when you have a fever*.

<sup>18</sup> The Mansfield story was a remarkable footnote in the Civil Rights Struggle. Texas segregationalists won the day, and U.S. President Eisenhower refused to act. Governor Orval Faubus then thought he could win another "Mansfield" in Little Rock in 1957. He was mistaken, as Eisenhower sent in federal paratroopers to insure African American attendance.

I think they are gettin away with it cause its right before the election.  
Eisenhower's going to wait until he's good and elected, before he tackles  
anthing as hard as this.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

Makes sense. But do you think it may be us, who are behind the eight-ball?  
We're goin to look real foolish if Texas suddenly becomes a segregation  
fortress.

LOGAN WILSON

Tom, I've always said that on this issue, that if the headwinds get too strong,  
*Dangles hand.*

We may have to tack in a different direction.

REGENTS CHAIRMAN TOM SEALY

*Takes another big gulp.*

I'm glad you said that.

LOGAN WILSON

*The men shake hands.*

We'll watch it, and stay in touch.

### **Scene 9: Barbara Meets Roommate**

*INT. Bedroom. Barbara is entering through the door with a suitcase. Cindy greets her.*

CINDY CHAVEZ

So you're my new dorm sister. I hear you is majorin in Music too!

*Barbara puts suitcase down. The two shake hands. Barbara is more polished and confident.*

BARBARA

Oh yes, my name is Barbara Louise Smith. And you're ?

CINDY CHAVEZ

I'm Cindy Chavez from Texas Southern, and I hear you are from Prairie View.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Two Historically black universities.

*They beam at one another, and Barbara stares at Cindy quizzically. Confused.*

BARBARA

And now we're . . . both in the big time. You know, I thought your name was Laura.

CINDY CHAVEZ

Well they made a switch, and you got me instead. I know you are probably wondering about my background, but I've always felt more comfortable going to the Negro schools in Houston—till now at least.

BARBARA

Well its great to know you, and to be here.

CINDY CHAVEZ

I just wish they were better ready for us.

BARBARA

Whatya mean?

CINDY

One shower for thirty girls? Make your own sandwich days? I don't know, we better get some good time slots, or we're gonna be missin out.

BARBARA

Well at least we don't need to wear Beenies; we're not freshmen. And I couldn't afford one anyway.

CINDY CHAVEZ

One crazy dude guy, maybe lookin for some excuse to talk to us, said the men were going to have panty raid.<sup>20</sup>

BARBARA

A What?

CINDY CHAVEZ

Dey is going to steal yer underwear girl!

BARBARA

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<sup>20</sup> These developed into a big fad status in the 1950s.

*Stands up, as if to get more of her luggage outside. Camera zooms in on Barbara who acts professional.*

Dey is not goin to steal my underwear. The one thing I will refuse in my pursuit of a higher education, is to go bout dirty, mal-nourished, and nude at the same time!

### **Scene 10: Barbara's First Class:**

*INT. Room. Could be classroom, or even a room of professor's house. Martha Ann Kelly, Barbara, Carol Cold, Maurie, Cindy, and Joann, are all in class. Class is segregated, with minorities on left.*

EDRA GUSTAFSON (Lecturer)

Now you girls from the black schools, I'm a little worried, that you might have missed out on some of the fundamentals.

How many of you know about registration?

CINDY

*Doesn't know how to specify the answer, so she jokes:*

Well I think we all registered for this class.

*Class members chuckle.*

EDRA GUSTAFSON

*Frowns, and acknowledges Barbara raising her hand only with a nod.*

BARBARA

Registration is about the proper balance between head voice and chest voice.

EDRA GUSTAFSON

You may know that, but have you used techniques such as the "Low-I-Sing" exercise to perfect it?

BARBARA

I haven't used that exercise, mam.

EDRA GUSTAFSON

This is what I am worried about. To be a great singer, an artiste, one must build very tall.

*Holds hand high.*

You may have natural ability, but you missed two years here, and will only go so high on a mediocre foundation.

*Holds up hand half as high.*

So I don't know what we're gonna do.

*Shakes her head.*

Some of you, could profitably spend a good extra hour or two each day, following each of the exercises on the mimeographed sheet I am giving you now,

*Starts passing out formidable looking handout sheets (we could use our scripts for this).*

as you go through the seven foundational areas of singing.

### **Scene 11: The Announcement of Dido and Aeneas**

*INT. Same as Scene 10. Class*

EDRA GUSTAFSON

Now I am hoping that someone from our class will get the lead this year in our yearly Spring Opera. And you black girls, don't lose hope, OK. I want to assure you that if you win the lead roles, I would be delighted as well.

### **Scene 12: Barbara and her friends**

*EXT. Campus bench, or outside table.*

BARBARA

Miss Edra Gustafson is goin to be delighted if I win. And I want to *make* her delighted too.

CINDY

Barbara, you have a chance. For a Prairie View graduate, you are the best.

JOANN,

God has given you the voice, Barbara; you're my favorite

*Martha Ann Kelly and Carol head toward Joann, but when they see Barbara and Cindy , they want to go on.*

JOANN

And where are you girls goin? Hey, I'm white, you can sit and talk to me.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Oh, and who are your friends there?

JOANN

Barbara Smith, and Cindy Chavez. . . . You know, you really should sit with us. Because outside here there are no rules. This isn't the colored dorm, or the left side of the classroom!

MARTHA ANN KELLY

No rules?

CAROL

Joann are you tryin to confuse us?

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Isn't that what a jungle is, a place that has no rules?

JOANN

Girls, I'd like to you to meet the young lady, who is goin to win the Dido<sup>21</sup> part in the opera, Barbara Louise Smith.

CAROL

---

<sup>21</sup> Pronounced: DIE-doh with the accent on the first syllable.

Why is your friend so anxious to have a part that was written by a white composer, for white singers in the white nation of England even before the United States was a country?

JOANN

Well maybe you should know, that a white composer, Henry Purcell, way back in the seventeenth century, decided to showcase the story of an African queen! Her name was Dido, queen of Carthage, who according to the legend falls in love with the founder of Rome, Aeneas. Barbara will be perfect for the part!

CAROL

Not in Texas she won't be perfect for the part. Maybe you should start reading the newspapers.

*The two groups leer at one another. Then, the two white girls walk on and get the camera.*

CAROL

Its truly sad what is happening to Joann, and how she's bein takin in by the newcomers.

### **Scene 13: Barbara on the Telephone with Moma**

*INT. Two rooms. CROSS-CUTTING SCENES. Could use same old-fashioned telephone. Barbara's location should be more austere, as if she is using the telephone of a dorm or dorm mother.*

BARBARA

Moma, I practice all the time, which can be nice, since I get the shower and the sandwich makin late at night to myself.

JERRI LEE

Are you strainin your voice?

BARBARA



Moma, I always do warm ups, and I'm learnin a lot more about 'markin',<sup>22</sup> keepin my voice down, a spell. Singin is beautiful. There's a lot of work but the great posture and breathin of singin is also great for energy, circulation, and health!

JERRI LEE

Are you eatin nuff?

BARBARA

No. Haven't got time, I'm goin really serious for the big Dido part in our spring opera. Mom it's the best thing a singer can get here, and as I hear the other gulls in the practice, I think my voice is as high and pleasin as any of them.

JERRI LEE

But what are you eatin?

BARBARA

Cambell's soup, saltine crackers, but the audition is this Friday, and I've never been more nervous about anything in my life.

JERRI LEE

Since you practice on campus so much, can't you eat at the cafeteria?

BARBARA

No moma, the campus places won't serve us Negroes.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Scene 14: Rivals Scheme for PART**

*INT. Pricy Bedroom. Late in afternoon, or evening. There should be a desk in the room. Martha Ann is busy typing on old fashioned typewriter at desk. Carol interrupts. Gradually they face each other.*

CAROL

So what do you think about our swarthy songbirds?

MARTHA ANN KELLY

*Still typing.*

Well one sounds way too shrill, like she's made of metal.

---

<sup>22</sup> Marking is a way of singing that puts less strain on the voice.

<sup>23</sup> A few years later, In the 1960s, the campus was rocked by the integration of its dorms and cafeterias.

CAROL

Well I'm mainly concerned about the nightingale.

*Said with a flicker of contempt.*

-----Bah-bah-ra.

Have you heard her? . . . !

MARTHA

*Shakes her head up and down like she is impressed.*

Yeah.

CAROL

How in the world, I wonder . . .

MARTHA ANN

I thought at first it was some graduate student. Have you heard how high and low she can sing—in voice? . . . And the magnitude?!

*As if disgusted.*

She's goin to break some windows!

CAROL

You know its not fair, those negras coming from those black schools. I bet they never had to worry about calculus!

I'm sure they jes sang thar hearts out while we were slavin over some stupid polynomials, and now we have to figure some way, to make sure, they don't create a spectacle.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

*Mind darting ahead to the issue that concerns her.*

But Carol, could Joann be right? What if

*Says her name lingering it over now less with contempt than with envy.*

Bah-bah rah . . .

wins the Dido part, and googly-eyes Aeneas on stage? Since we have no black men in the singin department, this could really be . . .

CAROL

Yes, a disaster. Martha Ann Kelly, don't even think this. I know yer gonna get the part. What did Professor Gustafson say about your voice, again?

MARTHA

She said it was as smooth as the bark of a Texas Persimmon.

*Smiles and turns her voice into more of a singsong.*

CAROL

You could also save our school from an awful lot of trouble.

### **Scene 15: Barbara Auditions**

*INT. Barbara faces camera and sings Dido's Lament, a classic aria. We will need to settle on the recording we are using beforehand. Boom mics first take in room sound, and producer loops it into scene. Next, we use digetic music of soloist singing Dido's lament so Barbara can lip sync with it. Producer deletes the digetic music, and uses the non-digetic voice-over together with room noise in final edition.*

*As Barbara sings, she takes in very deep breaths, and maintains superb posture.*

### **Scene 16: Barbara wins the role**

*INT. Could be same as scene 10 & 11.*

EDRA GUSTAFSON

I am so pleased that for the third year in a row, a member of our class has won a lead role in the opera. But not just one. TWO! Of course, you will be co-casted for the same part. Before I say who, just remember, that you should not give up, just because you were not selected.

*Motions with arms.*

This is a time to think about our spheres, of attack, breathing, posture, pronunciation . . . Where did you lack development? Where did you lack refinement? What part of the building caved in? Girls I want you all to go to the top!

*Pauses for effect.*

The winners are Martha Ann Kelly,<sup>24</sup> and Barbara Smith.

### **Scene 16: White Divas upset**

*INT. Pricy Bedroom. Late in afternoon, or evening. Girls could be in pajamas. Martha Ann is typing, and then pauses whimsicall, sighing.*

MARTHA ANN KELLY

I really hoped I could sing it every night of the concert. Now I'm not sure all my relatives will be able to make one of my two nights with the Dido part.

CAROL

And to think who you are splitting it with! Our dark Dido is going to change the whole character of the whole opera. Its so strange that we have to live in the time when . . . everything become confused, and goes downhill.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

*Thinking a little more philosophically.*

Carol . . . I don't know. The way I understand it. The races should be separate. But I admit Barbara is good. . . In fact, she's a musical fanatic! Its just that they should have their culture, and we should have ours. That's good for both races, isn't it?

CAROL

In my town, Negroes gather by their storefronts to play craps. They meet in these cafes with jute box music and go vampin and propositionin. Their culture is very inferior. Their leaders are communists, their preachers . . .

MARTHA ANN KELLY

But there are good black people, Carol. Isn't it just liberals who want to confuse everything, and mix ivieryone together? Listen to them, and we'll lose our culture, and religion, and then all we'll have to live on is science!

CAROL

Oh come Martha, the problem is the Negros themselves!

---

<sup>24</sup> The name of the white girl who actually was co-casted with Barbara.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Would you like a cookie?

CAROL

Throw it here, girl!

MARTHA

*Reaches in her stash, successful throws cookie to Carol who makes a big point about catching it, and after exclamation below, popping it into her mouth.*

CAROL

Whoa!

MARTHA

Carol, I still don't quite git your point, though. I mean, what's worse, a black face or a black heart?

*Carol looks a little nonplused, but she is silenced having to chew the cookie in her mouth.*

The music minister at the Campus Baptist church needed some singers, and a few of Dr. Gus's negro students volunteered. In fact, I think Barbara was one of them. They sounded very nice. I still don't know if it was a good thing. Of course, a lot of our white students don't make any time for it.

CAROL

I don't know what has gotten into the campus Baptists. Our church in Livingston certainly wouldn't be inviting Negroes in to sing.

### **Scene 17: Barbara Practicing late into the night.**

*INT. Barbara's dorm room.*

*Barbara slowly comes into dark room. Maneuvers curtain to get some light, begins to undress to go to bed. Cindy is in bed.*

CINDY

Barbara, why is you comin home so late for?

BARBARA

Cindy , ever since I got the part, my lessons with Mrs. Gus haven't been goin so well, and I just need somehow to convince her . . .

CINDY

You are gonna kill yourself girl, and I am not gonna stand by while you do it. You are amazing. The most brilliant girl in class, but you lack common sense.

BARBARA

No, I am fine. The Lord has given me a lot of energy.

CINDY

Barbara, I'm just afraid. They let us into this big white university, and suddenly, its like they pullin the carpet under our feet. You've probably heard that Price Daniel is most likely to become our new Governor. He was the attorney who tried to keep all Negros completely out of UT in the Heman Sweatt case.

BARBARA

Cindy, you've got to stop tryin to solve the world's problems. You jes get a good night's sleep, so we can concentrate on makin our music department, a good place. And it will become a good place, as long as we get a little rehearsal time together.

*L-CUT. Non-Digetic Piano music at end of this scene which continues into early part of next scene,*

### **Scene 18: Professor's weirdness**

*INT. Piano Practice, Lesson Room. Gustafson is on the piano.*

DR.EDRA GUSTAFSON

I don't like the thickness and over-vibrato of your voice.

BARBARA

*Soft spoken, mild protest. Still in energetic spinal stretch mode, great posture.*

But does everyone have to sound the same? . . . I mean . .

*Relaxes posture.*

I know I've got to cut down on my tremolo, but shouldn't the Queen of Carthrage have . . . a vocal richness?

DR. EDRA GUSTAFSON

*Staring at sheet music.*

You will never make it to the big time, sounding like this. You know, Barbara, I am not prejudiced.

*Repositions piano bench to look Barbara more in eye.*

I have tried to work with you, and I certainly am very impressed with the drama department's full endorsement of you for the part. But somehow, some missing link in your background, it seems to me, is injurious to the mellifluousness of what is needed here. We may have hit an impasse, and I'm not sure I can continue to coach you effectively.

BARBARA

Professor Gustafson, I want badly to do the part, and I am willing to do whatever you want to make it happen.

*Gustafson stares up at her sternly.*

Jes teach me!

**Scene 19: WHITES TALK ABOUT THE ISSUE:**

*EXT. Same as scene 12. It is Halloween. Martha sneaks up behind Joann with mask.*

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Boo!

JOANN

*Shocked.*

Ohhhh, you scared me!

*Good naturedly throwing up her hands.*

I'm glad its you.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Yes, only me, in the middle of the jungle. Say, thanks for allowing me to borrow your chemistry book.

JOANN

Are you wearing that to the dance tonight?

MARTHA

No, I don't have any time.

JOANN

*Joking*

Well you're welcome for borrowing the book. In fact you could probably put me out my misery by keeping it.

*Sitting alongside Joann*

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Look Joann, I was hoping we could get past this issue. But maybe isn't this whole effort to mix races wrong. I mean, isn't it bad for Barbara's people too?

JOANN

Mart, you know Barbara loves music. Her sister, Connie sings, her mother sings, her brother Howard sings. She came from a town, Center Point, which used to have a all black school. They wanted the best. But how many of these people could afford violins? You must must know that Barbara never had such goosebumps, such opportunity, as now!

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Yes, but this isn't the music of her people.

JOANN

You know, Mart, its funny how we expect blacks to adopt our ways, and stop bein such heathen. And then when its convenient, they're not supposed to embrace our ways at all.

And why, in any case, would we close off to them, the best the world has to offer. As I recall, a White Southerner did not compose our opera about your Dido.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Oh, OK, I see.

JOANN

Silence.

MARTHA ANN KELLY



So you're sayin that white folks have the power to call the shots, and their policy is to have no policy, but only that which keeps them on top.

JOANN

That's it.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

*Thinking.*

I'm sorry I've been a problem for Barbara. Its jes that my Daddy believes that there's something about a way of life that has to be defended. And when they is so many black people that are in trouble, to mix them up with whites is goin to cause more trouble.

JOANN

Mart, I wonder if you and I might jes consider. Wonder if it was right fer one group to have a chance. Wonder if it was right for another group to fight for the best kind of society. We'd jes have two rights fighten one another.

But wonder if God jes wants us to love one another. Wonder if the one group has to sacrifice somethin, and the other group has to sacrifice somethin. Isn't the Bible right when it says that God shows no partiality? Each side has just got to give a little bit.

MARTHA ANN KELLY

Stares at Joann without an answer. Puts a hand on Joann shoulder. Looks away.

JOANN

Thanks again for the book.

## **Scene 20: Professor's Opposition Trumped and Overcome**

*INT. Finishing Lunch at Mrs. Gus's house, or having finished it on sofa.*

MRS. GUS

Your vibrato has improved immensely. And I like the sound.

*Tries to show humor.*

We just have to take some of the darkness out of it.

BARBARA

*At least feigns enthusiasm.*

Thank you professor for inviting me to your home. I enjoyed your Swedish meatballs very much, and I would enjoy singing at your Lutheran church.<sup>25</sup>

*Suddenly becoming cagey in a good humored way:*

But Professor, is it possibly your goal that everyone should sound the same?

MRS. GUS

Well there is the good and the bad.

BARBARA

But isn't Miss Dido known basically for her Lament? Why would I want my voice to be more sugary?

MRS. GUS

Because you want people to sympathize with a sweet, fragile girl whose about to die!

BARBARA

But isn't Dido an African queen too, someone who had power, someone whose rich soul is just overflowing with (can't find the right word) . . . ?

*Barbara stares at Mrs. Gus with a pleading, earnest look*

## **SCENE 21: Barbara Triumphant with Friends.**

*EXT.*

BARBARA

I is so pleased that Mrs. Gus doesn't doesn't threaten me anymore. She still don't say nothin about my range or magnitude, but at least she isn't cutting me down all the time.

CINDY

Barbara, at first I thought you wer gonna stay on her bad side, But I'm glad you stood up for your rights. You is one good singer, and Mrs. Gus . . .

---

<sup>25</sup> Gustafson according to Conrad's late-in life testimony (Texas Book Two, 2012) cooked Swedish meatballs in her home for her, and indeed employed Barbara to sing at her Swedish Lutheran Church

JOANN

You know, I think Mrs. Gus, like a lot of people around here, really are just conservative. They're confident not necessarily about what is right, but what has been easier, and useful.

BARBARA

That reminds me of our theatre instructor!

CINDY

*Moans. Puts hands on forehead.*

Oh don't remind me of that class!

BARBARA

Do you know Dr. White?

JOANN

O sure, I've had him. He isn't a problem for you, is he?

BARBARA

No, he's nice enough but . . .

I just hope he knows what he is doing, in insisting we all see a film downtown.

CINDY

Yeah, Joann, did you know about this? I'm not so sure I like the idea of being lynched, just tryin to do my homework assignment.

JOANN

*Indignantly.*

You mean Dr. White expects you to crash the all-white theatre downtown?

BARBARA

*Searches hard and successfully in her mind to locate the points. Speaks confidently at first then less so.*

Well he said he was going to contact the cinema, speak with the manager, give us a special pass, and . . . encourage us all to go on the same night.

*Barbara and Cindy give an extended look to one another. Barbara's confidence wanes a little.*

CINDY

I'm not sure this is gonna work.

**SCENE 22: Price Daniel Wins Texas Election. November Meeting of the Desegregation Committee<sup>26</sup>**

*INT. Boardroom*

PRESIDENT LOGAN WILSON

Whatever the university may want to do, we have to recognize certain realities. In this November election we have elected a segregationist governor, Price Daniel, one of four Democratic hopefuls who all pandered to the white majority. Second we now have a stronger law against intermarriage than before. Finally we have a law on the books urging interposition, against federal mandates in integration. And this received a four-one majority?

H.Y. MCCOWN

It does not take a genius to figure out that the current policy of integration at the University of Texas is in trouble. At the very least, we must be exceedingly . . . cautious.

MAURIE SUTTLE

‘Careful’ is a good word.

JOANN THOMPSON

Careful in doing what is right?

DEAN NOWOTNY

We are not going to become a world-class university if we<sup>27</sup> keep acting like a regional university.

---

<sup>26</sup> Not only did Governor Alan Shivers stand like a rock against federal desegregation laws and win. Now in this same academic year of 1956-57 in November, Texas has elected a segregationist. Price Daniel, who defended UT in the Sweatt Case, where the university first tried to keep out African-American graduate students in 1946, was one of four candidates for the Democratic nomination—all of them opposed integration. After becoming Governor, Daniel let it be known he was unhappy with the UT integration program.

<sup>27</sup> Slips into the dialect of his Yiddish parents.

H.Y. MCCOWN

*Getting angry.*

We are who we are!

PRESIDENT LOGAN WILSON

*Holds two fingers up as he eyes everyone in the meeting. He eyes Joann, and Notwotny imploringly.*

There are two watchwords that must govern our actions as we move ahead. We must show . . .

*Gives the two words special emphasis.*

Discretion,

and . . . Expediency.

We cannot incite. We must measure situations as they arrive. This is why I so value this Committee with its student members. We may be leagues apart emotionally, but we are going to speak as one voice: avoiding conflict, and doing what is best for UT.<sup>28</sup>

H.Y. MCCOWN

I am so thankful too for our students participating in this. And please do not ever think, that I am trying to limit your expression! But remember we had one candidate in the last election who wanted to use Texas Rangers to keep federal marshals out of our schools. We had another who wanted to impeach every member of the Supreme Court. These are perilous times for our university. We do not want to be personally responsible for an outpouring of blood. We do not want to be personally responsible for aggravating a national calamity . . . .

LOGAN WILSON

*Knits his brow, like a statement of especial wisdom is coming.*

You can be the best of anything in life, but you cannot be the cause of bloodshed.

JOANN THOMPSON

---

<sup>28</sup> There is some rather humorous, latent irony here which Dr. Wilson was probably aware of, but which he tries most vociferously to cover up.

Both I, and the religious bodies on campus, do not want to incite bloodshed. But . . .

DEAN NOWOTNY

Are we not teaching our students to do what is expedient rather than right?

### **SCENE 23: Barbara attends the Cinema**

*INT. THEATRE TICKET OFFICE. Or EXT TICKET BOOTH. Barbara and Cindy go in doors to theatre. Come up to counter.*

CINDY

*To Barbara, softly:*

Well here it goes

BARBARA

*Barbara tries very nonchalantly, to hand in her ticket.*

WHITE TICKET TAKER #1

*Goes into meltdown mode, screaming:*

You can't, you can't, you can't, you can't!

*Barbara, and Cindy, at first paralyzed, beat a retreat.*

*Screen wipe, indicating passage of time. INT. Bathroom.*

JOANN

Tom the Theatre major said this will work! We'll just make you look like Hindus from India!

*Joann puts red dot on Barbara's forehead, and dresses her in robes like a Hindu.*

*Screen wipe. Cindy, also now with a dot on her forehead, and Barbara try again with a new ticket taker.*

WHITE TICKET TAKER #2

*Looks mildly anxious, but nods. The two roommates get right through, with Cindy letting go a smile!*

### **SCENE 23: Christmas at Home: Barbara tells everyone the good news**

INT. Table. Center Point Home. B&B Breakfast. Dialogue could include whatever foods are available.

BARBARA

Mrs. Gus, was actin all strange to me. But now she says my singin will be an event.

JERRIE THE MOTHER

Here, child, take some more eggs, casserole, what about some more Ham.<sup>29</sup>

BARBARA

*Digs into the food ravenously, as if she has not eaten in the year.*

## **SCENE 24: Conrad, and Jerri have heart to heart**

INT. Church / Chapel nave if possible.

*Scene begins in church. The girls are not in a choir, but are singing solos from where they are in the pews with family around them. Snippet shows Barbara singing Black Spiritual. Another snippet shows Connie singing a more raucous Spiritual.*

*Wipe and transition to Center Point home.*

*Sitting around a table.*

DAD

I may have a bad lungs, but my army discharge put my ears in heaven this morning, hearin my two daughters sing.

JERRIE LEE

We are blessed. Your grandmother Cash is so proud of you both.<sup>30</sup>

CONNIE

Of course, Barbara gets to study at the university. Where all ah do is sing in clubs.

DAD

Connie, you sing in church, and that is where it counts.

JERRIE LEE

---

<sup>29</sup> The actual food Barbara eats could be hid, or we could substitute other foods in the dialogue.

<sup>30</sup> This is extremely important. Dr. Christine Cash was the celebrated leader of the Center Point School.

Girl, I don't like you singin in the clubs.

BARBARA

*Barbara is beginning to model the diva at home, acting supercharged, and expressive.*

Connie, I think you can definitely come to the University of Texas. You and Mrs. Gus would get along quite fine.

CONNIE

No offense, Barbara, but I jes don't want to sing like you. It jes doesn't have my sound. I jes don't think either that whites is as open to us singin, as you think.

DAD

Connie, you is so smart. You could do well in every kind of music, and pick the one you do best in after that.

CONNIE

I don't like operas! And I don't think a Southern opera singer, much less a black opera singer has a prayer in life. Do you know why George Friedrich Handel shopped at five-and-dime stores?

*No one can answer*

Because he was baroque as hell.

JERRIE LEE

And what you do want is dives, where married men, and all other sorts of nare-dowells, ask for your phone number.

CONNIE

I've got ta start somewhere. Why is everything I do, wrong!

DAD

Connie, its not that its wrong. We're jes concerned about ya.

## **SCENE 25: Barbara and Family Playing Bid Whist; Everyone enthusiastic**

*INT. Evening. Table. The cards have been dealt. It is Dad and Mom vs. Barbara and Connie.*

BARBARA

*In new Diva role:*



Well Daddy I'm glad we're not playin your Pinochle, cause with bid whist<sup>31</sup> I'm kin go downtown with my little numbers.

CONNIE

Say it, girl!

DAD

Well Diva, I don't think you are goin to horswaggle seven tricks from me and yer moma--not no how. Assumes bull dog expression.

JERRIE LEE

Good naturedly.

You know how age, and treachery will always beat youth and skill

BARBARA

Well let's see now. Should we have trumps or not. Looks intently at Connie.

DAD

Hey, no cheaten now.

JERRIE LEE

Watch it, Connie can say something without sayin somethin

BARBARA

No trumps. That means yer Jokers Daddy, aren't worth nothin

DAD

*Stern. Without revealing his hand.*

So you think I have jokers?

JERRIE LEE

---

<sup>31</sup> Bid Whist was a favorite African-American card game where the successful bidder could make the smaller numbers worth more than the large ones—by going “downtown.” This reversal in expectation is happening now to Barbara who at this moment is still the star of a UT opera

Connie's eyeballs told her somethin. Daddie we've gotta find a way to crack der code.

DAD

But how could she know?

BARBARA

*Lays down Ace of Spades.*

Well Daddy, here's the Ace of Spades, my favorite.

DAD

*Lays down two of spades*

Darn it! My one chance in life.

CONNIE

*Plays 6 of spades*

Here's the reassurance. Barb. You are the best.

JERRIE LEE

*Plays 3 of spades*

Well you got the first trick.

*Break in time. Wipe.*

O my, two more tricks Daddy, and they win everything. How can this be?

DAD

Barbara's been takin everything today. Now I know the difference between an opera star, and a pit bull—jewelry!

BARBARA

*Trembling with mock seriousness. Laughing.*

You is so right Daddy—here's a king of diamonds. Oh, Oh, Commie, Save me Commie, I mean Connie!

*They all laugh.*

*Plays a King of Diamonds*

DAD

Yeah, you all is playin like communists, And here is the Berlin Airlift  
*Proudly plays a three of diamonds.*

CONNIE

Watch out Daddy, diamonds are a girls best friend.<sup>32</sup>  
*Connie plays a two of diamonds.*

BARBARA

*Full of enthusiasm:*

Go Girl. Go girl!

JERRIE LEE

Lays down her lame queen of diamonds.

Disgustin!

CONNIE

And now I has the four!

*Everyone lays down their cards. Barbara and Connie scream in excitement as if they are cheerleaders after the winning touchdown, Mother and Dad smile as they lay down their cards in mock disgust.*

## **SCENE 26: Barbara and Cindy are back at school: hopes abound**

*INT. Evening. Dorm Room of Barbara and Cindy .*

BARBARA

*Enters the door. Cindy is seated at a desk.*

Roomie, you is back.

*They hug.*

CINDY

You have some good times?

BARBARA

---

<sup>32</sup> Allusion to Marilyn Monroe's 1953 hit song, diamonds are a girl's best friend.

It was wonderful being home. Home, home, in Center Point, with Daddy back, and grandma, and the relatives, and church.

CINDY

I've decided to switch to flute. I talked to Dr. Barrington, and he thinks there might be a place for me in the orchestra!

BARBARA

Ohhh, well that's news . . .

*Becoming thoughtful.*

Well that could be good. You are a great soprano, with flute or voice. Girl, think of it, we might be doin Dido and Aeneus together, how wonderful!

Were yer parents OK about everythin?

CINDY

Daddy complained about the costs, and Moma fretted, but my uncle gave me a twenty, and I bought this this.<sup>33</sup>

*Cindy takes out her new trousers.*

BARBARA

Do you dare wear those?

CINDY

Well, some of the white girls are wearing them on campus. Why shouldn't we?

### **SCENE 27: Threatening phone call**

*INT. B & C's Dorm room. Barbara is working intently at her desk, speaking out loud biology terms. In her bare or stocking feet.*

BARBARA

the Octet Rule in Chemistry is like a musical Octave, Chlorine is like an atonal 7<sup>th</sup>. We is jes one electron shy, one note in need.

CINDY

---

<sup>33</sup> Ideally this scene could bring out Carolyn's impulsive manner.

*Comes in from the hallway, as if running.*

Barbara, there is someone on the phone for you. I think he said he was a reporter or something, and is interested in your Dido part.

BARBARA

*Excited.*

O my. I'll tell you all about it

*Barbara slips on shoes. And runs out*

CINDY

*Cindy's voice gets louder as Barbara departs:*

Girl I'm goin to wait right here for ya.

*Barbara races out the door.*

CINDY

*Looks at her chemistry book. Pages through it. Grunts. Is the model opposite of Barbara, showing that she is bored by staring out the window. Then staring back at the text, and saying out loud, as if speaking to herself:*

Ionic and Covalent. Why do we have to talk bout *two* types of bondage. Isn't havin to study this enough?

CINDY

*Barbara returns looking sheepish and frightened. Cindy is excited.*

CINDY

Well, what do ya know!

BARBARA

It wasn't a reporter, Cindy , it was a . . .

CINDY

It was a what?

BARBARA

*Puts her hands over her face.*

I think it was some kind of . . . white racist.

CINDY

*Draws closer to Barbara as if to comfort her.*

Well what did he say?

BARBARA

He said basically that I was like . . . (breaking into a cry) dirt! Scum!

That if I played the part of Dido, something bad would happen to me.

CINDY

*Angry.*

I am not going to let that slide. I'm seeing the dorm mother, right away, and see if we can't trace that call!

*Cindy runs out. Cameras do close-up of Barbara's frightened, bewildered and tearful face.*

**SCENE 28: Barbara and Joann talk it out.**

*EXT. New Location.*

BARBARA

Joann, could I talk to you

JOANN

Sure, Barbara.

*The two sit together*

BARBARA

Since, I've returned from the break, I have the impression that something is happening . . . and that some negative kinds of people . . . are trying to deeply discourage me.

JOANN

What do you mean?

BARBARA

I received a threatening phone call, which the phone company says they can't trace. I've received some looks around campus which seem more than unfriendly.

JOANN

*Sympathetically:*

Ohhhh. I bet people talked about you during the break, and probably got a lot of flak from their parents about it. Barbara please keep me informed about all of this. Our Interdenominational Committee . . . is committed to integration, and we will fight this. . . . But tell me, do you feel scared about it?

BARBARA

I'm not scared about it. But I am practicing night and day to be the best Dido there ever was.

JOANN

This is evil. I can't believe this is happening at the University of Texas. Barbara, promise, you will tell me, if you get any kind of threat like this to you again!

*The two young women stare at one another.*

BARBARA

*Barbara and Joann stare at one another in the eye. But Barbara does not promise, and looks away.*

### **SCENE 29: Threatening Guys**

*INT Practice room, switches to EXT. Evening. Perhaps under streetlamp.*

*Barbara closes a piano, and walks out of the room. It is late at night. As she walks "across campus," Ron and Bo follow her. At first by a distance, then they run up.*

BO ANGSTROM

Hey Chocolate girl. I hear your tryin to sing your way into a white boy's heart.

RON WHITEHEAD

I'll tell you right now, you couldn't sing your way into my heart.

BARBARA

*Barbara walks faster, and avoids eye contact.*

BO ANGSTROM

So yer not goin to talk to us, huh? Is that because you are a racist?

RON WHITEHEAD

Yeah aren't whites good enough?

BARBARA

*Barbara slows her walk, but still looks straight ahead, as un-fazed as she can be.*

BO ANGSTROM

Well isn't this something, Ron. We've got this high society blackie here who sings opera, and is too good to talk to crackers like us.

BARBARA

What you want from me?

BO ANGSTROM

The word from the Bird<sup>34</sup> is that you are goin to have to drop your white lover boy for starters. You do know its against the law in Texas to marry a white.

BARBARA

I am playing the role of Dido, who was an African queen.

BO ANGSTROM

That's a joke. You're no queen.

*Stares at her.*

Yer nothing but a black jigaboo. And something seriously nasty is goin to happen to you, if you keep this up.

BARBARA

---

<sup>34</sup> 1950s slang.



*Barbara breaks into a run.*

*BO ANGSTROM*

There she goes, the black queen, running into the night . . .

*Laughs.*

Jes like some polecat.

*RON WHITEHEAD*

*Shouting furtively, long distance:*

Remember what we said!

### **SCENE 30: Barbara retreats into her music: Goes into Overwork Mode**

*INT. Practice Room with Piano. Cindy could be wearing trousers, and has some heavy books. Notes of Dido's Lament are heard from inside the practice room. Action begins with forthright Cindy walking down the hall, and opening the door. Music stops. Barbara has tears in her eyes.*

CINDY

*Dramatically opens door to practice room.*

Gull [girl], it is 1 AM and I am here to escort you home.

BARBARA

Cindy , what are you doin . . .?

CINDY

*Lays books on piano top with a bang*

You've practiced Nuff. I cant let you walk home by yourself agin.

BARBARA

*Rises to hug Cindy. Crying.*

I am so frightened. Thank you for being here!

*Disentangled un-gracefully. Sits back down.*

Though I feel bound to practice. I really must be the best, only the best....

*Cindy, in full mother-hen mode. Might put hands on hips akimbo; Barbara looks up in appeal.*

CINDY

You are one strange girl. . .

Rather than live with all this pressure on yourself, why don't you tell Joann about the threats you've been receiving? She's on the Desegregation Committee!

BARBARA

Cindy, don't you see? If President Wilson, or some dean hears that I'm being threatened, that violence is possible, they might cancel my premiere!

*Turns toward music.*

I am not telling Joann about it.

*Gathers new resolution, and looks sternly into Cindy's eyes.*

And you are not going to tell Joann either!

CINDY

You are mad, Barbara!

*Picks her books back up from the piano top, angrily.*

You are being foolish. If we don't stand up for what rights we've gained, we will lose even them!

BARBARA

*Shouting. Boxing her ears.*

NO!

CINDY

*Some jealousy that Cindy has felt toward Barbara's successes is beginning to show:*

Very well then. Go get beat up by a bunch of crackers. Don't bother standing up for your race. Think only about yourself, and your beloved Dido!

*Slams the door.*

BARBARA

*Weeps.*

### **Scene 31: Cindy tells Joann:**

*INT. Joann's bedroom.*

CINDY

Joann, you have been a true friend, taking me into your room, and a friend of us colored students as well.

JOANN

Well Cindy , I admire your courage coming in here with me.

CINDY

Joann . . . what makes you different than the others, anyway? Yer from Texas, right?

JOANN

Well you might be surprised Cindy. I am the head of the interdenominational committee. There is not an organized religious group on campus that opposes integration. Here, read some of these statements from the various groups.

*Hands Cindy a typed sheet from bureau. Cindy reads with expression.*

CINDY

**Segregation is counter to the teachings of Christ. Christ destroyed all barriers between men by his sacrifice.**

**Christian churches unfailingly, therefore, must condemn segregation as the evil fruit of natural man's pride, and his arrogant assumptions of superiority over those who appear to be different from him.**

This is good stuff! It makes me feel more hopeful too.

*Hands back sheet graciously, smiling.*

JOANN

I am confident that we are heading in the right direction.

CINDY

*Smiles.*

And right here in the heart of Texas!

*Cindy gets up to leave.*

JOANN

So you can tell your roommate, not to worry about that crank call.

CINDY

*Turns, to head out, then stops.*

O Joann . . .

JOANN

Yeah?

CINDY

There's been more than just a call. Ahhhhh. Do you know that white boys have been harassing her at night?

JOANN

WHAT? All she told me is that she received a threatening phone call. . .

I thought she was going to tell me if anything else happened. . . .

CINDY

*Sits down again.*

Well I think she is just too engrossed in her practicing. She has now received at least three totally savage phone calls. Also young men, have been stalking her at night when she has the long walk back to the colored dorm. She didn't want me to tell you. . . But . . .

*Touches her forehead, looking fearful . . .*

JOANN

*Riled, grabs Cindy's hand pressing it for a time for emphasis:*

Why didn't you tell me this before? We have a desegregation meeting this week, and I am going to insist that someone call the police!

CINDY

Joann, I feel Barbara will hate me for telling you this.

JOANN

Why?

CINDY

Because . . . well . . . I think . . . Barbara is more concerned about being number one, than in standing up against injustice. . . .

### Part III: Being Yanked

#### Scene 32: Infamous March Meeting. Wilson, Sealy and McCown discuss Ramifications, and decide Barbara will be yanked, yet they do not set the machinery of rejection into motion.

*INT. Table. Something like Restaurant. Could be B&B breakfast.*

WILSON

I'm so pleased YOU TWO could meet for breakfast, and talk a little more informally. The university needs the wisest path possible.

*Looks at the other two as if they might have something to say, which is ironic, because they don't know yet what the topic is going to be.*

But the fools are coming out of the woodwork, and the outrageous is breaking out all over the place

SEALY

What's up, Logan?

WILSON

The music and theatre departments, without consulting us, have assigned a Negro girl to play opposite a white male for the spring opera!

MCCOWN

God, we're talking about romance. . . . Those implications could kill us.

WILSON

For all the intellectual power at our university, we hav, I'd say . . .

*Wilson stares off in space, counting. Shows increasing aggravation as he reviews his faculty roster.*

Bout four . . . well perhaps as many as 12 maybe 15 faculty who lack the common sense even of a chimpanzee.

SEALY

Good God, the Bubbas and Amoses in the Legislature will have a field day.

MCCOWN

Amen, Brother.

*Turning to Wilson*

I am so thankful we have a Chairman of the Board who knows our state so well.

WILSON

*Gazing at Sealy with rapt appreciation.*

Tom I so thank you for your empathy, and your willingness to help. Especially when we have a case where we'll be damned if we do, and damned if we don't.

SEALY

Logan . . . we've got to yank that Negress out of the cast.

WILSON

Well, already, you're nailing that one for us. I learned at our Desegregation Meeting that our colored songbird has also been receiving death threats.

MCCOWN

This is why I have been losing sleep over this whole desegregation thing. We're not talking about standard policy issues.

*Takes a short drink.*

We are talking about saving lives.

WILSON

*Ignoring McCown.*

Tom, you've said it all. The Negro girl in question is just going to have to understand that we are trying to save her life, keep the legislature from interferin, Promote the quiet integration that will make the University of Texas famous.

SEALY

What exactly is the policy then?

WILSON

I think the policy must be. . . that we preserve the discretionary power of the university to do what is best, given the situation.<sup>35</sup>

SEALY

So in other words we can't let events, the legislature, or the faculty dictate.

WILSON

Exactly.

SEALY

When do you intend to let the Negro girl know?

WILSON

Well that can wait till the opera is almost upon us, and the semester is over. They're doing some split casting, so . . . a white girl is already in place, to cover the part. I wouldn't want Austin's Negros, or some snake-in-the-grass lawyer to make a farce of this. In the meantime, if any legislator calls, we can quietly let them know that interracial sex is not on our agenda.

*Wilson looks for agreement in the eyes of Sealy, and McCown. Both nod.*

### **Scene 33: Menacing White Guys Spit in Barbara's face**

EXT. Evening. Behind big Tree. This is a climactic scene and some non-digetic music that climaxes with the assault of spittle would be optimal.<sup>36</sup>

BO ANGSTROM

So, you really think we should be waitin up for blackbird?

RON WHITEHEAD

Month ago, I said no, because there was a cop. But for the two weeks, nothin. I heard her yodelin. I know she's goin to be comin.

*Points to music building.*

But there are still others in her Department of 'Communist Music' building. I think if we wait her out, behind this tree, we'll have the best chance of interceptin her.

---

<sup>35</sup> The irony is that this is the opposite of a policy, and akin to what Joann realized earlier represented a naked power grab.

<sup>36</sup> Barbara did report later in an interview that she was spat at on her way home.

BO ANGSTROM

*Objecting to the idea of waiting.*

Yeah, but . . . she goes home so late, even the criminals have gone to sleep by then.

RON WHITEHEAD

Well I brought some patriotic strengthenin medicine!

*Takes out two six-packs of beer bottles.*

BO ANGSTROM

Whoa! We're goin to have a good time!

*First screen wipe, suggesting the passage about an hour. Now the two are sitting down.*

You know, I think my Daddy might even be proud of me for this. I feel kind ah like Paul Revere.

RON WHITEHEAD

Well I know our great grand-daddies would be proud of us. Here they went off and died for the Southern Way, whereas the men of our generation are scared by a solitary cop who might even share their views.

*Another screen wipe suggests the passage of more time. The two are now moderately drunk.*

BO ANGSTROM

O My,

*Laughing Ridiculously. Holding head*

I'm so drunk, . . . my brain is on fire!

I think I could probably jump over that little high rise out yonder, wanna see me try?

RON

Stop making noise!

BO

*Gets up and jumps awkwardly.*

Whoa, made it!

*Falls down laughing.*



RON WHITEHEAD

Bo, Shhhhh

*With exaggerated efforts to calm Bo Down. Pulling him behind tree.*

I see her coming!

*Looks at watch:*

Its quarter to three, later than ever!

BO ANGSTROM

*Hides himself clumsily.*

RON WHITEHEAD

*Whispers*

You cranked?

BO

*Gets a hold of himself. Nods. And takes a big drink of "beer (water)," holds it in mouth.*

BARBARA

*Camera catches Barbara walking and humming her part still about fifteen feet away.*

RON WHITEHEAD

*Turns sullen. Shakes head. Whispers to Bo.*

She's cruisin for a bruisin.

RON WHITEHEAD

*Shouts to Barbara in singsong:*

Hey Polecat!

BARBARA

*Screams!*

Oh God!

*Breaks into a run.*

BO and RON

*Run up to Barbara. Ron holds her from behind. Camera shows a full side view of Bo spitting (away from camera, and in reality, away from Mary). Barbara's face may next be sprayed with water, and then a camera gets a full frontal of her, her face distorted, and wet. Non-digetic Musical climax.*

BARBARA

*Screaming, though not too loudly*

*Ahhhhh*

**SCENE 34 NE Texas Representative in Texas House, Joe Chapman and H.E. Howard, Racist Donor, Discover the Barbara issue**

*EXT. Porch. It may well be that smoking a cigarette is impossible. Both could also be sipping something that looks like wine.*

TEXT ON SCREEN

Sulphur Springs, Texas Home March 1957

*Camera could make an establishment shot of outside home (B&B), then show Harriet in full frontal.*

HARRIET

The University of Texas is assaulting our cherished values. Joe can't you do something about it?

JOE

I could.

HARRIET

People say, our Texas Negroes are not that bad. And I agree with them. But they are an inferior race.

JOE

OK, I'll grant you that.

HARRIET

Now if our problem at the university was that there was some communist professors, they can be labeled as such, and booted out of office. This is exactly what happened to the previous UT President, Homer Rainy.

JOE

Yeah, I'm still following ya . . . .

HARRIET

But the insidious thing about the Negro problem is that now we are being forced to call an inferior race good. When that happens, everything is compromised—marriage, honor, the sanctity of the family, religion . . . everything will skid downhill as we are forced to mix with what is inferior.

It will not just be intermarriage that causes this, though that will be the foremost symbol of our decline. Our way of life, our culture will be compromised forever!

JOE

Harriet, I am indebted to you, and to your late husband, through the years, as you know. I am not just willing, but eager to help you.

*Pulls out a cigarette. Harriet has a lighter, and she helps him light it.*

Still, can I best serve your interests by burning bridges to the liberal element, as well as the Longhorn alums?

HARRIET

Joe, I've checked this. Northeast Texas has one of the lowest percentages of Texas Exes in the state. You remember how well Ma and Pa Ferguson, as well as Pappy O'Daniel did in our part of the state, bashing the university?

JOE

OK.

*Takes a big puff.*

HARRIET

Now if you, like them, begin to excite the prejudices of every Hoss, Slick, Bubba, and Dusty that hangs out by the forks of our creeks, you will win their partiality.

JOE

Yeah.

*Another puff.*

OK.

*Big exhale. Then puts hand in hair as if perplexed.*

*Still, elections are not decided as much as you might think by your friends. They are decided by what your enemies end up doing.*

HARRIET

*Harriet is momentarily thrown off. She didn't know Chapman had such insight.*

Exactly. . . But you could also cover yourself by saying that you are trying to spare the university, embarrassment, by keeping their agenda, encouraging intermarriage between whites and negroes off the news.

JOE

Harriet . . . I like this angle. Appealing to the people, and mollifying the Texas Exes at the same time. You really impress the hell out of me sometimes, Harriet.

HARRIET

And you, by making a big issue of this Negro girl from own district of Northeast Texas, playing Dido in the upcoming UT opera. . . I believe you could become governor!

JOE

*Gives a Harriet a smile that for the first time verges on flirtation.*

### **SCENE 35: Joe Chapman's Press Release<sup>37</sup>**

*INT. Microphone on Speakers rostrum (could be performed at NTCC's Whatley Center).*

JOE

*With a microphone before him, on a desk—mimicking Orval Faubus,<sup>38</sup> he states*

The people of Texas made it very clear in the last election that they do not want race mixing. Now as a Texas Ex, myself, I am trying to spare the university some embarrassment. It is clear that there are forces in the legislature willing to cut down the expense of this institution, especially if it is going to act as an instrument of revolutionary change. And so I am going to call on the president, Dr. Logan Wilson to stop this incitement towards intermarriage that is occurring in the upcoming UT opera of Dido and Aeneas.

---

<sup>37</sup> Joe Chapman from Sulphur Springs is Barbara's own representative in the Texas House.

<sup>38</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B86NkGz52cc&t=102s>. This YouTube segment shows Faubus trying to resist federal pressure on his schools toward integration.

**SCENE 36: DEAN MCCOWN BREAKS IN ON LESSON BETWEEN EDRA GUSTAFSON AND BARBARA WITH BAD NEWS**

*INT. Practice Room.*

EDRA GUSTAFSON

Barbara, I am delighted with the overtones of your voice. You have internalized the seven main pillars of singing beautifully.

*Door opens abruptly.*

DEAN MCCOWN

Excuse me.

EDRA GUSTAFSON

Dean McCown!

DEAN MCCOWN

I am sorry to interrupt. And I have something important, from the President of this institution to say:

BARBARA

*Looks Dumbfounded.*

DEAN MCCOWN

Miss, you will not be able to play or sing the Dido part in the upcoming opera.

BARBARA

*Stares in disbelief.*

EDRA GUSTAFSON

What kind of nonsense is this?

DEAN MCCOWN

Edra, the university is under a lot of pressure from the legislators.

BARBARA

No!

EDRA GUSTAFSON

You can't.

DEAN MCCOWN

*Looks toward Edra, and then Barbara.*

We also have heard that this young lady has been receiving death threats.

*Looks toward Barbara*

President Wilson, the Board, and I earnestly want to avoid violence, and desperately want to insure your safety.

EDRA GUSTAFSON

Barbara, is this true? Why haven't you been telling me about this?

BARBARA

Dean, Dr. Gustafson, I haven't told people about the threats, because I wanted to sing the part more than anything!

EDRA GUSTAFSON

But Barbara, you should have told me about this! You can always sing another day.

DEAN MCCOWN

I cannot understate the nature of the threat, to you all, and to the discretionary power of the university to pursue our course of quiet integration.

BARBARA

Are you sayin, that by not singin, I will help the cause of integration?

DEAN MCCOWN

Exactly. We cannot let a racial incident at our university become a political football.

*Pauses, and tries to accommodate to the tension he brought into this practice room.*

The Negrophobes in our state will put an end to integration at UT altogether.

*Looks at Barbara:*

Both your right to study music here, and the university itself will suffer.

BARBARA

This doesn't make any sense.

EDRA GUSTAFSON

*Puts her arm around Barbara.*

DEAN MCCOWN

I believe it will make sense to you in time. Professor Gustafson, I have already talked to Dean Doty and Dr. Colton about this. This decision is final. She will not be singing in this spring's UT opera, and I am sorry to have to be the bearer of bad news.

BARBARA

*Cries*

EDRA GUSTAFSON

*Hugs Barbara.*

### **SCENE 37: JOE CHAPMAN "TRIUMPHANT"**

*Again giving a press conference:*

I indeed did not realize that my remarks would be broadcast all over Texas, and even throughout the South. But I am pleased to say that my warning already has had some good effects, and that many, including members of the UT administration, are working with me to save the university some embarrassment . . .

*Smiles:*

The university flourishes when it can quietly go about its business turning scholars into good citizens, and productive members of society. We don't need riots, and demonstrations. We don't need to turn the university into a revolutionary commune, illustrating new ways in which we should live life. . .

REPORTER

There have been reports that the vast number of students at UT support integration, and that they even staged a demonstration yesterday in which you were hanged in effigy. Do you have any comments on that?

CHAPMAN

Well, the campus definitely has **a little group of starry-eyed liberals inclined to make a lot of noise."**

### **SCENE 38: THE PRESS HARASSES BARBARA**

*INT Academic Building, NTCC Whatley Auditorium Foyer, or parlor. Cindy, and Edra Gustafson hover nervously in background.*

REPORTER

So what was your reaction, when you were told you could not be in the opera?

BARBARA

I don't even know what to say, because I don't know who or what to believe.

REPORTER

Are you upset with the university?

BARBARA

*Tries to evade the question. And leave the interview.*

REPORTER

*Becoming exasperated. Tried to get Barbara back in the game by asking an inflammatory question. Semi-shouts:*

Is it possible that you were taken off the part, because you were not well enough prepared?

BARBARA

**Don't you know that if it was my singing ability that caused me to lose the part, I would never have been selected in the first place? The less said about that, the better.”<sup>39</sup>**

REPORTER

Are you still going to see the opera?

BARBARA

**Of Course I am going to go see it. We support these things.**

REPORTER

Just curious, why aren't you protesting the opera, if you so deserved to be in it.

BARBARA

---

<sup>39</sup> Bold sections indicate actual quotes.



Please go. . . I want to save my voice you know.”<sup>40</sup>

### **SCENE 39: Reporter makes another Effort**

*INT. Barbara’s dorm room. Camera first focuses on Cindy working, and then does cut-away of what draws her attention. The door is opening. The Reporter snoops. Opens door to Barbara’s room very slowly which camera catches. Reporter peers in cautiously.*<sup>41</sup>

CINDY

*Angry*

What are you doin in here?

REPORTER

*Nonchalantly and politely as possible:*

Oh, I was just waiting to see if Miss Smith might have a few words for me.

CINDY

Get out of our room! Right now!

REPORTER

O I’m sorry, I must have misinterpreted the dorm mother . . .

*Reporter runs out*

### **SCENE 40: STUDENT SUPPORT FOR HER**

*INT. Joann’s or even Maurie’s Bedroom.*

*Moves excitedly into the room.*

JOANNE

Those snots at Littlefield dorm wouldn’t even look at the petition, but I got whole 100 names from Brackenridge!<sup>42</sup>

CINDY

Thank you so much for doing this, for my roommate’s sake, and for the sake of all the colored students!

---

<sup>40</sup> Conrad admitted later that she did not attend UT’s *Dido and Aeneas* in the Spring of 1957.

<sup>41</sup> According to Conrad years later, this actually happened.

<sup>42</sup> Littlefield was the oldest and most prestigious dorm, Brackenridge a newer one.

MAURIE

The administration has got to know that they have mistreated Barbara in a big way.

JOANNE

We have over 1,000 names so far, and I bet we can get another 500.<sup>43</sup>

CINDY

The thing that is so hard to understand is why President Wilson made no effort to reach out to Barbara in any personal way . . .

MAURIE

*While Maurie speculates, Joann looks at a fresh newspaper she has also just received.*

I know why he didn't reach out. He didn't want to be photographed with her. He didn't want the racists in our state to merely think he was padding things over. He also thinks he is somehow protecting her by never mentioning her name, or giving her so much as a second in the spotlight.

JOANN

*Looks at Newspaper, see image on next page:*

Oh I can't believe what Bill Bartlett drew!

*Joann laughs. Camera does cutaway to the image on the next page.*

*The two other girls crawl on to the bed alongside Joann, eager.*

CINDY

Wait till Barbara sees this!

MAURIE

This is exactly what is happening. The President is willing to sacrifice his student, but not the university's lucre.

JOANNE

You've got to love Bill for this cartoon.

*Said like she knows him well, and as if she is developing a crush on him.*

He is such a blast!

---

<sup>43</sup> UT Student leaders ended getting 1,500 names on their petition protesting Barbara Conrad's expulsion from the opera.

MAURIE

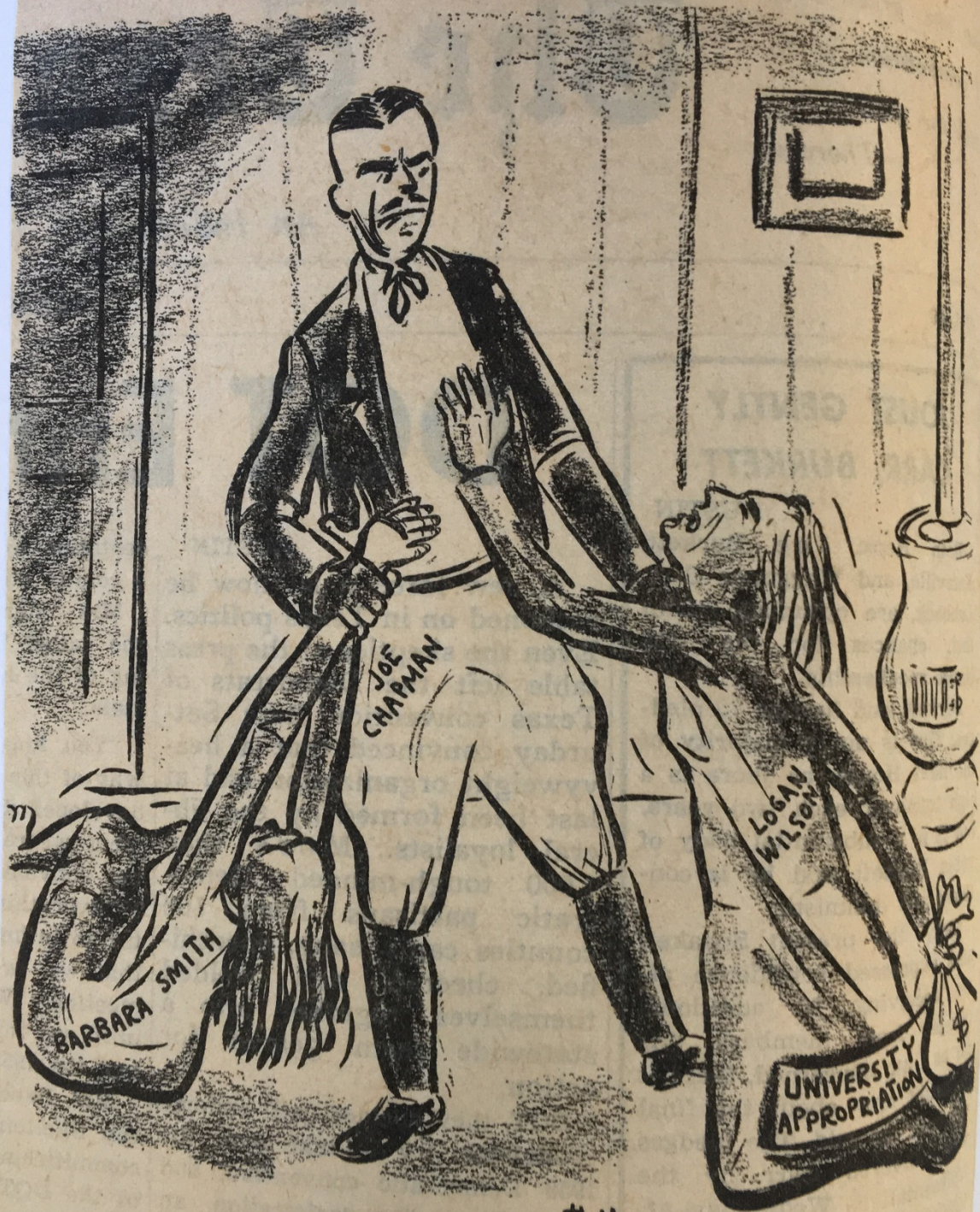
*Perhaps as if to show that she doesn't think Bill is that hot.*

Where is Barbara, by the way?

CINDY

Oh she is studying.

# 'O Please Sir, Spare My Money'



Bartlett  
Bartlett Appears Exclusively in the Texas Observer



MAURIE

Cindy , you have been a great help and liaison for us. But I wonder . . . is Barbara somehow angry at us for doing all this?

CINDY

No, she's flattered deep inside, really. Its just that . . . Well . . . Barbara is Barbara. An African Methodist minister called her the other day, and wanted to help, and she didn't know what to say. She really just wants to become a great singer, period. She doesn't . . .

*Looking up in a questioning way.*

#### **SCENE 41: LOGAN WILSON GIVES HIS STATEMENT**

*INT. Larger Hall.*

*Logan in formal attire addressing the faculty:*

For those of you who claim our intervention in the spring opera was unfair, let us remember the outstanding fact. The University of Texas has been the first institution of the South to accept Negroes as undergraduates!

*Semi-applause. A few hands clap for a while.*

The University has taken a foremost position in recognizing injustice. The university has taken a foremost position in the effort to evade violence.

*Now there are, pointedly, no claps.*

Now in this matter of the spring opera, we have been faced with a very broad spectrum of opinion. I am convinced that: **“Any administrative action taken in this episode, regardless of its nature, necessarily would have been displeasing to some.”**

**But the decision was made. And the decision itself was made without pride or apology.**<sup>44</sup> We were confronted with the spectacle of a negro girl being harmed. We were confronted by a polarized and uncertain legislature. We were confronted with a public consensus that was at odds with the cultural direction in which our arts department was headed.

---

<sup>44</sup> Subtext: I am one gritty, stoical President!

Our decision was based on our need to avoid bloodshed, and to preserve the discretionary power of the university.

## **SCENE 42: JOHN SILBER ATTACKS**

*INT. Larger Hall. (Anti-Wilson faculty member):*

*John Silber had a malformed right arm, which he never tried to hide. He was from German-Jewish roots in San Antonio.*

Text on Screen

Meeting of the Faculty Senate

SILBER

I am here as a faculty member to call into question the actions of our University President, Dr. Wilson, regarding the Negro girl who was savagely expelled from the Dido part in the school opera. I disagree completely with our President's reasoning, and outlook.

I oppose his strategy on integration.

Let us first consider the fact that hooligans of some sort or other were threatening our negro student.

Should it not be our university policy to intimidate, find, foil, and prosecute these hooligans?

Why instead has our university victimized the victim? I have been told that this negro girl wanted to sing the part more than anything. Why did we deprive her of this hard-won opportunity?

**Civilization . . .**

*Silber looks around, using the pause to give emphasis to his keynote sentence:*

**does not abdicate to barbarism on the basis of threats. . . .**

**Rather it calls the police.**

**I am not sold on the idea that if the negro girl had sung, there would have been uncontrollable violence.** What specific event or precedent for this did our administrators have in mind? When, even in the controversial days when Pa Ferguson

was governor, or when President Homer Rainey, fought the legislature on behalf of academic freedom, did the University of Texas explode in violence? . . . .

**If the President was so concerned about the safety of the girl, why did he let her practice on for a whole month living in a “fool’s paradise,” when he knew she was not going to have the part?** Why did he not publicly call her debut<sup>45</sup> off, thus removing the cause for these threats?

**Why**, as he instead allowed the hostility to continue, **did he make no active effort to protect her? Why did the President not meet with her privately? Why have calls not been traced, and why have the police found no suspects?**

### **SCENE 43: FAMILY COMES TO OFFER SUPPORT**

*INT. Barbara’s dorm room, and later what could be a restaurant, or parlor table.*

*Knock on dorm door:*

BARBARA

Mom! DAD! CONNIE!

*Jerrie comes in, and hugs her daughter*

JERRIE LEE

How is my girl doing?

*Barbara hugs Dad.*

CONRAD

We’ve read all about it

CONNIE

*Barbara hugs sister.*

Sis!

BARBARA |

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<sup>45</sup> Pronounced day-BEAU.

*Crying.*

Mom, Connie, you were right! This hasn't been easy.

*Deep hugs. Then to mother:*

You brought your UMBrella. Do you mind if I take it?

JERRI LEE

Its for you dear.

*Later. Mom, Dad and Barbara around a table.*

CONRAD

You did great getting the part Sweetie, no one can expect more than that . . .

BARBARA

*Still distraught, though semi-elated that her family is here.*

I wasted a lot of my time on nothing.

CONRAD

Barbara, that's the way it is sometimes in life. But God doesn't command us to get everything we want. He did die for our sins with the hope that we could play our part with as much faith and love as possible.

JERRIE

But I still think, Conrad, we are all wrong to want to bust into the fickle society of whites. If Barbara had worked like this at Prairie View, we would all be enjoying the opera now.

CONRAD

Dear, the age you are talkin about is past. You know we had a nice community at Center Point. But the school even there is gone, and people are driven automobiles and movin every which way. If we don't open ourselves up, Negroes are going to be living like we did, in a lot unstable Queen Cities, on the edge of everything, rather than inside.



JERRIE

But why does our daughter have to suffer like this?

CONRAD

Barbara, is a great example of the modern age. She is singin the kind of music that all educated people of every race should want to hear. She's letting her light shine just the way she should.

JERRIE

What do you think Barbara?

BARBARA

*Turns imploringly first to mother, then to father, back to mother, and finally to father.*

Moma, you've been great to me throughout my life, and you were right about so much that has happened here.

But I think Daddy is right too. The University Baptist church, knowing my plight, had me sing last Sunday. And after the service, I thought, you know, I may have lost a part, but I have gained a new community here. People of both races are supporting me, I know it. I want to work hard to please them! And if some cracker cuts me down, what can I do? I am not here to preserve a semblance of life, but to live it.

#### **SCENE 44: THE OFFER FROM HARRY BELAFONTE**

*INT. Dorm Telephone.*

CINDY

Barbara, you would not believe who is on the other end of the line?

Harry Belafonte! He's calling from New York. He wants to talk with you!

BARBARA

O come on Cindy, please don't mess with me this morning.

CINDY

No its him! He said a New York paper carried the story from the *Houston Post*. He wants to help you!

BARBARA

Did it sound like him?

CINDY

Oh, it did, it did. NOW QUIT KEEPING HIM WAITING!

BARBARA

*Runs frantically down the hall way.*

BARBARA

*Skeptical.*

Hello . . . . Is this Mr. Harry Belafonte? . . . .

*Listens for a while. Closeup catches a transformation Barbara's frown turns into a surprised Smile.*

Oh . . . I love your Banana Boat song, and all your hits. How did you get my number, why are you calling me? . . .

BARBARA

Well I . . . feel pressed, but not crushed.

*Listens.*

Go to New York? Oh that is so kind of you to offer. That is very kind. . . . It was just as I was saying to my parents, that I lost a part, but I gained friends. And that is even more important. . . . Mr. Belafonte, please don't be angry with me, but I must ask my mother first. . . I could never go to New York without asking my parents.

#### **SCENE 45: JERRIE LEE, and BARBARA CONSIDER IT.**

JERRIE LEE

So Mr. Belafonte has not only given you a call. But now a card, and a letter, and he is willing to help you in New York City?

BARBARA

Yes Moma. I know it sounds unbelievable! But I believe all of it.

JERRIE LEE

Barbara, this is jes great. Jes great. You know how proud I am. But . . .

I am not going to allow my daughter to go to New York City, and be dependent on a young star, who may want some other form or repayment later. Let's keep him on the line, but you need to finish your time at UT first. Let's see how sincere he is.

BARBARA

But Mom, this could be my big chance, my breakthrough!

JERRIE LEE

Girl, you're goin to need a pretty strong UMBrella if you take off to New York City without a degree, and--countin on a divorced young male star to see you through.

BARBARA

But he is agreeing to pay for my plane fare, for all kinds of theatre and dance lessons in New York City, . . . He says he has a foundation, and I believe, he said he knew where I could stay, for a few months at least.

JERRIE LEE

And what about food, and what about if you get sick, and what about bus fare, and what about the kind of people you might have to stay with, what about the books or costumes you might need to study acting or ballet? Did he say anything about that?

BARBARA

No, but . . .

#### **SCENE 46; BARBARA RESOLVES TO STAY at UT**

*INT. BEDROOM.*

MAURIE

Oh I would do anything to stay with Harry Belafonte in New York. Barbara, you must be crazy!

BARBARA

I can't say I haven't dreamt about the possibility. But I think I have found my calling here for now. Dr. Gus says if I can't do a senior recital, she will hire me a lawyer. Reverend Wilkinson wants me to sing more often at University Baptist.

JOANN

Maybe if Mr. Belafonte is sincere, he will help Barbara out down the line. Then Barbara will have more to fall back on. Perhaps she could teach, if her singing career runs into trouble.

MAURIE

Its sounds like a once-in-a-lifetime dream, though.

BARBARA

Yes, I think you are right Cindy. But it is only a dream, and I have to base my career on facts.

CINDY

*Trying to make light of Barbara's professionalism.*

Ouuuuuhhh, Barbara . . . sharp!

JOANN

Barbara, I am so glad you are staying, and I think you are going to help the cause of integration at UT by staying. People will see you again, and again, and be reminded again and again of the injustice done toward you, and this will be good. Plus your Christian character and wonderful singing will remind all the racists, and quasi-racists and pseudo racists on our campus that they are wrong—through and through, to talk about an inferior race.

#### **SCENE 47: Ms. Gus, Nowotny, and John Silber discuss the Barbara story**

*INT. Nowotny, and Silber are in an intense conversation at what appears to be a restaurant, or table in a hotel They spot Edra Gustafson:*

TEXT ON SCREEN

1977 Meeting of the Association of American Universities in New York City

NOWOTNY

Edra, join us! I never thought you too would come to a Meeting of the AAU!

GUSTAFSON

Beaming with a big smile.

Oh yes . . . Arno, . . ! . . . John! We Texas Exes need to stick together! I've made the fateful decision of becoming a Dean rather than retire. And John you are the Boston University President!

SILBER

Yes!

GUSTAFSON

Congratulations, John, you are one University President that makes the news!

NOWOTNY

Yes, isn't it amazing, Edra, that our UT liberal has become a Texas bad boy in Massachusetts, tryin to bust the Yankee faculty Union, and accusing his professors of laziness?

*He winks at Silber, as if to say—in the end I am a better liberal than you have proved.*

GUSTAFSON

John I don't know how you survive day after day!

SILBER

Well the trustees have been very good to us, and supportive.

GUSTAFSON

Have you two watched TV lately?

SILBER

Oh Yes, I heard, your student was on TV!

GUSTAFSON

*Looking first at Silber*

Well you were her greatest defender!

*Looking at Arno*

In fact you were, also!

SILBER

Yes it was our Barbara uhhh . . . . in that ABC miniseries on President Roosevelt

GUSTAFSON

You probably want to say “Barbara Smith.” But Barbara has adopted her father’s first name as her last name, you know, in show business, so now she is Barbara Smith Conrad.

She was absolutely wonderful

SILBER

I am so pleased to see her succeed after all the trouble Logan gave her at UT.

NOWOTNY

She is internationally famous, now. She has made it to the top!

GUSTAFSON

Oh she has, she’s played Carman, she’s been a lead in Aida, sung at the Met, Vienna, my pride and joy. And you both helped make that happen!

SILBER

Well the people at UT did a lot in the end. Getting that fund together at her graduation so that she could accept the rest of that offer from Belafonte, and New York City. . .

GUSTAFSON

Not just Harry Belafonte, and New York, but do you know that former First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, paid part of her way to come to New York?

SILBER

I think I did know that.

NOWOTNY

We sometimes Wonder, Why does someone make it to the truly big time? I think Barbara had two very powerful factors going for her.

One, she was a fanatic. Willing to pursue excellence to the limit.

But two, she see-sawed her way up from the case of victimization at UT, and made it into her path for success. Everyone wondered, what will the girl do who was cheated? She got people’s attention. She kept that attention by doing

the unexpected. Staying at UT, getting her BA, and then leveraging sympathy in Austin for the Barbara Smith fund that got her on a firm footing in New York.

GUSTAFSON

And then leveraging her Texas story in New York City. So that a troubled European Jewish intellectual like Maestro, Julius Rudel, fully aware of what bigotry did to Europe, would attempt to right the wrong in America. He was the final one who made Barbara—giving her a leading role at the Metropolitan Opera.

SILBER

Ah yes, fanaticism, and the ability to leverage misfortune—thank God America still has at least those two ladders to success!

#### **SCENE 48: EPILOGUE. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CHARACTERS.**

*INT and EXT. Camera shows random action scenes of the characters. They should be doing things characteristic of them, lighting up, as engaged in lighthearted or interesting conversation, typing, or talking on the telephone. Writing then appears on the screen with a musical background:*

TEXT ON SCREEN

##### Epilogue

*Focusing on Barbara:*

Barbara Smith Conrad became an internationally acclaimed opera singer, singing for millions as a film artist in the 1970s, singing for President Reagan at the White House, and Pope John Paul II in New York City. In 2009, Texas Representative Bryan Hughes initiated an act in the Texas legislature praising Conrad for her contributions to cultural life. She died in New Jersey in 2017, and was buried in the Texas State Cemetery in Austin.

*Focusing on Wilson:*

Dr. Logan Wilson survived as University of Texas President for four years after the debacle with Barbara Conrad. In 1960 he was replaced by a much more openly integrationist President, Harry Ransom. In a recent history of the University of Texas, Conrad claimed that Wilson never made an effort to visit or reach out to her while she was a student at UT, or afterwards.

*Focusing on Nowotny:*

Dean Arno Notwotny, for many years, the Dean of Student Life at UT, became a popular figurehead of the university. He was known as “shorty” and could be counted on to lead cheers at major UT sporting events. Notwotny initiated many long-term organizations and events at UT and died in 1982.

*Focusing on Silber:*

Dr. John Silber became an acclaimed University of Texas Dean who realized the Nowotny vision of securing great faculty members in the 1960s. He then moved on to become a nationally acclaimed Boston University President. He died in 2012.

*Focusing on the UT Tower or some other symbol.*

The University of Texas did not end legal discrimination until the late 1960s. By this time, Barbara’s struggle had already become something of a UT legend. During the 1980s, UT President Dr. Peter Flawn made an effort to befriend Barbara Conrad. She returned to UT often in the 1990s as a Guest Instructor to teach Master Classes and special seminars in voice. In 2009, on the 50<sup>th</sup> year of her graduation, she returned in triumph to University being feted with a series of receptions and programs. She was featured at that time in a video promotional about the University of Texas.