

# Home at Mount Vernon – A Play

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## Cast of Characters

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### *Speaking Roles*

**NELLY:** *George Washington's Step-granddaughter*

**WASHY:** *George Washington's Step-grandson*

**ONEY JUDGE:** *Martha Washington's enslaved personal servant*

**GEORGE WASHINGTON:** *First President and owner of Mount Vernon*

**JOHANN EHLERS:** *German indentured servant, gardener*

**CHARLOTTE:** *Enslaved house servant, married to Austin*

**JACK:** *Enslaved man, born in Africa*

**AUSTIN:** *Enslaved man, married to Charlotte; brother of Oney*

**FRANK LEE:** *Enslaved man; brother to Billy*

**MARTHA WASHINGTON:** *Wife of George Washington*

**MOLL:** *Enslaved house servant*

**TOBIAS LEAR:** *Tutor and personal secretary to George Washington*

**CORNELIUS McDERMOTT ROE:** *Irish indentured stonemason & bricklayer*

**THOMAS MAHONEY:** *Irish indentured house carpenter & joiner*

### *Non-Speaking Roles*

The following people were very much a part of life at Mount Vernon, and can be working at various tasks in the background of any scene.

**BILLY LEE:** *Enslaved man; personal servant to Washington*

**EDY JONES:** *Enslaved woman*

**BETTY:** *Enslaved woman*

**DICK JASPER:** *Laboring man*

**DOLL:** *Enslaved laboring woman*

**FANNY:** *Enslaved woman*

**HERCULES:** *Enslaved cook*

**CAVEN BOA:** *Irish indentured tailor*

**THOMAS GREEN:** *Hired supervisory carpenter*

# Home at Mount Vernon

## Act I

### Scene 1

*The year is 1791. George Washington is serving as the country's first president. Although he and his family have been living in Philadelphia, the temporary capital of the new nation, a month's visit to Mount Vernon is underway, giving all in the family a break from the busy pace of city life, with time to enjoy the charms of the home, the gardens, and the river views.*

**TIME:** *Early fall, 1791*

**SETTING:** *The West Parlor at Mount Vernon*

*As the play begins, George and Martha Washington's grandchildren, Nelly, age 12, and George Washington, known as "Washy," age 10, are reading in the West Parlor. Washy is restless.*

*Washy sneaks up on Nelly, pulls the open book from her hands and puts it on his chair, then sits down on it so Nelly can't get it back.*

### NELLY

Give me my book! You horrid thing!

### WASHY

You have been reading all day, Nelly. We ought to play a game together! I have no one but you around, and I am so bored!

### NELLY

I will not! You are a horribly spoiled brat! I shall tell on you!

*(She moves as if to leave the parlor.)*

**WASHY**

Go on and tell Grandpapa, then! He dare not punish me! I do as I please.

**NELLY**

*(angrily)*

You believe because you are a boy, you deserve more than I?

**WASHY**

It was your sad fate that caused you to be born a girl!

**NELLY**

We share the same history! Why should your life be so different from mine?

**WASHY**

*(boastfully)*

Because I am a boy, and my destiny is to conquer and rule! I am the grandson of the great General Washington, so I do whatever I want!

**NELLY**

You are still just 10 years old, and able to be punished like a child for being so spoiled and naughty! Now give me my book and leave me be!

*Washy grumpily gets off the chair and reluctantly hands the book to Nelly. The sound of a carriage approaching is heard and Washy rushes to the doorway to look out the West Front entrance.*

**WASHY**

Oh! Listen! Horses! Someone might be coming who will want to play cards!

*Frank Lee, the enslaved butler, moves towards the door at the sound of the horses. He ushers in Johann Ehlers, who is carrying a large portmanteau. He sets it down in the middle of the Central Passage.*

**FRANK LEE**

Sir, allow me to take your belongings to where you will be staying.

**MR. EHLERS**

*(looking concerned)*

Thank you, but no. I prefer to keep this with me.

*Washy makes as if to speak with Mr. Ehlers, but Oney, Martha's personal servant, sees him and blocks his way. Nelly stands back respectfully.*

**ONEY**

*(sternly to Washy)*

Oh no, young man! You know your Grandpapa will not have you bothering a guest! Now off upstairs both of you! You are best not seen or heard until you be sent for!

*Nelly and Washy leave reluctantly, casting curious looks back at the portmanteau. Oney makes a shooing motion as if to sweep them from the room, while George Washington enters and greets Ehlers.*

**WASHINGTON**

Mr. Ehlers, welcome to Mount Vernon. Come sit with me in the parlor. You must be parched after your ride from Alexandria.

*(He speaks to Oney.)*

Tea, please, Oney.

*Ehlers looks back momentarily at the portmanteau left in the Central Passage before following Washington into the parlor.*

**EHLERS**

*(speaking carefully)*

Herr Washington, I am happy to be invited here at your handsome farm.

**WASHINGTON**

Your work for King George as a master gardener was brought to my attention by some recent visitors. They were quite complimentary about the magnificent plantings!

**EHLERS**

*(bowing)*

Thank you, Herr Washington. Forgive me. My English is not so good. You may know the king wanted an English garden. I worked to create this as best I can. The climate there is very good for so many plants and trees.

**WASHINGTON**

Did you find it very much different than what you knew in Germany? You ARE German, are you not?

**EHLERS**

Yes I am! Germany is so much different from England and this place. So many times I think about why I come to this new America. Like all men, I long for the homeland I know best.

**WASHINGTON**

Perhaps you can send for your wife in Germany to join you once you become comfortable here. I brought you here to help me design some new gardens at Mount Vernon.

**EHLERS**

Indeed. It would be an honor to do so. I will work hard for you to repay my journey costs.

**WASHINGTON**

*(nodding)*

Very good. It is farming here at Mount Vernon which gives me great satisfaction.

*Oney returns with the tea. Washington does not look at her, and speaks more to Ehlers.*

**WASHINGTON**

Oney will show you where you will be staying for your employment at Mount Vernon. There you will find the company of others who are also engaged in improvement of the house and the estate.

**EHLERS**

Are there persons who come here from Germany?

**WASHINGTON**

*(smiling)*

Oh, you will find that most everyone here has come from somewhere else.

**EHLERS**

*(bowing again)*

Only you can claim to be native-born of this country, Herr Washington.

**WASHINGTON**

Do not be so sure of that, Mr. Ehlers. ... I am not certain that any of us can say we were here first; except, perhaps, the Indian people. It was they who dwelt here when our ancestors arrived so many generations past.

*As the men are sipping tea, Washy runs into the room despite Oney's efforts to prevent him from doing so. Washy runs up to the two men, interrupting their conversation.*

**WASHY**

Grandpapa, will you teach me that card game like you promised?

**WASHINGTON**

*(putting a hand on Washy's shoulder)*

Mr. Ehlers, let me introduce my very rude grandson – George Washington Parke Custis. He and his sister Nelly have created plenty of new trouble for Mrs. Washington and myself in what was to have been our declining years!

*(Washington smiles – despite his words; he is very fond of both children and shows it.)*

**EHLERS**

*(speaking to Washy)*

Young man, you already have much fortune in being born into this family and this magnificent country.

**WASHY**

*(looking puzzled)*

Yes, sir. Thank you sir.

**WASHINGTON**

*(to Washy)*

Now leave us to talk farming, young man. We've no time for card games as of now.

**WASHY**

*(pouting)*

Yes sir. Good day, Mr. Ehlers.

*(He speaks politely but is clearly irritated at being asked to leave.)*

*Oney holds Washy's arm and walks him out of the room.*

### **EHLERS**

Allow me to say, Herr Washington, that even in England your name is spoken with respect.

### **WASHINGTON**

*(with a slight smile)*

Perhaps this many years after suffering defeat in controlling America, the English people can begin to see more commonalities than differences between our nations.

### **EHLERS**

And that is the wisdom, sir that we have come to expect from your many experiences.

*Washington bows graciously to Ehlers and they exit, leaving the portmanteau behind. Washy and Nelly reappear. They politely lean over to inspect the portmanteau, but don't touch it.*

### **WASHY**

You see – it's a foreign portmanteau! From Germany!

### **NELLY**

So what is so interesting about that? We've so many things here from England and France and elsewhere!

### **WASHY**

*(looking embarrassed)*

I cannot say, but maybe because a foreign man brought it himself! It is from so far away and seems – exotic, I guess you would say.

**NELLY**

*(laughing at her brother)*

You are a funny one, Washy! Everything and everybody comes from somewhere! This portmanteau is more like Grandpapa's than it is different! Now let us go see if we might have more gingerbread. If the kitchen is so busy as always, we should perhaps not be noticed!

*The children leave as Charlotte, a young house slave and seamstress for the family, enters. She looks curiously at the portmanteau in the middle of the Central Passage and moves it over to a wall. Oney, Charlotte's sister-in-law, enters while Charlotte is moving it.*

**ONEY**

You best leave that right where you found it, Charlotte.

**CHARLOTTE**

Why ever? Somebody's likely to fall over it.

**ONEY**

It belongs to a Mister "A- lurz."

*(she exaggerates his name.)*

He is a man who comes here from Germany. You cannot be sure what he carries in that box.

**CHARLOTTE**

Nonsense! It cannot be anything odd. All folks carry the same traveling things with them – shirts n' breeches n' such!

**ONEY**

That is where you be wrong, Charlotte! Foreign folks got foreign tricks and spells on their person!

**CHARLOTTE**

*(tossing her head)*

That be a lot of silliness, Oney! This portmanteau is a great deal shabbier than most! If Mr. Ehlers is so magic-like, why does he not just conjure up a nicer, newer one?

*Jack, an older enslaved man enters. He stops when he sees the two women.*

**JACK**

Women, why you doing nothing but standing about jawing? General Washington's got a fellow to stay and plan out the new gardens. He is joining the rest of the house folks for meals, now. We got us more work!

**CHARLOTTE**

I will not be jumping just because one fellow from Germany arrives now! Why, we've had folks from all over – why is he special? He is indentured for his ship passage here, is he not?"

**JACK**

That is right, Charlotte. An indentured servant is just as much a slave as we be, only he be white and after a few years working, he will walk away free and go wherever he likes.

**ONEY**

If he has the money, that is. No matter how free you are, you always be wanting for money.

**JACK**

*(looking thoughtful)*

That is right, that is right. Only I would rather be poor and free to live my own life, rather than hold all the world's riches and belong to another man as his property.

**ONEY**

Why are some of us born into luck and others not?

**JACK**

*(slowly shakes his head sadly)*

Why is it the chicken has wings but cannot fly out of the chicken coop? Why, indeed.

*He walks off stage still shaking his head, and the two women look at each other and walk off the other direction.*

## Scene 2

**SETTING:** *The East Front of the Mansion, on the Piazza.*

*Washy is playing outside, sitting on the ground. Jack and Austin come on stage. Jack is holding a basket of small fish.*

**AUSTIN**

*(speaking to Jack)*

You have there a fine catch of herring for your supper, I see.

**JACK**

My old bones make catching fish mighty hard, I find. But some small-size herring be running pretty good just now.

*Washy looks up and speaks to the two men.*

**WASHY**

Those are awfully scrawny fish, Jack! Is that the best the river had?

**AUSTIN**

*(laughing)*

The young master is criticizing even the Lord's creations now!

**JACK**

I suppose about all I am good for now is catching a few fish for a family supper.

**AUSTIN**

The child cannot even know how far you had to come just to be content with a catch of puny herring!

**WASHY**

What do you mean, Austin?

**JACK**

Pay him no mind, Master Washington. I am such an old man now I nearly forget the place I come from!

**WASHY**

Why Jack, you have always lived here with Grandpapa and Grandmama!

**AUSTIN**

*(getting slightly angry, but trying not to show it)*

Young sir, do you not know that Jack here was brought as a slave from Africa?

**JACK**

Now, now Austin. He cannot want know of circumstances that do not concern him.

**WASHY**

*(angrily)*

I do want to know! You must tell me where you came from, Jack!

**JACK**

*(looks down at the ground)*

Well, then...all I will say is that I was a child no bigger than you when I got took and sold into slavery. You know, there is folks whose work it is just to steal and sell people to labor hard for no wages.

**WASHY**

I know Africans are bought and sold, but I never gave it much thought.

**JACK**

All I thought about as a child is whether I would die on that trip across the sea! Many of the folks DID die; among them my sister and two younger brothers. Just after that, I got sold to work myself near to death in the fields; but here I am all these years later – still alive but plenty old.

*Just then Charlotte can be heard calling for Austin. She joins them on the piazza.*

**CHARLOTTE**

Austin, now where did you get to?

**AUSTIN**

Just here working, Charlotte!

**CHARLOTTE**

Working at standing about talking?! Come set up the table for the Washington's dinner, now!

*Charlotte tugs on his shirt and pulls him in the direction of the kitchen. Jack laughs, watching Charlotte haul Austin off.*

**WASHY**

*(talking to Jack)*

You miss Africa, Jack?

**JACK**

*(suddenly serious)*

It was quite a long time past. I hardly recall any of it, except that one smell.

*(He looks off in the distance, thinking)*

**WASHY**

Smell of what?

**JACK**

There be some kind of tree, I reckon. Smells of camphor. Spicy. Most heavenly smell in the world. Never smelled it since.

**WASHY**

*(sniffing the air himself)*

Right now, I smell apple pie! I hope Hercules baked a great deal of them. I feel I could eat up a whole bear right now!

**JACK**

That scent of apples cooking is going to remind you some day of home here on the farm at Mount Vernon.

**WASHY**

You think so? When we were in Philadelphia, it just smelled like horses and dung! Too many people in that city! Even if we are only home for a short while, I plan to eat up as much food as I can!

**JACK**

Run along and eat hearty, young Washington!

*(He watches the boy leave and then rubs his stomach regretfully.)*

### SCENE 3

**SETTING:** *The West Parlor at Mount Vernon*

*Nelly is sitting with Martha Washington. They are embroidering. Charlotte, Oney, and Moll are bent over mending.*

**NELLY**

Grandmother, this ivory thimble Grandpapa gave me has a large crack in it! It snags the threads and makes my needlework look careless.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

He will buy you a new one, Nelly, dear. It is his desire that you lack for nothing. Perhaps he can procure a new one from a silversmith in Williamsburg.

**NELLY**

What is ivory? Is it animal bone?

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

I understand it to be something much like bone from a very large animal. That big animal tooth your grandfather has displayed in the Central Passage is from a dead elephant. Craftsmen carve the elephant's ivory tusks into all sorts of clever things.

**NELLY**

Where are the elephants from?

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Elephants are found in the wild, but certainly they are from far, far away in Africa.

**NELLY**

Oh! Like Jack! Washy said Jack told him about being from Africa!

**CHARLOTTE**

*(interrupting the ladies)*

Old Jack cannot recall much of Africa – he tells those tales over and over until he almost believes he can smell it!

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Oh, Charlotte! Jack deserves tolerance; he is quite advanced in age. But what does that mean – he can smell Africa?

**CHARLOTTE**

He says it smell like camphor and spice. Some kind of tree.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

*(musing)*

The tamarind tree perhaps? Whatever it is, pleasant odors bring on thoughts of home.

**NELLY**

Grandmother, what smells of home to you?

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Oh, the plant we called the Myrtle-berry! I too recall the spicy strong smell of a plant! The candles that were made of its wax smelled so lovely. That fragrance now always brings to mind my happy years as a young girl living at Chestnut Grove.

**NELLY**

But are you not happy, now?

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

*(looking a little sad but smiling)*

Of course, dear. What more could I wish for than to be here at Mount Vernon with my family?

**CHARLOTTE**

Folks just pine to feel they be back home.

*Nelly looks at Charlotte with surprise, but Martha Washington continues with her sewing.*

**ONEY**

Charlotte, surely you cannot recall anywhere but here!

**CHARLOTTE**

Oh, that is for certain. But at times I wonder about where my people come from way before we got to be slaves living with the Custis folks.

**NELLY**

That must be odd to not know. I know I have a mother, and she was born in these colonies, and I had a father but he is dead now. Now I have Grandmama and Grandpapa. What else is there to know?

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Every being springs from a mother and is born in a homeland. It unites us, in a way.

**CHARLOTTE**

*(slightly saucy)*

Oh sure, Missus, we are all alike!

**ONEY**

*(warningly)*

Charlotte, you hush yourself.

**CHARLOTTE**

*(looking at Martha)*

I apologize. I was only considering that we all come from somewhere. No matter who we end up being in life.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Now this is all much too serious talk! Nelly, think carefully about what color your new gown shall be! I glimpsed some elegant blue silk taffeta in Philadelphia. Shall we send for a length?

*Nelly nods eagerly and all the women return to their tasks.*

*Washy suddenly bursts in.*

**WASHY**

Nelly! Remember Mr. Ehlers' portmanteau from Germany?

**NELLY**

Oh course, silly. What of it?

**WASHY**

Grandpapa told Austin to carry it to the servants' house and Mr. Ehlers would have nothing to do with that! He said he would take it there himself.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Whatever is so odd about that? Most likely he is used to doing for himself.

**ONEY**

He snapped at me when I tried to move it! He has some kind of spell on that portmanteau.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

That is nonsense talk, Oney, and I will not hear any more of it.

**NELLY**

*(to Washy)*

So what do you think makes it so special?

**WASHY**

I mean to find out!

**MOLL**

Master Washington, you stay on your side of the estate. Let that German man alone to do his work.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

Yes, indeed, Washy. Attend to your own affairs. I believe you have French grammar to do before Mr. Lear arrives for your lessons.

**WASHY**

*(leaving the room with annoyance)*

Yes, ma'am.

**MARTHA WASHINGTON**

*(to Nelly, who nods and laughs)*

Your brother will create any kind of excitement to keep from his lessons, will he not?

## SCENE 4

**SETTING:** *The Bowling Green at Mount Vernon*

*Mr. Ehlers is standing outside, admiring the vast expanse of groomed grass. Tobias Lear approaches him.*

### TOBIAS LEAR

Mr. Ehlers! Allow me to introduce myself to you. I am Tobias Lear, the President's secretary.

### EHLERS

I am happy to meet you! Now I ask how long you work for His Excellency, King Washington.

### TOBIAS LEAR

General Washington would want you to know that he is not a king; rather the elected leader of the people of this new nation. And I have been fortunate to be with him and his family for a number of years now.

*Two men, Cornelius McDermott Roe and Thomas Mahoney, enter carrying several small bushes, the roots wrapped in rough cloth.*

### THOMAS

*(speaking to Ehlers)*

Mr. Ehlers? General Washington wanted you to include these Myrtle-berries into your plan. He said Mrs. Washington favored this particular plant for its scent. He intends it to be a special treat for the lady.

**TOBIAS LEAR**

*(gestures grandly)*

That is why this man is not only first in the heart of his countrymen, but first to his lady and family!

**EHLERS**

*(agreeing)*

A kind gentleman is he to bring Mrs. Washington's long ago memory into his garden.

**TOBIAS LEAR**

She will indeed be pleased he considered her longings for the perfume of this plant from her girlhood. I know he put much time into locating and bringing them to the plantation.

**CORNELIUS**

*(playfully)*

Some candles smell nice and all, but to my mind, there be no better perfume than that of potatoes, or praties as I call them, roasting on a fire!

**TOBIAS LEAR**

I agree with you there, sir! The fragrance of our favorite foodstuffs rivals the sweet scent of any tree's blossom!

*They all laugh.*

**EHLERS**

What you gentlemen say is true – we all long for remembering of the home place. I recall fondly my home of Bremen.

**CORNELIUS**

*(to Ehlers)*

Are you a Dutchman? I hear the accent of a foreigner like myself.

**EHLERS**

I am Johann Ehlers, and I do indeed come from Deutschland, or Germany, as the Americans say.

**CORNELIUS**

My name is Cornelius, and this here is Thomas. Ireland is our home, but we find ourselves come to America for the chance at working to keep food in our bellies.

**EHLERS**

Again, I am hearing of more folks recently arriving in this America!

**TOBIAS LEAR**

And it is understandable! Every man must come from somewhere! That is, except myself, as I am a native-born American.

**THOMAS**

Nay, sir! Look back in your own history and you will see that your people were born elsewhere!

**TOBIAS LEAR**

Well, yes; I myself was born in New Hampshire. A separate place entirely from Virginia.

**CORNELIUS**

And before that, mate?

**TOBIAS LEAR**

I suppose I am English, then, for my distant relations sailed for this New World over a century ago!

**THOMAS**

*(smugly)*

You see!?! Everyone comes from somewhere else – even, you, my friend! For England be a foreign country now to America!

**TOBIAS LEAR**

*(laughing)*

True enough, sir. I stand corrected.

*Washy and Nelly arrive on the scene, rolling hoops. Washy runs into the men because he is not looking up. Tobias puts out his hands to stop him.*

**TOBIAS LEAR**

Here, here, young man! Your French grammar work must be completed for you to run and play so freely!

**NELLY**

*(giving Washy a serious look.)*

He has not done as you asked, Mr. Lear, preferring to spy into the affairs of others! (She gives Washy a serious look.)

**WASHY**

I was NOT spying!

**TOBIAS LEAR**

But the war is over! There is no more need for espionage now, young Washington!

**NELLY**

Washy thinks Mr. Ehlers is carrying secrets in his portmanteau!

**EHLERS**

*(startled)*

Secrets? I?

**WASHY**

Mr. Ehlers, why are you so secretive about the portmanteau you brought to Mount Vernon with you?

**EHLERS**

Young man, I do not believe I need explain, but because you are so curious, I shall show you now.

**WASHY**

*(very surprised)*

Indeed? Now?!

**EHLERS**

Let us return to my room at once so that you may see for yourself what secret I have brought here from Germany.

**NELLY**

Agreed then, Mr. Ehlers. Maybe Washy can forget about this silly idea when he sees that you have brought only practical items for your new life in America.

**THOMAS**

*(calling back to Mr. Ehlers)*

Get those Myrtle-berry bushes into the ground soon, mate, so that Mrs. Washington can get to enjoying their fragrance!

**NELLY**

*(smiling and talking to no one in particular)*

Oh, Myrtle-berry! Grandmama was just speaking of them! How lovely of Grandpapa to have them included in Mount Vernon's gardens!

*Mr. Ehlers, Nelly, Tobias, and Washy all walk over to the servants' house doorway. Mr. Ehlers reaches in and brings out the portmanteau. Oney, Charlotte, Jack, and Austin gather too – all watching curiously.*

**EHLERS**

Now then, young man, let me show you the magic I have brought all this way from Germany.

*He opens the portmanteau, which is now light and empty except for a thin bit of twig, its roots wrapped with damp linen. Mr. Ehlers holds it out to Washy, proudly.*

**WASHY**

*(disappointed)*

A stick?

*(then, brightening)*

A magic wand, perhaps?

**NELLY**

Oh Washy – you see, this is a tiny tree! Much like the Myrtle-berry plants Grandpapa is to have planted for Grandmama! They will bring her the happy smell of home!

**EHLERS**

*(bowing to Nelly)*

Correct, young lady! A black currant cutting brought from Germany. I mean to plant it here as a memento from my homeland. In time, it should produce most delicious berries.

**CHARLOTTE**

*(pushing in)*

I knew there was no magic or spells in that portmanteau!

**ONEY**

*(also coming forward)*

Can we be sure? How are we going to trust this man who comes from who knows where?

*George Washington walks up to the group. He addresses Tobias Lear.*

**WASHINGTON**

Mr. Lear! Why is so little work being accomplished just now? What is the distraction?

**WASHY**

*(interrupting before Tobias can speak)*

Grandpapa! Mr. Ehlers brought a magic stick all the way from Germany!

*The assembled company laughs – except Oney who remains looking serious and suspicious.*

**WASHINGTON**

Magic, you say! How does it work? Do I have cause to be afraid?

**EHLERS**

*(smiling)*

The only magic is to bring alive the smell and taste of Germany in the spring. It is a black currant vine. I hope you would allow me to plant it here. There is no better way to taste Germany!

### WASHINGTON

That is indeed a unique kind of magic, Mr. Ehlers. I understand your affection for growing such memories. The careful tending of plants which provide thoughts of home can bring comfort those who long for reminders of familiar place.

### TOBIAS LEAR

(speaking to Washington)

Sir, that truth is heard in your humble reminders that we should find ways to unite through our humanity, rather than divide our nation through trivial concerns and arguments.

### WASHINGTON

Mr. Lear, you make a better statesman than many men! My words coming from you sound profound, indeed!

### WASHY

(petulantly)

What do all these words mean? You talk, and talk, but I cannot understand!

### ONEY

Master Washington, these fine gentlemen are saying what we all know to be true amongst folks: we are more alike than we are different. All folks come from somewhere, and everybody most likely be headed off to somewhere else, in time.

### EHLERS

Mr. Washington, I know your custom is to hear the wisdom of esteemed men such as yourself, but I cannot help but think Oney has spoken very much a truth.

*Oney bobs her head slightly in acknowledgement of this remark. Washington looks thoughtful.*

*Washington, Lear, and Ehlers resume talking quietly and along with Washy, they walk off. Charlotte and Oney are left alone and when Charlotte sees that the men are some distance away, she talks to Oney.*

**CHARLOTTE**

And you tell me to hush when I be sassing to Mrs. Washington?!

**ONEY**

Charlotte, what I say is not sassing; it be the truth! General Washington himself has said it before!

**CHARLOTTE**

I do not know about that, Oney. But he surely is thinking more about it now! That has got to be the only time a slave owner thought about where everybody came from just to do his work!

**ONEY**

If anyone can turn thought over in his mind, it is the General. Something will come of it yet....but enough of this pondering, Charlotte. We have a great deal more work to do.

**CHARLOTTE**

*(she shoves Oney's shoulder in a friendly way and speaks loudly)*

I will be pondering all that until the day I am free to come and go when and where ever I want! I surely came from somewhere and I want the chance to decide for myself where I am going to live out my days rather than everyone else always deciding it for me!

**ONEY**

*(sadly)*

I cannot help but wonder how that will ever happen for us, Charlotte. But you reckon we might at least hope?

*Charlotte nods and the two women pick up baskets and walk slowly off in the opposite direction than Washington and the others.*

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*The play is finished.*