

Scene Seven
Fire Escape
Moments Later

(STUART alone on the fire escape landing, reciting from his script to the stars above.)

STUART AS HOTSPUR. By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap

To pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned honor by the locks,
So he that doth redeem her hence might wear
Without corrival all her dignities.

(IDA walks onto the landing, not realizing STUART is there, a basket full of needle, thread, cloth, and dried beans in her arms.)

IDA. Oh! I'm sorry, Stuart, I can –

STUART. No, stay. Please. It's a lovely night and I could use the company.

(IDA smiles sympathetically.)

IDA. You know, that was brave of you in there. Sharing what you did.

STUART. Guess I'd rather be called swish than yellow.

IDA. June feels awful.

STUART. Oh, it's not her fault, poor kid. It's Maggie that – I thought she always had my back. But apparently she thinks I'm not even good enough for a stage army.

IDA. Right.

STUART. So, what are they doing in there?

IDA. Maggie was upset, took a break, left Celeste in charge. She's leading a masculine-walk workshop.

STUART. Oof. Deliver me.

IDA. *(Of her basket.)* Gave me a project, too.

STUART. What's that?

IDA. *(Smiling.)* You'll see tomorrow.

STUART. Can't wait. You know, I haven't seen you smoke before.

IDA. That's 'cause I don't. But I come out here sometimes. When I want to be alone.

STUART. What's wrong?

IDA. Oh, I went to give blood today. June inspired me. What with her Victory Socks and rubber drives and Junior League.

STUART. I might have some cookies inside if you're light-headed?

IDA. No, it's not that. I never got close to a needle. That nurse looked me in the eye and told me they were all set.

STUART. All set?

IDA. For colored blood.

STUART. Ida, that's absolutely dreadful.

IDA. There's this poem? It was in the last issue of *Negro Story* – the last stanza, after that nurse, it keeps running through my head:

"Goodbye to the days of the jig and shine boy;

And hello, brother.

We will live with you, work with you,

And sing in your songs your sorrow.

We will weep for your dead as we mourn our own,

And place our blood beside yours upon the altar."

STUART. Gee.

IDA. Our blood, Stuart. Yours, mine. It belongs in that blood bank and it belongs here *(The theater.)*, together on this altar, on that stage in there.

STUART. I'm not sure I follow.

IDA. I saw what happened to you just now, and I – I have a proposition.

(STUART sits up.)

STUART. Do tell.

