WHEN THE LEVEE BROKE
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Early that same morning. Georgie is dressed in her work clothes. She is tired and overworked. She takes a short cut onto Lester road. The Mississippi not too far off in the distance.

Her straw hat hangs from around her neck as she puts her hair up in a tight bon.

A flirtatious whistle from off.

Georgie looks behind her and then rolls her eyes. Curtis, a sixteen year old black boy appears.

He too is dressed to work the fields.

CURTIS
Knew my eyes weren’t trickin me. Ain’t a boy this side of the Mason Dixon line got a behind like Georgia Winter.

GEORGIE
Curtis Duncan you’re a real dog.

CURTIS
Just callin it like I sees it.

His overalls hang down past his waist. He removes a toothpick from his pocket and puts it in his mouth.

GEORGIE
Where you comin from?

CURTIS
Home, silly.

Georgie glares at Curtis.
CURTIS
Yah that’s right. Asked Mr. Percy last week. Said I could switch over to the farm on Harrison road. Be with you.

Curtis moves in closer on Georgie.

GEORGIE
Negro, please.

Curtis throws a rock into the Mississippi.

CURTIS
Come on girl. I know you feel it too. Don’t you think its time? Be with a real man. Tired of playin games.

Georgie snorts.

GEORIGE
Ain’t playin nuthin with you Curtis.

They walk on.

CURTIS
So what’s it like workin for Mr. Percy?

Georgie picks up a rock.

GEORGIE
Don’t look at him much. Just take my money and leave.

Beat.

I know one thing for sure...better not let him catch you actin out. You come to Harrison field; he’ll put you to work for sure. Everybody round here know we pick the most cotton per day.

CURTIS
Like you special.

GEORGIE
Know I is at least.

Beat. Curtis is covered in sweat.

CURTIS
Girl ain’t you hot? Know I’m hot.

Georgie yawns.

GEORGIE
Ain’t even seven in the mornin.

CURTIS
Speak for yourself. It’s hot as hell. Got me looking like a burnt biscuit.

GEORGIE
Just means the rain is comin is all. Cool us off.

CURTIS
Well it sure needs to hurry up.

A couple other workers walk by in the other direction. They nod to Curtis and Georgie and then are gone. The cotton field appears around them.

CURTIS
You swim?

GEORGIE
Like a fish.

CURTIS
After work a few of us are headed towards the river. Cool off. Should come.

Voices are heard and more workers are seen. All gathered around in one area.

GEORGIE
Can’t. Busy.

CURTIS
With what? Whatchu busy with?

GEORGIE
Nonya.

CURTIS
Coupla of the girls are comin with me and John Houston. Sally Walker and Janice Kerr.
GEORGIE
Sally Walker is a loose girl. I hear she swim naked.

Georgie continues to walk, Curtis grabs her hand—he looks at her face long and hard.

Ow, what you grabbing me for!

Curtis is still. His eyes still on Georgie.

CURTIS
Don’t know. Just look different to me is all.

The two turn to see that a crowd has formed by the barn behind them.

A white man wearing a suit and top hat stands on the bed of a wagon front and center.

After a moment the man in the wagon takes his hat off revealing himself. Upon seeing the face of Governor Wallace, faint whispers are heard from the workers beneath him.

The Governor raises his hand and all fall silent.

A moment later he takes his top hat and puts his hand inside of it. He then takes his hand out in a dramatic gesture holding it up, revealing nothing in it.

He then holds the top hat open and out for all to see that his hat is in fact, empty.

His eyes scan the crowd until he finds his volunteer. Her name is Inez. She is a heavy set woman of fifty. Her hair is completely white. Her features are soft.
Inez instantly looks at the ground beneath her feet. The Governor examines her long and hard.

WALLACE
What’s your name, darlin?

Inez looks up at the Governor and then back down at the ground.

INEZ
Inez…Sir. My name is Inez Samson.

The Governor nods as the messenger at the edge of the crowd pulls out a list and scan it until they find Inez’s information.

WALLACE
Inez. You got yourself a right beautiful name. Right beautiful.

The crowd continue to look at one another. Inez has not moved.

Say, I sure would be obliged if you’d do me a little favor.

She looks at him.

Right quick. I promise.

She nods.

Inez. Could you place that delicate little hand of yours into my hat? I think there might be something in it. Somethin just for you. No one else.

She looks around at the crowd.

Go on. It’ll be alright.

She walks over to the Governor and places her hand on the tip of the hat. The Governor smiles.

Make sure you get deep in there, Inez.
She puts her hand further into the hat. After a moment she feels something. She pulls it out her hand revealing a crisp ten-dollar bill.

Take it. It’s yours.

A voice from the crowd booms.

VOICE

Is it real, Inez?

Inez holds the money in her hand, she is speechless as she nods.

WALLACE

Inez—how much cotton do you pick in one day?

Inez looks around at the others.

Don’t be frightened. Take your time.

INEZ

Depends on the day, Sir.

WALLACE

Is that right?

INEZ

Depends on the heat, too... I’d say the most cotton I’ve picked in one day could fill about half of that sac you got up there.

Wallace examines one of his bags.

WALLACE

Half of this?! With those little hands of yours. Well I’ll be damned, Inez. That surely is something.

INEZ

Thank you, Sir.

WALLACE

And Mr. Percy? How much would he pay for a sac half that size?
Inez looks around.

It’s okay. Mr. Percy knows I’m here.

INEZ

Bout...three dollars, sir.

WALLACE

How many hours of work, Inez?

INEZ

Hours?

A few in the crowd chuckle.

From sun up to sun down, Sir. Go by light here.

Wallace examines Inez long and hard.

WALLACE

I see. Thank you, Inez.

Wallace paces in front of the crowd.

What if I were to say that I’ve traveled from far away from here to tell all of you that as a sharecropper working on this side of the Mississippi... your life is about to change. For the better.

What if I were to say that?

The Governor is still. No one says a word.

Micah a tall built man in his thirties speaks.

MICAH

I’d say you was crazy, Sir.

The Governor looks up, spotting MICAH in the distance.

WALLACE

Young man. Yes, you... what’s your name?
MICAH holds his head high.

MICAH

The man with the note pad checks the list. Micah watches him.

Wallace takes this in.

WALLACE
Micah: “He who is most like God.”

Are you a man of faith?

MICAH
Yes, Sir. Say my prayers every night, Sir.

Wallace holds out his hat.

WALLACE
Young man…If you will.

Micah comes forward. The Governor pulls out another crisp bill.

Can you tell me what this is?

MICAH
Well, it’s money, Sir.

WALLACE
Indeed it is.

Beat.

And do you... He who is most like God have faith in little ol me... that I can take this bill and turn it into something else?

A moment. Micah looks at the crowd and then Wallace.

Why, I suppose so, Sir. Whatever you say, Sir.
Wallace puts the dollar into the hat.

If you have faith... touch it... just once...

Micah touches the hat. Wallace walks through the crowd.

All of you...

He walks through the crowd as one by one they touch the hat.

WALLACE
Ladies and Gentlemen: I’ve come here on behalf of somethin bigger than all of us. Up North, they say there’s a storm headed this way. A storm of astronomical proportions. And I’d rather slit my own throat as the Governor of this state than see this miraculous land we stand on torn to shreds by the devils makin.

I am here on behalf of faith. Because God himself has spoken to me—yes, siree he sure has... and he has led me here to this very spot where you all stand.

He examines them all long and hard.

I am here to make the ground beneath our feet an Arc that will withstand the floods of Illinois. My mission is to recruit the best and brightest workers of Greenville Mississippi. You. The people of Harrison cotton field! Whatever Percy pay’s you... I’ll triple it. Whatever breaks you get... I’ll triple that too.

Will this mission be difficult? Yes. Will we get tired? Yes. But Strength is only in the mind. Together our hands will follow.

After everyone in the crowd has touched his hat.

Micah.

Micah takes the hat. He looks into it.

Go on.
Micah puts his hand into the hat and lifts it up. His fist is filled with sand.

MICAH
Lord have mercy /Jesus...

WALLACE
By a show of hands whose with me? Who of you will follow me through the flood and into the Promised /Land!

MICAH
Look what he did!

A hand is raised. Followed by another.

WALLACE
Yes/ Sir!

MICAH
It’s /sand!

More hands.

Yes! Praise him! Praise him high /above! For he is good to me!

Micah looks at the crowd in disbelieve.

MICAH
He turned the/ money into sand!

More hands, followed by the rest. Wallace claps, shouting like a preacher to his choir. The crowd stares in amazement, followed by cheers and hoops.

WALLACE
Hallelujah! Praise the merciful Lord in all his glory. For today... he has surely blessed us all.
Amen.

The crowd continues to cheer as Wallace stands in glory and the lights slowly fade to black.