



The Death of Emmett 'Bobo' Till

CULTURE SHOCK

The Original Stageplay

CHRISTIAN PLAYWRIGHT

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Sample Script



WEDNESDAY

LIGHTS UP

Two African American boys are seated at the checker table playing checkers in silence.

Roy exits the store carrying a suitcase.

He stops to look at the boys with a slight disgust.

Carolyn comes out behind him. Roy turns to face her.

ROY: Your sister-in-law Juanita should be here soon.

CAROLYN: I know.

ROY: I'll be sure to bring something back for you and the boys from Texas.

CAROLYN: I know that too.

ROY: Where are them boys by the way?

CAROLYN: In the back!

ROY: Make sure they're in bed by 7:00 and remember to lock the doors before you leave and turn off all the lights 'cxept that one on the front porch.

CAROLYN: Ok.

Pause.

ROY: Carol, look...I'm sorry 'bout what I said back there. It's just that...

Roy looks at the boys, he speaks a little softer.

ROY: I don't like having colored people hanging around out here. It makes me nervous.

CAROLYN: Roy, just go. I can take care of myself.

ROY: I wish you wouldn't be so naïve.

CAROLYN: Stop calling me naïve!

ROY: Sorry. But one a them days those colored people is gonna get outta line.

CAROLYN: Just go, Roy...don't let us have another argument.

Roy considers.

He nods and kisses her on her cheek. He picks up his suitcase and exits.

Carolyn watches him leave. She then turns and goes back into the store leaving the door half open.

NARRATOR: I've long considered the whole concept of death. I have even concluded that no one can die before their appointed time and, in most cases, as you carefully examine all the events leading up to that time...it seems like pieces of a puzzle being placed in its exact position. *(slight pause)* Yet, in the case of Emmett 'Bobo' Till, let every man be his own judge.

GREG: Mr. Bryant don't like us being around.

LUCIEN: Yeah, but he ain't got much choice in the matter. Without us colored folks, his shop wouldn't have customers.

GREG: But he always talking mean and I hear he sometimes beat up on some of the other folks when they don't do what he says.

LUCIEN: He's just ignorant. But he knows he needs us just as much as we need his service.

GREG: Yeah.

LUCIEN: As long as we stick to just business, we a'right.

Emmett and his cousin, Curtis enter.

They stop a little way from the checker table where Lucien and Greg are deep in the game.

CURTIS: Bobo, remember mama's warning.

EMMETT: I remember...but I ain't let nobody take me for a liar.

CURTIS: I really think we should just leave.

EMMETT: Not yet.

Emmett takes a photograph from his pocket and stares at it.

EMMETT: A couple more minutes, cous....that's all I'm asking.

CURTIS: Ohhh...

EMMETT: Will you try to relax.

CURTIS: Oh, I'm trying....

They join those at the checker table.

EMMETT: Hey...

LUCIEN: Hey...

EMMETT: Whose winning?

LUCIEN: Who do'ya think?

EMMETT: Right, right! Maybe you need to teach Greg how to play.

LUCIEN: So he can start winning. I ain't think so. Whatcha doing here anyways?

GREG: Yeah, you come to spread more lies.

LUCIEN (*speaks without looking up from the table*): What say you, Chicago boy.

EMMETT: I brought proof that I ain't lying.

LUCIEN (*looks up this time*): Yeah, go ahead...make your case.

Emmett hands them the pictures.

LUCIEN: Whoa!

GREG: You ain't kidding.

EMMETT (*smiles triumphantly*): Told ya. (*folds his arm*)

LUCIEN: But...you got to do better than that, Bo.

Just then Carolyn Bryant steps from the store with a broom in hand.

She starts sweeping the curb.

EMMETT (*grabs his pictures*): Man, you guys are hardheaded.

CURTIS: What more proof do ya need?

LUCIEN: Them just pictures man. You expect us to swallow your story that you been with white girls because you took a picture standing beside one of ‘em.

EMMETT: It’s proof, ain’t it?

Lucien glances over at Carolyn.

When he looks back, Greg nods at him with a sheepish smile.

LUCIEN: We know how you can prove yourself beyond any shadow of a doubt.

EMMETT: Yeah, how. Tell me and I’ll do it.

LUCIEN: You talking mighty big, Bo...there’s a pretty little white woman over there. Since you know how to handle white girls, let’s see you get a date with her.

CURTIS: Ohhh...Bobo, bad idea.

LUCIEN: You ain’t chicken, are you Bo?

EMMETT: I ain’t chicken.

LUCIEN: Go ahead.

Emmett walks boldly over to Carolyn.

CURTIS: Ohhh...

GREG: Stop winning, you sissy!

Lucien and Greg chuckle.

Curtis is almost wetting his pants.

EMMETT: Halo, ma'am.

Carolyn stops sweeping.

CAROLYN: May I help you with something?

EMMETT: Apart from two cents worth o' bubble gum, how's about a date, baby.

Curtis gasps, slaps his hand over his mouth.

CAROLYN: Excuse me!

EMMETT: Ya know...dinner...where two people sit 'round a table and have some chow.

CAROLYN: You have some nerve talking to me like that.

EMMETT: You don't like the way I talk, baby?

CAROLYN: Please leave.

Emmett grabs her by her waist.

Lucien and Greg are no longer smiling; they start to shake in their boots.

LUCIEN: Ah, Bo...

EMMETT: You needn't be afraid o' me, baby. I been with white girls before.

CAROLYN (*open mouth*): Ah...

Carolyn pulls away from him and heads for the door to the store.

Emmett eyes her and wolf whistles before she disappears behind the door, slamming it loudly.

CURTIS: Ohhh..

Only Emmett is laughing at this point.

Lucien and Greg can't believe what he just did.

LUCIEN: Hey, gotta go...see ya in heaven, man.

They dash off quickly.

CURTIS: Ohhh...

Emmett slaps Curtis.

EMMETT: Stop that! It's no big deal a'ight.

Emmett grabs Curtis' arm, and they exit.

The door opens and Carolyn storms out with a gun (.38 colt) hoisted in front of her.

She looks left and right, but no one else is there.

Her Sister-in-law, Juanita, run out behind her.

JUANITA: What happened?

Carolyn is too shaken to respond right away.

She turns for the door, but Juanita grabs her.

JUANITA: Tell me what just happened here, Carol.

CAROLYN: Boy...Boy just touched me....asked me for a date.

JUANITA: Boy? You mean a black boy?

Carolyn nods.

JUANITA: Lord have mercy.

CAROLYN: Roy will deal with it when he gets back.

JUANITA: Roy will kill him if he finds out.

Carolyn stares at Juanita a bit.

CAROLYN: I'm not good at keeping secrets, Juanita.

JUANITA: There has been enough bloodshed, sis...we have to try.

Carolyn nods. She goes back into the store.

Juanita looks around to see if there's anyone watching.

She then follows behind Carolyn.

The stage remains quiet and lighted for a beat, and then...

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Mamie Till-Bradley sits alone on a stool.

She hesitates before speaking.

MAMIE: I warned him so many times and...even as I watched that train pull away, I knew...somehow...my words had fallen on deaf ears. “Be Careful,” I said, “If you had to get down on your knees and bow when them white folks go past, do it willingly.”

(Pause)

Emmett Till was always too much a man to listen.

(Pause)

Course you know somet’ing like that is hard to keep quiet.

LIGHTS OUT

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