

“PERCHANCE”

**a play in one act
by
Angela Wilson**

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The cast of characters:

ABEL	The ghost of a murdered President, 30 years old.
WILKES BOOTH	An actor/assassin, 26 years old.
EUGENIA	A black woman, between 35 and 45 years old
ROSETTA	A devout confederate soldier, in her late 30's

In a barn back of the big house, a slave woman, Eugenie, is visited by the ghost of Lincoln who's come to await the arrival of the fugitive John Wilkes Booth. While the wounded Booth is tended by the master's free-spirited daughter Rosetta, Eugenie helps Lincoln beat up his killer. A play of magic realism — not to mention sweet payback for that most dreaded of creatures, "an actor with a political opinion."

The Setting:

A barn. Late afternoon. April 1865.

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(AT RISE: EUGENIE is squatting over a bucket, reciting her memorized lines from Shakespeare, pondering the meaning of the words. When she rises, she goes to empty the contents, but is diverted by the sound of gunshots and dogs barking. She is embarrassed as she attempts to find somewhere to put the bucket.)

EUGENIE

“I dare do all that may become a man, who dares no more, is none.”

Mr. Abel? You can come back in now. I ain't mad at you no more. Silly gettin' mad at a ghost anyways.

“I dare do all that may become a man, who dares no more, is none.” That means we got to try to find some..... definition for being a human bein' and then follow the definition to the letter. And if we don't follow that definite definition, we ain't a human bein' at all.

(ABEL, a ghost, enters, carrying a prized volume of Shakespeare)

But we are a human bein' even if we don't have no words for it.

ABEL (presenting the volume as a gift)

Words are dreams. I give you “dreams.”

EUGENIE

With pretty words like that, I might never had no worse day, Mister Abel.

If I could have anything I want it would rather be to see my man again and hear him speak these pretty words, Shakespeare's words, lyin' down on a pretty yard with flowers.... somewheres of our own. Only the Good Lord could give me somethin' like that, Mr. Abel. But I see my man in my sleepin' dreams.

ABEL (lazily)

To sleep. Perchance to dream. If you could have anything you want, anything at all, and if I could give it to you, what would it be?

EUGENIE

If you could give it to me? I would want from you one thing, Mr. President....a word.

ABEL

A word. (*Annoyed*) Oh, yes. Freedom? And what is freedom?

EUGENIE

Same as honor. A word. But what makes you think I was goin' to say the word "freedom?" Maybe I don't care about freedom. What would I do with freedom? Maybe I would do lots of things. Maybe not.

ABEL

Well, we'll change the subject. To Beauty. What is it like to be real pretty? Think of one word.

EUGENIE

Oh, Mister Abel, I ain't pretty. I ain't even young anymore. Heck, you ain't young anymore, though you look round thirty years old.

You tell me, what's it like to be real homely? - (*Giggling*)

ABEL

I recall two women passing by me when I was a young man and upon seeing my face, one of them fainted. I rose to tend to her and her companion walloped me. She said 'get away from her, you ugly fool, can't you see your ugly face has made my sister prostrate with fear?' I asked, 'what do you rightfully suppose I can do about the Lord adorning me with an ugly face?'

EUGENIE

What she say?

ABEL

She said, 'you could STAY HOME, that's what you could do!' Stay home!

(*Pause.*)

EUGENIE

