

**Please choose this scene to prepare if you are in the age range of  
15-20  
Read the Role of Young Maya**

**SCENE 5**

*(Summer morning. The yard in front of the Store.)*

MAYA: All adults had to be addressed as Mister, Missus, Miss, Auntie, Uncle, Cousin, Sister, Brother and a thousand other appellations. Everyone I knew respected these customary laws, except for the powhitetrash children. *(Young Maya enters with a rake)* One summer morning, I raked the dirt yard of leaves and spearmint-gum wrappers –

YOUNG MAYA: and then I made a careful design of half-moons to make it look

nice. MAYA: I put the rake back

YOUNG MAYA: and came around to find Grandmother on the front porch admiring my work. *(SQ faraway laughter)*

MOMMA: Then she looked up the road.

YOUNG MAYA: A troop of the powhitetrash girls were marching over the hill.

MAYA: We could hear their laughter. Crackling and popping like pine logs in a cooking stove. YOUNG MAYA: Momma did an excellent job of sagging from the waist down –

MAYA: but from the waist up –

YOUNG MAYA: she seemed to be pulling as tall as the oak

tree. MOMMA: Sister, go on inside. *(begins to hum)*

MAYA: *(she watches her hum)* – I wanted to beg her,

YOUNG MAYA: Momma, come on inside with me. If those girls come into the Store, you go to the bedroom and let *me* wait on them. Alone I know how to handle them. They only frighten me if you're around.

MAYA: But of course, I didn't say anything

YOUNG MAYA: and went inside

MAYA: and stood behind the screen door. *(SQ girls laughter and chatter closer)* The girls came to stand in the yard

YOUNG MAYA: right in front of Momma. *(Momma continues to hum)* Then one of them crossed her arms, pushed out her mouth and started to hum. She was mocking my grandmother. Another said *(SQ. "Naw Helen, you ain't standing like her. This here's it")* Then she lifted her chest and mocked her - their elder, my grandmother, Annie Henderson. *(SQ. "Naw, you can't do it. Your mouth ain't pooched out enough. It's like this.")* Through the fly-speckled screen-door I could see Momma as she sang on. No louder than before, but no softer either. No slower or faster. The dirt on the girls' dresses continued on their legs, feet and faces. Their greasy uncolored hair uncombed. I started to remember them for all time. *(SQ "Look here, Annie." Giggles)* Then one crossed her eyes and stuck her thumbs in both sides of her mouth. I wanted to throw a handful of black pepper in their faces, to scream that they were dirty scummy peckerwoods! But I knew I couldn't. Suddenly, the tallest girl did a hand stand. *(SQ Girls laughing and clapping.)* Her dirty bare feet went straight for the sky. Her dress fell down. She had on no drawers. How long could Momma hold out? *(SQ more giggling. Momma keeps singing)* Finally, they started moving out

MAYA: one at a time -

YOUNG MAYA: They shook their slack behinds *(SQ "Bye, Annie. Bye, Annie. Bye, Annie.")*

MOMMA: Bye, Miz Helen. Bye, Miz Ruth. Bye, Miz Eloise.

YOUNG MAYA: *(Tears and anger flow)* Why did Momma have to call them Miz? The mean nasty things! *(Momma bends down and lays her hands on Young Maya)*

MAYA: Then she looked at me. Her face a brown moon shining on me. She was so beautiful. Something had happened out there – I could see

YOUNG MAYA: she was

happy. MOMMA: *(Look and*

*Nods)*

MAYA / YOUNG MAYA: Momma had won.

*(Maya watches Young Maya take the rake back to the yard. Young Maya easily erases the powhitetrash girls' footprints from the dirt. She begins to create a new design in the dirt.)*

MAYA: I erased the powhitetrash girls footprints from the dirt with ease

YOUNG MAYA: and began to make a new design

MAYA: It was a large heart -

YOUNG MAYA: With lots of hearts growing smaller inside...

*(Lights shift)*