

VIRGINIA Southern. In tenuous charge of the homestead. Somewhat sad, somewhat vindictive. Talks to the audience.

DONALD Southern. The somewhat nervous, but determined, brother of Virginia. Talks to the audience.

MISSY SUE Also Southern, but from the other side of the tracks. Donald's girlfriend.

SETTING: The spacious entry hall to Virginia and Donald's home. Essentially a living room with typical furniture. There is an entrance from the outside, upstage center. All the exits and entrances to the rest of the house come from random parts of the stage, with no consistency. The play takes place in a mythical, gentile South.

COSTUMES: Donald and Missy Sue are dressed nicely: he like a young Republican, she more like a Denny's waitress going out dancing. Virginia doesn't go out much and dresses for comfort.

TIME: The present.

(At rise, the stage is empty. Voices are heard offstage.)

Donald *(off)* Now there is no reason to be nervous.

Missy Sue *(off)* Oh, I'm not!!

(DONALD peers in nervously.)

Donald Okay... it's clear. Come in now.

Missy Sue *(entering)* Great! Oh this place is just darling. I mean, it's huge, too, but huge and darling all at once!

(For the remainder of the scene, DONALD speaks in a hushed tone, and tries to subtly imply that she should do the same.)

Donald The decor was mostly chosen and arranged by my mother a long time ago.

Missy Sue She has great taste.

Donald Had.

Missy Sue Had? Oh, I'm sorry, sweetie.

Donald Don't be. I never knew her, but she left me and my sister well provided for. I appreciate her a great deal, but I don't, you know... miss her.

Missy Sue That's how I am about my Dad! We have sooo much in common!

Donald Your father's dead?

Missy Sue No, but he was gone before I could talk. Only he didn't do much providing, before or after he left.

Donald Ah. Well, shall we... I mean could we...
(*indicating go into the rest of the house*)

Missy Sue I have to use the bathroom first!

Donald It's down the hall to the left.

Missy Sue Back in a jiff!

(*She starts to exit and runs into VIRGINIA entering.*)

Virginia Hello.

Missy Sue Holy goodness!

Donald Virginia. You're... up.

Virginia I heard you come in. Hello. I'm Virginia.
You must be...

Missy Sue Missy Sue.

Donald Donald's told me so much about you.

Missy Sue He has? Aw...

Donald Well... uh... how could I not, Missy Sue? You know you monopolize my thoughts even when you're not around.

Virginia Were you going to the bathroom?

Missy Sue Wow, he said you were psychic.

Virginia Did he?

Donald Well, psychic, I suppose--

Virginia Telepathic, nosy, what's the difference, right? The closest bathroom is the third door on the left, but I strongly suggest taking the extra few steps up the stairs, turning right and entering something you'll like a lot more.

Donald Well, yes, the master bathroom is bigger, but--

Missy Sue I'll take your advice. It's so wonderful to finally meet you, Virginia!

(MISSY SUE exits. VIRGINIA walks up to DONALD and places her hand gently on his cheek.)

Virginia She's lovely. *(turns to the audience.)* This is the part where we lie to each other. *(turns back to him)* Where did you meet her?

Donald Bingo.

Virginia Do you play?

Donald Once in a while. *(turns to the audience)* Okay, never. It was at a coffee shop. *(turns back to her)* We've had a very whirlwind romance.

Virginia So it would seem... *(to audience)* ... since just last week it was some other tramp. *(to him)* What does she do, so that I can act as if you'd ever mentioned her before.

Donald Plays the tuba.

Virginia Interesting choice.

Donald All right, she cheerleads.

Virginia Naturally.

Donald I love her.

Virginia Oh ho ho ho. That's a funny thing to say. Unless you're actually thinking it, in which case it's just fucking sad. *(to audience)* This is the part where we find our honest tongues. *(to him)* She's a child. In the one-hundred volume memoirs of you life, what shall we call the Missy Sue period? The late-TWENTIES crisis? That book's chapters are becoming repetitious. You get me?

Donald I... understand your meaning. I can see where it would look that way. But--

Virginia No. There is nothing for you to do but get rid of her as soon as possible. I mean, really, how old is she?

Donald *(to audience)* This is the part where I get honest. *(turns to her, pauses)*. Fifteen.

Virginia Nice.

Donald But I haven't touched her. *(to audience)* This is the part where I leave it up to you to make up your own mind about the truth.

Virginia *(to audience)* Please. *(to him)* You haven't laid a finger on her? Really.

Donald Never sexually. Missy Sue's... a visceral young woman. There's lots of touching. But I can assure you, it has gone no further.

Virginia Listen to yourself... sad. Sad sad sad!

Donald We're leaving together.

Virginia On the run from the law?

Donald No! To Alabama, where our love will be legal. Where our MARRIAGE will be legal!

Virginia I'm... marriage? Alabama??? *(to audience)* Sometimes you don't know what to say, how to help people see clearly... *(to him)* I guess... I guess I'm in shock. She's in on this plan?

Donald It was her idea.

Virginia Oh. When are you...

Donald *(to audience)* Sometimes you don't know what to say, how to really say "fuck off." *(to her)* Soon. Tonight.

Virginia Oh! *(to audience, quickly)* This is the part where I tell you about myself. I'm twenty-six, do absolutely nothing that I don't have to, and I read, a lot. A lot. I don't bother retaining much of it, I just like it to go through me like Mexican food. So much more under control than the way life crashes over you... this ridiculous life. I have withdrawn from it, and because of the hard work of my parents, who have BOTH been gone since Donald and I were very small, I don't HAVE to do anything. I used to... do things. I no longer see the point in anything but observing from a safe distance. Back when I was out looking for friendship, and love, and meaning, back then I had lords a leaping... Well, they were at my beck and call, so I suppose they were kind of leaping. They were hardly lords, though. All of them were just looking for the ease I had, financial and otherwise, and one by one they sucked it away from me until ease was no longer mine. *(to him)* You have to run from me, sneaking away in the night?

Donald *(to audience)* This is the part where I tell you about... HER. The horror she has been to me. This dominating monster who has turned me into someone not worthy of another person's love. If you'd grown up under the fire of a sister like mine, you too would quiver whenever a woman approached. And as for her "lords a leaping..." yes, we can hear each other while the other one's talking to you, that's how this works... *(silently panics)* but then... *(glancing at her, then back to audience)*... I mean, I love my sister. She's... oh, damn it, I'm leaving anyway. Her ten lords were the most hideous collection of faux princes you can imagine. All one step from homelessness, and no steps from homeliness. And she then held their poverty against them. "Oh yeah, you'd like to be rich like me, wouldn't you? I knew it, YOU'RE USING ME!!" Is that the cruelest thing ever? Raising ugly paupers' hopes, and

then resenting that they look forward to not being poor. I've digressed, but remember... a horror.

(He turns back to her. They consider each other for long while, standing very close. MISSY SUE is heard from afar, offstage.)

Missy Sue *(off)* Hello? Hello? I'm lost!

(They both look offstage, then go back to looking at each other. He calls off, mechanically.)

Donald We're in here, my dumpling.

Missy Sue *(off, but getting closer)* Where?

Donald Just come toward my voice. There's a large mirror next to the door, facing you right now. Just keep walking toward yourself until you get too close and scare yourself.

Missy Sue *(entering quickly)* I'm here! *(to Virginia)*
Oh my goodness, it was worth getting lost to be able to see the master bathroom... what an amazing place! Is that real gold?

Virginia Only some of it.

Missy Sue I almost couldn't stop myself from taking a bath. A tub you sit right down in, and the jets, and the lavender just LOOKS so relaxing. And all those mirrors!

Donald It has excellent feng shui.

Virginia Donald shared your wonderful news.

Missy Sue He did?

Virginia I couldn't be more happy for you. Alabama, did he say?

Missy Sue Well, yes. I was hoping we'd share that together.

Donald Afraid it just slipped out. My excitement.

Missy Sue *(smiling)* Ooooooh!
Virginia I hear Alabama is lovely this time of year.

Missy Sue I miss it so! I love it there! I'm so happy you're happy for us. Donald was afraid you wouldn't approve or something.

Donald Ha ha, no, no, that's not true. That's not what I said, kitten.

Missy Sue Whatever.

Virginia It's the big sister thing. I was given my responsibilities before Donald, and I was sometimes overly domineering when I was young. People make mistakes and move on, but I sometimes think Donald doesn't believe that I love him.

Missy Sue Sometimes... it's the people that we're closest to that we hurt the most.

Virginia That's right. Very wise.

Donald Look, we were just coming by to pick up a few things. Our flight is in a little while.

Missy Sue Donald!

Donald Yes... pet?

Missy Sue Check-in's not for hours.

Donald Yes, but... well, I've still got some packing to do, and... our time's not unlimited.

Missy Sue Fine. Go pack.

Donald Right, okay then. Virginia, I'll give you a call when we're settled in.

(He moves to an exit, then turns and looks

back at MISSY SUE.)

Don't you think you'd be better... come with me, it'll be fun, I want to show you my, uh, fossil collection.

Missy Sue And I would like to stay and have a nice visit with Virginia. I'll be fine.

Virginia She'll be fine, Donald.

Donald I know that... I just mean... I'll be back in a minute... Movers are getting all the big things...

(MISSY SUE charges over to him and pushes him out the door, friendly but firmly.)

Missy Sue Get out of here now, you silly billy!

Donald *(exiting)* Okay, okay, I'll be RIGHT back!

(He's gone. MISSY SUE turns back to VIRGINIA.)

Virginia Well done.

Missy Sue Thank you. I love him for AND in spite of his being so clingy.

Virginia Alabama, huh?

Missy Sue Yes.

Virginia Lovely architecture. Donald will get used to the heat.

Missy Sue Well... I hope so.

Virginia He just tends to get a little bogged down by the heat . I love watching him play tennis. Don't tell him I said so--

Missy Sue Oh, never!

Virginia --but what I love is the look that takes him over when he's worked up a sweat. Dazed,

crazy, delusional. It's hysterical. But it's not the same, living in the intense heat. You can always drink a lemonade on your porch to cool down.

Missy Sue
Virginia

Well, it's a little hot here, too...
Oh, but it's a dry heat.

Missy Sue

I... suppose so.

Virginia

(to audience) This is the part where I begin to confuse her. *(to Missy Sue)* We visited Baton Rouge once, that's as close as either of us have been to Alabama.

(MISSY SUE is very confused by VIRGINIA's aside to the audience, and has clearly heard the whole thing.)

Visiting someone claiming to be a long lost cousin. I was fifteen, Donald twelve. We went down there to fight his claim with our lawyers. I wore taffeta. Donald pretty much wore what he's wearing today, in a smaller size. But when you find a look that works, right?

Missy Sue

Uh... uh, right, right! Um, what was... never mind.

Virginia

Are you feeling faint?

Missy Sue

No! I'm just--

Virginia

(to audience, interrupting her) This is the part where I, with kindness, make her confess that she still has some reservations, and that money is what really attracts her most to my Donald. This is the part--

Missy Sue

I'm right here!

Virginia

(to her, sympathetically) Of course you are, darling. I've never said this before, but I feel like you're the sister I never had! Someone I can open up to.

Missy Sue Wait... but you just said something about making me confess--

Virginia What? No I didn't.

Missy Sue But you did!

Virginia Missy Sue, I didn't. I'm so sorry to have upset you like this, but it was just an unintentional misunderstanding.

Missy Sue Oh. Well... all right, I guess. I'm sorry for the misunderstanding.

Virginia *(to audience)* Now I've cowed her, the stupid child!

Missy Sue I know I heard that!!!

Virginia What?

(DONALD enters carrying a suitcase.)

Donald All packed!

Missy Sue Donald!

(MISSY SUE throws herself at him and sobs on his shoulder.)

Donald What?

Missy Sue It's Virginia! She's been being very mean since you left!

Virginia I have no idea... Missy Sue, what ever could you mean?

Missy Sue *(to DONALD, pleading)* SHE'S SCARING ME!

Donald Just back off, Virginia.

Virginia But, Donald, surely you're not going to take her side over--

Donald Stop right there, Virginia. Not this time.

Not this time. I've let you keep me from happiness for the last time. We are going to Alabama. And we are going to be happy, far, far away from you!

(DONALD drops to his knees in front of MISSY SUE.)

Donald cont. Missy Sue, I love you. You have brought an amazing peace to me. You fill me with courage. I am not perfect, but can we leave now and begin the rest of our lives together?

(MISSY SUE is overcome and embraces him.)

Missy Sue Oh, Donald, yes, yes!

(They hug deeply, then DONALD looks out to the audience.)

Donald And that's when I knew that I had finally found her!

(MISSY SUE backs away, horrified, as he continues narrating to the audience.)

Finally, a woman who would look past my family's well chronicled history of insanity to see the REAL ME.

Missy Sue Oh!

(VIRGINIA turns to the audience. The siblings now overlap their monologues until MISSY SUE screams and runs out.)

Virginia *(overlapping)* This is the part where she finally realizes that I will stop at nothing to prevent her from taking my brother from me. That he may leave here with her tonight, but will he be there for her in a day or a week, or will it be me instead that she wakes up to one night standing over her bed.

Donald *(overlapping)* She's not like the other ones.

Who led me on, and didn't love me. She's seen through my failings, and past the money, and found what it is that makes me special. It doesn't matter that I don't know what it is! Since she can see it, that means it's there and someday I'll see it, too!

Missy Sue Aaaarrggghhhh!!!

(MISSY SUE runs from the room, falling over herself to get away. The siblings look after her, then DONALD looks at VIRGINIA.)

Donald You didn't have to do that.

Virginia Oh yes I did.

Donald *(pause)* I liked her very much.

Virginia Sure, what's not to like. Lovely to look at, pleasant to converse with.

Donald Sorry if we woke you, coming in. I should have told you what I was doing. I'm sorry.

Virginia No apologies needed.

(They both turn to the audience.)

Virginia & Donald I once again am the peacemaker. I once again suffer for my brother's/sister's insanity.

(Having both heard this, they turn and look at each other suspiciously.)

Virginia Come. Let's have dinner.

Donald Yes, a bite to eat would be very nice.

Virginia After you.

Donald No, after you.

Virginia You are so polite, I will argue no further.

(They exit opposite sides of the stage, both talking to the audience.)

Donald

(simultaneous) I accept her offer of dinner. She's family, the only thing you can ever really rely on in this world. They're not always fair, they're not always right, sometimes they're downright villainous, but family... that's what it's all about.

Virginia

(simultaneous) In the end, I forgive him his weaknesses. I accept his failures. Not that that's all that there is, but a majority of it is failures. And I love him, he is my brother and I will protect him against everything... that's what it's all about.

(Those two end lines shouldn't sync up, but come out one after the other. The lights fade out... End of play.)