



# SLAVERY

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

ROBERT R. BOWIE, JR.

# SLAVERY

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

## **THE TIME AND PLACE OF THE PLAY**

The stage is set in a corner of one floor of the law library of a huge multinational law firm. A stage right window at the corner of the building, looks way down to the street. There is a coffee machine with a bean grinder next to it on a table against the wall. There are computer terminals on work desks and shelves of Federal and State Reports filling the back walls. There are ceiling lights high above the stage and individual lights on the desks and tables that as the play begins, are all turned off. There is a clock on the down stage wall. The play takes place in the late-1990's.

## **THE CAST OF CHARACTERS**

- Tonya Ogden: Black woman in her late twenties. She is a Senior Associate with the law firm.
- Onaje: Black man in his late thirties. He is a maintenance man for the office building and an ex-boxer.
- John Ogden: White man, in his early thirties. He is dressed in a tuxedo. He is older because he has worked before he went to law school.

2003 Robert R. Bowie, Jr.  
All Rights Reserved  
Contact:  
Robert R. Bowie, Jr.  
526 E. Seminary Avenue  
Towson, Maryland 21204  
e-mail: bob@bowie.com  
05/15/03

**ACT I**  
**SCENE I**

*As the lights come up, Tonya is deep in concentration at one of the tables with books and papers all around her. Onaje, the maintenance man, enters with his cleaning cart and begins cleaning the library, but he is slow and deliberate in doing so, hoping to catch Tonya's attention. After a short time he takes the waste paper basket and puts it on one of the study tables, pulls his cart over next to it and sits down, puts his feet up on the table and goes through the waste paper basket, paper by paper. He reads and he discards. He is deliberate. Every once in a while he looks over at Tonya, but she does not notice him. Tonya puts her pen down and goes over to the coffee machine and grinds coffee beans, puts them in the coffee machine and adds water and goes back to work. Her concentration is deep. The clock in the library says 7:15 p.m. After the audience has had time to digest the scene. Onaje speaks.*

**ONAJE:**

I've tried to check the executive committee e-mail and I've found nothing — I know they have taken it, but I've been through every trash can on every floor and in any computer that's been left on and I can't find it. If you don't get it... I got to talk to you about that research I promised for you. *(Tonya does not look up.)* You listening? *(Beat)* They are doing it to you again?

**TONYA:**

*(Angry and tense.)* Yes.

**ONAJE:**

You sure this isn't last night, last week or last year?

**TONYA:**

*(Still looking down.)* No. They vote tonight.

**ONAJE:**

You want to know what happens around here all you have to do is ask. I read the trash on the nineteenth floor tonight. But like I said when you weren't listening — I found nothing, but I know they voted.

**TONYA:**

They promised me they would send somebody over here from litigation...

**ONAJE:**

I'll ride it out with you and, if you let me, I'll buy you breakfast tomorrow morning. I don't like you wanting this so bad. Before they tell you, I've got to tell you about my research about your people...

**TONYA:**

Christ, Onaje, it's been what I've been work'n for...

**ONAJE:**

Oh, yea. I know but ... if you don't get it...

**TONYA:**

But they definitely took the vote?

**ONAJE:**

Yes, I'll just get some of this stuff out'a here now and come back later for the rest.

**TONYA:**

No. No. I'm sorry... You're not disturbing me, Onaje. You have this research you were telling me about?

**ONAJE:**

I tried to tell you last night. You have time now?

**TONYA:**

No. No. This is big. Real big. Listen to this. At noon they bring this doctor in from Hopkins. The big conference room on twenty-e shopping it. So its sell, sell, sell from our side, but this was different. The Hopkins guy is busting his buttons. Normally, he is just negotiating some price for putting together a patent that he doesn't know if it may or may not hit the market. But today it feels different. He is leaning back and enjoying his lunch. Big shot. Controlling the game. How much are we gonna kiss his ass? Midway into lunch our senior guy asks "so what's the invention?" And the Hopkins guy leans forward with an Ace in the hole and he says "Doctor so and so" —the gyro —gear loose dude at the end of the table, has created the "Alpha Cell". "Not the clone — the original." None of us know what that means — so none of us want to be too impressed — so we wait for the next question. But you know what he says he's created? The original. The soul of the first cell — The thing which happened billions of years ago when the plasmic ooze —the lightning strike.

**ONAJE:**

Oh come on.

**TONYA:**

It gets worse.

**ONAJE:**

Like plants and animals and people?

**TONYA:**

It gets worse. The tension in the room from our side was unreal. Nobody moved and the senior guy brakes the silence with the punch list question: "So you haven't revealed this invention to anyone within the last year — through publication or seminar?"....And the Hopkins guy says "of course not" —And our senior guy continues: "good, because if you had, you'd loose the ability to patent it"...Well Gyro lurches forward and says "What if — last year — I explained it to my class?"...So the Hopkins guy is stunned — but everybody

keeps eating lunch. They get another soda. They go for the chips now. The silence is deafening. And our senior guy restates the obvious — hedging as he goes “well if you truly disclosed it to ‘one killed in the art’...” And Gyro says: “They are all grad students at...” Well you can imagine. Gyro is on the phone. Checking the exact date of the lecture, the Hopkins guy has burst out into a cold sweat and our senior guy is mopping up his saliva... I mean think about a piece of this action!

**ONAJE:**

You’ve got to write that patent by tomorrow or its gone?

**TONYA:**

Well, Gyro gets off the phone and tells the group it turns out he “explained” it to the class one year ago tomorrow. I get the assignment because “I’m the best biologist/lawyer in the intellectual property department.” That’s at like four this afternoon after they brought all the files over here. But think about this. I will be the author of this patent. Yea, I know the timing is terrible. I made them get somebody from litigation to come down here and research “ready for patenting” and the “full disclosure of the invention” issues because maybe if it’s not “ready” or there was “no full disclosure” then I’ve got time — If not, it’s got to be filed tomorrow — Friday — close of business — in D.C. Think about it ...if its true it’s worth billions — (*Onaje does not answer —stunned by the magnitude of the issue.*) Onaje give it up? Talk to me. Talk about this as a career break!

**ONAJE:**

Bull.

**TONYA:**

Bull?

**ONAJE:**

It’s too late. I want you to think about if they don’t make you a partner. You said you bill about two thousand five hundred hours a year?

**TONYA:**

Yea, that’s about right — plus or minus. Why?

**ONAJE:**

For the last eight — nine years?

**TONYA:**

So?

**ONAJE:**

Tonya, I was thinking about this last night when you didn’t have time to talk to me. I worked it out actually. That’s like seven hours a day for six days a week?

**TONYA:**

Yea.

**ONAJE:**

If they don’t vote you in as a partner tonight that may be good.

**TONYA:**

Good?

**ONAJE:**

Yea. ‘Cause you’d be the last person in your family to be a “freed slave.”

**TONYA:**

I’ve earned the right to be a partner, Onaje.

**ONAJE:**

You know you come from slave stock?

**TONYA:**

So?

**ONAJE:**

Think girl! *(Beat)* I know they have voted at five o'clock tonight. It's on all the calendars and then all the big shots went off in black tie to some fundraiser at Wilmer Eye Clinic tonight.

**TONYA:**

Why haven't they told me yet?

**ONAJE:**

Listen to me. Your people love you no matter what. Here. *(He hands her a package of papers.)* To keep your spirits up if you don't get this thing — you can still be proud.

**TONYA:**

This is the history research?

**ONAJE:**

I went to the library and I've been doing computer searches... Way back your father's folk go back to Ben Raymond. You come up through his brother's side.

**TONYA:**

The Ben Raymond they talk about at church?

**ONAJE:**

My people aren't from Ben Raymond, but I am from proud folk too. My people were slaves too and when I was in the fight game I'd fight the white boys at "Steelworkers Hall" and they set me up to lose but I would not go down. I lost to two white boys who went on and got ranking, but I did not ever go down! And they may have beat on me but my hands were up around my head and sometimes I would come back at them in the last round and I would bring those white boys to their knees. Cause every once and a while I would take one of their "set ups" down. Down! Standing over them when the last bell rang. If you're good in the fight game Tonya, you fight on that day

at that hour. No colds, no "I'm tired", no excuses and if they hire you to beat you up — you're there. I am from strong people, Tonya. *(Beat)* I want to be recognized by you!

**TONYA:**

Recognized?

**ONAJE:**

Yes, recognized as your equal.

**TONYA:**

How are you not my equal?

**ONAJE:**

I want to be recognized as someone — someone who you might love.

**TONYA:**

*(Beat)* That is very sweet Onaje. *(Beat)* You have always watched out for me late at night, haven't you?

**ONAJE:**

I figure I wish I had your education. With it I could have been real powerful. *(Beat)* Will you do the right thing?

**TONYA:**

*(She looks at him hard.)* Will I do the right thing?

**ONAJE:**

If they don't make you partner?

**TONYA:**

Yea. I'll do the right thing.

**ONAJE:**

Then look over what I've brought you. All your people are already proud

of you. You look out this window. You see that corner there. That used to be a slave cell right here in downtown Baltimore. Your great great uncle was held there and he was Ben Raymond. A moral man. You can read all about it right in there. Don't matter if you make partner. Your people are already proud of you. You know your people? You know who you are?

**TONYA:**

Thank you Onaje.

**ONAJE:**

I don't want them to be able to hurt you.

**TONYA:**

You can't protect me from that, can you Onaje?

**ONAJE:**

But I'm tell'n you this tonight for a reason.

**TONYA:**

Because if I get it, I'm gone?

**ONAJE:**

Yes.

**TONYA:**

After all these late night years?

**ONAJE:**

Hell, I did all your office politicking for you.

**TONYA:**

You did?

**ONAJE:**

You don't know this, but I know your salary, the salary of all the

associates, the net and gross profits of the firm and the profit centers by partner and associate. *(Joking)* Honey, trash collection is power! If they don't make you partner, I've decided either to write the letter of protest or apply for a place on the executive committee. Trust me. They make that mistake — they need me.

**TONYA:**

*(Placing her hand on the research.)* So this is the research?

**ONAJE:**

You should read it tonight, Tonya.

**TONYA:**

Read it tonight?

**ONAJE:**

It's like we are holding hands with them all the way past the grave and slavery and the ships and back into the Ivory Coast and all the way back to Adam and Eve.

**TONYA:**

Are we talking about the patent?

**ONAJE:**

Your history is in your genes, girl. Like a library of where you come from. What aren't we talking about, Tonya?

*(The Lights Go Out.)*



**ACT I  
SCENE II**

*(The lights come up on Tonya working at the desk when John Ogden walks in through the upstairs left door and flips on the lights. The clock on the wall is now two hours later...it is 9:00 a.m.)*

**JOHN OGDEN:**

*(He is in black tie. After flipping on the lights he walks in confidently through the door and, grinning, walks over to Tonya at her desk and addresses her.)* Hey, Ogden, of the 21st floor finally meets Ogden of the 16th. *(He holds out his hand. She does not accept it).*

**TONYA:**

Where the hell have you been?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Drink'n with my litigation buddies at that Wilmer Eye thing.

**TONYA:**

You're drunk.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Sure — it's nine o'clock.

**TONYA:**

Do you know what is going on here?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Sure. The partners told me you needed a litigator to research if you could buy some time. I heard all about the meeting..

**TONYA:**

And you went out drinking?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Greg Marshall was supposed to come but he fell asleep. When you're face is on the table you tend to lose track of time.

**TONYA:**

You know any biology?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Some.

**TONYA:**

You drink coffee?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

If you make it.

**TONYA:**

It's made.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

But did you make it?

**TONYA:**

I don't know who made it.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Tell you the truth — I was okay at biology. I know the basics: You want to know the basics? If it wasn't for biology we wouldn't be here — right? See I understand it and what's even better — I practice it every chance I get.

**TONYA:**

Go home.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Hey, I volunteered for this. I wanted to meet the other Ogden who is supposed to be the star of the Intellectual Property Group and who has my name and who, I am competing against for my partnership place. You heard anything on that?

**TONYA:**

Is it you?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

*(With great self-confidence.)* They haven't told you yet? *(He laughs.)*

**TONYA:**

*(Beat)* I need to know if I've got to file this patent tomorrow —Friday —close of business or if maybe the time doesn't run. I put the file over there. *(Pointing at the work table on the side.)* Work or get out.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Don't get freaked! It's just what we've been working for, for the last ten years...

**TONYA:**

Ten for you. Nine for me.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

*(Heading over to the coffee machine and pouring a cup of coffee.)* They say it is the "Alpha cell"?

**TONYA:**

If the P.T.O. takes it — it is worth billions.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

More like mega — billions.

**TONYA:**

A lot of money for the firm.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

*(Adding cream and sugar.)* Fuck the money. *(Delivering the joke.)* Let's talk about the phone call to The Pope.

**TONYA:**

I can't write a patent of this magnitude in the next twelve hours. I need you to find me a "not ready for patenting" exception or a "testing" exception or something.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

A year ago tomorrow —right? And you want my memo in writing?

**TONYA:**

I know how this place works. You won't find anything you are comfortable with to give an extension. Your ass will be covered and I'll have to do the work.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

I'll get it right. I always get it right. I'm as smart as you are. But they will only take one of us.....

**TONYA:**

*(At the edge of tears.)* I'm panicked, worked —to —death, no prospect of marriage because I work all the time —burned out... Meet the competition for your place in the partnership. I need your help.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yea ...and "black".

**TONYA:***(Stunned)* I can't believe you said that.**JOHN OGDEN:**

Why, doesn't it matter?

**TONYA:***(Turning away)* I can't believe you said that. *(She goes back to her work at her desk —turning her head away from John Ogden as he heads for the desk with the notebook which Tonya has prepared for him. Both go to work at their separate tables.)***ACT I  
SCENE III***(The lights come down on the main library again, Tonya is studying the packet of research which Onaje gave her as she works at a desk. The clock says 11:15 p.m.. The city lights fill the dark window from below and the library is in silence. John now has his open books around him. They have said nothing for over an hour.)***TONYA:***(She gets up from her reading and goes over to the window. She is still very angry at John's comment.)* Hey white boy — listen to me! If you look down —right there at the intersection of Pratt and Howard Streets, you can see where one of my relatives spent about two months in 1863. *(She looks over at John Ogden.)* He was my great —great uncle. He had no children. That I know for sure, and he was released on July 24, 1863, by Col. William Birney of the U.S. Colored Troops, along with 25 other black men, 1 boy, 29 women and 3 infants.**JOHN OGDEN:***(Turning away from his research. He is not really listening to Tonya.)* I can't get you out of this. I've gone deep *(holding up the handout)*. The handout is the invention? This is what he gave his class? You've read the Pfaff case? Supreme Court 1998 resolves the issue of when an invention is complete enough for the one year time period to run. If you've got a blue print the time starts to run and this handout is the blue print "babe".**TONYA:**

Don't call me "babe" or I'll hit you hard enough to send you back a generation!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

The invention was disclosed one year ago tomorrow.

**TONYA:**

I'll never get this done.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

We do the best we can. They brought it in late. We didn't.

**TONYA:**

*(Surprised)* You stay'n...?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

It's an "all — nighter" in the name of the client right? We bill some hours tonight. We take breaks. My stepfather taught me that. He was with the firm years ago... So I meet the other Ogden of the 16th floor...maybe we get it done.

**TONYA:**

"Maybe we get it done?" You see that's the difference between you and me...

**JOHN OGDEN:**

That handout you can use for the "claims" section. It's right on the money. Tell me it's different than the patent and I'll start my research again — but you won't. I'll put "the history" together. You do the "claims." We get back to work *(Looking at the clock)* in fifteen minutes or so — Maybe we get it done — maybe we don't. It's not our fault if we don't.

**TONYA:**

*(Very vulnerable.)* You are real smart, aren't you?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yea, I'm very smart.

**TONYA:**

Is it already over?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Over?

**TONYA:**

Have they done the vote?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

The partnership vote?

**TONYA:**

Yea. And you volunteered to come over...

**JOHN OGDEN:**

What makes you think that?

**TONYA:**

You're so cock sure...

**JOHN OGDEN:**

So how do you know about that prison?

**TONYA:**

I was looking at some research that was given to me. *(She unconsciously pats the folder of papers which Onaje had given her.)* I have a history. Maybe not as famous as yours, but I have a history.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You did this research here?

**TONYA:**

The man who cleans the floors did it.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

The black guy, Onaje?

**TONYA:**

You know him?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

I've done some late nights here. You stay all night you know Onaje. He was a fighter. There's a fight poster on one of the walls at Merlin's. I'll bet he doesn't even know one of them is still around.

**TONYA:**

He got on the computers. He did the research.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

He did? Research on your people?

**TONYA:**

My great uncle was named Ben Raymond.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Can I see. *(He goes over and looks at the file.)*

**TONYA:**

"Ben Raymond" is a hero.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

"Ben Raymond"?

**TONYA:**

I guess you can imagine, we lost our African names. "It's just a name."

**JOHN OGDEN:**

"Ben Raymond" was in that prison at Pratt and Howard?

**TONYA:**

Ben Raymond was a runaway slave who got caught in May of 1863 and

held in that prison here in Baltimore, even after Lincoln's Proclamation, which, as I'm sure you remember, happened on January 1 of 1863. He was a runaway slave on my daddy's side. But Ben Raymond was a hero way before that because he had no children. He loved his woman, Viney, real deep. He sacrificed for her.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

And that's what made him famous?

**TONYA:**

It was a frightening gift he gave us. He sacrificed for her. He gave us understanding when we were slaves.

*(The Lights Go Out.)*

**ACT I**  
**SCENE IV**

*(The lights come up on the library. The clock now reads 12:30. John Ogden is over researching a completely different issue on a different table. He has different books open on the different table.)*

**JOHN OGDEN:**

*(Holding a law book in his hand.)* This is not what I wanted to find.

**TONYA:**

*(Turns away from her work.)* What is it?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Look at this. Ogden in re: Raymond. This is your documentation of the missing piece of your family history.

**TONYA:**

*(Leaving her desk.)* What are you doing?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You use the computer. I'm more careful than you are. I go back to the written reported decisions.

**TONYA:**

Excuse me?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

The slave cases are still in the old Annotated Reports of Maryland.

**TONYA:**

Are they? *(Turns back at him.)* So?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Ogden in re: Raymond 1863. "The chattels of John Andrew Ogden of Prince Georges County, Owner of one: Ben Raymond who was convicted of self —mutilation April 30, 1863 and assault, the case was appealed May 17, 1863 and as you said the case and the appeal were dismissed after he was release on July 24, 1863.

**TONYA:**

Your family?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

The facts of the case are set out just about how you described them. Read them if you want. *(Glancing over the law book, and case, which is open in his hand.)* In 1859, before the war began Ben Raymond and Viney were married in a slave wedding down in Prince Georges County...

**ONAJE:**

*(A spot lights falls on Onaje as he delivers for Tonya the research that he has done.)* ...And shortly thereafter the master came to him and said "Ben Raymond I want you to come up upon Viney and make me more slaves." And Ben Raymond refused. And the master came back at him later and said "Ben Raymond, I won't let you be with Viney unless you be with her and make me more slaves." And Ben Raymond refused. The third time the master come up upon Ben Raymond he came with a long "Bowie knife" at his throat and a sawed off shot gun pointed at his pants and he said...

**JOHN OGDEN:**

*(Turning from the book he has been quoting from and delivers his joke.)* "Ben Raymond you make me slaves or I cut your throat and then I blow off your balls." *(He looks up from the book with a rye smile.)* I'm paraphrasing.

**TONYA:**

You can leave.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Read it! (*Referring to the case he has found and read from.*) The right answer, on your more immediate case, is that it must be filed tomorrow. I have typed up my research so you can at least feel the comfort that my ass is on the line... at least in some limited degree... just like yours.

**TONYA:**

Just put it in the file and get out of here!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Don't you see — you are writing the patent that will fail — either way. They told you this is a career opportunity of a life time but think about it!

**TONYA:**

Get out of here!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Can you do the head games?

**TONYA:**

If I fail and do not deliver the patent by 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning — I lose — but if I do — my name is on the “God patent” — the “creation cell.” The female anti —Christ brilliant and as black as the ace of spades. And the partnership vote?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yea, that's the problem. Now ask yourself why they haven't told you about the vote yet.

**TONYA:**

I just want the “yes” vote.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

And after you write this patent — then they own you?

**TONYA:**

But if I don't, I get fired?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You gonna make slave baby's for the mast'a?

**TONYA:**

Get out of here!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

No, this is worse! The cell — to be manipulated and sold — the monopoly you have created — with your own words. The U.S. Court enforcing every word that creates future what? Plants? Animals? Humans? Black children? — Maybe you hate me but my reasoning is good?

**TONYA:**

We don't know for sure if it works!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Just the scribe? Hana Arnt at the Nuremberg trials concluded “yes” all the Nazis did was “take orders” and we live in the world of “benevolent evil...?”

**TONYA:**

In the meeting the science clicked into place in my head. Look at it. You said you know biology! I'm afraid it might work.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Too subtle for me.

**TONYA:**

What are you saying?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

I can't write a patent, but you can. You don't get it, do you? (*Turning on her.*) History books are going to record this night — whether you get it done or not — or even whether you write it perfectly. You will be deposed for the rest of your life. You will be a witness in endless trials, in endless courtrooms and you will get what you wanted now but in what jurisdiction will you get a final ruling and when you die you will not even know whether you were right or wrong. Tonight's the night and you don't get it do you? Your finger prints are on it no matter what.

**TONYA:**

I don't care what you say. I'm writing it. I'm signing it. I am filing it tomorrow. I want to be a partner — no matter what!

*(Lights Go Out)*

**ACT I  
SCENE V**

*(It is now later that same night. The clock says 2:45. The lights again come up on the library. John Ogden has hung his tuxedo coat over a chair and proceeds to work in shirt and suspenders.)*

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Think about this. (*Turning away from his books.*) "First disclosure" in Europe controls.

**TONYA:**

*(Working at her computer and deep in concentration.)* I've almost got it done. Leave me alone.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

First disclosure. A year ago it got disclosed — so its not patentable in Europe — I'm not through with Japan, etc...

**TONYA:**

So?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

We can't even sit on it.

**TONYA:**

Sit on what?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

It's out there already.

**TONYA:**

Out where?



**JOHN OGDEN:**

You don't understand what this invention is all about?

**TONYA:**

Sure I do!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

The patent controls the ownership — right!

**TONYA:**

So it's out there already?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You file it and the deal is that if you disclose it you get a monopoly in the U.S. for what? Eighteen something years?

**TONYA:**

But if we disclose it — it is public and only ours for a period of time...

**JOHN OGDEN:**

But only in the U.S. — everyone will pick up on this. Think about the mutations. Vegetation greener — children smarter — The world becomes victim to the puppeteer — the world dances on the strings...

**TONYA:**

But I file it and anybody can get it?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

If we sit on it. Trade secret — like the coke formula — never disclosed — never revealed so the P.T.O. never has it and the world never knows. That's the exception to the filing deadlines — you decide not to file.

**TONYA:**

The senior guy faxed it off to Japan and E.C. counsel. Besides it's not a

“secret” anymore, if it was a handout in the class.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yea, it's out there.

**TONYA:**

We can't even shut it down. Somebody else will come up with it?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You want this? Keep working.

**TONYA:**

I am working.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

No, we've got till dawn to figure this out! Keep working!

**TONYA:**

How many hours did you put in?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

About three hundred less than you last year.

**TONYA:**

What is your rate?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Same as yours. Senior Associate.

**TONYA:**

Are we equal?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

No.

**TONYA:***(Exploding)* Why not!**JOHN OGDEN:**

You know what I discovered?

**TONYA:**

What?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Walking back here after drinking. I turn my eyes fifteen maybe twenty degrees above the street. This is the street I have walked for years to go to work and back and I see the same thing. But by just lifting my eyes above eye level I see sky. I see the tops of buildings against the sky. I see a vision which has been there but I have missed it for every sun rise and sunset that I've left and come to the office. I go out drinking to night and walk back to the office and I look at the light on the clouds in the sky... All it takes is a change in the vision of your walk to work that changes the work you do. *(Looking over at Tonya who is deep in her work and after a beat.)* Are you listening?

*(The Lights Go Out.)***ACT I  
SCENE VI***(The clock says 4:30. The setting is the same. Onaje enters as Tonya is sitting at the desk reading over the patent.)***ONAJE:**

Where is he?

**TONYA:**

He's off proofing the patent.

**ONAJE:**

I was just up on his floor. His office is empty.

**TONYA:**

Empty?

**ONAJE:**

The pictures are gone. The file cabinets are empty. There is nothing there.

**TONYA:**

I don't understand.

**ONAJE:**

I don't either. I was up on that floor at 6:30 last night and everything was in place.

**TONYA:***(Beat)* They must have moved him to a bigger office while he was at the black tie at Wilmer...

**ONAJE:**

Who would have done it? I would have been told if movers were coming in.

**TONYA:**

Maybe he wanted to do it himself.

**ONAJE:**

But he was at Wilmer.

**TONYA:**

There is nothing there?

**ONAJE:**

The desk is empty. No pens. No paper clips.

**TONYA:**

They would not have done that to him.

**ONAJE:**

No.

**TONYA:**

He's got a great reputation here. He would be encouraged to stay as a contract partner.

**ONAJE:**

Maybe he moved to an open office and I didn't notice.

**TONYA:**

Wouldn't they have told you?

**ONAJE:**

Yes.

**TONYA:**

It's over. They took him to Wilmer. They had him in black tie. He came back just to laugh at me.

**ONAJE:**

Yea, you weren't even invited to the Wilmer thing, were you?

**TONYA:**

No.

**ONAJE:**

They must have decided weeks ago.

**TONYA:**

That's why it wasn't in the trash.

**ONAJE:**

Yea and no e —mails. Its' on the calendars. They announce tomorrow.

**TONYA:**

I wish they had just told me.

**ONAJE:**

Once you've been passed over they don't care.

**TONYA:**

Last year they passed over ten people and no one would look them in the eye for weeks.

**ONAJE:**

He was passed over last year.

**TONYA:**

This year he makes it and they take him in black tie off to Wilmer to

show him off and they put me in the library to work me to death.

**ONAJE:**

Don't give up. You've got two years. It's not over yet, Tonya.

**TONYA:**

You want me to get it?

**ONAJE:**

If that's what you want.

**TONYA:**

I can't work another year. It's okay.

**ONAJE:**

You don't know that stuff I gave you yet, do you? You are from tougher stuff than any body else in here. Your people had families sold off piece by piece and they survived. A wife and children sold off separate. And men who die in the fields at thirty, maybe thirty — five years old with the scars of lashes on their back. And Ben Raymond who stood up to the master — the master who was John Ogden's great grandfather. You are one of many survivors, girl. Be as good as them now.

**TONYA:**

I don't want to walk these halls tomorrow when the word goes out.

**ONAJE:**

Just don't give up. Even if you never get it, you've got to be standing up when they ring the last bell. No matter how hard they hit you, you can't ever go down. *(Beat)* Finish your work, Tonya. Finish your work.

*(The Lights Go Out.)*

**ACT I  
SCENE VII**

*(The clock says 5:15. Dawn is starting to creep through the windows. Tonya is finishing making the last changes to the patent. John Ogden enters.)*

**JOHN OGDEN:**

I read it backwards which is the only way to proof. It's ready for the printer. It's amazing what you have accomplished tonight.

**TONYA:**

May I ask you something?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yes.

**TONYA:**

Is it your family?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yes.

**TONYA:**

You know?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

I know the names.

**TONYA:**

*(Beat)* We'll know in an hour or so?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

There will be a press release and an e —mail through out the firm.

**TONYA:**

So you know?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Yes.

**TONYA:**

Apologize to me!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

No. Tonya, I won't apologize to you. I've spent tonight thinking about ownership and greed and Ben Raymond and the fact that my people owned yours and I will not apologize. You have prohibited me from doing that.

**TONYA:**

*(She grabs him and shoves him away from her.)* You sick white bastard! *(She hits him hard.)* Domination! Domination. It is in your genes!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Judge me! I have been here all night helping you! Who are you angry with, me? Is it me?

**TONYA:**

Which office did they move you to?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Which office?

**TONYA:**

Your office is empty.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Is this about my empty office?

**TONYA:**

We have both worked for this.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Who has worked harder?

**TONYA:**

You admitted I had more hours than you.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Whose research is better?

**TONYA:**

You can't measure that! *(Beat)* Mine! Didn't they give me this patent? They sent you to help me, didn't they?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

They didn't send me.

**TONYA:**

Of course they sent you! You came in black tie to mock me, while I worked!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

We have become blind. Both of us? What has caused that?

**TONYA:**

I am not blind to you!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

See better then! Who is Ben Raymond — he is your ancestor — not mine?

**TONYA:**

I know him from church.

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Give him his life back!

**TONYA:**

Tell me what you know! Tell me which office did you get?

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You know what I know? I know Ben Raymond better than you.

**TONYA:**

You liar! Liar! Liar!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

No. I know him because he is me tonight. You don't know him because you spent all night drafting this patent. I keep asking you all night "What does this patent mean?" And you don't care because you are just do'n the job. You just want to be an owner, a partner and to get there you will create a patent that gives ownership to the "Alpha Cell"? You just created the contract which is enforceable by the U.S. Government for the ownership of what? The single cell? The source? The domination of the planet by one of its species. But perhaps you are saved from yourself because it may have been scattered all over the world so that others will colonize and control and you will be saved from being what you hate so much? Say out loud what you want and listen to what you say!

**TONYA:**

I want to know what office you got!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

You won't look at me because my people owned yours? I know Ben Raymond. I think he understood love to be self — restraint — he knew how

to stop the domination of the genes.

**TONYA:**

Shut up. Stop all this! I just want to know what office you got. Tell me just that!

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Sure, I'll tell you what office I got. They told me to get in black time. I got in black tie. They told me to show up at Wilmer. I went out and got a bottle of Jack Daniels and put my feet up on my desk. And I thought about all the life I had given up and all the nights I'd spent on that floor. I've got nobody. Do you know how in debt I am? I've got student loans. I bought into it deep. I just came down here to watch you fuck up. I came down to prove to myself I was better than you. You want me to sign off on the "Alpha Cell" patent, I will. I've watched you work all night. You are very good. You want my apartment that costs too much? My credit cards? My car? They also owned me — now if you want them you can have them and they will own you for a while. *(Beat)* But I understand Ben Raymond and you don't. That is one thing I know for sure. He is me. He is me right now.

**ONAJE:**

*(The spotlight falls again on Onaje as he delivers the research he has done...)*  
...He destroyed in himself what the Master wanted. Ben Raymond took that sharp knife out of the master's hand and for one moment they looked at each other with Ben Raymond holding onto that knife. And Ben Raymond held that knife out against the master... And he had a clean decision: yes or no. And he turned that knife around in his hand. He dug that knife into himself for he would produce no slaves and then, Tonya he had no master after that...

**JOHN OGDEN:**

Neither one of us has spent a life we can be proud of. Look at how we spend our lives. They told me before Wilmer. They were right. I can't compete with you. You can have my office because it's empty. *(Beat — as he exits)* They chose you. *(He exits.)*

SLAVERY: ACT I; SCENE VII

**TONYA:**

*(Alone on the stage, with the last light on her, she is stunned for a moment and then cries outright and then bursts into tears of joy and then breaks into a big smile and then wraps her arms around herself laughing as she does. She starts chanting.)*  
Yes! Yes! Yes! *(As she looks up toward the sky.)* Thank you! *(The lights go out.)*

*End of the Play*