

A play in One Act

A Path Longing To Be Found

by

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A PATH LONGING TO BE FOUND

ACT ONE:

Scene One Intro to Bathilda's diary

Scene Two Bathilda meets Mattie

Scene Three Bathilda's frustrated

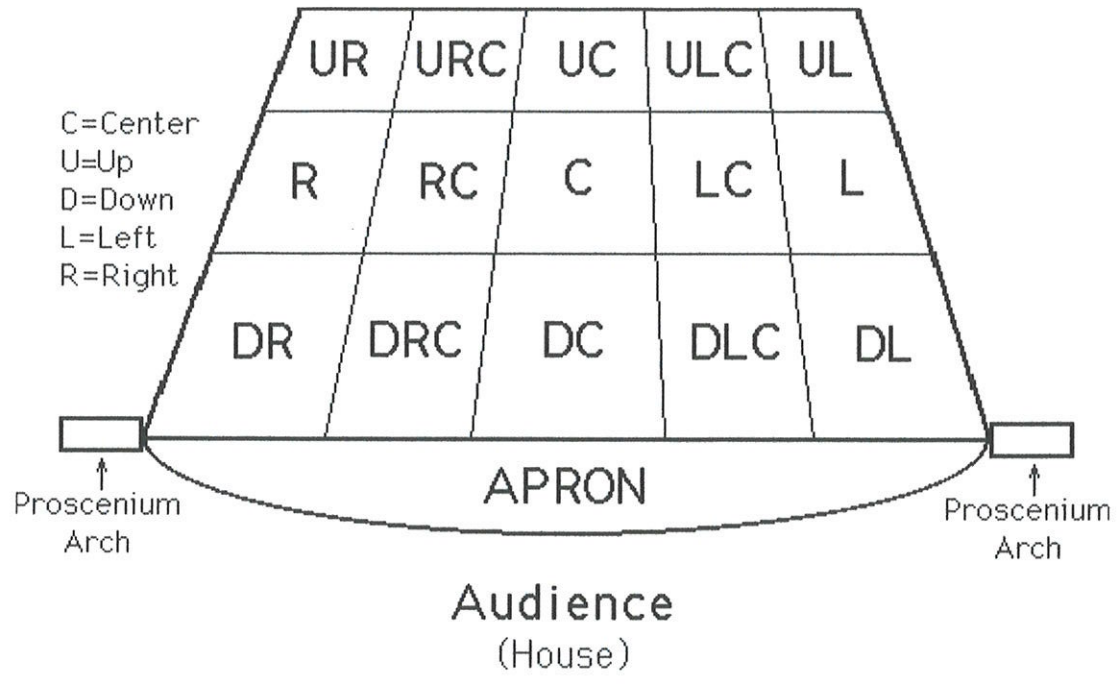
Scene Four Bathilda gets sick

Scene Five Nehemiah talks about running away

Scene Six The runaway

RUNNING TIME:

An hour and a half



Cast of Characters

NARORATOR ONE and TWO: Explains Bathilda's history with meaning.

NARORATOR THREE and FOUR: Explains Aileen's life history with meaning.

BATHILDA: She is a quiet but strong at heart, young slave girl around thirteen years of age. She keeps quite most of the time

MASTER JACOB: He is a tough man who tends to lose his temper easily.

MARRIE: She is an average sized slave woman in her early twenties, she's mostly quiet but when she speaks, she talks with confidence, kindness and wisdom has a lot of wisdom for her age.

NARAROTOR FIVE AND SIX: Explains Nehemiah's life history with meaning.

NEHIMIAH: He is a tall young slave who is around eighteen years of age. Ever since he was younger, he would constantly dream about being a free man. He dreamed so much, to the point where he doesn't pay much attention to the affect of his actions.

SCENE DESCRIPTION

Scene One: Opens up with introduction of Bathilda's life story. Mattie's introduction Bathilda meets Aileen.

Scene Two: Ties in with Scene One. Nehemiah's Introduction

Scene Three: Bathilda gets upset when her master's son messes with her, while she was working.

Scene Four: Bathilda gets sick. Nehemiah's Introduction

Scene Five: Nehemiah convinces Bathilda and Mattie to run away with them.

Scene Six: The slaves' runaway from the plantation

SCENE ONE

(With the curtain closed narrator one stands upstage and introduces BATHILDA'S character.)

NARRATOR ONE: *(Speaking to audience)* Bathilda was born a slave. When she was just seven her mother lied to save a runaway friend, when her master found out about her Mothers lie he sold Bathilda to a different plantation. At this new place her job was to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner to her master and his family. Every evening, the family's oldest daughter Sarah would sneak out with Bathilda and teach her how to read and write. Sarah gave Bathilda a slate so she could practice the alphabet and putting words together. For years she kept this secret of being able to read and write from the person she trusted the most, which was the cook Mamello. When Bathilda was thirteen years old her master caught Sarah (his daughter) and Bathilda poking fun and laughing by the brook, behind his house. Sarah whispered something in Bathilda's ear that caused Bathilda to crack up laughing, as soon as the Master saw this he became Furious, came up behind the two girls, and tore them apart.

NARRATOR TWO: He whipped Bathilda angrily in his barn and went straight to work looking for someone he could sell her to. Two days after the event he managed to sell her to a formal friend of his. When the day came for Bithilda's departure she sat inside the wagon fuming with confusion and hurt. Sarah snuck up behind the wagon and handed Bathilda a journal. She told her to hide it where no one would find it. Bathilda obeyed and hid the journal inside her dress and also managed to say good bye before the wagon took off. It took two days for Bathilda to get to her new home. When she arrived to her new plantation, she was taken into a one room cabin where she was to stay. Alone she lay down and cried herself to sleep. When it was time for her to work she worked when she had time to sleep so slept. She lived her life trying to survive and never seemed to wake up from the pain she felt every single day. It was if she was living in a nightmare and no matter how hard she tried, she was never able to wake up. For the first time when she went to bed, she felt something strangely hard in her dress. She unbuttoned the front of her dress and took out the journal that Sarah had given her before she left. Tears streamed down her face and for the first time in a long time she knew what to do. Write. Bathilda kept writing, telling the story of her life so if she was to pass. Someone would at least know her name.

(Curtains open showing BATHILDA sitting down at a table inside her cabin. With tears in her eyes she speaks out loud while writing in her diary.)

BATHILDA: My name is Bathilda, I'm 13 years old slave and I live in South Carolina. I learned how to read and write by my Masta's daughter Sarah. She is 12 years old and becauz I learned how to write, she gave me a special book. She calls it a diary. But I decide to call it mine. Dis book is da only thin I have. I was separated by my ma and pa when I was seven years old. I don't remember my pa much but I do rememba da way he smelled. He would work very hard, an when

he came home he smelled of sweet, sweat mixed with dark hard dirt. My pa used to play da fiddle every night before we would go to bed and sing. "Judgment Day is Comin Soon". That was my pa's favorite song. I rememba my ma like da color of my skin. She had dark brown eyes, nappy black hair and dark chocolate skin. I've never saw chocolate before, but Sarah told me it's da same color of my skin. My old Master separated sold when I turned seven years old He probably thought my Ma and Pa would try to run away since I was old enough to go with them. But my Masta didn't give my parents a chance to prove they wouldn't. As soon as I was done workin in da cotton field and started headin home I saw a wagon and da man who drove the wagon took my Ma and Pa. I screamed, and kicked, but Nothing would bring them back. Because of that I became very sick. But Im better now and Im stronger, strong enough to write my life in my book called Mine.

(BATHILDA sits down starring at her journal, she hears a foot steps outside her door , quickly she pushes her journal unto the floor and stands up. The cabin door opens to revels her slave master and a dark shadow of someone else. Her master steps in the room and pushes the young woman in the room. Spot light shines on MATTIE and NARRATOR TWO comes on stage right.)

NARRATOR THREE: When Mattie was eight years old both of her parents died of the flue. Her master was worried that she would come down with the flue also, so he sold her to one of the neighbors he couldn't STAND! At this new plantation, she started off by cleaning the pots and pans that were used after each meal. When she became older her job was to help cook the meals for the master and his family. The kitchen only brought sorrow to Mattie. Every time she would walk inside the door, memories would come up of her and her mother.

NARRATOR FOUR: For hours she was stuck in that hot room forced to prepare meal after meal. Once the dinner dishes were washed she only had a few hours to rest before it was time for her to help cook breakfast. On a sunny Sunday afternoon, her master came into the kitchen furious, he grabbed Mattie by the arm, pulled her outside, and told her over and over that she deserved to die. She was whipped that night, whipped so hard that she just passed out. In the morning she was told that her Masters daughter was sick from food poisoning so the master blamed her for it. When her wounds heeled she was taken miles away to a small cabin on the Rogers plantation. Before she entered her new cabin, she was told that there was a young girl that already lived there. Mattie, had no idea that from the day she would step into the cabin, her life would change by become so close to someone she had never known before.

(Full Lights On)

MASTER: *(spits on the floor)* Bathilda! Now what you doin being awake so late. This here is a young slave named Mattie. I just bought her yesterday *(pushes the slave.)* She's a good cook that will replace that nasty Iwin who tried to poison me. *(Spits again.)* I's expect you to show her around in the morning, I'll leave you two alone now. Get to bed Bathilda -- Now!

BATHILDA: Yes masa!

(The MASTER steps out of the room and slams the door behind him. BATHILDA looks down at the young woman on the floor.)

MATTIE: *(looking down at the floor)* I got ma own clothes and blanket don't worry about me now. I know what to do. You betta go and get some sleep. We can talk in the mornin.

(MATTIE gets up and places the blanket she got with her on the floor and lies down.)

BATHILDA: Okay *(BATHILDA lays down on her straw mat.)* Good night then.

MATTIE: *(laying down on her blanket)* good night.

(Lights Out)

SCENE TWO

(Lights on – MATTIE is sitting at the table lighting the fire in the fireplace, BATHILDA wakes up looks around letting her eyes get used to the light of the fire. MATTIE glances at BATHILDA for a quick second.)

MATTIE: *(Keeping her eyes on the fire)* Good mornin chil. *(Looking at BATHILDA)* My name is Mattie, I'm sure you heard the masa say it last night.

BATHILDA: Yeah I heard him. *(Proudly standing of her mat.)* My names Bathilda. I reckon your gonna take the place of Iwin.

MATTIE: Yeah! Gonna be the new cook.

BATHILDA: Good! I didn't like the old cook much, she was mean and nasty to me.

MATTIE: *(Standing up and foulding blanket)* Well Ima sorry to hear that.

BATHILDA: Na it all well. Just glad masa got a cook that's a nice one.

MATTIE: Well thank you! I won't let ya er masa down, now— (*opening up her cloth of corn bread*) would you like some of this here corn bread?

BATHILDA: Yes'm

(*BATHILDA gets up and walks over to the small table MATTIE is sitting at. BATHILDA sees two scars on the left side of MATTIE face. BATHILDA looks but pretends that she doesn't see them. BATHILDA takes the bread and sits down on her mat.*)

MATTIE: (*Starts heading towards the door*) Well now I best start workin on breakfast. You can rest some more don't worry about me, the masa showed me the kitchen already and I know how to cook. Just rest a little bit then come and help when ya ready.

(*MATTIE exits the room leaving BATHILDA alone.*)

BATHILDA: (*Upset*) I should have asked her about those scars. I should have found out what happen to her. I should have. (*Taking out her journal and looking at it*) I'm happy that I have you, without you I wouldn't be able to express how I feel right now--- well I mus get to work (*talking to her Journal*) I have a long day ahead of me.

(*BATHILDA puts the Journal under her mat exits the cabin door. Lights Out*)

SCENE THREE

(*BATHILDA walks into the cabin exhausted and angry; she lays down on her mat and closes her eyes. MATTIE enters and runs to her side.*)

MATTIE: (*Compassion*) Bathilda! Ima so sorry! Ima sure he didn't mean it Ima actually pretty sure he didn't mean anythin he did.

BATHILDA: (*Frustrated*) Masa's son Ben nocked the bucket of water I was carryin right out of my hand! MATTIE you saw it!

MATTIE: I know child! I know! But you mustint get frustrated about it. Just preten it never happen.

BATHILDA: No! I cant preten to ignore somthin that happen. I was bringin the water back to wash the dishes that he used for super! And all he can do is knock the bucket right outa ma hands (*looking down at her hands*) ma hands! The hands that's been washin his dirty dishes months!

MATTIE: ima sorry Bithilda I really am!

BATHILDA: (*Crying*) Yeah well I'm sorry too! I'm sorry that I hate them! I hate all of them! Every single one that done me wrong!

MATTIE: No Bathilda! No! you must not hate no one, no matter how hard it is for you. God has called us to love one anotha. We mustn't judge anyone, no matter how tuff it is. For the people who hurt abuse and mislead us. Are people that are here to make us stronga. Remember, that God created us all equal it is us that choose what we are to do with the way we treat one anotha.

BATHILDA: (*Calming down*) okay ima do ma best but he betta not try and mess with me again.

MATTIE: okay Bathilda! Okay! Now we better get all of those dishes cleaned up from dinna before it gets too cold outside.

BATHILDA: okay.

Lights Out

SCENE FOUR

(**NARRATOR ONE** comes up front stage with a sign that says, "Three days later"
NARRATOR exits stage left. Lights shine on the cabin door. **BATHILDA** comes through the door stumbling and coughing.)

BATHILDA: (*Lying down on her mat*) O! where ma journal?

(MATTIE walks into the room, sees BATHILDA and walks over to her side. She feels her head.)

MATTIE: (Shocked) Bathilda! You're so hot! (standing up) Just rest, I know what to do chil.

BATHILDA: I'll be okay. (Trying to get up) I mus get back to ma work.

MATTIE: No! You jus lay down and rest, I'll do your work now just rest ya hear?

BATHILDA: Yeah I hear you but I mus get it. I mus get back to work. (Lying down with eyes half closed) I don't have time ta jus lay and sleep I gotta get up. (Falling asleep) I mus get---up.

MATTIE: that's right chil just sleep now, just sleep.

(MATTIE exits cabin door. Lights dim)

(Lights on BATHILDA lying down on her bed mat. BATHILDA sits up and hears background voices outside of, MATTIE and young man.)

MATTIE: She's been fellin poorly for two days now. She's just been sleepin, she only been wakin up to have a little food.

NEHEMIAH: Is she doing all right now?

MATTIE: She's doin what she's doin. A lot betta though it sure is hard workin without her though. I'lla show you where ya be sleepin.

(MATTIE and NEHEMIAH enter through the cabin door. Light shines unto NEHEMIAH. Every one freezes. NARRATOR THREE comes on stage to introduce NEHEMIAH to the audience.)

NARRATOR FIVE: Nehemiah was born on the Johnson's Plantation. His Mother was a slave but his Father was the slave master (John). When Nehemiah's mother gave birth to him, the master John's wife made sure that he sold the baby because she didn't approve of him being the father. Master John sold his son to one of his neighbors. Nehemiah grew up not knowing where he had come from and where he was going. When he was thirteen years old, he was working in the cotton field, when he had this sudden erg to run. So he took off feeling the wind rush against his face, for the first time in his life, he felt free. But at that moment of his feeling of freedom, a rock was thrown and hit the back of his head. He fell to the ground in pain and looked up to see the over seer starting down at him. From his house. The man grabbed Nehemiah and put him on his horse.

NARRATOR SIX: He was whipped that night and had to sleep in the barn with an iron thing on his neck. He never forgot how he felt the day he ran. Actually he thought quite a lot about it, to the point where he made a plan to run away. The next night he set off. But before the sum came up he was caught by a man that was passing through. Once again he was taken back to the barn and beaten. But this time he was sold to another plantation. It was during that afternoon when he was taken to a cabin to see that he would be staying with two young women. He was around eighteen years old when he arrived at the Rogers plantation.

(NARRATOR THREE walks off stage. Actors unfreeze and light shines so all actors can be seen.)

MATTIE: Bathilda! Ya feel betta now?

BATHILDA: (*Looking up*) a lot bettea.

MATTIE: (*Looking at NEHEMIAH*) Dis here is Nehemiah Bathilda. And Nehemiah this is Bathilda. Nehemiah will be stayin with us. Masa bought him yesterday.

NEHEMIAH: Nice to finally meet ya Bathilda! Mattie was tellin me about ya. I'm glad you are feelin good.

BATHILDA: Thank ya sa. I do feel much betta. Thank ya

NEHEMIAH: Do ya know what you wa sick from?

BATHILDA: Na! I don't but I'll be ok mista.

NEHEMIAH: Alright well Ima gonna get back to the cotton field. See you two lata. Ba

(*NEHEMIAH exits out of the door.*)

MATTIE: Hesa very nice young man. He seems to be stuck on runnin away though--Its okay ima sure he gonna get used to bein here and come to his senses.

BATHILDA: I hope so, who knows what masa would do if he ran off.

MATTIE: Yeah! Well we musint think about that now I gotta get back to cookin. You stay here and get some rest now. I don't want you gettin sick again.

BATHILDA: okay. Ba.

(*MATTIE exits the cabin door. BATHILDA is left alone inside the cabin. She goes to her mat lifts it up and picks up her journal from underneath.*)

BATHILDA: (*Writing in journal, speaking out loud*) I feel is so much betta now. I do have bad head ace back but it doesn't matter to much anymore since I'm well enough to work. Since da last time I wrote, Mattie told me that about five slaves ran away from da plantation. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to be able to run on soil that you've never seen before and to be able to feel da breeze rush past your face. As you take off leavin you turn to see da foot prints you are leavin behind foot prints that seem to follow you, every step you take. But all I can seem to do is dream, dream about bein free enough to do whatever I want when I want. So every night, before I go

to bed I pray that everythin I went through that day was just a dream and maybe someday I'll wake up free.

(BATHILDA puts her journal back underneath her pillow and lies down.)

(Lights Out)

SCENE FIVE

(BATHILDA and MATTIE are sitting inside the cabin mending their clothes when NEHEMIAH overly excited.)

NEHEMIAH: Them slaves that ran off a while ago were caught this afternoon. They've been taken to the barn to get whipped.

MATTIE: O! ma Lord!

(BATHILDA stands up shocked.)

NEHEMIAH: I know it's hard! It's hard livin like dis.

BATHILDA: Nehemiah. You best be gettin back to da cotton field who knows what they gonna do to you if they find you in here.

NEHEMIAH: I will but I'm not done with what I came in here to say.

MATTIE: *(Standing up worried)* then say it Nehemiah. Just come out with it no...

NEHEMIAH: *(Interrupts)* Alright then! Well I've been talkin to some people, at the cotton field they've been tellin me that the best way to run is South. There is dis place in Florida that we can go to be free. Free! And them slave catchers won't look for us becus they be thinkin we be runnin North.

MATTIE: Nehemiah! Are ya sure?

BATHILDA: *(Shocked)* You mean we have a chance to be free?

NEHEMIAH: Yeah! Free Bathilda. *(Day dreaming)* For da first time I have a chance! A chance to make it to escape and neva have to worry about comin back to slavery.

BATHILDA: But what if they find us?

NEHEMIAH: NA! Don't ya see. Them slaves that were runnin ran North. So them slave catchers be lookin for us North if we run. We be goin South. An't nobody be lookin for us there.

MATTIE: (Looking at Bathilda) Bathilda has a point though Nehemiah! (Looking at Nehemiah) What if they find out? We ain't the only slaves t be runnin away south.

NEHEMIAH: Yeah we won't but I em runnin south. You have a choice to or not to come. Are you with me?

MATTIE: (*Staring at NEHEMIAH*) What dis place be called again?

NEHEMIAH: It called Fort Mose. Its in Florida now so it gonna take us a while to travel there. We be havin to run durin the night and hidin by the day. It ain't gonna be a fun journey but it will be worth it all.

MATTIE: Well It sounds like a mans journey. I ain't gonna be runnin like a were some bear lookin for food.

NEHEMIAH: Come on now Mattie. Who's gonna be with me now?

BATHILDA: (*Looking at MATTIE*) Mattie?

MATTIE: We do what we gotta do. Ain't no body made to be treated like this. I ain't gonna work fo no one who treats me like I was the dirt on the bottom of their shoes. I'm gonna run away. Are ya with us Bathilda?

BATHILDA: All ma life I dreamed of how it would be like to go anywhere I wanted to at anytime without haven to worry about nothin. I guess dis is ma chance. I'll go too

NEHEMIAH: Good we gonna leave in three more days from now. When we get back into the cabin afta workin on the third day, we gonna get our stuff to gtha and run away. I betta get back out to them filds now. (*Opening the cabin door*) Ba now. See you tonight.

MATTIE: I needa start cookkin dinner. Bathilda ya can stay here, I don't need help until a little while.

BATHILDA: OK

(NEHEMIAH and MATTIE step out of the cabin leaving BATHILDA alone. She takes out her journal from under her mat, goes over to the table and starts writing.)

BATHILDA: (*Writing in diary*) I have a strange new feelin inside of me that I've nava had before. Ma heart is beatin fast and for da first time I'm at peace. Maybe I'm happy. Maybe I'm just havin a feelin as if I'm gonna sleep ok tonight without worryin about a night mirror. Whateva it is, all I know is that in three days I'm goona be closa to bein free then I've ever been before. But until then I'm still in a night mirror.

(BATHILDA closes her journal puts it back under her mat and exits up stage, cabin door. Lights Out)

SCENE SIX

(NARRATOR ONE walks stage left, in front of dark set holding a sign that says three days later. While exiting stage right, lights come on and shine in the cabins showing **BATHILDA** and **MATTIE**. Both of them are quietly packing their belongings. **NEHEMIAH** enters the cabin door.)

NEHEMIAH: We need to hurry now. The masta's house lights been all turned off.

MATTIE: *(Standing up off the floor)* Well then. When should we leave?

NEHEMIAH: When we sure they ain't gonna get up for nothing. When they're asleep of course

BATHILDA: Do ya know how long that will be from now?

NEHEMIAH: *(Walking towards the door)* Na! But I'm gonna sit out side a little longa until I feel it's completely safe fo us to go.

(NEHEMIAH exits cabin door. Lights dim down leaving **MATTIE** and **BATHILDA** in the room putting the last of their belongings that they have by the door and walking silently back and forth in the room. **NEHEMIAH** walks into the cabin door quietly.)

NEHEMIAH: *(Whispering)* It's time for us to leave to freedom.

MATTIE: I'm shaken so much. I realized that they gonna be lookin for us way early in the morning since I'm da cook.

NEHEMIAH: Don't be worryin about that now. *(Putting his hand on her shoulder)*. Everythin is gonna be okay. We gonna be runnin at night and hidden by day rememba now?

(MATTIE nods her head slowly)

BATHILDA: *(Picking up her belongings)* Well I'm ready to go.

MATTIE: Well I guess I'm ready to then.

NEHEMIAH: Well before we go, listen her. I'll be goin first in line. If I say stop, Stop! If I say run, run like you be runnin fo your life.

BATHILDA: I'll be sure to do that.

NEHEMIAH: Good now let's go.

(NEHEMIAH exits the cabin door with MATTIE and BATHILDA following. BATHILDA closes the door. In a few minutes later BATHILDA opens up the door one last time walks inside to her sleeping mat, get her journal and places it in her small cloth bag. She looks around the room, touches the table, and looks up gazing into nothingness.)

NEHEMIAH: *(Off stage in a fierce whisper)* Bathilda common now!

(BATHILDA quickly walks over to the cabin door and exits.)

(Lights Out)