

***Father Comes Home From the War* by Suzan-Lori Parks**

The sky slumbers in waves of a navy blue linen, glistening like a diamond necklace on her chest, sits the northern star, a guide to those lost, a beacon of hope to those seeking refuge. Hands press up on the dark sheet, their silhouettes fight and push to tell their story. Gently the moon and stars reveal the chorus in soft white breath of the evening's light, their sweat reflecting the moonlight. A shift on the horizon disturbs her slumber, as she slowly pulls her covers away from the distant drumming of a reddish orange sun. Hero struggles internally with himself on whether or not to go to war with Boss-Master. Unbeknown to him, his fate is already set as sounds of war approach over the hills. The fiery morning light echoes across the fields like a bloody war horn, it stops Hero with a burning realization that he must go with Boss-Master to the war for he has no choice in the matter. The morning mist ignites with the fiery beams of the approaching battle, the heat spreads across the chorus and the fields. Hero leaves his people to take his chance on winning his freedom as he disappears into the inferno of the sunrise.

The blistering heat of the southern summer sun bleaches out the vividness of the wildlife, greens and browns become shades of a flaxen white as the bare skin of the sweaty soldiers glares back the intense sun. The slight moving sways of the trees flickers speckles of light across the hidden campground and men. Here in the middle of the southern furnace the Colonel's true thoughts and feelings are revealed, his arrogance as thick as the humidity. Hero finds comfort in learning more from Smith, with the Colonel gone the midday sun cools as the Union overtakes the Confederate in the background. The evening approaches as the intense bleaching sun softens its rays from whitening light to a light hue of amber, the standing shadows of the men stretch further than before across the campsite as the speckles of light leaking through the swaying trees trace around the branded scars on Smith and Hero. The cannons draw closer, the ambers trickle in shades of red from the heat of battle. Smith pulls Hero to run away with him, but Hero declines. With Smith's advancement towards the north, a beam of the evening sun shoots in from the tree line, highlighting Hero while he puts on the Union jacket. Hero exits and with a loud thunder of a cannon the stage plummets to dark.

The sun reaches over the plains and grasps tightly around the old shack in the farming field. Its white rays weaken to a golden hue, and soon it will lose hold of the home and those that reside in it. The bleaching grip carves around Penny and Homer as they embrace and kiss. Odd See enters and gives a fresh breath to the scene, the sun begins to tire, and its golden rays drop to a vivid amber while a

lavender tone begins to fade in. The sky gives a sigh of relief to the weakening of the oppressor. Penny awaits Hero's arrival and lights an oil lanterns to beacon Hero home. Greeted with a happy home and friends, Hero (now Ulysses) shares his stories. The sun fails to keep its grip with the land and plummets from the horizon. A brush of blue graces in place of where the amber once grasped for. The evening sky stands tall and begins her journey to take back her domain. With the physical struggle between Ulysses and Homer, the twilight sky shifts to a deep night blue and the stars walk forth from their hiding places. The North Star glistens once again in the night sky, the oil lanterns flicker with a cool breeze as Penny cries for the men to stop fighting. The Runaways head out into the dark abyss towards the shining star, Penny and Homer each grab hold of a lantern as they ready to leave. The candlelight from the lanterns flicker and stretch the shadows of Penny and Homer across Ulysses till they vanish over the hills. There is no more warmth or home, only the calm breath of the night sky illuminates the lonely Ulysses and his faithful dog.