VIVIAN. Decent men back out. Decent men make excuses. Decent men say one thing and do another. Decent men change the rules. Then decent men don’t show up.
GRANT. I will give you everything I have, all my life. But don’t ask me to go back there for the same damn thing over and over again! I can’t do it!
VIVIAN. This is hard. But when Jefferson dies, I’m still a school-teacher. So are you. Children are our responsibility. Not only those we teach. Not only those we raise. But every child we taught in the past, like Jefferson.
GRANT. I’m responsible for Jefferson?
VIVIAN. If you aren’t, you are running away. You have to stand up like a man, too.
GRANT. Not now I don’t! The Sheriff says no more visits!
VIVIAN. Find a way.
GRANT. The Sheriff is a son of a bitch but he’s right!
VIVIAN. He’s wrong! Stop swearing and try again!
GRANT. I can’t walk through iron bars. All Jefferson wants is to be left alone. I don’t blame him! He wants to be a hog, let him be a hog! (Pause.)
VIVIAN. All right. Let’s calm down, and think this through. Jefferson is young, and terrified. He’s lived all his life dirt poor in the country, with kerosene lamps and fireplace heat. Been to town a dozen times in his life? Ever been in a courtroom before? How could he understand what goes on there? He has to be confused. Does Jefferson really understand what happened to him?
GRANT. Of course!
VIVIAN. I mean what he did and didn’t do, exactly? Do you think he killed Mr. Grope?
GRANT. I don’t know. (Thinks.) No, I don’t.
VIVIAN. But he was right there, half drunk, with stolen money in his hand, yes?
GRANT. Yes.
VIVIAN. He did commit crimes.
GRANT. No, not murder.
VIVIAN. Then think a minute. Two white men and a Deputy Sheriff walk in on an ignorant, innocent boy and he’s arrested. He’s on trial for murder. He’s found guilty. He’s going to die. Yes?
GRANT. Yes.
VIVIAN. His lawyer says hog. Miss Emma makes this federal case out of it and says be a man. That’s a lot for a boy to live with, alone in a death cell. So he takes refuge in hating us and himself.
GRANT. That’s right, but what can I do about it?
GRANT. I’ll ask the Sheriff. One more time, I’ll try.
VIVIAN. Good for you. Cheers. (They sip their drinks, and relax.)
GRANT. So, how was Edwin’s?
VIVIAN. As usual. Same sale on radios to get you there, then noting else.
GRANT. Oh, yeah. Radios.
VIVIAN. Little Philcos.
GRANT. How much?
VIVIAN. Ten dollars. (Pause.)
GRANT. Oh. Er, uh. Vivian.
VIVIAN. What?
GRANT. A radio. Bet he never had one of his own.
VIVIAN. Oh.
GRANT. I might get it to him somehow. You say ten?
VIVIAN. Yes, Grant. Here’s two, from me. (Vivian puts one, then two dollars on the table.)
GRANT. Thanks. (They smile at each other and sip. Lights dawn. Lights up on the bench at center. Enter Paul. Enter Grant. Grant carries a package marked Edwin’s.)
PAUL. Before we go in, there are these conditions. Limited visits, to be approved by me one at a time. Two day advance notice until seven days before the execution. And I have to stay in the room.
GRANT. How did it happen?
PAUL. Sheriff Guidry reconsidered your request.
GRANT. Why?
PAUL. His reelection.
GRANT. You point that out to him?
PAUL. He saw it himself.
GRANT. I think you did. Thank you.
PAUL. We might as well call each other by our names. Mine’s Paul.
GRANT. Grant.