**Mississippi the Musical**

**Synopsis**

In the imaginary Hope River, Mississippi, in 1959, change was sparking and crackling like a downed power line for both white and black folks. The Cotton Curtain had hid the racists’ mob lynching and church torching and deadly bombing for decades. But now the Cotton Curtain was being torn asunder by the nightly news exposing the evil brutality and state-sponsored terrorism to our nervous nation and the entire world. Yes, terrorism. After all, violent endemic racism is nothing but terrorism dressed in more familiar clothing.

Mississippi the Musical is a mixed race, gothic tale of a troubled white girl, Kitten, acknowledging her racism, evolving and embracing the reality that repentance and change were required of her and everyone in Hope River.

Kitten, who has an imaginary black friend, Buttons, is diagnosed as having serious mental health issues manifesting in her bi-racial, bi-sexual compulsive behavior. She confronts Moses and Hattie inappropriately, tries to seduce her Ole Miss friend Toby and even makes a move on Hattie’s pregnant sister, Justine. Kitten is smart, if problematic, and after some revelatory dreams, tells her black friends she’ll be their spy to alert them to any Klan plans her father, Pastor Please, might be plotting.

Toby, a privileged alcoholic white boy, compulsively lusts for his father’s black maid, Hattie, who has no choice but to submit to Toby’s advances. Moses, a black juke joint owner, actually loves Hattie. Moses proposes to her and takes her inside his juke for their first coupling. Kitten spies on Toby and sees him at Moses’ juke. Like a creepy voyeur Toby listens to Moses and Hattie and sneaks up on the juke.

Toby rushes in and murders Hattie with a carving knife. Moses cradles Hattie in his arms and weeps when she breathes her last. Moses throws Toby out of the juke and he staggers off, splattered with Hattie’s blood. Kitten confronts Toby but he threatens her with death should she ever testify against him. For a while, Kitten is able to keep what she’s seen to herself. She knows that no one would take the word of a “crazy” girl over the lying Toby.

Moses is jailed and makes a devils’ bargain with Toby. Moses knows no white boy would be found guilty of murdering a black girl in Mississippi. Plus the murder happened in his juke with a knife he just recently bought. Moses insists Toby vow to care for Hattie and Justine as long as he lives. For this Moses never implicates Toby in the murder.

When Moses is electrocuted Toby believes he’s home free. But after Kitten’s father, an emotionally and sexually abusive Klan leader, describes Moses’ execution in grisly detail, Kitten decides to tell the truth to the congregants of Hope River Holiness Church. Toby wanders into the church after the meeting. When confronted by Kitten Toby denies any wrongdoing and lets them know justice as in “just us white folks” is on his side. However, when Justine, Hattie’s sister, points a shotgun at Toby’s groin, the inebriated and cowardly Toby confesses, albeit, with his own dishonest twist. Justine admits to killing both Toby and Kitten’s fathers on the way to the meeting and tells the defiant Toby he’s next.

Kitten is miraculously set free of her fantasies with the knowledge that Pastor Please is dead. The stage goes pitch black with Justine, despite her mother and pastor pleading for her to reconsider, squeezing the shotgun trigger to blow Toby to kingdom come. After a few seconds the lights return as Kitten and Cast sing *Mississippi Reprise* and *Rope Is Fallin’*.

© 2018 Gregory James Tornquist [greg.tornquist@hotmail.com](mailto:greg.tornquist@hotmail.com) 615 516-1948