Pond

by Mark Lyons

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FADE IN:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Cheap huts line one side of the road, woods on the other.

WHITE GUARDS corral several groups of chained BLACK CREOLES into caravans along the road.

Most of the Creoles are young and healthy. There's very few elders.

One GUARD walks by ARMAND, a 20's male, and ETIENNE, a 30's female. Both are very dark skinned.

The guard checks to make sure their chains are snug.

ARMAND
We've lived here for over seventy years. You have no right to up and move us.

The guard stands straight and looks Armand in the eye.

GUARD
It'd be a good idea to keep those thick lips shut here on out.

The guard walks off to inspect more chains.

MARGARET, a young white woman in a frilly pink flower-print dress, walks by. She eyes the black people.

ETIENNE
Wha'shoo doin' here, little flowery girl? Ki l'aj to gain?

MARGARET
Speak English to me.

ARMAND
She asks how old you are.

MARGARET
I'm seventeen. And don't call me flowery. You won't speak to me or my father that way.

Etienne gestures to the dozens of people around her.

ETIENNE
Your fatha really need the lot of us for his slavin'?

MARGARET
Don't be stupid, woman. You'll stay with us until you're trained proper. Then you'll be auctioned on the fairgrounds.
ETIENNE
Pretty girl like you should be home with yo' motha.

MARGARET
My mother has passed. You'll be wise not to speak of her again.

ARMAND
Pay no mind to her, flowery girl. The old mind leaves at her age.

MARGARET
I said don't call me flowery.

ETIENNE
Then do not wear flowery dresses.

Margaret eyes them.

MARGARET
And what do you mean old? She can't be forty yet.

ARMAND
So it looks on her face and body, but she just celebrate her hundred and eight birthday not even two months ago.

Margaret looks the woman up and down.

ARMAND
That is what truly upsets us. De white folk like you are taking us away from our longevity.

MARGARET
I don't understand.

ARMAND
Myself, I'm near ninety-four year-old.

Armand motions into the woods on the other side of the road.

ARMAND
You take us away from our pond, we can no longer sustain the young tissue.

ETIENNE
Armand!

Margaret looks into the woods Armand refers to.

MARGARET
Pond? You mean-
ARMAND
What de explorers have searched for for hundreds of years over, we've created in our own back yard.

MARGARET
I don't believe you.

ARMAND
Look around, flowery girl.

Margaret does.

ARMAND
Why are there but only a few elders here? Because they are the ones who would not drink from it. They wouldn't bathe in it. They wanted to age and die naturally.

She looks at him skeptically. Etienne looks at him angrily.

ARMAND
Imagine never losing the softness of the skin on your cheek. Never losing the firmness in your hips. Not having to become stout after childbirth.

Margaret becomes aware of Armand's eyes on her body and she pulls her shoulders back so her chest sticks out more.

MARGARET
Where?

Armand again motions to the woods.

ARMAND
Lala. Through the tr-

ETIENNE
Armand! No!

MARGARET
Let him speak, old woman!

Margaret lets Armand finish.

ARMAND
There, through the trees, and past the stones.

Margaret looks.

ARMAND
For seventy years we've drank and washed in that water. And look at us.
Margaret looks at the sweat glisten on his body.

ARMAND
A century old and flesh like new.
Muscles like oxes.

ETIENNE
Do not listen, child.

ARMAND
She doesn't want you to discover the powers to your advantage.

MARGARET
Silence now! Both of you. There'll be no more words.

Margaret trails off to the front of one of the caravans.

She looks around to make sure none of the guards are watching her.

She takes a blanket off a wooden seat of the caravan and tucks it under an arm.

She casually strolls off through the trees.

Etienne turns to Armand.

ETIENNE
Wha'shoo go tell her that for, fool!?

EXT. TOMB YARD - DAY

Margaret hurries past stone graves and towards a pond down a slight hill.

ETIENNE (V.O.)
We were going to let the disease die in that water.

At the water's edge, Margaret pulls her dress off and only wears her undergarments.

ETIENNE (V.O.)
You've seen the virus in that pond infect our mothas and fathas.

Margaret steps into the water and slowly immerses herself.

ETIENNE (V.O.)
You've seen them spread it to each other with their fluids.

Margaret cups her hands and drinks the water.
ETIENNE (V.O.)
You've seen the water rot our parents' blood. You've seen the deficiencies. You know no one is immune.

Margaret swims in the water.

ETIENNE (V.O.)
You know the disease must not get out of that water hole!

ARMAND (V.O.)
If the young girl keeps her loins to herself, it will be contained.

Margaret steps out of the water and dries off with the blanket. She slides her flowery dress back on.

ARMAND (V.O.)
If she spreads it to the other white people through her fluids, they deserve the lesions and the waxy blisters.

ETIENNE (V.O.)
That is not fair to de other people. They do not deserve that disease in their blood.

Margaret walks back through the grave stones and woods.

ARMAND (V.O.)
What they are doing to us is not fair.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Armand and Etienne watch Margaret walk past them to the caravan she got the blanket from.

Armand smiles at her wet hair.

ARMAND
(under his breath)
Toutswit. Swinn-twa.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PLANTATION FIELD - DAY

Hot. Armand sweats and bails hay by himself.

Other black Creoles from his village harvest cotton way out in the field, watched by guards.

He doesn't see Margaret approach behind him.
MARGARET
You've learned to use the tools
very well over the weeks.

Armand turns to her.

ARMAND
'Shoo doin' here, flowery girl?

Margaret stares him in the eyes.

MARGARET
I'm going to let you call me names,
today.

She walks over closer to him and grabs at the front of his
trousers.

MARGARET
In fact, today, you can speak to me
however you want.

He backs away from her clutch.

ARMAND
'Shoo doin'?  Don't do that!

She looks at him, threatening.

MARGARET
If you don't do what I want you to
do...

Margaret lifts her dress up with one hand to reveal her
cotton panties beneath.

MARGARET
I will start screaming right now
and they'll be at my side like
that.

With her other hand, she snaps her fingers.

MARGARET
And don't think for even a second
that they need proof to shoot you
for raping a little white girl.

Margaret gets down on her knees so her mouth is equal height
to his groin.

MARGARET
Now walk to me.

Armand looks at her open mouth and her hiked dress.

CUT TO BLACK.