

BLPC

GREENWOOD: AN AMERICAN DREAM DESTROYED SYNOPSIS

Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed, tells the powerful story of the Greenwood massacre from the perspective of the prosperous Boley family. It examines the tragedy as it unfolds on May 30-June 1, 1921, in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma, also known as the “Negro Wall Street” for its’ entrepreneurial opportunities. With its’ vibrant business sector, it would become the target of mass destruction by a jealous white mob.

Cast of Characters:

<u>Grandmother Boley, 70’s</u>	Matriarch of the Boley family, owner of “The Boley Eating Establishment,” She cooks and cares for family and community. Carries the history.
<u>Frank Boley, 50’s</u>	Prosperous real estate agent in Greenwood, a leader, well educated, believes education and class will save the race.
<u>Molly Boley, 50’s</u>	Socialite wife of Frank, mother of daughter Solene. Obsessed with image of her family and Greenwood.
<u>Solene Boley, 22</u>	Spoiled only child of Frank and Molly Boley. In love with the shoeshine boy but engaged to a wealthy farmer, she’s becoming involved in the Suffragette movement.
<u>Bill Boley, 30’s</u>	A World War I veteran, a butcher in the family restaurant, he desperately tries to put the war behind him.
<u>Della, 30,</u>	Fun loving, live-in maid for rich white family, she visits Greenwood often to see her paramour Bill.
<u>Dick Rowland (Jimmie Jones), 22</u>	An enterprising shoeshine boy, in love with Solene, Accused of assaulting a white girl
<u>Peg Leg (Horace) 40</u>	World War I veteran, Bill’s friend, does odd jobs, always in uniform, always ready for a fight.

<u>Dr. A.C. Jackson, 50's</u>	Soft spoken, prominent doctor in Greenwood
<u>Leviticus Solomon, 30</u>	Wealthy landowner, in love and engaged to Solene.
<u>Lawrence Pritchard, unspecified age</u>	Photographer/reporter hired by Molly to record Greenwood's prosperity.
<u>Maria Bonilla, 20's,</u>	Spanish speaking Black girl, from Honduras, works at Boley Restaurant.

ACT I, SCENE I

Greenwood—The Dream
Study to show yourself approved...

SET: *MISS BOLEY'S MEAT MARKET AND CAFÉ. Red Brick Façade. SIGN IN WINDOW:*
"NO SMOKING, NO DRINKING, NO CUSSING!" A Chopping Block representing Butcher Shop, or a Display Case, Tables and Chairs comprise the set. A piano or Victrola may or may not be in one corner. Family living quarters may be backstage or upstairs Frank's Real Estate offices may or may not be seen. There is a back door to the establishment.

ON RISE: *MAY 25-29. In the Café. Early morning. The café hasn't opened yet. BILL can be heard in offstage kitchen, CHOPPING meat. PEG LEG goes back and forth with boxes high over his head. In the background of their lives, MARIA serves the family breakfast, cleans tables, does chores, etc. SOLENE, filled with a frantic energy, enters, singing French song, "Champs-Elysees."*

SOLENE

(Singing)

"Aux Champs-Elysees, At the Champs-Elysees, at the Champs-Elysees, In the sun, under the rain, At noon, or at midnight. There is everything you want at the Champs-Elysees..."

SOLENE

Bonjour Grand mama! *(French pronunciation)*

MOTHER BOLEY

Good morning Solene. You did say good morning, didn't you? And what's that you singing?

SOLENE

A French song I learned in Paris. You should see Paris, Grandmother-

MOTHER BOLEY

Baby, I'm just glad to see you back home safe and sound. It was starting to look like you weren't ever coming back.

SOLENE

Grandmother, you know what I think?

MOTHER BOLEY

What you think baby?

SOLENE

I think you should bring Mother Boley's Eating Establishment into the twentieth century, yes, you should put a few small tables and chairs outside, and create a whole little French section, like in Monmartre.

MOTHER BOLEY

Like where?

SOLENE

Monmartre. It's where I stayed, the colored section of Paris. And instead of pancakes, you should serve Crepes Suzette for breakfast.

MOTHER BOLEY

Serve Suzie who, for what?

SOLENE

Oh, Grandmother, Crepes Suzettes, pancakes the French style, with strawberries and you can serve Croquet Monsieur-

MOTHER BOLEY

What? Child what is you talking about?

SOLENE

Eggs, cheese, and ham-

MOTHER BOLEY

Ham--that reminds me--Bill!

BILL

(Offstage)

Yes?

MOTHER BOLEY

Son, don't forget to send a plate of meats around to Old Lady Johnson, chop it up real good for her too, you know her teeth-

*(Bill enters,
Sharpening knives)*

BILL

Already got it ready, mama.

MOTHER BOLEY

Oh, and you better fix up a plate for the Millers too, I hear they both doing poorly-

BIIL

Mama, you give away more food than we sell-

MOTHER BOLEY

Well, I'm not gonna let nobody go hungry around here.

SOLENE

And Crepes Suzette for everybody Maria!

Merci beaucoup.

(Singing)

"Everything you want at Champs Elysees, etc..."

(PEG LEG and BILL join in)

PEG LEG

Hey, I remember that song!

BILL

Yeah! They sung that in Paris all the time, Solene. Soldiers had their victory march down that street, Champs Elysees Well, the white soldiers did.

PEG LEG

Yeah, Colored soldiers lost their lives over there just like the White, but the Army wouldn't let us be a part of the victory march.

BILL

They let the African soldiers take part, though, but not us colored soldiers I was done with the American Army then.

SOLENE

Uncle Bill, how could you return to the United States after Paris? If I were you I would have never come back. I would have stayed in Paris forever.

BILL

Well, I liked France, true enough, they treated us soldiers real good, but I was homesick, I wanted to come back home, see my family. Some of the soldiers stayed over there, though. I still got friends there and one of these days, I plan to visit them.

SOLENE

How do you think I'd look with my hair bobbed, grandmother, like this. *(Puts her hair up)*

MOTHER BOLEY

I don't think your folks would like it...

SOLENE

(Big sigh)

Mother and Father have to realize that I'm a grown woman now. I'm nineteen, for goodness sakes. They can't run me all my life. They think that just because they give me all these material possessions they can tell me what to do, even who I should marry-

MOTHER BOLEY

Baby, they just want you to have everything they didn't have coming up. Just like me, I want the the best things for my children, having come out of slavery myself—

SOLENE

Oh, Grandmother, why must you talk about slavery, it's been fifty years-

MOTHER BOLEY

Thank God, no auction for my boys, and I'm just saying I want the best things for them-

SOLENE

But I want more than things. I want the world! Oh, I wish I was back in Paris again. Since I've come back from Paris, I know that I can have it too. I met Negro people from everywhere—Harlem, Africa, the Caribbean. Look at these new books I'm reading. Gertrude Stein: "Paris is not so much what Paris gives you as what it doesn't take a way." That's what I loved about it. It didn't take away my womanhood just because I was a Negro girl. All kinds of fellows gave me the wink--Italians, Senegalese, Frenchmen—

MOTHER BOLEY

Solene!

SOLENE

But Grandmother I never felt so ladylike as when I was in Paris. Here in the U.S., all you hear is White womanhood this, White womanhood that. But there, I felt MY womanhood.

MOTHER BOLEY

(Reprimanding)

Now here! What kind of way is that for a girl to be talking who 'bout to be married? Womanhood. Come here, child, sit down. Now you just carrying on and slinging around all those big words. You know you have to slow down for Grandmother. I'm from Greenwood Mississippi. And don't you forget where you come from either. I'm glad you went to Paris and all, but you just calm yourself down--Now sit down, and talk to grandmother...now what is it? Come on, I can tell something's bothering you. Is it Jimmie Jones? *(No answer)* Your mama was hoping that trip would take your mind off of him.

SOLENE

I know.

MOTHER BOLEY

Did it? *(Solene shakes head no)* Child, now, you got to get over that boy, 'cause your mama is bound and determined for you to marry that potato farmer.

SOLENE

His name is Leviticus. Leviticus Solomon, Esquire. He's also an attorney.

MOTHER BOLEY

Um hum. Well, how did you like touring Paris with Leviticus. Solomon. Esquire's family?

SOLENE

His mother and sisters were nice, kind of boring, but I liked them.

MOTHER BOLEY

Good thing, cause your mama want you to marry into that family something fierce. She hasn't stopped talking about the wedding ever since you left. You still planning to marry the boy, ain't you?

SOLENE

Oh, Grandmother, I don't know, I don't know anything anymore-

MOTHER BOLEY

Well, you better try to find out, because he's on his way here now, with a train load of potatoes.

SOLENE

(Musing)

I'm not talking about him. I'm-I'm talking about...while I was in Paris, without Mother breathing down my neck, I felt free for the first time in my life. Free! I'm ready to make my own decisions. The Suffragist women in Washington D.C are having a meeting and-

MOTHER BOLEY

What you talking about?

SOLENE

Women from Africa, the Caribbean, and around the world were in Paris for the International Council of Women of the Darker Races. And they were talking about what white women are doing here in America for their own self -determination.

MOTHER BOLEY

Wait a minute. If you saying all of that to say you not going to marry this Leviticus boy, I don't want to be nowhere around when you try to tell your mama that.

SOLENE

Oh! I wish I were back in Paris again...

(Enter MOLLY)

MOLLY

Come Solene!

SOLENE

...striding down the Champs Elysees-

MOLLY

Let's check the items again to make sure everything is here-

SOLENE

- past the Arc de Triomphe.... the Versailles, the Louvre-

MOLLY

...Coco Chanel-

SOLENE

...the Sorbonne, the Eiffel Tower-

MOLLY

...Elsa Schiaparelli. Jean Patou—the silks, the satins-

SOLENE

Oh I had a splendid time!

MOLLY/SOLENE

Splendid!

(ENTER JIMMIE JONES)

JIMMIE

Hi Solene!

SOLENE

Hi Jimmie.

JIMMIE

(To all)

Good morning.

MOTHER BOLEY

Good morning to you Jimmie Jones.

MOLLY

We are not open yet, Mr. Jones.

JIMMIE

Yes mam, I know, I-uh-I'm dropping off Mr. Frank's shoes and I need to put in an order for my Aunt Damie at the bakery.

(JIMMIE'S eyes on SOLENE, as Mother Boley speaks)

MOTHER BOLEY

Well, you tell Damie, I'm making my famous Mississippi Pot Roast today too. That ought to give Jenkins café a run for their money. Last week they had lines around the block for that smothered steak and gravy they serve. *(Beat)* Well, let me get myself up from here, go check on my food.. *(Calling to Bill)* Bill! How we set for tonight, son?

BILL

We'll be ready for 'em, mama. I'm cooking up a new barbecue sauce.

MOTHER BOLEY

Oh yeah, we gonna beat out them Jenkins today, for sure.

(As exits)

Tell Damie, I say hello, Jimmie...Jimmie!

JIMMIE

(Pulling eyes away from Solene) Uh-
Yes mam, yes mam!

(MARIA enters.)

MARIA

The baker's on the telephone about the wedding cake, Miss Molly.

MOLLY

Oh dear, I hope there's no problem. *(Pointing)* Maria, take Mr. Jones' order, so he can be on his way, please.

MARIA

Yes mam.

(MARIA goes over to JIMMIE, with pen and pad).

JIMMIE

Well...I'd like a nice, beautiful, sweet, lovely pound cake with just a kiss *(kisses air)* of vanilla icing...

MARIA

Oh? Anything else?

JIMMIE

Huh?

MARIA

Anything else?

JIMMIE

No...that's all I want in the whole world...

(Enter FRANK)

FRANK

(Upset)

Good morning, Jim, be with you in a minute, son. I'm running late. Went by the house, and hoodlums had thrown trash all over our lawn again. I'm going to meet with some of the neighbors about this to form a neighborhood patrol. *(Beckoning for Molly)* Molly, bring me my shoes please-

MOLLY

I'm on the telephone Frank.