



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
CENTRO DE COMUNICAÇÃO E EXPRESSÃO
Departamento de Línguas e Literaturas Estrangeiras
Bacharelado em Letras - Inglês**

LUCIANA SOARES DE MEDEIROS

**HOW TO MAKE A BLACK WOMAN:
Controlling Images and the visuality of female characters
in literature and film**

Florianópolis

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LUCIANA SOARES DE MEDEIROS

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in literature and film**

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso de Graduação em
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Orientador: Prof. Dra. Alessandra Soares Brandão

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CENTRO DE COMUNICAÇÃO E EXPRESSÃO
DEPARTAMENTO DE LÍNGUA E LITERATURA ESTRANGEIRAS



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Imagens de Controle, Caracterização, Cinema, Mulheres Negras

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It took life to break me down

so that I could reorder the pieces and put myself back together.

It took life to undress me

so that I could rediscover which style suited me.

It took life to turn me inside out

so that I could discover that there is no right or wrong side, there is what there is.

It took life threatening to leave

so that I could welcome it with appreciation, affection and desire.

It was in the absence that I could

remake

recreate

feel and

revive myself.

Life imposed its presence.

And to her, I owe my eternal gratitude for getting this far.

Had I been given a clear definition of love earlier in my life it would not have taken me so long to become a more loving person. Had I shared with others a common understanding of what it means to love it would have been easier to create love.

bell hooks

RESUMO

Este estudo tem como objeto examinar os elementos visuais - cabelo, maquiagem e figurino - que expressam a ideia de feminilidade e personificam a personagem feminina negra principal de *Fences* (Um limite entre nós), tanto na peça quanto em sua adaptação para o cinema, analisando semelhanças e diferenças segundo o conceito de Imagens de Controle, desenvolvido por Patricia Hill Collins. O conceito é uma representação de gênero específica para pessoas negras, manipulada dentro de sistemas de poder articulados por raça, classe, gênero e sexualidade. A ideia da pesquisa é analisar a construção da caracterização de uma personagem interpretada pela atriz norte-americana Viola Davis em obra para Cinema adaptada de um produto literário. A pesquisa visa aprofundar um campo de análise que articula linguagem e cultura, com foco nos modos como os produtos textuais e audiovisuais constroem as imagens de personagens femininas negras, articulando as descrições dessas personagens com o conceito de Imagens de Controle, para problematizar as relações entre a indústria cultural e o reforço de espaços sociais destinados a grupos marginalizados.

Palavras-chave: Caracterização, Imagens de Controle, Mulheres Negras, Cinema

ABSTRACT

This study has as its object to examine the visual elements - hair, makeup and costume - that express the idea of femininity and embody the main black female character in *Fences* in both the play and its film adaptation, analyzing similarities and differences according to the concept of Controlling Images, created and debated by Patricia Hill Collins. The concept is a specific gender representation for black people, manipulated within systems of power articulated by race, class, gender, and sexuality. The idea of the research is to analyze the construction of the design of a character performed by the American actress Viola Davis in a work for Cinema adapted from a literary product. The research aims to deepen a field of analysis that articulates language and culture, focusing on the ways that textual and audiovisual products build the images of black female characters, articulating the descriptions of these characters with the concept of Controlling Images, to problematize the relations between the cultural industry and the reinforcement of social places designed to marginalized groups.

Keywords: Character Design, Controlling Images, Black Women, Cinema

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1 INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the Emmy Awards ceremony, a celebration of television in the United States, awarded the first black woman in its history as best actress in a drama series: Viola Davis. The history of the Emmy Awards, however, began on January 25, 1949. Sixty-six years separate both moments and history brings us countless episodes that help us contextualize, understand and problematize the deficiency of participation of black people in diverse productions, including movies.

On her acceptance speech, Viola said:¹:

In my mind, I see a line. And over that line I see green fields and lovely flowers and beautiful white women with their arms stretched out to me over that line, but I can't seem to get there no-how. I can't seem to get over that line,' That was Harriet Tubman in the 1800s. And let me tell you something: The only thing that separates women of color from anyone else is opportunity. You cannot win an Emmy for roles that are simply not there. So here's to all the writers, the awesome people that are Ben Sherwood, Paul Lee, Peter Nowalk, Shonda Rhimes, people who have redefined what it means to be beautiful, to be sexy, to be a leading woman, to be black. And to the Taraji P. Hensons, the Kerry Washingtons, the Halle Berrys, the Nicole Beharies, the Meagan Goods, to Gabrielle Union: Thank you for taking us over that line. Thank you to the Television Academy. Thank you. (BBC, 2015)

The layers of Davis' emotional speech encompass representativeness - something of fundamental importance for the construction of contemporary society in search of inclusion, reparation and social transformation - and also representation. This leads us to think about their quality and how we are creating and recreating these images to be interpreted and represented, and, consequently, in the relationships between the created images and their possible interpretations. Going one step beyond, one can also think about if and in what way these images help to maintain the system and social structure that perpetuates the same dynamics of exclusion that are explained here by the very distance between the creation of the award and the validation of the first black actress to achieve it in her main acting category.

¹ Excerpt of the award available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSpQfvd_zkE

Associated to the panorama illustrated above, the research I have developed in the field of art direction and performing arts² points directly to this creation of character image. In its origin, observing the creative process of the character designer (professional responsible for enabling the ideas for the visuality of characters), the aforementioned study opened possibilities to expand its discussion to another point of impact of these created images, which would be both the audience with which they relate, as well as the people they help to visually represent on different stages and screens.

This project you are about to read is part of a larger one currently under development as a Phd in Literature that, in summary, analyzes the visuality of characters played by the actress Viola Davis and its correlations to the Controlling Images, concept created by Patricia Hill Collins. As an excerpt of the larger project, this one, developed as a final project for the Baccalaureate in English undergraduate course, has as its objective to describe and compare the visual elements - hair, makeup and costume - that express the idea of femininity and embody the main black female character in *Fences*, both the play and its film adaptation, analyzing similarities, differences and absences, according to the concept of Controlling Images. *Fences* is a play awarded with the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1987, and was written by American playwright August Wilson in 1983. Wilson, a black author, focused on exploring in his writings the complexities of race relations, creating an amount of work with levels of density and complexity that put his name in the cannon of American Literature.

Fences, in summary, displays the problematics of a black family during the 1950's, living in a segregated black neighborhood in Pittsburgh, USA. The plot is concentrated on the head of this family, Troy Maxson, a garbage collector in his mid-fifties, dealing with frustrations and insecurities. Troy, a disgraced baseball player, bitter with the effects of the color barrier and racial segregation in his life and personal expectations, takes out his frustration on his family members and friends, and manipulates their relationship dynamics to remain in a position of power. Rose Maxson, his wife and mother of his second son, is the person of interest to this study, regarding the elements that help create the image of this woman, entangled in this time, space and reality.

The idea for this research is born after questions that arise and remain in the face of the depth and complexity of reality in the scenic scope: would there be, in these images of

² PhD in Scenic Arts at UDESC with the research "*COLOR, LIGHT AND SHADOW - Reflections on perception and the process of creation of make-up artists*"

characters created by and for the cinema, a reinforcement of social concepts of black women? What concepts would these be? Are these images working in collaboration to maintain spaces of segregation and hierarchy? As Winnie Bueno (Out 2019) points out, *“a lot is celebrated when a black woman receives the sporadic Oscar award for best actress. What we sometimes don't realize is that these women are given statuettes for roles that represent stereotypes built to control the body and behavior of black women”*.

Researching the filmography of an international actress involves its relevance to the discussion about representation and representativeness of black people in places of power, knowledge and public exposure. Representativeness is fundamental for the organization and development of contemporary society in search of inclusion, reparation and social transformation. While thinking about quality of representation, we can also reflect about how these images serve the system and social structure that perpetuates the dynamics of exclusion (made explicit, for example, by the distance between category awards in scenic areas and the validation of the first black actress to be awarded in their main categories).

The demands of contemporary organized social movements for more representation and better qualified representativeness have repercussions in multiple aspects of social life, such as modeling and marketing (ads and magazine covers), acting (film, tv shows), positions of power in companies, institutional politics, to list a few examples. It is essential that the relations between literature and their derived audiovisual productions are also understood as sources of reflection, which can be potential elements of inclusion and qualified representation. Connecting teaching, research and development of literacies (native language, foreign language, audiovisual, imagery) is vital for the joint construction of new narratives for bodies historically deprived of protagonism and personal choices.

Thus, the hypothesis that arises from the curiosity that guides this study is that there would already exist in the original literary text elements indicative of the visuality of the characters that would fit into some of the descriptions of Controlling Images. These elements would be reinforced by its transposition to the audiovisual, where the creation of the character design would add layers of interpretation and density to the Controlling Images associated with them (for the purpose of this research we understand character design as a concept involving costume-make-up-hair). This research, therefore, proposes to follow a path of work that involves the areas of Arts, Language and Social Sciences. The aim of this study is to

establish intersections between the aforementioned areas, focusing on studies of character design and creation of visuality, still incipient in national and international academic research, part of the scope of art direction/production design. It also aims to collaborate in the creation of theoretical links between literary and film studies, and those of images, art direction with a focus on character design, and social science studies with a focus on race and gender.

1.1 Objectives and methodology

The objective of this research was to examine the visual elements - hair, makeup and costume - that express the idea of femininity and embody the main black female character in *Fences* in both the play and its film adaptation, analyzing similarities and differences according to the concept of Controlling Images. To achieve the main objective of the study, the research was divided into two steps: the first one involved describing the main character's visual elements (hair, makeup and costume) in the play by August Wilson and as portrayed and played by Viola Davis in the film adaptation, including its screenplay as a possible reference text. The second step involved understanding the idea of femininity linked to the character's aesthetics, comparing the visual descriptions (in text and film) listing similarities, differences and/or absences, analyzing them according to the concept of Controlling Images.

This study was organized as a documentary and descriptive research, having as documents a film, its screenplay and the original play text from where it was adapted. To segment the search and select these relevant documents for the study, the research source was the movie *Fences*, with origins in a literary production and whose character (main or supporting) was interpreted by the actress Viola Davis. With the selected documents, reading was the next step, performed to identify the character played by Viola Davis and, subsequently, to assess whether or not it was possible to describe her visual conception, both in texts and in film. Reading both the play and the screenplay, and watching the film made it possible to list the visual elements related to makeup, hair and costume, and with this listing, the character designs present in the documents were discussed to observe whether or not they could relate to the concept of Controlling Images, developed by Patricia Hill Collins

By the end of the study, it was possible to understand the relationship between the character design in the final production for film and its description (or lack of) in the play text. This step is vital to establishing a comparative relationship, highlighting similarities, differences, and absences between the documents. With the outline of this entire network of relationships between the elements researched, the study could move on to critical analysis and debate of the material, articulating the concepts of Controlling Images to the researched items, listed and described in the documentary step.

In terms of textual organization, this study presents a brief literature review about its main elements and aspects addressed in the research: the actress Viola Davis, her connection with August Wilson and *Fences*' text, the notions of representation and representativeness that are articulated with the character and the actress who plays it, the historical and cultural context data that relate to the time portrayed in the text and film, and the notions of Controlling Images and the particular image that is associated with Rose Maxson. Following this brief review, we will detail the documents studied, highlighting in each one what appears or not as an indication of the physical materiality of the character played by Viola, in terms of direct references to hair, makeup and costume, as well as other direct or indirect references to physical forms (body and face) or appearance associated with physical and/or psychological alterations resulting from the actions present in the text (e.g. tiredness changing body expression, joy/sadness changing facial expression, among other possibilities).

Finally, we will be able to observe what emerges from the attentive look about the presence or not of elements that denote how we should understand Rose's physicality, as an accessory resource for the creation of the mental image that forms the figure of the character in question. Although the result of the investigation initially points to a path of absence of concrete data for the creation of visuality, which could be understood as an invalidation of the initial hypothesis that generated the curiosity of the research, in the end we can discuss how it is precisely this absence that opens the possibility of creation that can unite representation and representativeness, and we can analyze how this is presented in the researched materials.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Viola and August

Just two years after receiving the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series³ in 2015, Viola won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the film *Fences*. The Academy Award is an important moment for the film industry in the United States and has also international prestige. The role played by Viola is the same role that won her the prize for best leading actress at the Tony Award - dedicated to theater - years earlier in 2010. With the Oscar, she becomes the American black actress with the highest number of nominations for the award (4 in total), and the first holder of the The Triple Crown of Acting, term used by the entertainment industry to refer to an actor who has won an award on the three main segments of acting: theater (Tony Award), TV (Emmy Award) and cinema (Oscar). The Oscar for this category in the year of its victory is also highlighted by the nomination of three black women (in addition to Viola: Naomie Harris and Octavia Spencer) as competitors, something also rare to occur.

In her Oscar reception speech, Viola said⁴:

You know, there is one place that all the people with the greatest potential are gathered and that's the graveyard. People ask me all the time — what kind of stories do you want to tell, Viola? And I say exhume those bodies. Exhume those stories - the stories of the people who dreamed big and never saw those dreams to fruition, people who fell in love and lost. I became an artist and thank God I did, because we are the only profession that celebrates what it means to live a life. (BUTLER, 2017)

In her autobiography (DAVIS, 2022), Viola shares with the reader her entire personal trajectory since childhood, which serve as the foundation for her artistic creation and help the public to understand the magnitude of her power as an actress. From the deprivations,

³ For her role as Annalise Keating in *How to get away with murder*, TV series produced by Shonda Rhymes.

⁴ Excerpt of the award available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbo9GVmv87Y>

difficulties, violence and racism that cross her entire personal history and previous generations, it is possible to get acquainted and recognize an important and dense part of North American history and how its social constitution affected and still affects the material reality of the lives of racialized people, particularly black bodies. Finding in art not only a way of expressing her creative being but also a concrete source of distancing herself from the harsh realities that had so far been presented to her, Viola dives into the opportunities that the profession offers her.

Until she became the internationally recognized artist that she is today, Viola describes her journey as similar to that of any artist under development, with the peculiarities of being a dark skinned black woman in a cultural industry context that does not put her in front of the cameras as a main character, and constantly tests her persistence in staying in the area. Racial segregation, present since previous centuries in the artistic field, does not fail to present consequences on the actress's personal and professional life. Analyzing the development of the make-up artist profession in the scenic segments throughout history (MEDEIROS, 2022, chapters 3 and 4: items 3.4 and 4.2), I was able to observe in my previous research that in the literature of the area aimed at actors-makeup artists, concrete data had already presented visual stereotyping of black bodies, through the creation of the visuality of the character, both in costume, hair and make-up. The development of products for professional make-up also demonstrated a chemical and industrial evolution inversely proportional to social demands for inclusion and representation of racialized bodies. With an industry supported by racist scientific foundations of the era, and composed, in its various productive levels, by professionals and artistic choices that are based on the scientific premises in vogue in each historical period, the segregation of black bodies finds in this context the fundamentals to support its maintenance and foster an entire social process of invisibility to maintain and reinforce the structure of domination and the dehumanization of racialized people.

Although the instability of her acting career and the structural racism of society remain an important part of her professional path as an actress, Viola's career is permeated by dedication and commitment to different characters, from minors to majors, and in this aspect we find her connection with August Wilson and with Rose Maxson, the character that would bring her a Tony and an Oscar. Wilson, however, is a light-skinned black American author

(BRITANNICA, 2022), the result of an interracial relationship - with a black mother and a white father (of German origin) - and his lighter skin color contrasts to the dark black skin of Viola. At another moment and project, we can discuss issues such as colorism, passing, and how these are connected in different ways in relation to socially constituted genres, yet for this moment and study it is worth mentioning that, although at first glance we may think that the social passing arising from the fact that being a light-skinned black man would bring him the peace of mind to follow life paths with more fluidity and fewer impediments resulting from the racism present in society, August Wilson's life⁵ is marked by processes of exclusion and segregation not very distant from those also experienced by Viola.

It is in the change of residence and in the direct relations with white neighborhoods that, from an early age, Wilson realizes that there is a difference in treatment, access and opportunities for people of color. Directly or indirectly, we can understand that, just as the experience permeates the entire construction of Viola's career as an actress, Wilson is also crossed by racism and, while Viola does not have the possibility of forgetting or hiding her skin color and her physical traits, Wilson, on the contrary, has the possibility to choose who he wants to portray in his texts and describe their visualities. And his choice turns to creating universes that describe the reality of the North American black population, as well as his focus on creating characters of common origin, with professions that are not anchored in physical exceptionalism as a data to make the character relevant to the narrative. In this way, August Wilson creates people close to the common individual, such as the housewife and the garbage collector of *Fences*, giving them a voice, intellectual and psychological depth, their own narratives and layers of complexity, elements that may seem usual when we think of white characters, but which become scarce when we historically list black characters, whether in literature or in films (adapted from these or not).

In his career, the arrangement of a sequence of theatrical plays that describe each decade of the entire 20th century stands out, composing at the end a retrospective and portrait of the history of North American society and a picture of black people in this context, with its multiplicity, complexity and paradoxes inherent to the human being. The set of texts, called

⁵ The biographical elements of August Wilson's life and career presented in this segment can be explored with more details on the following websites: <https://augustwilsonhouse.org/>, <https://awaacc.org/>, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/August-Wilson>, <https://augustwilson.library.pitt.edu/>, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/august-wilson> and <https://www.centertheatregroup.org/programs/students/learn-about-theatre/august-wilson-monologue-competition/august-wilson-biography/>

The Pittsburgh Cycle, or The American Century Cycle⁶, provides us with materials that have become plays staged on and off the Broadway circuit, some of which have been adapted for the cinema. It is from this material and from the undeniable depth and quality present in its content that August Wilson is awarded two Pulitzer Prizes, and the performances and adaptations for theater and cinema are nominated in different categories and important awards in the artistic area, receiving awards and highlighting that there is social demand for the representation of black bodies in text and on screen, just as there is an urgent need to reflect about the quality of this representation.

2.2 Communication, Representation and Controlling Images

The lack of - or negligible -representation of black people in the entertainment industry in the United States has been the subject of frequent and increasingly heated debates inside and outside the artistic segment and entertainment industry. The discussion grows and evolves parallel to the mobilizations made by social movements of representative minorities, such as Black Lives Matter, with impact on different segments, gaining space and depth, encompassing a diversity of claims that impact directly and/or indirectly on local black lives. The speeches of black actors and actresses at award shows usually follow the line of what Viola points out at both the Emmy and the Oscar, indicating that there needs to be room for black people, so that the relationship between the one who represents (the actor) and the one who perceives himself/herself represented (the audience) can exist in more positive ways.

Representation, in this sense, understood as the ability to describe or imagine (HALL, 1997), is a concept of extreme importance when discussing cultural elements, since language and its variety are symbolic forms of representation, and not only the text, but also audiovisual products are forms of language and permeate the imaginary, creating images and reinforcing or challenging stereotypes. Representativeness, added to this concept when thinking about the visual design of a black character, generates a complex figure that unites quantity and quality, and can help us create layers of understanding on why there is more to

⁶ A brief summary of each play can be found here: <https://awaacc.org/american-century-cycle/>

this debate than solely the idea of stereotype as an oversimplification of the image or idea of a person.

Understanding culture as a cauldron of information and possibilities, as a set of practices among members of a social group, there is a production and exchange of meanings that are shared among these same members. Representation, as Stuart Hall points out (1997, p.1), “*connects meaning and language to culture*”. Language, in this context, is one of the possible ways to present concepts, thoughts, ideas and feelings, and by language we include not only writing, via varied texts (such as the play and script analyzed here), but also audiovisual (such as the film *Fences*) with its particularities and varied possibilities for the process of production of meanings. Communicating, therefore, is the essence of this work of shared conventions and codes via language. When we also think about the quality of the discourses produced, the diverse possible theoretical paths present us with possibilities to analyze both the ways in which representations and language produce meaning, as well as the effects and consequences of these representations.

Here, we add a personal reflection, bearing in mind the little attention and space given in the Brazilian academic environment to research focused on character design and makeup⁷: when we seek to reflect on how the visuality of a character is composed, and we try to punctuate its possible connections with categories of analysis that emphasize the racist, dominant and dehumanizing role of the quality of images produced, resulting on social immobility, we are, somewhat, in this study operating at the intersection of these fields of "how" and "effects", even if initially and contained.

The dynamics of interaction and communication, in this sense, guide something beyond the actor's craft as restricted to the specific techniques of his area, reinforcing representation and representativeness as aspects to be thought about and problematized. It is important for the industry to expand and to accommodate more black actors and actresses, but the contemporary debate adds to this the fact that it is not any type of role that one wants to play, since there is the technical side of being able to act in any category and artistic possibility, but there is also the social side, which involves the types of figures present in society that one also wants to see on screen, to deal with elements such as the projection and

⁷ Check: MEDEIROS, L. S. (2022) *COR, LUZ E SOMBRA: Reflexões sobre percepção e processo de criação de maquiadores-caracterizadores*. Doutorado em Artes Cênicas. Florianópolis: UDESC, 2022. Tese

creation of different perspectives of reality for the black population. In the Brazilian context, for example,

representation, especially in the media, was an important claim of the black movement in Brazil especially because of children like me, who did not see themselves on TV and who had all the construction of their self-esteem determined by this absence. The increase in the presence of black women in the media, therefore, is a response to this historical claim, but it still takes place in a controlled manner. (BUENO, October 2019)⁸

Communication, as a process facilitated by the use of language and different languages to be effective, has an intrinsic role in the process of reproduction of social relations. In this sense, even though it passes through several translation layers to transpose from a literary text to a character on the screen, depending on how it is conducted, it can reinforce and demarcate differences and social hierarchies, visibility and invisibility, and directly interfere in the quality of representations. On this point, we agree with Collins regarding the necessary conceptualization of linguistic and interpretive communities to glimpse the depth of the communication-language relationship and its intertwining with the systems of power operating in our society:

A language community is often seen as a place of social equality where speaking a shared language ostensibly encourages similar values and ideas and a common worldview. This understanding of language itself as the foundation of linguistic communities underlies common-sense ideas about translation. Here, it is enough to translate from Portuguese to English or vice versa so that the members of each language community have access to the worldview of the others. This perspective neglects the political implications of what it means to belong to a particular linguistic community. In this sense, language communities are apolitical – the power dynamics that affect all aspects of communication disappear. Just input ideas into Google Translate and see what comes out on the other side.

In contrast, my conception of the interpretive community makes power relations more central to the act of communication and translation. Power relations within an interpretive community regulate who can speak, who is heard, and what knowledge comes to represent that community to outsiders. Power relations shape who is silenced and who is heard. Racism and sexism operate within particular linguistic communities, generating patterns of silencing and listening that contribute to social relations of racism and sexism. Power systems such as these transform linguistic communities into interpretive communities with varying degrees of being able to speak for or represent a worldview. (COLLINS, SILVA-REIS, 2019, p. 229-230)

⁸ My translation, original in Portuguese.

When observing how the images to be represented in scenic productions are created, especially audiovisual ones such as TV and cinema, we can ask ourselves, among so many questions: How are these images idealized and produced, as a visual conception of these characters? Is this visual conception related to any other already present in contemporary social dynamics? And thinking from this problematizing and questioning perspective of realities, we arrive at the studies of Patricia Hill Collins, finding the concept of "‘*Controlling Images*’, as ‘*major instrument[s] of power*’, are ideological justifications of oppression that are central to the reproduction of racial, class, and gender inequality.” (COLLINS, 1991, p.68). These categories, at first, seem to converge into this desired articulation, which aims to problematize the artistic productions from specific sociological concepts, differentiating these categories also from the concepts of stereotype and representation.

Collins is also studied in depth in Brazil by Winnie Bueno, a Brazilian researcher who focuses on the concept of Controlling Images to contextualize it for our local reality and allows us to expand it. According to Bueno (April, 2019),

controlling images are defined by Patricia Hill Collins as a specific gender representation for black people that articulates from established patterns within the white Eurocentric Western culture. Controlling images differ from notions of representation and stereotype in the way they are manipulated within systems of power articulated by race, class, gender and sexuality.

And, as a way of expanding the concept beyond the North American reality, she also adds that

the dynamics of controlling images are not fixed, as are the assumptions of ideal femininity, which are influenced by combinations of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and citizenship status. Thus, the assumptions that organize the ideal of femininity in Brazil will not be the same as those that organize the standard of femininity in China, for example. That is, these categories are not fixed, but they are the ones from which controlling images are organized.
(*ibid*)

Patricia Hill Collins elaborates in her work *Black Feminist Thought* (1991) some Controlling Images (main ones that can be unfolded and updated), social scripts that will guide the way black women will be seen and treated, scripts of behavior and control of bodies to frame them and keep them within the social dynamics permeated by racism and sexism, which make it difficult for black women to leave the place of objectification. Some of the images that Collins develops are: the *welfare mother* - representing poor women dependent on

public policies; the *jezebel* - whose hyper-sexualized body restricts her to a labels of promiscuity; the *mammy* - whose main function is to dedicate herself with loyalty to her employers, exercising the maternal role; and the *matriarch* - negative variation of the woman whose need to work makes it impossible for her to supervise her own family, not transmitting values and thus collaborating with the perpetuation of poverty. At this point, Bueno (2020, p.117-118) emphasizes that the figure of the mammy is the first representation of black women that the entertainment industry produces, and

just as controlling images were used during the slavery period to justify the violence produced by racism, today the mass media reproduces the ideologies necessary for the maintenance of racial segregation structures. Controlling images contain the substance of racist ideologies in shaping new forms of racism. The media reproduces and circulates these images that, while being assimilated, are resisted, even within the media itself.

With the concept of Controlling Images in mind, some questions continue to arise and add layers to the project. For example: if we return to the starting point of this project and search within our memories for roles in TV and cinema with black actresses performing, can we not relate the descriptions of the aforementioned Controlling Images with roles played by black actresses in audiovisual works? If we continue our observation to the genre types of these works, can we not also observe that, although narrative genre styles vary, the characters are of a narrow spectrum in scope? By narrowing this view even further, can we not finally reach the point that we want to describe and analyze in this research: in the possible scope of roles destined to be represented by black women, how is the visual conception of these characters?

Thinking about the possible languages in the relationships listed here, we have the visual conception as a final source, the audiovisual production as an intermediate source, and the literary production from which the audiovisual originates, as the primary source. From the transposition from one form of language to another, we can infer that adaptations, flexibilizations, diverse processes of complex and necessary translations are needed for what is described in the text be materialized in the aesthetics of the characters. This path intersects the choices of what to make representable or not and, here, we highlight Collins' observation regarding the translation and interpretation of ideas:

I see my own scholarly work as a double act of translation and interpretation. [...] I see my theoretical work in *Black Feminist Thought* and *Black Sexual Politics* as a translation from one form of language into another, of everyday speech into specialized academic language and vice versa. [...] Thinking about my work as translation and interpretation across multiple interpretive communities made two things clear. First, not all ideas translate. Some are indeed untranslatable because they come from and are meaningful within particular interpretive communities. [...] Second, power relations influence what is seen as worthy of translation and what simply does not exist because it has not been translated. Basically, some topics never make it into the public eye because more powerful groups are simply not interested in seeing such ideas translated. (COLLINS, SILVA-REIS, 2019, p. 232-233)

Thus, starting from the understanding of translatable and translated ideas, turned into images for the conception of characters' visuality, and which may be serving as a reinforcement of Controlling Images of black women, this study seeks to relate film productions adapted from literary productions of different genres and styles (from plays to soap operas and comics) to choose one that allows the description of these visualities and subsequent critical analysis articulating them to the concept of Controlling Images. It is understood, in this sense, that literature does not necessarily lose its centrality in the universe of contemporary culture, however, its forms of elaboration and assimilation can take place in ways other than direct textual reading. And observing the path taken from the text to what is seen on the screen is part of the charm and curiosity that permeates this proposal.

2.3 The decade - fashion, politics, culture

The decade portrayed in the history of *Fences*, the 1950s, in the United States, brings a period after the 2nd World War, where nations were in economic and social recovery. The aftershocks of long periods of war, affect different layers of human life, and in the field of artistic creations, despite restrictions in terms of materials and production possibilities, there was a relative adjustment to strengthen the images projected on screens and reinforce the role of the media, particularly cinema, in the construction of the social imaginary. Female visuality now had an affluent of magazines, TV was already part of some homes, and cinema focused on rebuilding the image of the diva, composing hairstyles, makeup and costumes to indicate

the new shapes, colors, proportions and qualities associated with the ideal woman of the period.

In the professional field of the area, there were already in Hollywood renowned make-up professionals with prestige, and creators of looks considered beauty references for each period of society and cinema. Max Factor and the Westmore brothers, for example, are consolidated names that create the beauty of the actresses of the moment, produce their professional products and are now also part of the dynamics of the industry aimed at the final consumer, outside the segment of acting professionals (MEDEIROS, 2022, p.168-182). The designs of the costume parts serve as a guide to dictate fashion and refer to new shapes of the pieces, lengths of skirts, height of heels, size or absence of necklines, pattern of fabrics, location of the waist in the figure of the clothes created, among others. Everything, every detail, is meticulously thought out to configure a standard of person to be recognized as valid and worthy of being copied by the average person (CASTELBAJAC, 1995; HERNANDEZ, 2011). With the return of men after the war period, there is a joint effort by different segments of the industry (the cultural as well) to realign the references that indicate which type of woman, in particular, is the desired standard of image and, therefore, of behavior.

The financial difficulties of the period, however, made it difficult for an ordinary person to immediately acquire all the indicated image pattern, and it is not uncommon to find in the reference bibliography images of the time concomitant female looks even closer to the 1940s (patterning, fabrics, cuts of pieces), especially when we analyze the less economically favored classes, which for self-explanatory reasons of need for subsistence cannot provide themselves with a constant change of clothing items and accessories, for example.

The new compositions of female visibility follow social pressure for changes, with alterations in civil rights, greater female participation in public life, and the creation of an image of renewed femininity is composed of round skirts, cardigans, and a visual freshness arising from the New look by Christian Dior, from the previous decade, in contrast to the utilitarian look of the workwear pattern, with more sober fabrics, cuts and colors alluding to a masculine body image. The archetypal image of the housewife is the new reference for the woman of the 1950s, but a woman who should always be tidy, even though she is carrying out domestic activities and waiting for her husband, who, after the war period, returns home to work in the country. Reinforcement in the social imaginary is constant and insistent through

all forms of image creation, whether via TV, cinema, or magazines and various advertisements for products, from clothing to home appliances (RHODES, 2008; BAUDOT, 2009; FOGG, 2013; STEVENSON, 2021).

However, although the panorama described so far is a brief summary of broader patterns being released in a vast population, in the case of black women, the context described above is even denser, considering that the USA still lives a period of racial segregation that segments society and prevents the free movement of black people, restricting their access to consumer goods, but above all, access to basic rights to promote subsistence, belonging and social equality. It was only on July 2, 1964, that President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act (ANDREWS, 1985), decreeing the end of racial segregation in the country. The date, still, is later than the period portrayed in the play and in the film.

3 FENCES: TEXTS AND FILM

Fences is the sixth play written by August Wilson as part of his ten-part “The Century Cycle”, a set of plays focusing on each decade of the 20th Century. Wilson aimed at the creation of an artistic image of the century having black people as the center of its narrative. The play is set in the 1950’s, presents us with a family dealing with a temperamental middle-aged father, and guides us through their struggle with human problems such as love, responsibilities, betrayal, trust, death, fear, perspective, racism, and generational trauma, to list a few. It was written in 1983, first performed at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s 1983 National Playwrights Conference, then premiered on stage in 1985 at the Yale Repertory Theatre, having later its debut on Broadway with the same cast in 1987 and being nominated for 6 Tony Awards, winning 4 of them (best direction, best play, best leading actor, best featured actress). August Wilson was awarded a Pulitzer prize for Drama for his work with *Fences*. In 2010 the play was revived and the new cast included Denzel Washington as Troy and Viola Davis as Rose, granting them 10 Tony nominations and 3 prizes (best revival, best leading actor and actress). Wilson was working on a film adaptation for this Play in 2005 when he died of cancer. The production, however, was resumed and conducted by Denzel and

in 2016 the film premiered, later being nominated for 4 Oscars (best picture, best adapted screenplay, best actor and best supporting actress) and giving Viola her first Oscar and the Triple Crown of Acting.

The first part of this research involved reading the Play, the Screenplay, and highlighting any element, direct or indirect that could be a reference to Rose Maxson's visual description. Hair, makeup, costume, colors used, patterns, body forms, skin color, physical or psychological interferences that could affect the character's appearance, were the elements that guided the search for evidence. With these elements collected and listed, the second part of the research involved watching the film to check how the character showed up on screen and compare her visuality (hair, makeup and costume) with the previously listed data.

3.1 The Play

The play is set mostly in the backyard of Troy and Rose Maxson's house, with a few moments of dialogue in the kitchen or living room. The structure consists of two acts, with 4 scenes on the first act, and 5 scenes on the second act. Rose is part of all the scenes, yet, she is the only character with **no visual description**, or any indicative of visuality (regarding hair, makeup and costume, or any of the elements previously mentioned as secondary references to her character design). All the characters have at least 1 visual reference of their own. Even Troy's mistress, that is only mentioned by him and Bono, is physically described. Rose is the only one restricted to acts of service and reaction to someone else's actions.

3.2 The Screenplay

The screenplay was initially developed by August Wilson, but the project had to be postponed due to his death in 2005, being resumed almost a decade later with Denzel Washington as the director and Tony Kushner working as screenwriter over the drafts left by Wilson, but credited as co-producer. As a formal script it has little variation from the original

play when it comes to text content (following Denzel Washington’s command to preserve Wilson’s work), adding specifications for settings and the order of scenes, body language or change of costume. Rose, now, besides still being part of most of the scenes, is granted only 4 insertions of visual reference, 3 citing general costume ideas and 1 being specific about her physical/mental state and her clothes. The details for the other characters remain as in the play: more detailed and specific.

3.3 The Film

The film displays a character that comes to life not only because of the quality of the text, but also due to Viola’s striking performance. The production design has a reduced color palette (Figure 1), the art references the decade and their social class, and she has minimum variation in hair, makeup and accessories. Costume (Figure 2) plays a different part in her aesthetics, with waisted dresses in pastel colors, with floral, checkered or stripes as pattern for their fabric. The pastel palette is only challenged by a heavy dark coat and a funeral attire. The small wardrobe, however, is organized in a way that she has minor to major changes in

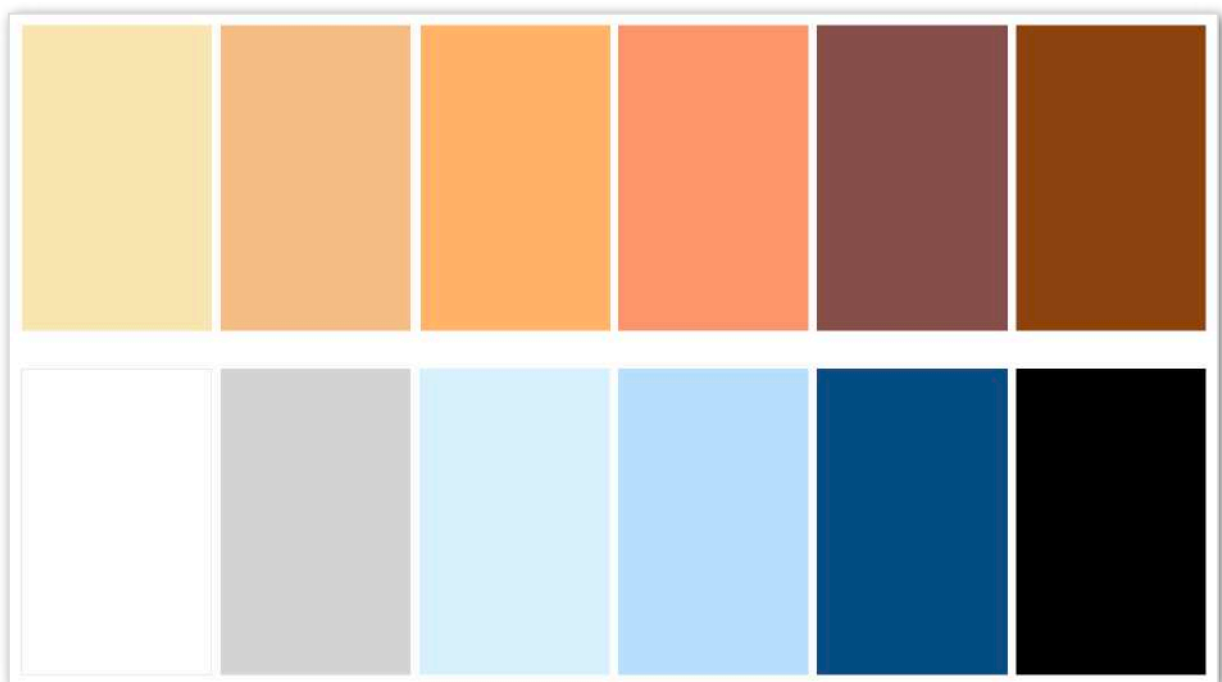


FIGURE 1 - ROSE MAXSON'S COSTUME COLOR PALETTE

Design of Rose’s Color Palette (my own development) to illustrate the main colors used in her dresses and accessories in most of the scenes (first row - yellow to rose pastels and earth tones), and the alternative colors used in specific moments of the narrative, such as church and funeral (second row - off-white to black with grays and dark blues).

her visuality in each of her 13 entrances. Since the dialogues remain faithful to the original, the physical description of Alberta, Troy's Mistress, added to Raynell's skin color also gives room for interpreting her as a black woman with a lighter skin, in comparison to Rose's.

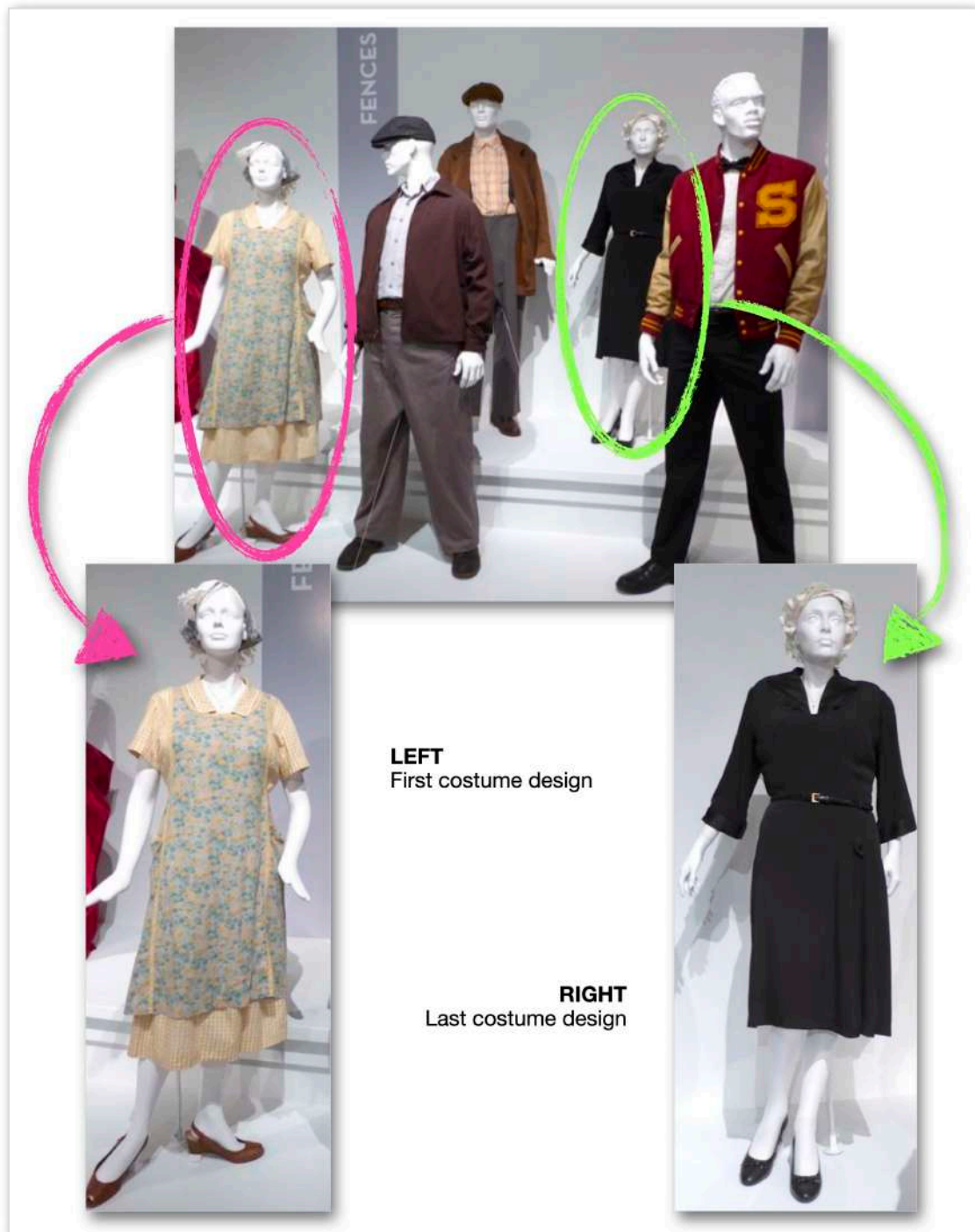


FIGURE 2 - FENCES - ORIGINAL COSTUME

Original costume on display at Downtown L.A.'s FIDM Museum on February 8, 2017, as part of the 25th Art of Motion Picture Costume Design exhibition. (Collage made by me) Images available at: <https://hollywoodmoviecostumesandprops.blogspot.com/2017/02/fences-movie-costumes-on-display.html>

4 DEBATE - similarities, differences and absence

Viola (ANDERSON, 2017) considers August Wilson someone that understands the black community and portrays them as individuals, highlighting their complexities, and, therefore, their humanity. In giving a voice to the average man, Wilson chooses a specific connection of representation with representativeness, detaching himself from the obvious text that only considers black folks as interesting to be portrayed if they excel in something - usually sports or music. The imaginary of being exceptional permeates the racist structure that controls black bodies, denying levels of agency and establishing unachievable goals in life for the ordinary man. What August does is to reclaim this man's life to himself, giving him a voice of his own, showing the audience and the reader that there is a life and a story worth of being told. His works and his activism in life put the text and film chosen to be discussed in this research under a different spotlight, one filled with expectations.

In the original text of *Fences* (1983), August Wilson only indicates as physical data that Rose Maxson is ten years younger than her husband Troy, 53 years old. While Troy receives physical descriptions from the first lines of text (act 1, scene 1, p.4), notes on working and non-working clothes, as well as other characters that appear throughout the play, such as: his co-worker Bono, also a garbageman (act 1, scene 1, p.4); Troy's eldest son, Lyons (Act 1, Scene 1, p.16); Troy's brother Gabriel (Act 1, Scene 2, p.27); Troy and Rose's son, Cory (act 1, scene 4, p.59) and even his daughter Raynell, a child, near the end of the text (act 2, scene 5, p.93). Troy's mistress, Alberta, Raynell's mother, a character that is only mentioned but not performed by any actress, is physically described by Bono and Troy on pages 7-8 as follows: "*BONO: I don't know about that Indian part. But she damn sure big and healthy. Woman wear some big stockings. Got them great big old legs and hips as wide as the Mississippi River. TROY: Legs don't mean nothing. You don't do nothing but push them out of the way. But them hips cushion the ride!*". Rose, however, is described through her work at home and through her actions and reactions to the other characters, especially her husband.

On her entrance in the play, the description highlights her age compared to her husband's: "*she is ten years younger than TROY*" (act 1, scene 1, p.8), and the rest of the description involves elements of a psychical/affective background and domestic work actions

in relation to who performs in the scene. The creation of the black woman, in this sense, is limited to domestic work activities, without visual description, or any other representation that insinuates her physicality, personal care or visual presentation through clothing, as happens with the other characters. Rose, the only woman actually present in a physical body in the story, does not have a described body, and her existence seems constrained to react to her husband's existence.

Besides the absence of visual description - in the sense of presenting the body type, details of the physical appearance in hair and makeup, or composition of clothing and accessories, there is not any impediment for the film adaptation to be produced. For this one, there is a relative range of data to indicate the materialized presentation of this female body that exists in the mid-1950s in a working-class suburb of a segregated Pittsburgh, in the United States, in a region inhabited by a mostly black and poor population, dealing with ordinary problems relating to securing one's livelihood. From the reality data of where the story to be told is located, it is possible to understand the path taken by the production design for artistic decisions involving the reduced color palette and minimal variety of locations.

From the Screenplay, the indicatives of visuality appear on a few pages, focused on costume and without much details. On page 42: "*Rose, dressed nicely, checks the front door to make sure it's locked.*", page 101: "*It's early April, and the weather's cool. Rose, looking tired, wears a light jacket and scarf over her head.*", page 115: "*Rose, dressed up, holds the baby in one arm, from which a purse hangs, stuffed with diapers and two warm bottles.*", and later on page 133, when the funeral scene is described: "*Rose leans out of the window, her hair up, wearing black.*".

Rose, thus, appears on screen (WASHINGTON, 2016) with a creation of character design that visually inserts her into the fashion style of the 1950s (Figure 3), with the following particularities: there is a reduced number of garments, in a color palette with little variation in pastel tones with checkered, striped or floral prints, and only two costumes deviate from the pattern (Figure 4) - the obvious black funeral attire at the end of the film, and a coat/dress made of heavier fabric in a darker bluish/grey tone, as well as one of the scarves she wears in some scenes to cover part of the hair. Throughout the plot, the same shoe, bracelet, necklace with a cross pendant are used, and a pair of earrings appears in two scenes, one of them with a continuity error (earring does not appear, there is a camera cut, in the



FIGURE 3 - ROSE MAXSON'S COLOR PALETTE APPLIED TO COSTUME 1

Rose's wardrobe, with its reduced color palette and pieces of clothes, with a 1950s style and minimal mix of pieces and accessories to create differences within scenes: 1a - Main yellow costume in a scene outside the house, natural light; 1b - The same composition but inside the house and in different lighting; 1c - The same yellow checkered dress with a different apron and a light blue scarf on her head; 2 - Tidier outfit, used to leave the house environment, with different fabrics in dress and cardigan; 3a/ b - Second costume design used mostly at home and while performing activities such as cooking, cleaning or hanging clothes - same button dress with pastel rose color and small roses as pattern, with apron and scarf in different colors from the first costume design; 4 - Another outfit with pastel rose colors but tidier and with striped pattern, with apron, used inside the house but not while cooking or cleaning. (Collage made by me)

return to Viola the golden and relatively bulky earring stands out in the light of the scene).

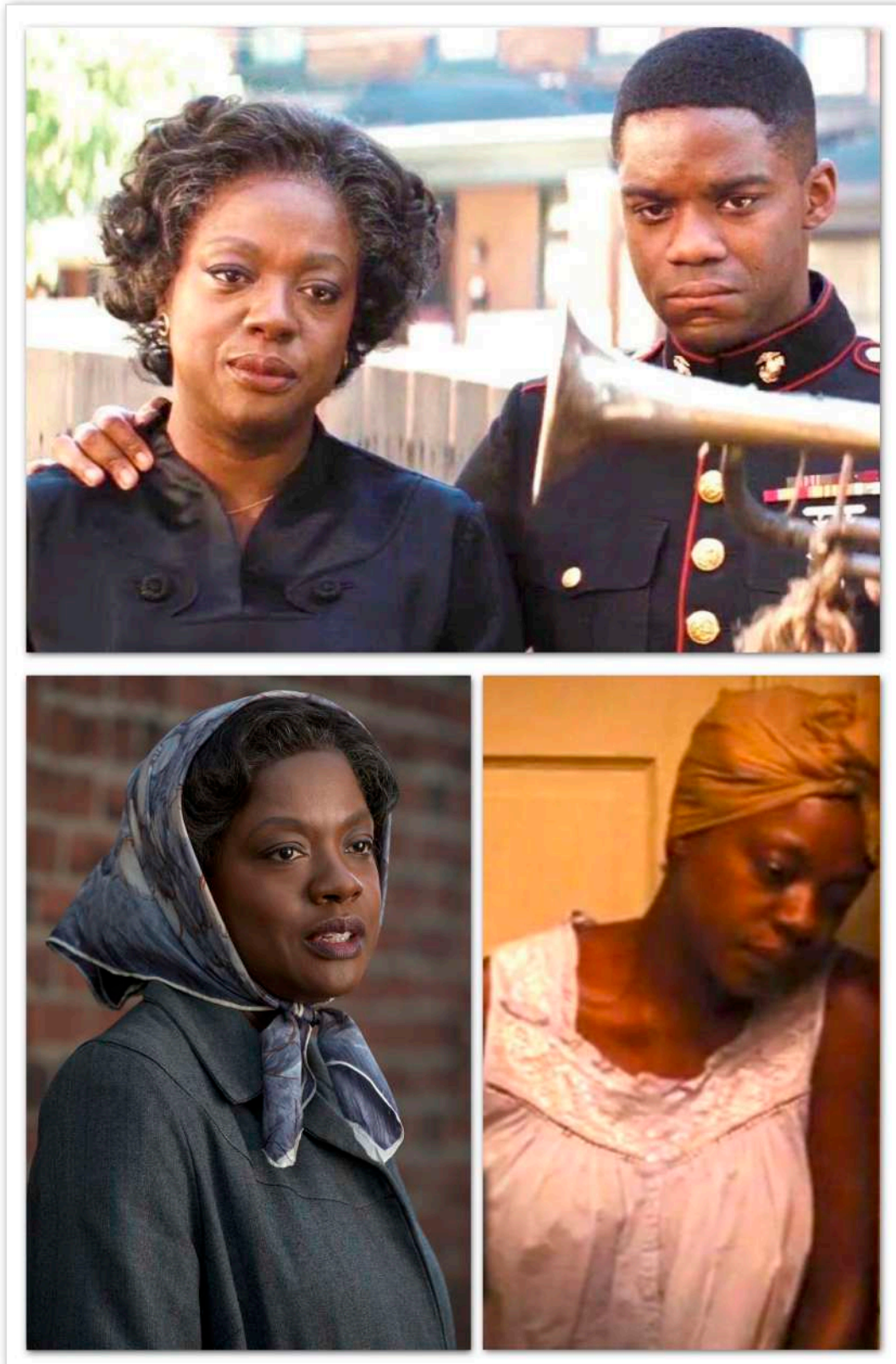


FIGURE 4 - ROSE MAXSON'S COLOR PALETTE APPLIED TO COSTUME 2

First row - Funeral Attire with classical black dress, the same accessories from previous scenes, hair with more white strands to reinforce passage of time. Second row - Left: Blue scarf covering the head and heavy blue jacket, applied to a moment of her life when she is struggling with marital problems and goes to Troy's workplace to talk to him; Right - Light nightgown (white/off-white?) and scarf to protect the hair while sleeping, a customary way of black women dealing with natural hair.

In terms of make-up and hair, there is also no significant variation (Figure 5): Rose/ Viola has a dark black skin tone, there is no apparent application of products (in the sense of making the character appear to be wearing makeup) other than a line of eyeliner and a shade of lipstick color with a satin shine that appears in the opening scene and does not reappear in the following ones. Although the elements are few, there are 13 interchanges of clothing parts creating small variations in the compositions in each of Rose's entrances (her entrances, approximately: 05m10s; 21m33s; 33m38s; 46m25s; 1h05m; 1h24m15s; 1h24m; 1h25m; 1h26m06s; 1h31m36s; 1h36m44s ; 01h42m22s; 01h54m38s). The hair follows the costume variations, sometimes being smoother with light curls at the ends, sometimes more wavy up to above the ears, sometimes with a scarf in a triangular fold covering part of the head (especially at moments of domestic functions such as cooking or hanging clothes). There is a

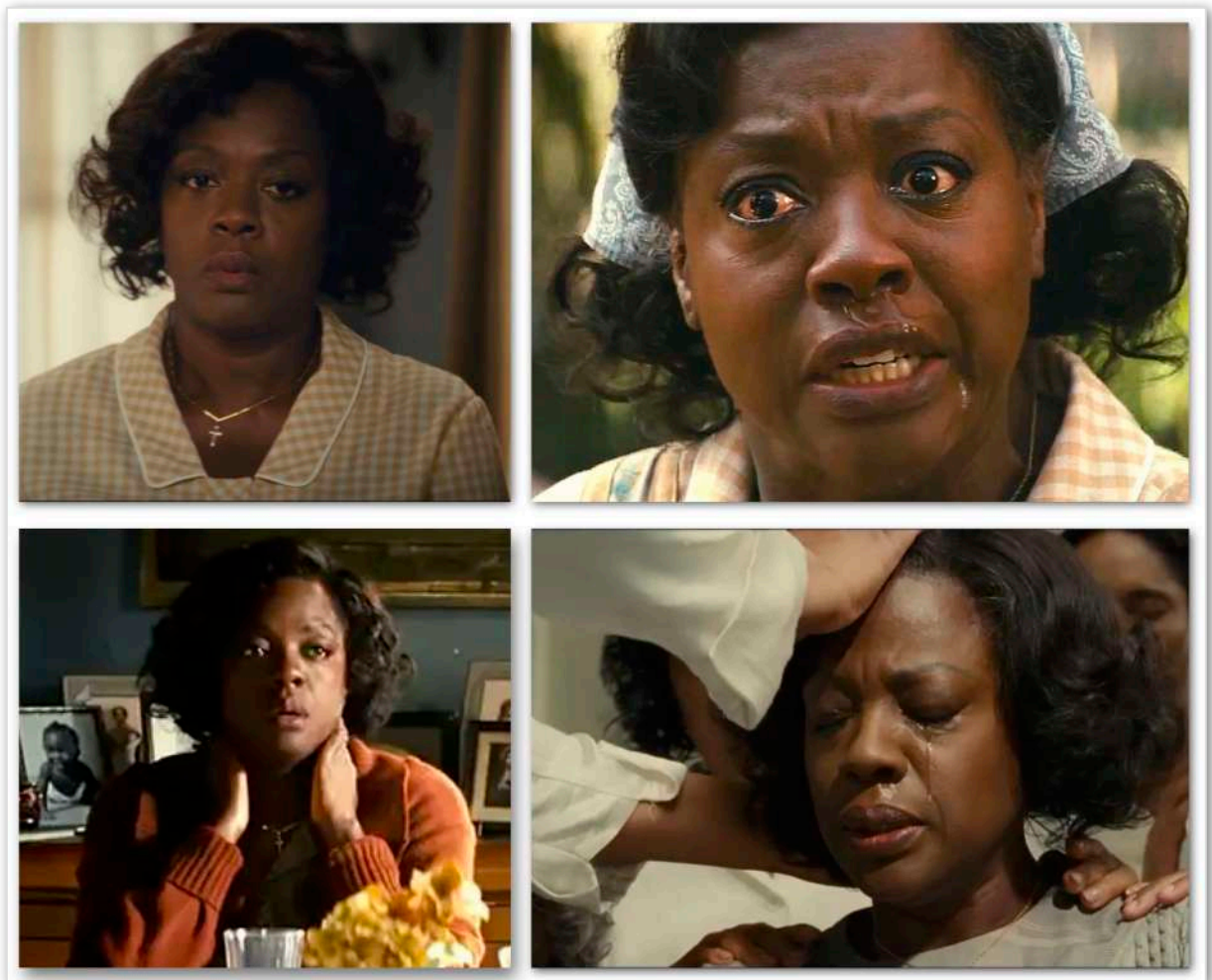


FIGURE 4 - ROSE MAXSON'S HAIR AND MAKEUP

Rose's appearance in different scenes, with no variation in makeup, minimum hair style (more or less curly, with or without scarf). (Collage made by me)

different attention to her hair style in the exit scenes to take the cake to church, when Raynell is still a baby, and in the final funeral scene.

Here, we have important elements to coordinate a first understanding of what stands out when we think of visuality as indicative of a pattern of femininity in a given context, and the relationship of this resulting image with the ideas of representation and representativeness, data of fundamental importance and already present in public debate when the film was made (released in 2016). Although the original text does not contain elements of description of the character's visual composition, the film, by its own constitution in another field, as an audiovisual product, depends on this composition so that the actress can bring the character to life, associating clothing, hair and makeup with the technical acting elements. The objective directions of art and production design, in this sense, complement the objective and subjective choices of acting, producing a complex image that starts to configure something beyond any of its parts in isolation.

5 FINAL REMARKS

The hypothesis that guided this study was that there would already exist in the original literary text elements indicative of the visuality of the characters that would fit into some of the Controlling Images. Reading and searching for evidences, and later watching the film to compare text and screen references, tested and proved the hypothesis to be denied. Notwithstanding, the study was far from being considered lost or irrelevant, since it paradoxically highlighted something else, that was not evident at a first glance: the absence. This absence cannot be considered a void or any form of nullity. It is a fertile ground where creativity and possible connections can be made to generate an image that not only represents an artistic reference, but a political symbol of representation with representativeness, if those in charge of the production design are aware of the complexities involved in the process.

We conclude this study with the understanding that Rose Maxson has her physical creation constituted and detailed only in the film, adaptation of the original theatrical text. Her character design personifies the low-class woman, housewife, from the black periphery of the

United States, with social circulation reduced to family and church, and existence presented through actions of domestic work and responses to male existences present in the plot. The quality of interpretation brought by Viola both to the play and to the film - and which earned her both the highest awards in the acting categories, a Tony and an Oscar - gives life and depth to the character, bringing layers of complexity and physical existence linked to affective data or actions/reactions indicated in the text.

The composition created for Rose's visuality, in terms of costume, hair and makeup, is constrained to a representation of femininity of a specific period in US history, in the post-World War II moment, and represents a particular aesthetic pattern, which reinforces characteristics of socialization and social roles represented by peripheral black women and housewives of the portrayed period. The non-existence of physical materiality in the source text and the existence of visuality composing its physical materiality for the film, come together to create a representation of a black woman that we can associate with the descriptors brought by Collins for the Controlling Image of the *mammy*, the black woman whose existence is denied, her appearance absent, her identity withheld by service actions that reduce her to a body that roams in spaces reacting to the needs and existence of others, in particular of other men, acting as a mother in denial of her womanhood. The little variety of costumes indicate not only a choice of production design for historical verisimilitude, but also reveals the layers of this character to whom the non-described physical materiality helps creating - in the characteristic brought by text and performance - her non-place as a woman, as a sexualized body, desired by her partner, while being individualized and with desires, thoughts of her own and personal characteristics expressed in her appearance.

There are deeper layers to think about regarding representation and representativeness, when we observe the choice of inserting the professional body of a dark skinned black actress to give life to this stereotype beyond the stereotype, which brings in the visuality that generates Rose's physical materiality the composition of the Controlling Image that strips her of the possibility of managing her own existence. However, even though absence is the tonic that guides Rose's creation, the text allows us to observe that, although the inherent problems of being written, described and performed as an individual and not a mere third-party appendage, it is by assuming this absence that Rose comes to exist by herself, when she turns to her husband Troy and shoots: "*From right now... this child got a*

mother. But you a womanless man.” (WILSON, 1983, act 2, scene 3, p.81) Rose materializes not only through film, but also in the text that denied her physical description from the beginning, by assuming this denial and giving it back to the other character of which she was made appendage. It is in absence that presence is made, and Rose Maxson receives a concrete data of physical existence that resonate her density and complexity.

Depending on the generosity of those who create the adaptations, however, is still a foggy and complex terrain, which makes room for other debates and necessary studies, when we think of creating characters that are visually described in a coherent way with the aspirations of representation with representativeness of populations placed on the margins of societies and in situations of vulnerability in different contexts and layers. It is necessary that we pay close attention to the absences in our representations, discourses and projects, so that, with or without deliberation, we do not reinforce categories that go beyond the mere visual stereotype, and constitute themselves as images that deprive people of their status as individuals capable of existing, manage themselves and have social mobility beyond the dominant strategies that are structured to control their bodies and deny their humanity.

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ANNEXES

A - Fences - Play

B - Fences - Screenplay

A - Fences - Play

Act 1

Act 1, Scene 1

Act One Scene One

It is 1957. TROY and BONO enter the yard, engaged in conversation. TROY is fifty-three years old, a large man with thick, heavy hands; it is this largeness that he strives to fill out and make an accommodation with. Together with his blackness, his largeness informs his sensibilities and the choices he has made in his life.

Of the two men, BONO is obviously the follower. His commitment to their friendship of thirty-odd years is rooted in his admiration of TROY's honesty, capacity for hard work, and his strength, which BONO seeks to emulate.

It is Friday night, payday, and the one night of the week the two men engage in a ritual of talk and drink. TROY is usually the most talkative and at times he can be crude and almost vulgar, though he is capable of rising to profound heights of expression. The men carry lunch buckets and wear or carry burlap aprons and are dressed in clothes suitable to their jobs as garbage collectors.

BONO Troy, you ought to stop that lying!

TROY I ain't lying! The nigger had a watermelon this big.

(He indicates with his hands.)

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Talking about . . . "What watermelon, Mr. Rand?" I liked to fell out! "What watermelon, Mr. Rand?" . . . And it sitting there big as life.

BONO What did Mr. Rand say?

TROY Ain't said nothing. Figure if the nigger too dumb to know he carrying a watermelon, he wasn't gonna get much sense out of him. Trying to hide that great big old watermelon under his coat. Afraid to let the white man see him carry it home.

BONO I'm like you . . . I ain't got no time for them kind of people.

TROY Now what he look like getting mad cause he see the man fromt he union talking to Mr. Rand?

BONO He come to me talking about . . . "Maxson gonna get us fired." I told him to get away from me with that. He walked away from me calling you a troublemaker. What Mr. Rand say?

TROY Ain't said nothing. He told me to go down the Commissioner's office next Friday. They called me down there to see them.

BONO Well, as long as you got your complaint filed, they can't fire you. That's what one of them white fellows tell me.

TROY I ain't worried about them firing me. They gonna fire me cause I asked a question? That's all I did. I went to Mr. Rand and asked him, "Why?" Why you got the white mens driving and the colored lifting?" Told him, "what's the matter, don't I count? You think only white fellows got sense enough to drive a truck. That ain't no paper job! Hell, anybody can drive a truck. How come you got all whites driving and the colored lifting? He told

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me "take it to the union." Well, hell, that's what I done! Now they wanna come up with this pack of lies.

BONO I told Brownie if the man come and ask him any questions . . . just tell the truth! It ain't nothing but something they done trumped up on you cause you filed a complaint on them.

TROY Brownie don't understand nothing. All I want them to do is change the job description. Give everybody a chance to drive the truck. Brownie can't see that. He ain't got that much sense.

BONO How you figure he be making out with that gal be up at Taylors' all the time . . . that Alberta gal?

TROY Same as you and me. Getting just as much as we is. Which is to say nothing.

BONO It is, huh? I figure you doing a little better than me . . . and I ain't saying what I'm doing.

TROY Aw, nigger, look here . . . I know you. If you had got anywhere near that gal, twenty minutes later you be looking to tell somebody. And the first one you gonna tell . . . that you gonna want to brag to . . . is gonna be me.

BONO I ain't saying that. I see where you be eyeing her.

TROY I eye all the women. I don't miss nothing. Don't never let nobody tell you Troy Maxson don't eye the women.

BONO You been doing more than eyeing her. You done bought her a drink or two.

TROY Hell yeah, I bought her a drink! What that mean? I bought you one, too. What that mean cause I buy her a drink? I'm just being polite.

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BONO It's alright to buy her one drink. That's what you call being polite. But when you wanna be buying two or three . . . that's what you call eyeing her.

TROY Look here, as long as you known me . . . you ever known me to chase after women?

BONO Hell yeah! Long as I done known you. You forgetting I knew you when.

TROY Naw, I'm talking about since I been married to Rose?

BONO Oh, not since you been married to Rose. Now, that's the truth, there. I can say that.

TROY Alright then! Case closed.

BONO I see you be walking up around Alberta's house. You supposed to be at Taylors' and you be walking up around there.

TROY What you watching where I'm walking for? I ain't watching after you.

BONO I seen you walking around there more than once.

TROY Hell, you liable to see me walking anywhere! That don't mean nothing cause you see me walking around there.

BONO Where she come from anyway? She just kinda showed up one day.

TROY Tallahassee. You can look at her and tell she one of them Florida gals. They got some big healthy women down there. Grow them right up out the ground. Got a little bit of Indian in her. Most of them niggers down in Florida got some Indian in them.

BONO I don't know about that Indian part. But she damn

sure big and healthy. Woman wear some big stockings. Got them great big old legs and hips as wide as the Mississippi River.

TROY Legs don't mean nothing. You don't do nothing but push them out of the way. But them hips cushion the ride!

BONO Troy, you ain't got no sense.

TROY It's the truth! Like you riding on Goodyears!

(ROSE enters from the house. She is ten years younger than TROY, her devotion to him stems from her recognition of the possibilities of her life without him: a succession of abusive men and their babies, a life of partying and running the streets, the Church, or aloneness with its attendant pain and frustration. She recognizes TROY's spirit as a fine and illuminating one and she either ignores or forgives his faults, only some of which she recognizes. Though she doesn't drink, her presence is an integral part of the Friday night rituals. She alternates between the porch and the kitchen, where supper preparations are under way.)

ROSE What you all out here getting into?

TROY What you worried about what we getting into for? This is men talk, woman.

ROSE What I care what you all talking about? Bono, you gonna stay for supper?

BONO No, I thank you, Rose. But Lucille say she cooking up a pot of pigfeet.

TROY Pigfeet! Hell, I'm going home with you! Might even stay the night if you got some pigfeet. You got something in there to top them pigfeet, Rose?

ROSE I'm cooking up some chicken. I got some chicken and collard greens.

TROY Well, go on back in the house and let me and Bono finish what we was talking about. This is men talk. I got some talk for you later. You know what kind of talk I mean. You go on and powder it up.

ROSE Troy Maxson, don't you start that now!

TROY

(Puts his arm around her.) Aw, woman . . . come here. Look here, Bono . . . when I met this woman . . . I got out that place, say, "Hitch up my pony, saddle up my mare . . . there's a woman out there for me somewhere. I looked here. Looked there. Saw Rose and latched on to her." I latched on to her and told her — I'm gonna tell you the truth — I told her, "Baby, I don't wanna marry, I just wanna be your man." Rose told me . . . tell him what you told me, Rose.

ROSE I told him if he wasn't the marrying kind, then move out the way so the marrying kind could find me.

TROY That's what she told me. "Nigger, you in my way. You blocking the view! Move out the way so I can find me a husband." I thought it over two or three days. Come back —

ROSE Ain't no two or three days nothing. You was back the same night.

TROY Come back, told her . . . "Okay, baby . . . but I'm gonna buy me a banty rooster and put him out there in the backyard . . . and when he see a stranger come, he'll flap his wings and crow . . ." Look here, Bono, I could watch the front door by myself . . . it was that back door I was worried about.

ROSE Troy, you ought not talk like that. Troy ain't doing nothing but telling a lie.

TROY Only thing is . . . when we first got married . . . forget the rooster . . . we ain't had no yard!

BONO I hear you tell it. Me and Lucille was staying down there on Logan Street. Had two rooms with the outhouse in the back. I ain't mind the outhouse none. But when that goddamn wind blow through there in the winter . . . that's what I'm talking about! To this day I wonder why in the hell I ever stayed down there for six long years. But see, I didn't know I could do no better. I thought only white folks had inside toilets and things.

ROSE There's a lot of people don't know they can do no better than they doing now. That's just something you got to learn. A lot of folks still shop at Bella's.

TROY Ain't nothing wrong with shopping at Bella's. She got fresh food.

ROSE I ain't said nothing about if she got fresh food. I'm talking about what she charge. She charge ten cents more than the A&P.

TROY The A&P ain't never done nothing for me. I spends my money where I'm treated right. I go down to Bella, say, "I need a loaf of bread, I'll pay you Friday." She give it to me. What sense that make when I got money to go and spend it somewhere else and ignore the person who done right by me? That ain't in the Bible.

ROSE We ain't talking about what's in the Bible. What sense it make to shop there when she overcharge?

TROY You shop where you want to. I'll do my shopping where the people been good to me.

ROSE Well, I don't think it's right for her to overcharge. That's all I was saying.

BONO Look here . . . I got to get on. Lucille going be raising all kind of hell.

TROY Where you going, nigger? We ain't finished this pint. Come here, finish this pint.

BONO Well, hell, I am . . . if you ever turn the bottle loose.

TROY

(Hands him the bottle.) The only thing I say about the A&P is I'm glad Cory got that job down there. Help him take care of his school clothes and things. Gabe done moved out and things getting tight around here. He got that job. . . . He can start to look out for himself.

ROSE Cory done went and got recruited by a college football team.

TROY I told that boy about that football stuff. The white man ain't gonna let him get nowhere with that football. I told him when he first come to me with it. Now you come telling me he done went and got more tied up in it. He ought to go and get recruited in how to fix cars or something where he can make a living.

ROSE He ain't talking about making no living playing football. It's just something the boys in school do. They gonna send a recruiter by to talk to you. He'll tell you he ain't talking about making no living playing football. It's a honor to be recruited.

TROY It ain't gonna get him nowhere. Bono'll tell you that.

BONO If he be like you in the sports . . . he's gonna be

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alright. Ain't but two men ever played baseball as good as you. That's Babe Ruth and Josh Gibson. Them's the only two men ever hit more home runs than you.

TROY What it ever get me? Ain't got a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of.

ROSE Times have changed since you was playing baseball, Troy. That was before the war. Times have changed a lot since then.

TROY How in hell they done changed?

ROSE They got lots of colored boys playing ball now. Baseball and football.

BONO You right about that, Rose. Times have changed, Troy. You just come along too early.

TROY There ought not never have been no time called too early! Now you take that fellow . . . what's that fellow they had playing right field for the Yankees back then? You know who I'm talking about, Bono. Used to play right field for the Yankees.

ROSE Selkirk?

TROY Selkirk! That's it! Man batting .269, understand? .269. What kind of sense that make? I was hitting .432 with thirty-seven home runs! Man batting .269 and playing right field for the Yankees! I saw Josh Gibson's daughter yesterday. She walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet. Now I bet you Selkirk's daughter ain't walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet! I bet you that!

ROSE They got a lot of colored baseball players now. Jackie Robinson was the first. Folks had to wait for Jackie Robinson.

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TROY I done seen a hundred niggers play baseball better than jackie Robinson. Hell, I know some teams Jackie Robinson couldn't even make! What you talking about Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson wasn't nobody. I'm talking about if you could play ball then they ought to have let you play. Don't care what color you were. Come telling me I come along too early. If you could play . . . then they ought to have let you play.

(TROY takes a long drink from the bottle.)

ROSE You gonna drink yourself to death. You don't need to be drinking like that.

TROY Death ain't nothing. I done seen him. Done wrassled with him. You can't tell me nothing about death. Death ain't nothing but a fastball on the outside corner. And you know what I'll do to that! Lookee here, Bono . . . am I lying? You get one of them fastballs, about waist high, over the outside corner of the plate where you can get the meat of the bat on it . . . and good god! You can kiss it goodbye. Now, am I lying?

BONO Naw, you telling the truth there. I seen you do it.

TROY If I'm lying . . . that 450 feet worth of lying!

(Pause.) That's all death is to me. A fastball on the outside corner.

ROSE I don't know why you want to get on talking about death.

TROY Ain't nothing wrong with talking about death. That's part of life. Everybody gonna die. You gonna die, I'm gonna die. Bono's gonna die. Hell, we all gonna die.

ROSE But you ain't got to talk about it. I don't like to talk about it.

TROY You the one brought it up. Me and Bono was talking about baseball . . . you tell me I'm gonna drink myself

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to death. Ain't that right, Bono? You know I don't drink this but one night out of the week. That's Friday night. I'm gonna drink just enough to where I can handle it. Then I cuts it loose. I leave it alone. So don't you worry about me drinking myself to death. 'Cause I ain't worried about Death. I done seen him. I done wrestled with him. Look here, Bono . . . I looked up one day Death was marching straight at me. Like Soldiers on Parade! The Army of Death was marching straight at me. The middle of July, 1941. It got real cold just like it be winter. It seem like Death himself reached out and touched me on the shoulder. He touch me just like I touch you. I got cold as ice and Death standing there grinning at me.

ROSE Troy, why don't you hush that talk.

TROY I say . . . What you want, Mr. Death? You be wanting me? You done brought your army to be getting me? I looked him dead in the eye. I wasn't fearing nothing. I was ready to tangle. Just like I'm ready to tangle now. The Bible say be ever vigilant. That's why I don't get but so drunk. I got to keep watch.

ROSE Troy was right down there in Mercy Hospital. You remember he had pneumonia? Laying there with a fever talking plumb out of his head.

TROY Death standing there staring at me . . . carrying that sickle in his hand. Finally he say, "You want bound over for another year?" See, just like that . . . "You want bound over for another year?" I told him, "Bound over hell! Let's settle this now!" It seem like he kinda fell back when I said that, and all the cold went out of me. I reached down and grabbed

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that sickle and threw it just as far as I could throw it . . . and me and him commenced to wrestling. We wrestled for three days and three nights. I can't say where I found the strength from. Every time it seemed like he was gonna get the best of me, I'd reach way down deep inside myself and find the strength to do him one better.

ROSE Every time Troy tell that story he find different ways to tell it. Different things to make up about it.

TROY I ain't making up nothing. I'm telling you the facts of what happened. I wrestled with Death for three days and three nights and I'm standing here to tell you about it.

(Pause.) Alright. At the end of the third night we done weakened each other to where we can't hardly move. Death stood up, throwed on his robe . . . had him a white robe with a hood on it. He throwed on that robe and went off to look for his sickle. Say, "I'll be back." Just like that. "I'll be back." I told him, say, "Yeah, but . . . you gonna have to find me!" I wasn't no fool. I wasn't going looking for him. Death ain't nothing to play with. And I know he's gonna get me. I know I got to join his army . . . his camp followers. But as long as I keep my strength and see him coming . . . as long as I keep up my vigilance . . . he's gonna have to fight to get me. I ain't going easy.

BONO Well, look here, since you got to keep up your vigilance . . . let me have the bottle.

TROY Aw hell, I shouldn't have told you that part. I should have left out that part.

ROSE Troy be talking that stuff and half the time don't even know what he be talking about.

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TROY Bono know me better than that.

BONO That's right. I know you. I know you got some Uncle Remus in your blood. You got more stories than the devil got sinners.

TROY Aw hell, I done seen him too! Done talked with the devil.

ROSE Troy, don't nobody wanna be hearing all that stuff.

(LYONS enters the yard from the street. Thirty-four years old, TROY's son by a previous marriage, he sports a neatly trimmed goatee, sport coat, white shirt, tieless and buttoned at the collar. Though he fancies himself a musician, he is more caught up in the rituals and "idea" of being a musician than in the actual practice of the music. He has come to borrow money from TROY, and while he knows he will be successful, he is uncertain as to what extent his lifestyle will be held up to scrutiny and ridicule.)

LYONS Hey, Pop.

TROY What you come "Hey, Popping" me for?

LYONS How you doing, Rose?

(He kisses her.) Mr. Bono. How you doing?

BONO Hey, Lyons . . . how you been?

TROY He must have been doing alright. I ain't seen him around here last week.

ROSE Troy, leave your boy alone. He come by to see you and you wanna start all that nonsense.

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TROY I ain't bothering Lyons.

(Offers him the bottle.) Here . . . get you a drink. We got an understanding. I know why he come by to see me and he know I know.

LYONS Come on, Pop . . . I just stopped by to say hi . . . see how you was doing.

TROY You ain't stopped by yesterday.

ROSE You gonna stay for supper, Lyons? I got some chicken cooking in the oven.

LYONS No, Rose . . . thanks. I was just in the neighborhood and thought I'd stop by for a minute.

TROY You was in the neighborhood alright, nigger. You telling the truth there. You was in the neighborhood cause it's my payday.

LYONS Well, hell, since you mentioned it . . . let me have ten dollars.

TROY I'll be damned! I'll die and go to hell and play blackjack with the devil before I give you ten dollars.

BONO That's what I wanna know about . . . that devil you done seen.

LYONS What . . . Pop done seen the devil? You too much, Pops.

TROY Yeah, I done seen him. Talked to him too!

ROSE You ain't seen no devil. I done told you that man ain't had nothing to do with the devil. Anything you can't understand, you want to call it the devil.

TROY Look here, Bono . . . I went down to see Hertzberger about some furniture. Got three rooms for two-ninety-eight.

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That what it say on the radio. "Three rooms . . . two-ninety-eight." Even made up a little song about it. Go down there . . . man tell me I can't get no credit. I'm working every day and can't get no credit. What to do? I got an empty house with some raggedy furniture in it. Cory ain't got no bed. He's sleeping on a pile of rags on the floor. Working every day and can't get no credit. Come back here — Rose'll tell you — madder than hell. Sit down . . . try to figure what I'm gonna do. Come a knock on the door. Ain't been living here but three days. Who know I'm here? Open the door . . . devil standing there bigger than life. White fellow . . . got on good clothes and everything. Standing there with a clipboard in his hand. I ain't had to say nothing. First words come out of his mouth was . . . "I understand you need some furniture and can't get no credit." I liked to fell over. He say "I'll give you all the credit you want, but you got to pay the interest on it." I told him, "Give me three rooms worth and charge whatever you want." Next day a truck pulled up here and two men unloaded them three rooms. Man what drove the truck give me a book. Say send ten dollars, first of every month to the address in the book and everything will be alright. Say if I miss a payment the devil was coming back and it'll be hell to pay. That was fifteen years ago. To this day . . . the first of the month I send my ten dollars, Rose'll tell you.

ROSE Troy lying.

TROY I ain't never seen that man since. Now you tell me who else that could have been but the devil? I ain't sold my soul or nothing like that, you understand. Naw, I wouldn't have truck with the devil about nothing like that. I got my furniture and pays my ten dollars the first of the month just like clockwork.

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BONO How long you say you been paying this ten dollars a month?

TROY Fifteen years!

BONO Hell, ain't you finished paying for it yet? How much the man done charged you.

TROY Aw hell, I done paid for it. I done paid for it ten times over! The fact is I'm scared to stop paying it.

ROSE Troy lying. We got that furniture from Mr. Glickman. He ain't paying no ten dollars a month to nobody.

TROY Aw hell, woman. Bono know I ain't that big a fool.

LYONS I was just getting ready to say . . . I know where there's a bridge for sale.

TROY Look here, I'll tell you this . . . it don't matter to me if he was the devil. It don't matter if the devil give credit. Somebody has got to give it.

ROSE It ought to matter. You going around talking about having truck with the devil . . . God's the one you gonna have to answer to. He's the one gonna be at the Judgment.

LYONS Yeah, well, look here, Pop . . . let me have that ten dollars. I'll give it back to you. Bonnie got a job working at the hospital.

TROY What I tell you, Bono? The only time I see this nigger is when he wants something. That's the only time I see him.

LYONS Come on, Pop, Mr. Bono don't want to hear all that. Let me have the ten dollars. I told you Bonnie working.

TROY What that mean to me? "Bonnie working." I don't care if she working. Go ask her for the ten dollars if she

working. Talking about "Bonnie working." Why ain't you working?

LYONS Aw, Pop, you know I can't find no decent job. Where am I gonna get a job at? You know I can't get no job.

TROY I told you I know some people down there. I can get you on the rubbish if you want to work. I told you that the last time you came by here asking me for something.

LYONS Naw, Pop . . . thanks. That ain't for me. I don't wanna be carrying nobody's rubbish. I don't wanna be punching nobody's time clock.

TROY What's the matter, you too good to carry people's rubbish? Where you think ten dollars you talking about come from? I'm just supposed to haul people's rubbish and give my money to you cause you too lazy to work. You too lazy to work and wanna know why you ain't got what I got.

ROSE What hospital Bonnie working at? Mercy?

LYONS She's down at Passavant working in the laundry.

TROY I ain't got nothing as it is. I give you that ten dollars and I got to eat beans the rest of the week. Naw . . . you ain't getting no ten dollars here.

LYONS You ain't got to be eating no beans. I don't know why you wanna say that.

TROY I ain't got no extra money. Gabe done moved over to Miss Pearl's paying her the rent and things done got tight around here. I can't afford to be giving you every payday.

LYONS I ain't asked you to give me nothing. I asked you to loan me ten dollars. I know you got ten dollars.

TROY Yeah, I got it. You know why I got it? Cause I don't throw my money away out there in the streets. You living the fast life . . . wanna be a musician . . . running around in them clubs and things . . . then, you learn to take care of yourself. You ain't gonna find me going and asking nobody for nothing. I done spent too many years without.

LYONS You and me is two different people, Pop.

TROY I done learned my mistake and learned to do what's right by it. You still trying to get something for nothing. Life don't owe you nothing. You owe it to yourself. Ask Bono. He'll tell you I'm right.

LYONS You got your way of dealing with the world . . . I got mine. The only thing that matters to me is the music.

TROY Yeah, I can see that! It don't matter how you gonna eat . . . where your next dollar is coming from. You telling the truth there.

LYONS I know I got to eat. But I got to live too. I need something that gonna help me to get out of the bed in the morning. Make me feel like I belong in the world. I don't bother nobody. I just stay with my music cause that's the only way I can find to live in the world. Otherwise there ain't no telling what I might do. Now I don't come criticizing you and how you live. I just come by to ask you for ten dollars. I don't wanna hear all that about how I live.

TROY Boy, your mama did a hell of a job raising you.

LYONS You can't change me, Pop. I'm thirty-four years old. If you wanted to change me, you should have been there when I was growing up. I come by to see you . . .

ask for ten dollars and you want to talk about how I was raised. You don't know nothing about how I was raised.

ROSE Let the boy have ten dollars, Troy.

TROY

(*To LYONS.*) What the hell you looking at me for? I ain't got no ten dollars. You know what I do with my money.

(*To ROSE.*) Give him ten dollars if you want him to have it.

ROSE I will. Just as soon as you turn it loose.

TROY

(*Handing ROSE the money.*) There it is. Seventy-six dollars and forty-two cents. You see this, Bono? Now, I ain't gonna get but six of that back.

ROSE You ought to stop telling that lie. Here, Lyons.

(*She hands him the money.*)

LYONS Thanks, Rose. Look . . . I got to run . . . I'll see you later.

TROY Wait a minute. You gonna say, "thanks, Rose" and ain't gonna look to see where she got that ten dollars from? See how they do me, Bono?

LYONS I know she got it from you, Pop. Thanks. I'll give it back to you.

TROY There he go telling another lie. Time I see that ten dollars . . . he'll be owing me thirty more.

LYONS See you, Mr. Bono.

BONO Take care, Lyons!

LYONS Thanks, Pop. I'll see you again.

(*LYONS exits the yard.*)

TROY I don't know why he don't go and get him a decent job and take care of that woman he got.

BONO He'll be alright, Troy. The boy is still young.

TROY The *boy* is thirty-four years old.

ROSE Let's not get off into all that.

BONO Look here . . . I got to be going. I got to be getting on. Lucille gonna be waiting.

TROY

(Puts his arm around ROSE.) See this woman, Bono? I love this woman. I love this woman so much it hurts. I love her so much . . . I done run out of ways of loving her. So I got to go back to basics. Don't you come by my house Monday morning talking about time to go to work . . . 'cause I'm still gonna be stroking!

ROSE Troy! Stop it now!

BONO I ain't paying him no mind, Rose. That ain't nothing but gin-talk. Go on, Troy. I'll see you Monday.

TROY Don't you come by my house, nigger! I done told you what I'm gonna be doing.

(The lights go down to black.)

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Act 1, Scene 2

Act One Scene Two

The lights come up on ROSE hanging up clothes. She hums and sings softly to herself. It is the following morning.

ROSE

(Sings) Jesus, be a fence all around me every day
Jesus, I want you to protect me as I travel on my way.
Jesus, be a fence all around me every day.

(Troy enters from the house)

ROSE

(continued) Jesus, I want you to protect me As I travel on my way.

(To TROY) 'Morning. You ready for breakfast? I can fix it soon as I finish hanging up these clothes?

TROY I got the coffee on. That'll be alright. I'll just drink some of that this morning.

ROSE That 651 hit yesterday. That's the second time this month. Miss Pearl hit for a dollar . . . seem like those that need the least always get lucky. Poor folks can't get nothing.

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TROY Them numbers don't know nobody. I don't know why you fool with them. You and Lyons both.

ROSE It's something to do.

TROY You ain't doing nothing but throwing your money away.

ROSE Troy, you know I don't play foolishly. I just play a nickel here and a nickel there.

TROY That's two nickels you done thrown away.

ROSE Now I hit sometimes . . . that makes up for it. It always comes in handy when I do hit. I don't hear you complaining then.

TROY I ain't complaining now. I just say it's foolish. Trying to guess out of six hundred ways which way the number gonna come. If I had all the money niggers, these Negroes, throw away on numbers for one week — just one week — I'd be a rich man.

ROSE Well, you wishing and calling it foolish ain't gonna stop folks from playing numbers. That's one thing for sure. Besides . . . some good things come from playing numbers. Look where Pope done bought him that restaurant off of numbers.

TROY I can't stand niggers like that. Man ain't had two dimes to rub together. He walking around with his shoes all run over bumming money for cigarettes. Alright. Got lucky there and hit the numbers . . .

ROSE Troy, I know all about it.

TROY Had good sense, I'll say that for him. He ain't throwed his money away. I seen niggers hit the numbers and go through two thousand dollars in four days. Man brought him that restaurant down there . . . fixed it up

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real nice . . . and then didn't want nobody to come in it! A Negro go in there and can't get no kind of service. I seen a white fellow come in there and order a bowl of stew. Pope picked all the meat out the pot for him. Man ain't had nothing but a bowl of meat! Negro come behind him and ain't got nothing but the potatoes and carrots. Talking about what numbers do for people, you picked a wrong example. Ain't done nothing but make a worser fool out of him than he was before.

ROSE Troy, you ought to stop worrying about what happened at work yesterday.

TROY I ain't worried. Just told me to be down there at the Commissioner's office on Friday. Everybody think they gonna fire me. I ain't worried about them firing me. You ain't got to worry about that.

(Pause.) Where's Cory? Cory in the house?

(Calls.) Cory?

ROSE He gone out.

TROY Out, huh? He gone out 'cause he know I want him to help me with this fence. I know how he is. That boy scared of work.

(GABRIEL enters. He comes halfway down the alley and, hearing Troy's voice, stops.)

TROY

(continues): He ain't done a lick of work in his life.

ROSE He had to go to football practice. Coach wanted them to get in a little extra practice before the season start.

TROY I got his practice . . . running out of here before he get his chores done.

ROSE Troy, what is wrong with you this morning? Don't nothing set right with you. Go on back in there and go to bed . . . get up on the other side.

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TROY Why something got to be wrong with me? I ain't said nothing wrong with me.

ROSE You got something to say about everything. First it's the numbers . . . then it's the way the man runs his restaurant . . . then you done got on Cory. What's it gonna be next? Take a look up there and see if the weather suits you . . . or is it gonna be how you gonna put up the fence with the clothes hanging in the yard.

TROY You hit the nail on the head then.

ROSE I know you like I know the back of my hand. Go on in there and get you some coffee . . . see if that straighten you up. 'Cause you ain't right this morning.

(TROY starts into the house and sees GABRIEL. GABRIEL starts singing. TROY'S brother, he is seven years younger than TROY. Injured in World War II, he has a metal plate in his head. He carries an old trumpet tied around his waist and believes with every fiber of his being that he is the Archangel Gabriel. He carries a chipped basket with an assortment of discarded fruits and vegetables he has picked up in the strip district and which he attempts to sell.)

GABRIEL

(Singing.) Yes, ma'am, I got plums You ask me how I sell them Oh ten cents apiece Three for a quarter Come and buy now 'Cause I'm here today And tomorrow I'll be gone

(GABRIEL enters.) Hey, Rose!

ROSE How you doing, Gabe?

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GABRIEL There's Troy . . . Hey, Troy!

TROY Hey, Gabe.

(Exit into kitchen.)

ROSE

(To GABRIEL.) What you got there?

GABRIEL You know what I got, Rose. I got fruits and vegetables.

ROSE

(Looking in basket.) Where's all these plums you talking about?

GABRIEL I ain't got no plums today, Rose. I was just singing that. Have some tomorrow. Put me in a big order for plums. Have enough plums tomorrow for St. Peter and everybody.

(TROY re-enters from kitchen, crosses to steps.)

(To ROSE.) Troy's mad at me.

TROY I ain't mad at you. What I got to be mad at you about? You ain't done nothing to me.

GABRIEL I just moved over to Miss Pearl's to keep out from in your way. I ain't mean no harm by it.

TROY Who said anything about that? I ain't said anything about that.

GABRIEL You ain't mad at me, is you?

TROY Naw . . . I ain't mad at you, Gabe. If I was mad at you I'd tell you about it.

GABRIEL Got me two rooms. In the basement. Got my own door too. Wanna see my key?

(He holds up a key.) That's my own key! Ain't nobody else got a key like that. That's my key! My two rooms!

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TROY Well, that's good, Gabe. You got your own key . . . that's good.

ROSE You hungry, Gabe? I was just fixing to cook Troy his breakfast.

GABRIEL I'll take some biscuits. You got some biscuits? Did you know when I was in heaven . . . every morning me and St. Peter would sit down by the gate and eat some big fat biscuits? Oh, yeah! We had us a good time. We'd sit there and eat us them biscuits and then St. Peter would go off to sleep and tell me to wake him up when it's time to open the gates for the judgment.

ROSE Well, come on . . . I'll make up a batch of biscuits.

(ROSE exits into the house.)

GABRIEL Troy . . . St. Peter got your name in the book. I seen it. It say . . . Troy Maxson. I say . . . I know him! He got the same name like what I got. That's my brother!

TROY How many times you gonna tell me that, Gabe?

GABRIEL Ain't got my name in the book. Don't have to have my name. I done died and went to heaven. He got your name though. One morning St. Peter was looking at his book . . . marking it up for the judgment . . . and he let me see your name. Got it in there under M. Got Rose's name . . . I ain't seen it like I seen yours . . . but I know it's in there. He got a great big book. Got everybody's name what was ever been born. That's what he told me. But I seen your name. Seen it with my own eyes.

TROY Go on in the house there. Rose going to fix you something to eat.

GABRIEL Oh, I ain't hungry. I done had breakfast with Aunt Jemimah. She come by and cooked me up a whole

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mess of flapjacks. Remember how we used to eat them flapjacks?

TROY Go on in the house and get you something to eat now.

GABRIEL I got to go sell my plums. I done sold some tomatoes. Got me two quarters. Wanna see?

(He shows TROY his quarters.) I'm gonna save them and buy me a new horn so St. Peter can hear me when it's time to open the gates.

(GABRIEL stops suddenly. Listens.) Hear that? That's the hellhounds. I got to chase them out of here. Go on get out of here! Get out!

(GABRIEL exits singing.) Better get ready for the judgment Better get ready for the judgment My Lord is coming down

(ROSE enters from the house.)

TROY He gone off somewhere.

GABRIEL

(Offstage) Better get ready for the judgment Better get ready for the judgment morning Better get ready for the judgment My God is coming down

ROSE He ain't eating right. Miss Pearl say she can't get him to eat nothing.

TROY What you want me to do about it, Rose? I done did everything I can for the man. I can't make him get well. Man got half his head blown away . . . what you expect?

ROSE Seem like something ought to be done to help him.

TROY Man don't bother nobody. He just mixed up from

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that metal plate he got in his head. Ain't no sense for him to go back into the hospital.

ROSE Least he be eating right. They can help him take care of himself.

TROY Don't nobody wanna be locked up, Rose. What you wanna lock him up for? Man go over there and fight the war . . . messin' around with them Japs, get half his head blown off . . . and they give him a lousy three thousand dollars. And I had to swoop down on that.

ROSE Is you fixing to go into that again?

TROY That's the only way I got a roof over my head . . . cause of that metal plate.

ROSE Ain't no sense you blaming yourself for nothing. Gabe wasn't in no condition to manage that money. You done what was right by him. Can't nobody say you ain't done what was right by him. Look how long you took care of him . . . till he wanted to have his own place and moved over there with Miss Pearl.

TROY That ain't what I'm saying, woman! I'm just stating the facts. If my brother didn't have that metal plate in his head . . . I wouldn't have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of. And I'm fifty-three years old. Now see if you can understand that!

(TROY gets up from the porch and starts to exit the yard.)

ROSE Where you going off to? You been running out of here every Saturday for weeks. I thought you was gonna work on this fence?

TROY I'm gonna walk down to Taylors'. Listen to the ball game. I'll be back in a bit. I'll work on it when I get back.

(He exits the yard. The lights go to black.)

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Act 1, Scene 3

Act One Scene Three

The lights come up on the yard. It is four hours later. ROSE is taking down the clothes from the line. CORY enters carrying his football equipment.

ROSE Your daddy like to had a fit with you running out of here this morning without doing your chores.

CORY I told you I had to go to practice.

ROSE He say you were supposed to help him with this fence.

CORY He ain't saying that the last four or five Saturdays, and then he don't never do nothing, but go down to Taylors'. Did you tell him about the recruiter?

ROSE Yeah, I told him.

CORY What he say?

ROSE He ain't said nothing too much. You get in there and get started on your chores before he gets back. Go on and scrub down them steps before he gets back here hollering and carrying on.

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CORY I'm hungry. What you got to eat, Mama?

ROSE Go on and get started on your chores. I got some meat loaf in there. Go on and make you a sandwich . . . and don't leave no mess in there.

(CORY exits into the house. ROSE continues to take down the clothes. TROY enters the yard and sneaks up and grabs her from behind.) Troy! Go on, now. You liked to scared me to death. What was the score of the game? Lucille had me on the phone and I couldn't keep up with it.

TROY What I care about the game? Come here, woman.

(He tries to kiss her.)

ROSE I thought you went down Taylors' to listen to the game. Go on, Troy! You supposed to be putting up this fence.

TROY

(Attempting to kiss her again.) I'll put it up when I finish with what is at hand.

ROSE Go on, Troy. I ain't studying you.

TROY

(Chasing after her.) I'm studying you . . . fixing to do my homework!

ROSE Troy, you better leave me alone.

TROY Where's Cory? That boy brought his butt home yet?

ROSE He's in the house doing his chores.

TROY

(Calling.) Cory! Get your butt out here, boy!

(ROSE exits into the house with the laundry. TROY goes over to the pile of wood, picks up a board, and starts sawing. CORY enters from the house.)

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TROY You just now coming in here from leaving this morning?

CORY Yeah, I had to go to football practice.

TROY Yeah, what?

CORY Yessir.

TROY I ain't but two seconds off you noway. The garbage sitting in there overflowing . . . you ain't done none of your chores . . . and you come in here talking about "Yeah."

CORY I was just getting ready to do my chores now, Pop . . .

TROY Your first chore is to help me with this fence on Saturday. Everything else come after that. Now get that saw and cut them boards.

(CORY takes the saw and begins cutting the boards. TROY continues working. There is a long pause.)

CORY Hey, Pop . . . why don't you buy a TV?

TROY What I want with a TV? What I want one of them for?

CORY Everybody got one. Earl, Ba Bra . . . Jesse!

TROY I ain't asked you who had one. I say what I want with one?

CORY So you can watch it. They got lots of things on TV. Baseball games and everything. We could watch the World Series.

TROY Yeah . . . and how much this TV cost?

CORY I don't know. They got them on sale for around two hundred dollars.

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TROY Two hundred dollars, huh?

CORY That ain't that much, Pop.

TROY Naw, it's just two hundred dollars. See that roof you got over your head at night? Let me tell you something about that roof. It's been over ten years since that roof was last tarred. See now . . . the snow come this winter and sit up there on that roof like it is . . . and it's gonna seep inside. It's just gonna be a little bit . . . ain't gonna hardly notice it. Then the next thing you know, it's gonna be leaking all over the house. Then the wood rot from all that water and you gonna need a whole new roof. Now, how much you think it cost to get that roof tarred?

CORY I don't know.

TROY Two hundred and sixty-four dollars . . . cash money. While you thinking about a TV, I got to be thinking about the roof . . . and whatever else go wrong around here. Now if you had two hundred dollars, what would you do . . . fix the roof or buy a TV?

CORY I'd buy a TV. Then when the roof started to leak . . . when it needed fixing . . . I'd fix it.

TROY Where you gonna get the money from? You done spent it for a TV. You gonna sit up and watch the water run all over your brand new TV.

CORY Aw, Pop. You got money. I know you do.

TROY Where I got it at, huh?

CORY You got it in the bank.

TROY You wanna see my bankbook? You wanna see that seventy-three dollars and twenty-two cents I got sitting up in there.

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CORY You ain't got to pay for it all at one time. You can put a down payment on it and carry it on home with you.

TROY Not me. I ain't gonna owe nobody nothing if I can help it. Miss a payment and they come and snatch it right out your house. Then what you got? Now, soon as I get two hundred dollars clear, then I'll buy a TV. Right now, as soon as I get two hundred and sixty-four dollars, I'm gonna have this roof tarred.

CORY Aw . . . Pop!

TROY You go on and get you two hundred dollars and buy one if ya want it. I got better things to do with my money.

CORY I can't get no two hundred dollars. I ain't never seen two hundred dollars.

TROY I'll tell you what . . . you get you a hundred dollars and I'll put the other hundred with it.

CORY Alright, I'm gonna show you.

TROY You gonna show me how you can cut them boards right now.

(CORY begins to cut the boards. There is a long pause.)

CORY The Pirates won today. That makes five in a row.

TROY I ain't thinking about the Pirates. Got an all-white team. Got that boy . . . that Puerto Rican boy . . . Clemente. Don't even half-play him. That boy could be something if they give him a chance. Play him one day and sit him on the bench the next.

CORY He gets a lot of chances to play.

TROY I'm talking about playing regular. Playing every

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day so you can get your timing. That's what I'm talking about.

CORY They got some white guys on the team that don't play every day. You can't play everybody at the same time.

TROY If they got a white fellow sitting on the bench . . . you can bet your last dollar he can't play! The colored guy got to be twice as good before he get on the team. That's why I don't want you to get all tied up in them sports. Man on the team and what it get him? They got colored on the team and don't use them. Same as not having them. All them teams the same.

CORY The Braves got Hank Aaron and Wes Covington. Hank Aaron hit two home runs today. That makes forty-three.

TROY Hank Aaron ain't nobody. That's what you supposed to do. That's how you supposed to play the game. Ain't nothing to it. It's just a matter of timing . . . getting the right follow-through. Hell, I can hit forty-three home runs right now!

CORY Not off no major-league pitching, you couldn't.

TROY We had better pitching in the Negro leagues. I hit seven home runs off of Satchel Paige. You can't get no better than that!

CORY Sandy Koufax. He's leading the league in strikeouts.

TROY I ain't thinking of no Sandy Koufax.

CORY You got Warren Spahn and Lew Burdette. I bet you couldn't hit no home runs off of Warren Spahn.

TROY I'm through with it now. You go on and cut them boards.

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(Pause.) Your mama tell me you done got recruited by a college football team? Is that right?

CORY Yeah. Coach Zellman say the recruiter gonna be coming by to talk to you. Get you to sign the permission papers.

TROY I thought you supposed to be working down there at the A&P. Ain't you suppose to be working down there after school?

CORY Mr. Stawicki say he gonna hold my job for me until after the football season. Say starting next week I can work weekends.

TROY I thought we had an understanding about this football stuff? You suppose to keep up with your chores and hold that job down at the A&P. Ain't been around here all day on a Saturday. Ain't none of your chores done . . . and now you telling me you done quit your job.

CORY I'm gonna be working weekends.

TROY You damn right you are! And ain't no need for nobody coming around here to talk to me about signing nothing.

CORY Hey, Pop . . . you can't do that. He's coming all the way from North Carolina.

TROY I don't care where he coming from. The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with that football noway. You go on and get your book-learning so you can work yourself up in that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something can't nobody take away from you. You go on and learn how to put your hands to some good use. Besides hauling people's garbage.

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CORY I get good grades, Pop. That's why the recruiter wants to talk with you. You got to keep up your grades to get recruited. This way I'll be going to college. I'll get a chance . . .

TROY First you gonna get your butt down there to the A&P and get your job back.

CORY Mr. Stawicki done already hired somebody else 'cause I told him I was playing football.

TROY You a bigger fool than I thought . . . to let somebody take away your job so you can play some football. Where you gonna get your money to take out your girlfriend and whatnot? What kind of foolishness is that to let somebody take away your job?

CORY I'm still gonna be working weekends.

TROY Naw . . . naw. You getting your butt out of here and finding you another job.

CORY Come on, Pop! I got to practice. I can't work after school and play football too. The team needs me. That's what Coach Zellman say . . .

TROY I don't care what nobody else say. I'm the boss . . . you understand? I'm the boss around here. I do the only saying what counts.

CORY Come on, Pop!

TROY I asked you . . . did you understand?

CORY Yeah . . .

TROY What?!

CORY Yessir.

TROY You go on down there to that A&P and see if you can get your job back. If you can't do both . . . then you

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quit the football team. You've got to take the crooked with the straights.

CORY Yessir.

(Pause.) Can I ask you a question?

TROY What the hell you wanna ask me? Mr. Stawicki the one you got the questions for.

CORY How come you ain't never liked me?

TROY Liked you? Who the hell say I got to like you? What law is there say I got to like you? Wanna stand up in my face and ask a damn fool-ass question like that. Talking about liking somebody. Come here, boy, when I talk to you.

(CORY comes over to where TROY is working. He stands slouched over and TROY shoves him on his shoulder.) Straighten up, goddammit! I asked you a question . . . what law is there say I got to like you?

CORY None.

TROY Well, alright then! Don't you eat every day?

(Pause.) Answer me when I talk to you! Don't you eat every day?

CORY Yeah.

TROY Nigger, as long as you in my house, you put that sir on the end of it when you talk to me!

CORY Yes . . . sir.

TROY You eat every day.

CORY Yessir!

TROY Got a roof over your head.

CORY Yessir!

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TROY Got clothes on your back.

CORY Yessir.

TROY Why you think that is?

CORY Cause of you.

TROY Aw, hell I know it's 'cause of me . . . but why do you think that is?

CORY

(Hesitant.) Cause you like me.

TROY Like you? I go out of here every morning . . . bust my butt . . . putting up with them crackers every day . . . cause I like you? You about the biggest fool I ever saw.

(Pause.) It's my job. It's my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house . . . sleep you behind on my bedclothes . . . fill you belly up with my food . . . cause you my son. You my flesh and blood. Not 'cause I like you! Cause it's my duty to take care of you. I owe a responsibility to you! Let's get this straight right here . . . before it go along any further . . . I ain't got to like you. Mr. Rand don't give me my money come payday cause he likes me. He gives me cause he owe me. I done give you everything I had to give you. I gave you your life! Me and your mama worked that out between us. And liking your black ass wasn't part of the bargain. Don't you try and go through life worrying about if somebody like you or not. You best be making sure they doing right by you. You understand what I'm saying, boy?

CORY Yessir.

TROY Then get the hell out of my face, and get on down to that A&P.

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(ROSE has been standing behind the screen door for much of the scene. She enters as CORY exists.)

ROSE Why don't you let the boy go ahead and play football, Troy? Ain't no harm in that. He's just trying to be like you with the sports.

TROY I don't want him to be like me! I want him to move as far away from my life as he can get. You the only decent thing that ever happened to me. I wish him that. But I don't wish him a thing else from my life. I decided seventeen years ago that boy wasn't getting involved in no sports. Not after what they did to me in the sports.

ROSE Troy, why don't you admit you admit you was too old to play in the major leagues? For once . . . why don't you admit that?

TROY What do you mean too old? Don't come telling me I was too old. I just wasn't the right color. Hell, I'm fifty-three years old and can do better than Selkirk's .269 right now!

ROSE How's was you gonna play ball when you were over forty? Sometimes I can't get no sense out of you.

TROY I got good sense, woman. I got sense enough not to let my boy get hurt over playing no sports. You been mothering that boy too much. Worried about if people like him.

ROSE Everything that boy do . . . he do for you. He wants you to say "Good job, son." That's all.

TROY Rose, I ain't got time for that. He's alive. He's healthy. He's got to make his own way. I made mine. Ain't nobody gonna hold his hand when he get out there in that world.

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ROSE Times have changed from when you was young, Troy. People change. The world's changing around you and you can't even see it.

TROY

(Slow, methodical.) Woman . . . I do the best I can do. I come in here every Friday. I carry a sack of potatoes and a bucket of lard. You all line up at the door with your hands out. I give you the lint from my pockets. I give you my sweat and my blood. I ain't got no tears. I done spent them. We go upstairs in that room at night . . . and I fall down on you and try to blast a hole into forever. I get up Monday morning . . . find my lunch on the table. I go out. Make my way. Find my strength to carry me through to the next Friday.

(Pause.) That's all I got, Rose. That's all I got to give. I can't give nothing else.

(TROY exits into the house. The lights go down to black.)

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Act 1, Scene 4

Act One Scene Four

It is Friday. Two weeks later. CORY starts out of the house with his football equipment. The phone rings.

CORY

(Calling.) I got it!

(He answers the phone and stands in the screen door talking.) Hello? Hey, Jesse. Naw . . . I was just getting ready to leave now.

ROSE

(Calling.) Cory!

CORY I told you, man, them spikes is all tore up. You can use them if you want, but they ain't no good. Earl got some spikes.

ROSE

(Calling.) Cory!

CORY

(Calling to ROSE.) Mam? I'm talking to Jesse.

(Into phone.) When she say that?

(Pause.) Aw, you lying, man. I'm gonna tell her you said that.

ROSE

(Calling.) Cory, don't you go nowhere!

CORY I got to go to the game, Ma!

(Into the phone.)

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Yeah, hey, look, I'll talk to you later. Yeah, I'll meet you over Earl's house. Later. Bye, Ma.

(CORY exits the house and starts out the yard.)

ROSE Cory, where you going off to? You got that stuff all pulled out and thrown all over your room.

CORY

(In the yard.) I was looking for my spikes. Jesse wanted to borrow my spikes.

ROSE Get up there and get that cleaned up before your daddy get back in here.

CORY I got to go to the game! I'll clean it up *when I get back*.

(CORY exits.)

ROSE That's all he need to do is see that room all messed up.

(ROSE exits into the house. TROY and BONO enter the yard. TROY is dressed in clothes other than his work clothes.)

BONO He told him the same thing he told you. Take it to the union.

TROY Brownie ain't got that much sense. Man wasn't thinking about nothing. He wait until I confront them on it . . . then he wanna come crying seniority.

(Calls.) Hey, Rose!

BONO I wish I could have seen Mr. Rand's face when he told you.

TROY He couldn't get it out of his mouth! Liked to bit his tongue! When they called me down there to the Commissioner's

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office . . . he thought they was gonna fire me. Like everybody else.

BONO I didn't think they was gonna fire you. I thought they was gonna put you on the warning paper.

TROY Hey, Rose!

(To BONO.) Yeah, Mr. Rand like to bit his tongue.

(TROY breaks the seal on the bottle, takes a drink, and hands it to BONO.)

BONO I see you run right down to Taylors' and told that Alberta gal.

TROY

(Calling.) Hey Rose!

(To BONO.) I told everybody. Hey, Rose! I went down there to cash my check.

ROSE

(Entering from the house.) Hush all that hollering, man! I know you out here. What they say down there at the Commissioner's office?

TROY You supposed to come when I call you, woman. Bono'll tell you that.

(To BONO.) Don't Lucille come when you call her?

ROSE Man, hush your mouth. I ain't no dog . . . talk about "come when you call me."

TROY

(Puts his arm around ROSE.) You hear this, Bono? I had me an old dog used to get uppity like that. You say, "C'mere, Blue!" . . . and he just lay there and look at you. End up getting a stick and chasing him away trying to make him come.

ROSE I ain't studying you and your dog. I remember you used to sing that old song.

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TROY

(He sings.) Hear it ring! Hear it ring! I had a dog his name was Blue.

ROSE Don't nobody wanna hear you sing that old song.

TROY

(Sings.) You know Blue was mighty true.

ROSE Used to have Cory running around here singing that song.

BONO Hell, I remember that song myself.

TROY

(Sings.) You know Blue was a good old dog. Blue treed a possum in a hollow log. That was my daddy's song. My daddy made up that song.

ROSE I don't care who made it up. Don't nobody wanna hear you sing it.

TROY

(Makes a song like calling a dog.) Come here, woman.

ROSE You come in here carrying on, I reckon they ain't fired you. What they say down there at the Commissioner's office?

TROY Look here, Rose . . . Mr. Rand called me into his office today when I got back from talking to them people down there . . . it come from up top . . . he called me in and told me they was making me a driver.

ROSE Troy, you kidding!

TROY No I ain't. Ask Bono.

ROSE Well, that's great, Troy. Now you don't have to hassle them people no more.

(LYONS enters from the street.)

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TROY Aw hell, I wasn't looking to see you today. I thought you was in jail. Got it all over the front page of the *Courier* about them raiding Sefus' place . . . where you be hanging out with all them thugs.

LYONS Hey, Pop . . . that ain't got nothing to do with me. I don't go down there gambling. I go down there to sit in with the band. I ain't got nothing to do with the gambling part. They got some good music down there.

TROY They got some rogues . . . is what they got.

LYONS How you been, Mr. Bono? Hi, Rose.

BONO I see where you playing down at the Crawford Grill tonight.

ROSE How come you ain't brought Bonnie like I told you. You should have brought Bonnie with you, she ain't been over in a month of Sundays.

LYONS I was just in the neighborhood . . . thought I'd stop by.

TROY Here he come . . .

BONO Your daddy got a promotion on the rubbish. He's gonna be the first colored driver. Ain't got to do nothing but sit up there and read the paper like them white fellows.

LYONS Hey, Pop . . . if you knew how to read you'd be alright.

BONO Naw . . . naw . . . you mean if the nigger knew how to *drive* he'd be all right. Been fighting with them people about driving and ain't even got a license. Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver's license?

TROY Driving ain't nothing. All you do is point the truck where you want it to go. Driving ain't nothing.

BONO Do Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver's license? That's what I'm talking about. I ain't asked if driving was easy. I asked if Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver's license.

TROY He ain't got to know. The man ain't got to know my business. Time he find out, I have two or three driver's licenses.

LYONS

(Going into his pocket.) Say, look here, Pop . . .

TROY I knew it was coming. Didn't I tell you, Bono? I know what kind of "Look here, Pop" that was. The nigger fixing to ask me for some money. It's Friday night. It's my payday. All them rogues down there on the avenue . . . the ones that ain't in jail . . . and Lyons is hopping in his shoes to get down there with them

LYONS See, Pop . . . if you give somebody else a chance to talk sometime, you'd see that I was fixing to pay you back your ten dollars like I told you. Here . . . I told you I'd pay you when Bonnie got paid.

TROY Naw . . . you go ahead and keep that ten dollars. Put it in the bank. The next time you feel like you wanna come by here and ask me for something . . . you go on down there and get that.

LYONS Here's your ten dollars, Pop. I told you I don't want you to give me nothing. I just wanted to borrow ten dollars.

TROY Naw . . . you go on and keep that for the next time you want to ask me.

LYONS Come on, Pop . . . here go your ten dollars.

ROSE Why don't you go on and let the boy pay you back, Troy?

LYONS Here you go, Rose. If you don't take it I'm gonna have to hear about it for the next six months.

(He hands her the money.)

ROSE You can hand yours over here too, Troy.

TROY You see this, Bono. You see how they do me.

BONO Yeah, Lucille do me the same way.

(GABRIEL is heard singing offstage. He enters.)

GABRIEL Better get ready for the Judgment! Better get ready for . . . Hey! . . . Hey! . . . There's Troy's boy!

LYONS How you doing, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL Lyons . . . The King of the Jungle! Rose . . . hey, Rose. Got a flower for you.

(He takes a rose from his pocket.) Picked it myself. That's the same rose like you is!

ROSE That's right nice of you, Gabe.

LYONS What you been doing, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL Oh, I been chasing hellhounds and waiting on the time to tell St. Peter to open the gates.

LYONS You been chasing hellhounds, huh? Well . . . you doing the right thing, Uncle Gabe. Somebody got to chase them.

GABRIEL Oh, yeah . . . I know it. The devil's strong. The devil ain't no pushover. Hellhounds snipping at everybody's heels. But I got my trumpet waiting on the judgment time.

LYONS Waiting on the Battle of Armageddon, huh?

GABRIEL Ain't gonna be too much of a battle when God get to waving that Judgment sword. But the people's

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gonna have a hell of a time trying to get into heaven if them gates ain't open.

LYONS

(Putting his arm around GABRIEL.) You hear this, Pop. Uncle Gabe, you alright!

GABRIEL

(Laughing with LYONS.) Lyons! King of the Jungle.

ROSE You gonna stay for supper, Gabe. Want me to fix you a plate?

GABRIEL I'll take a sandwich, Rose. Don't want no plate. Just wanna eat with my hands. I'll take a sandwich.

ROSE How about you, Lyons? You staying? Got some short ribs cooking.

LYONS Naw, I won't eat nothing till after we finished playing.

(Pause.) You ought to come down and listen to me play, Pop.

TROY I don't like that Chinese music. All that noise.

ROSE Go on in the house and wash up, Gabe . . . I'll fix you a sandwich.

GABRIEL

(To LYONS, as he exits.) Troy's mad at me.

LYONS What you mad at Uncle Gabe for, Pop.

ROSE He thinks Troy's mad at him cause he moved over to Miss Pearl's.

TROY I ain't mad at the man. He can live where he want to live at.

LYONS What he move over there for? Miss Pearl don't like nobody.

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ROSE She don't mind him none. She treats him real nice. She just don't allow all that singing.

TROY She don't mind that rent he be paying . . . that's what she don't mind.

ROSE Troy, I ain't going through that with you no more. He's over there cause he want to have his own place. He can come and go as he please.

TROY Hell, he could come and go as he please here. I wasn't stopping him. I ain't put no rules on him.

ROSE It ain't the same thing, Troy. And you know it.

(GABRIEL comes to the door.) Now, that's the last I wanna hear about that. I don't wanna hear nothing else about Gabe and Miss Pearl. And next week . . .

GABRIEL I'm ready for my sandwich, Rose.

ROSE And next week . . . when that recruiter come from that school . . . I want you to sign that paper and go on and let Cory play football. Then that'll be the last I have to hear about that.

TROY

(To ROSE as she exits into the house.) I ain't thinking about Cory nothing.

LYONS What . . . Cory got recruited? What school he going to?

TROY That boy walking around here smelling his piss . . . thinking he's grown. Thinking he's gonna do what he want, irrespective of what I say. Look here, Bono . . . I left the Commissioner's office and went down to the A&P . . . that boy ain't working down there. He lying to me. Telling me he got his job back . . . telling me he working weekends . . . telling me he working after

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school . . . Mr. Stawicki tell me he ain't working down there at all!

LYONS Cory just growing up. He's just busting at the seams trying to fill out your shoes.

TROY I don't care what he's doing. When he get to the point where he wanna disobey me . . . then it's time for him to move on. Bono'll tell you that. I bet he ain't never disobeyed his daddy without paying the consequences.

BONO I ain't never had a chance. My daddy came on through . . . but I ain't never knew him to see him . . . or what he had on his mind or where he went. Just moving on through. Searching out the New Land. That's what the old folks used to call it. See a fellow moving around from place to place . . . woman to woman . . . called it searching out the New Land. I can't say if he ever found it. I come along, didn't want no kids. Didn't know if I was gonna be in one place long enough to fix on them right as their daddy. I figured I was going searching too. As it turned out I been hooked up with Lucille near about as long as your daddy been with Rose. Going on sixteen years.

TROY Sometimes I wish I hadn't known my daddy. He ain't cared nothing about no kids. A kid to him wasn't nothing. All he wanted was for you to learn how to walk so he could start you to working. When it come time for eating . . . he ate first. If there was anything left over, that's what you got. Man would sit down and eat two chickens and give you the wing.

LYONS You ought to stop that, Pop. Everybody feed their kids. No matter how hard times is . . . everybody care about their kids. Make sure they have something to eat.

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TROY The only thing my daddy cared about was getting them bales of cotton in to Mr. Lubin. That's the only thing that mattered to him. Sometimes I used to wonder why he was living. Wonder why the devil hadn't come and got him. "Get them bales of cotton in to Mr. Lubin" and find out he owe him money . . .

LYONS He should have just went on and left when he saw he couldn't get nowhere. That's what I would have done.

TROY How he gonna leave with eleven kids? And where he gonna go? He ain't knew how to do nothing but farm. No, he was trapped and I think he knew it. But I'll say this for him . . . he felt a responsibility toward us. Maybe he ain't treated us the way I felt he should have . . . but without that responsibility he could have walked off and left us . . . made his own way.

BONO A lot of them did. Back in those days what you talking about . . . they walk out their front door and just take on down one road or another and keep on walking.

LYONS There you go! That's what I'm talking about.

BONO Just keep on walking till you come to something else. Ain't you never heard of nobody having the walking blues? Well, that's what you call it when you just take off like that.

TROY My daddy ain't had them walking blues! What you talking about? He stayed right there with his family. But he was just as evil as he could be. My mama couldn't stand him. Couldn't stand that evilness. She run off when I was about eight. She sneaked off one night after he had gone to sleep. Told me she was coming back for me. I ain't never seen her no more. All his women run off and left him. He wasn't good for nobody. When my turn come to head out, I was fourteen and got

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to sniffing around Joe Canewell's daughter. Had us an old mule we called Greyboy. My daddy sent me out to do some plowing and I tied up Greyboy and went to fooling around with Joe Canewell's daughter. We done found us a nice little spot, got real cozy with each other. She about thirteen and we done figured we was grown anyway . . . so we down there enjoying ourselves . . . ain't thinking about nothing. We didn't know Greyboy had got loose and wandered back to the house and my daddy was looking for me. We down there by the creek enjoying ourselves when my daddy come up on us. Surprised us. He had them leather straps off the mule and commenced to whupping me like there was no tomorrow. I jumped up, mad and embarrassed. I was scared of my daddy. When he commenced to whupping on me . . . quite naturally I run to get out of the way.

(Pause.) Now I thought he was mad cause I ain't done my work. But I see where he was chasing me off so he could have the gal for himself. When I see what the matter of it was, I lost all fear of my daddy. Right there is where I become a man . . . at fourteen years of age.

(Pause.) Now it was my turn to run him off. I picked up them same reins that he had used on me. I picked up them reins and commenced to whupping on him. The gal jumped up and run off . . . and when my daddy turned to face me, I could see why the devil had never come to get him . . . cause he was the devil himself. I don't know what happened. When I woke up, I was laying right there by the creek, and Blue . . . this old dog we had . . . was licking my face. I thought I was blind. I couldn't see nothing. Both my eyes were swollen shut. I layed there and cried. I didn't know what I was gonna do. The only thing I knew was the time had come for me to leave my

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daddy's house. And right there the world suddenly got big. And it was a long time before I could cut it down to where I could handle it. Part of that cutting down was when I got to the place where I could feel him kicking in my blood and knew that the only thing that separated us was the matter of a few years.

(GABRIEL enters from the house with a sandwich.)

LYONS What you got there, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL Got me a ham sandwich. Rose gave me a ham sandwich.

TROY I don't know what happened to him. I done lost touch with everybody except Gabriel. But I hope he's dead. I hope he found some peace.

LYONS That's a heavy story, Pop. I didn't know you left home when you was fourteen.

TROY And didn't know nothing. The only part of the world I knew was the forty-two acres of Mr. Lubin's land. That's all I knew about life.

LYONS Fourteen's kinda young to be out on your own.

(Phone rings.) I don't even think I was ready to be out on my own at fourteen. I don't know what I would have done.

TROY I got up from the creek and walked on down to Mobile. I was through with farming. Figured I could do better in the city. So I walked the two hundred miles to Mobile.

LYONS Wait a minute . . . you ain't walked no two hundred miles, Pop. Ain't nobody gonna walk no two hundred miles. You talking about some walking there.

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BONO That's the only way you got anywhere back in them days.

LYONS Shhh. Damn if I wouldn't have hitched a ride with somebody!

TROY Who you gonna hitch it with? They ain't had no cars and things like they got now. We talking about 1918.

ROSE

(Entering.) What you all out here getting into?

TROY

(To ROSE.) I'm telling Lyons how good he got it. He don't know nothing about this I'm talking.

ROSE Lyons, that was Bonnie on the phone. She say you supposed to pick her up.

LYONS Yeah, okay, Rose.

TROY I walked on down to Mobile and hitched up with some of them fellows that was heading this way. Got up here and found out . . . not only couldn't you get a job . . . you couldn't find no place to live. I thought I was in freedom. Shhh. Colored folks living down there on the riverbanks in whatever kind of shelter they could find for themselves. Right down there under the Brady Street Bridge. Living in shacks made of sticks and tarpaper. Messed around there and went from bad to worse. Started stealing. First it was food. Then I figured, hell, if I steal money I can buy me some food. Buy me some shoes too! One thing led to another. Met your mama. I was young and anxious to be a man. Met your mama and had you. What I do that for? Now I got to worry about feeding you and her. Got to steal three times as much. Went out one day looking for somebody to rob . . . that's what I was, a robber. I'll tell you the truth. I'm ashamed of it today. But it's the truth. Went to rob this fellow . . . pulled out my knife . . . and he pulled out a gun. Shot

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me in the chest. It felt just like somebody had taken a hot branding iron and laid it on me. When he shot me I jumped at him with my knife. They told me I killed him and they put me in the penitentiary and locked me up for fifteen years. That's where I met Bono. That's where I learned how to play baseball. Got out that place and your mama had taken you and went on to make life without me. Fifteen years was a long time for her to wait. But that fifteen years cured me of that robbing stuff. Rose'll tell you. She asked me when I met her if I had gotten all that foolishness out of my system. And I told her, "Baby, it's you and baseball all what count with me." You hear me, Bono? I meant it too. She say, "Which one comes first?" I told her, "Baby, ain't no doubt it's baseball . . . but you stick and get old with me and we'll both outlive this baseball." Am I right, Rose? And it's true.

ROSE Man, hush your mouth. You ain't said no such thing. Talking about, "Baby, you know you'll always be number one with me." That's what you was talking.

TROY You hear that, Bono. That's why I love her.

BONO Rose'll keep you straight. You get off the track, she'll straighten you up.

ROSE Lyons, you better get on up and get Bonnie. She waiting on you.

LYONS

(Gets up to go.) Hey, Pop, why don't you come on down to the Grill and hear me play?

TROY I ain't going down there. I'm too old to be sitting around in them clubs.

BONO You got to be good to play down at the Grill.

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LYONS Come on, Pop . . .

TROY I got to get up in the morning.

LYONS You ain't got to stay long.

TROY Naw, I'm gonna get my supper and go on to bed.

LYONS Well, I got to go. I'll see you again.

TROY Don't you come around my house on my payday.

ROSE Pick up the phone and let somebody know you coming. And bring Bonnie with you. You know I'm always glad to see her.

LYONS Yeah, I'll do that, Rose. You take care now. See you, Pop. See you, Mr. Bono. See you, Uncle Gabe.

GABRIEL Lyons! King of the Jungle!

(LYONS exits.)

TROY Is supper ready, woman? Me and you got some business to take care of. I'm gonna tear it up too.

ROSE Troy, I done told you now!

TROY

(Puts his arm around BONO.) Aw hell, woman . . . this is Bono. Bono like family. I done known this nigger since . . . how long I done know you?

BONO It's been a long time.

TROY I done known this nigger since Skippy was a pup. Me and him done been through some times.

BONO You sure right about that.

TROY Hell, I done know him longer than I know you. And we still standing shoulder to shoulder. Hey, look here, Bono . . . a man can't ask for no more than that.

(Drinks to him.) I love you, nigger.

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BONO Hell, I love you too . . . but I got to get home see my woman. You got yours in hand. I got to go get mine.

(BONO starts to exit as CORY enters the yard, dressed in his football uniform. He gives TROY a hard, uncompromising look.)

CORY What you do that for, Pop?

(He throws his helmet down in the direction of TROY.)

ROSE What's the matter? Cory . . . what's the matter?

CORY Papa done went up to the school and told Coach Zellman I can't play football no more. Wouldn't even let me play the game. Told him to tell the recruiter not to come.

ROSE Troy . . .

TROY What you Troying me for. Yeah, I did it. And the boy know why I did it.

CORY Why you wanna do that to me? That was the one chance I had.

ROSE Ain't nothing wrong with Cory playing football, Troy.

TROY The boy lied to me. I told the nigger if he wanna play football . . . to keep up his chores and hold down that job at the A&P. That was the conditions. Stopped down there to see Mr. Stawicki . . .

CORY I can't work after school during the football season, Pop! I tried to tell you that Mr. Stawicki's holding my job for me. You don't never want to listen to nobody. And then you wanna go and do this to me!

TROY I ain't done nothing to you. You done it to yourself.

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CORY Just cause you didn't have a chance! You just scared I'm gonna be better than you, that's all.

TROY Come here.

ROSE Troy . . .

(CORY reluctantly crosses over to TROY.)

TROY Alright! See. You done made a mistake.

CORY I didn't even do nothing!

TROY I'm gonna tell you what your mistake was. See . . . you swung at the ball and didn't hit it. That's strike one. See, you in the batter's box now. You swung and you missed. That's strike one. Don't you strike out!

(Lights fade to black.)

Act 2

Act 2, Scene 1

Act Two Scene One

The following morning. CORY is at the tree hitting the ball with the bat. He tries to mimic TROY, but his swing is awkward, less sure. ROSE enters from the house.

ROSE Cory, I want you to help me with this cupboard.

CORY I ain't quitting the team. I don't care what Poppa say.

ROSE I'll talk to him when he gets back. He had to go see about your Uncle Gabe. The police done arrested him. Say he was disturbing the peace. He'll be back directly. Come on in here and help me clean out the top of this cupboard.

(CORY exits into the house. ROSE sees TROY and BONO coming down the alley.) Troy . . . what they say down there?

TROY Ain't said nothing. I give them fifty dollars and they let him go. I'll talk to you about it. Where's Cory?

ROSE He's in there helping me clean out these cupboards.

TROY Tell him to get his butt out here.

(TROY and BONO go over to the pile of wood. BONO picks up the saw and begins sawing.)

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TROY

(To BONO.) All they want is the money. That makes six or seven times I done went down there and got him. See me coming they stick out their *hands*.

BONO Yeah. I know what you mean. That's all they care about . . . that money. They don't care about what's right.

(Pause.) Nigger, why you got to go and get some hard wood? You ain't doing nothing but building a little old fence. Get you some soft pine wood. That's all you need.

TROY I know what I'm doing. This is outside wood. You put pine wood inside the house. Pine wood is inside wood. This here is outside wood. Now you tell me where the fence is gonna be?

BONO You don't need this wood. You can put it up with pine wood and it'll stand as long as you gonna be here looking at it.

TROY How you know how long I'm gonna be here, nigger? Hell, I might just live forever. Live longer than old man Horsely.

BONO That's what Magee used to say.

TROY Magee's a damn fool. Now you tell me who you ever heard of gonna pull their own teeth with a pair of rusty pliers.

BONO The old folks . . . my granddaddy used to pull his teeth with pliers. They ain't had no dentists for the colored folks back then.

TROY Get clean pliers! You understand? Clean pliers! Sterilize them! Besides we ain't living back then. All Magee had to do was walk over to Doc Goldblums.

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BONO I see where you and that Tallahassee gal . . . that Alberta . . . I see where you all done got tight.

TROY What you mean "got tight"?

BONO I see where you be laughing and joking with her all the time.

TROY I laughs and jokes with all of them, Bono. You know me.

BONO That ain't the kind of laughing and joking I'm talking about.

(CORY enters from the house.)

CORY How you doing, Mr. Bono?

TROY Cory? Get that saw from Bono and cut some wood. He talking about the wood's too hard to cut. Stand back there, Jim, and let that young boy show you how it's done.

BONO He's sure welcome to it.

(CORY takes the saw and begins to cut the wood.) Whew-e-e! Look at that. Big old strong boy. Look like Joe Louis. Hell, must be getting old the way I'm watching that boy whip through that wood.

CORY I don't see why Mama want a fence around the yard nowadays.

TROY Damn if I know either. What the hell she keeping out with it? She ain't got nothing nobody want.

BONO Some people build fences to keep people out . . . and other people build fences to keep people in. Rose wants to hold on to you all. She loves you.

TROY Hell, nigger, I don't need nobody to tell me my

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wife loves me, Cory . . . go on in the house and see if you can find that other saw.

CORY Where's it at?

TROY I said find it! Look for it till you find it!

(CORY exits into the house.) What's that supposed to mean? Wanna keep us in?

BONO Troy . . . I done known you seem like damn near my whole life. You and Rose both. I done know both of you all for a long time. I remember when you met Rose. When you was hitting them baseball out the park. A lot of them old gals was after you then. You had the pick of the litter. When you picked Rose, I was happy for you. That was the first time I knew you had any sense. I said . . . My man Troy knows what he's doing . . . I'm gonna follow this nigger . . . he might take me somewhere. I been following you too. I done learned a whole heap of things about life watching you. I done learned how to tell where the shit lies. How to tell it from the alfalfa. You done learned me a lot of things. You showed me how to not make the same mistakes . . . to take life as it comes along and keep putting one foot in front of the other.

(Pause.) Rose a good woman, Troy.

TROY Hell, nigger, I know she a good woman. I been married to her for eighteen years. What you got on your mind, Bono?

BONO I just say she a good woman. Just like I say anything. I ain't got to have nothing on my mind.

TROY You just gonna say she a good woman and leave it hanging out there like that? Why you telling me she a good woman?

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BONO She loves you, Troy. Rose loves you.

TROY You saying I don't measure up. That's what you trying to say. I don't measure up cause I'm seeing this other gal. I know what you trying to say.

BONO I know what Rose means to you, Troy. I'm just trying to say I don't want to see you mess up.

TROY Yeah, I appreciate that, Bono. If you was messing around on Lucille I'd be telling you the same thing.

BONO Well, that's all I got to say. I just say that because I love you both.

TROY Hell, you know me . . . I wasn't out there looking for nothing. You can't find a better woman than Rose. I know that. But seems like this woman just stuck onto me where I can't shake her loose. I done wrestled with it, tried to throw her off me . . . but she just stuck on tighter. Now she's stuck on for good.

BONO You's in control . . . that's what you tell me all the time. You responsible for what you do.

TROY I ain't ducking the responsibility of it. As long as it sets right in my heart . . . then I'm okay. Cause that's all I listen to. It'll tell me right from wrong every time. And I ain't talking about doing Rose no bad turn. I love Rose. She done carried me a long ways and I love and respect her for that.

BONO I know you do. That's why I don't want to see you hurt her. But what you gonna do when she find out? What you got then? If you try and juggle both of them . . . sooner or later you gonna drop one of them. That's common sense.

TROY Yeah, I hear what you saying, Bono. I been trying to figure a way to work it out.

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BONO Work it out right, Troy. I don't want to be getting all up between you and Rose's business . . . but work it so it come out right.

TROY Aw hell, I get all up between you and Lucille's business. When you gonna get that woman that refrigerator she been wanting? Don't tell me you ain't got no money now. I know who your banker is. Mellon don't need that money bad as Lucille want that refrigerator. I'll tell you that.

BONO Tell you what I'll do . . . when you finish building this fence for Rose . . . I'll buy Lucille that refrigerator.

TROY You done stuck your foot in your mouth now!

(TROY grabs up a board and begins to saw. BONO starts to walk out the yard.) Hey, nigger . . . where you going?

BONO I'm going home. I know you don't expect me to help you now. I'm protecting my money. I wanna see you put that fence up by yourself. That's what I want to see. You'll be here another six months without me.

TROY Nigger, you ain't right.

BONO When it comes to my money . . . I'm right as fireworks on the Fourth of July.

TROY Alright, we gonna see now. You better get out your bankbook.

(BONO exits, and TROY continues to work. ROSE enters from the house.)

ROSE What they say down there? What's happening with Gabe?

TROY I went down there and got him out. Cost me fifty dollars. Say he was disturbing the peace. Judge set up a

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hearing for him in three weeks. Say to show cause why he shouldn't be re-committed.

ROSE What was he doing that cause them to arrest him?

TROY Some kids was teasing him and he run them off home. Say he was howling and carrying on. Some folks seen him and called the police. That's all it was.

ROSE Well, what's you say? What'd you tell the judge?

TROY Told him I'd look after him. It didn't make no sense to recommit the man. He stuck out his big greasy palm and told me to give him fifty dollars and take him on home.

ROSE Where's he at now? Where'd he go off to?

TROY He's gone on about his business. He don't need nobody to hold his hand.

ROSE Well, I don't know. Seem like that would be the best place for him if they did put him into the hospital. I know what you're gonna say. But that's what I think would be best.

TROY The man done had his life ruined fighting for what? And they wanna take and lock him up. Let him be free. He don't bother nobody.

ROSE Well, everybody got their own way of looking at it I guess. Come on and get your lunch. I got a bowl of lima beans and some cornbread in the oven. Come on get something to eat. Ain't no sense you fretting over Gabe.

(ROSE turns to go into the house.)

TROY Rose . . . got something to tell you.

ROSE Well, come on . . . wait till I get this food on the table.

TROY Rose!

(She stops and turns around.) I don't know how to say this.

(Pause.) I can't explain it none. It just sort of grows on you till it gets out of hand. It starts out like a little bush . . . and the next think you know it's a whole forest.

ROSE Troy . . . what is you talking about?

TROY I'm talking, woman, let me talk. I'm trying to find a way to tell you . . . I'm gonna be a daddy. I'm gonna be somebody's daddy.

ROSE Troy . . . you're not telling me this? You're gonna be . . . what?

TROY Rose . . . now . . . see . . .

ROSE You telling me you gonna be somebody's daddy? You telling your *wife* this?

(GABRIEL enters from the street. He carries a rose in his hand.)

GABRIEL Hey, Troy! Hey, Rose!

ROSE I have to wait eighteen years to hear something like this.

GABRIEL Hey, Rose . . . I got a flower for you.

(He hands it to her.) That's a rose. Same rose like you is.

ROSE Thanks, Gabe.

GABRIEL Troy, you ain't mad at me is you? Them bad mens come and put me away. You ain't mad at me is you?

TROY Naw, Gabe, I ain't mad at you.

ROSE Eighteen years and you wanna come with this.

GABRIEL

(Takes a quarter out of his pocket.) See what I got? Got a brand new quarter.

TROY Rose . . . it's just . . .

ROSE Ain't nothing you can say, Troy. Ain't no way of explaining that.

GABRIEL Fellow that give me this quarter had a whole mess of them. I'm gonna keep this quarter till it stop shining.

ROSE Gabe, go on in the house there. I got some watermelon in the frigidaire. Go on and get you a piece.

GABRIEL Say, Rose . . . you know I was chasing hell-hounds and them bad mens come and get me and take me away. Troy helped me. He come down there and told them they better let me go before he beat them up. Yeah, he did!

ROSE You go on and get you a piece of watermelon, Gabe. Them bad mens is gone now.

GABRIEL Okay, Rose . . . gonna get me some watermelon. The kind with the stripes on it.

(GABRIEL exits into the house.)

ROSE Why, Troy? Why? After all these years to come dragging this in to me now. It don't make no sense at your age. I could have expected this ten or fifteen years ago, but not now.

TROY Age ain't got nothing to do with it, Rose.

ROSE I done tried to be everything a wife should be. Everything a wife could be. Been married eighteen years and I got to live to see the day you tell me you been seeing another woman and done fathered a child by her.

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And you know I ain't never wanted no half nothing in my family. My whole family is half. Everybody got different fathers and mothers . . . my two sisters and my brother. Can't hardly tell who's who. Can't never sit down and talk about Papa and Mama. It's your papa and your mama and my papa and my mama . . .

TROY Rose . . . stop it now.

ROSE I ain't never wanted that for none of my children. And now you wanna drag your behind in here and tell me something like this.

TROY You ought to know. It's time for you to know.

ROSE Well, I don't want to know, goddamn it!

TROY I can't just make it go away. It's done now. I can't wish the circumstance of the thing away.

ROSE And you don't want to either. Maybe you want to wish me and my boy away. Maybe that's what you want? Well, you can't wish us away. I've got eighteen years of my life invested in you. You ought to have stayed upstairs in my bed where you belong.

TROY Rose . . . now listen to me . . . we can get a handle on this thing. We can talk this out . . . come to an understanding.

ROSE All of a sudden it's "we." Where was "we" at when you was down there rolling around with some godforsaken woman? "We" should have come to an understanding before you started making a damn fool of yourself. You're a day late and a dollar short when it comes to an understanding with me.

TROY It's just . . . She gives me a different idea . . . a different understanding about myself. I can step out of this

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house and get away from the pressures and problems . . . be a different man. I ain't got to wonder how I'm gonna pay the bills or get the roof fixed. I can just be a part of myself that I ain't never been.

ROSE What I want to know . . . is do you plan to continue seeing her. That's all you can say to me.

TROY I can sit up in her house and laugh. Do you understand what I'm saying. I can laugh out loud . . . and it feels good. It reaches all the way down to the bottom of my shoes.

(Pause.) Rose, I can't give that up.

ROSE Maybe you ought to go on and stay down there with her . . . if she a better woman than me.

TROY It ain't about nobody being a better woman or nothing. Rose, you ain't the blame. A man couldn't ask for no woman to be a better wife than you've been. I'm responsible for it. I done locked myself into a pattern trying to take care of you all that I forgot about myself.

ROSE What the hell was I there for? That was my job, not somebody else's.

TROY Rose, I done tried all my life to live decent . . . to live a clean . . . hard . . . useful life. I tried to be a good husband to you. In every way I knew how. Maybe I come into the world backwards, I don't know. But . . . you born with two strikes on you before you come to the plate. You got to guard it closely . . . always looking for the curve-ball on the inside corner. You can't afford to let none get past you. You can't afford a call strike. If you going down . . . you going down swinging. Everything lined up against you. What you gonna do. I fooled them, Rose. I bunted. When I found you and Cory and a

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halfway decent job . . . I was safe. Couldn't nothing touch me. I wasn't gonna strike out no more. I wasn't going back to the penitentiary. I wasn't gonna lay in the streets with a bottle of wine. I was safe. I had me a family. A job. I wasn't gonna get that last strike. I was on first looking for one of them boys to knock me in. To get me home.

ROSE You should have stayed in my bed, Troy.

TROY Then when I saw that gal . . . she firmed up my backbone. And I got to thinking that if I tried . . . I just might be able to steal second. Do you understand after eighteen years I wanted to steal second.

ROSE You should have held me tight. You should have grabbed me and held on.

TROY I stood on first base for eighteen years and I thought . . . well, goddamn it . . . go on for it!

ROSE We're not talking about baseball! We're talking about you going off to lay in bed with another woman . . . and then bring it home to me. That's what we're talking about. We ain't talking about no baseball.

TROY Rose, you're not listening to me. I'm trying the best I can to explain it to you. It's not easy for me to admit that I been standing in the same place for eighteen years.

ROSE I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life too. I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me. Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forget

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about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good? You not the only one who's got wants and needs. But I held on to you, Troy. I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams . . . and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never gonna bloom. But I held on to you, Troy. I held you tighter. You was my husband. I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room . . . with the darkness falling in on me . . . I gave everything I had to try and erase the doubt that you wasn't the finest man in the world. And wherever you was going . . . I wanted to be there with you. Cause you was my husband. Cause that's the only way I was gonna survive as your wife. You always talking about what you give . . . and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take . . . and don't even know nobody's giving!

(ROSE turns to exit into the house; TROY grabs her arm.)

TROY You say I take and don't give!

ROSE Troy! You're hurting me!

TROY You say I take and don't give.

ROSE Troy . . . you're hurting my arm! Let go!

TROY I done give you everything I got. Don't you tell that lie on me.

ROSE Troy!

TROY Don't you tell that lie on me!

(CORY enters from the house.)

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CORY Mama!

ROSE Troy. You're hurting me.

TROY Don't you tell me about no taking and giving.

(CORY comes up behind TROY and grabs him. TROY, surprised, is thrown off balance just as CORY throws a glancing blow that catches him on the chest and knocks him down. TROY is stunned, as is CORY.)

ROSE Troy. Troy. No!

(TROY gets to his feet and starts at CORY.) Troy . . . no. Please! Troy!

(ROSE pulls on TROY to hold him back. TROY stops himself.)

TROY

(To CORY.) Alright. That's strike two. You stay away from around me, boy. Don't you strike out. You living with a full count. Don't you strike out.

(TROY exits out the yard as the lights go down.)

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Act 2, Scene 2

Act Two Scene Two

It is six months later, early afternoon. TROY enters from the house and starts to exit the yard. ROSE enters from the house.

ROSE Troy, I want to talk to you.

TROY All of a sudden, after all this time, you want to talk to me, huh? You ain't wanted to talk to me for months. You ain't wanted to talk to me last night. You ain't wanted no part of me then. What you wanna talk to me about now?

ROSE Tomorrow's Friday.

TROY I know what day tomorrow is. You think I don't know tomorrow's Friday? My whole life I ain't done nothing but look to see Friday coming and you got to tell me it's Friday.

ROSE I want to know if you're coming home.

TROY I always come home, Rose. You know that. There ain't never been a night I ain't come home.

ROSE That ain't what I mean . . . and you know it. I want to know if you're coming straight home after work.

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TROY I figure I'd cash my check . . . hang out at Taylors' with the boys . . . maybe play a game of checkers . . .

ROSE Troy, I can't live like this. I won't live like this. You livin' on borrowed time with me. It's been going on six months now you ain't been coming home.

TROY I be here every night. Every night of the year. That's 365 days.

ROSE I want you to come home tomorrow after work.

TROY Rose . . . I don't mess up my pay. You know that now. I take my pay and I give it to you. I don't have no money but what you give me back. I just want to have a little time to myself . . . a little time to enjoy life.

ROSE What about me? When's my time to enjoy life?

TROY I don't know what to tell you, Rose. I'm doing the best I can.

ROSE You ain't been home from work but time enough to change your clothes and run out . . . and you wanna call that the best you can do?

TROY I'm going over to the hospital to see Alberta. She went into the hospital this afternoon. Look like she might have the baby early. I won't be gone long.

ROSE Well, you ought to know. They went over to Miss Pearl's and got Gabe today. She said you told them to go ahead and lock him up.

TROY I ain't said no such thing. Whoever told you that is telling a lie. Pearl ain't doing nothing but telling a big fat lie.

ROSE She ain't had to tell me. I read it on the papers.

TROY I ain't told them nothing of the kind.

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ROSE I saw it right there on the papers.

TROY What it say, huh?

ROSE It said you told them to take him.

TROY Then they screwed that up, just the way they screw up everything. I ain't worried about what they got on the paper.

ROSE Say the government send part of his check to the hospital and the other part to you.

TROY I ain't got nothing to do with that if that's the way it works. I ain't made up the rules about how it work.

ROSE You did Gabe just like you did Cory. You wouldn't sign the paper for Cory . . . but you signed for Gabe. You signed that paper.

(The telephone is heard ringing inside the house.)

TROY I told you I ain't signed nothing, woman! The only thing I signed was the release form. Hell, I can't read, I don't know what they had on that paper! I ain't signed nothing about sending Gabe away.

ROSE I said send him to the hospital . . . you said let him be free . . . now you done went down there and signed him to the hospital for half his money. You went back on yourself, Troy. You gonna have to answer for that.

TROY See now . . . you been over there talking to Miss Pearl. She done got mad cause she ain't getting Gabe's rent money. That's all it is. She's liable to say anything.

ROSE Troy, I seen where you signed the paper.

TROY You ain't seen nothing I signed. What she doing got papers on my brother anyway? Miss Pearl telling a big fat lie. And I'm gonna tell her about it too! You ain't

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seen nothing I signed. Say . . . you ain't seen nothing I signed.

(ROSE exits into the house to answer the telephone. Presently she returns.)

ROSE Troy . . . that was the hospital. Alberta had the baby.

TROY What she have? What is it?

ROSE It's a girl.

TROY I better get on down to the hospital to see her.

ROSE Troy . . .

TROY Rose . . . I got to go see her now. That's only right . . . what's the matter . . . the baby's alright, ain't it?

ROSE Alberta died having the baby.

TROY Died . . . you say she's dead? Alberta's dead?

ROSE They said they done all they could. They couldn't do nothing for her.

TROY The baby? How's the baby?

ROSE They say it's healthy. I wonder who's gonna bury her.

TROY She had family, Rose. She wasn't living in the world by herself.

ROSE I know she wasn't living in the world by herself.

TROY Next thing you gonna want to know if she had any insurance.

ROSE Troy, you ain't got to talk like that.

TROY That's the first thing that jumped out your mouth.

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"Who's gonna bury her?" Like I'm fixing to take on that task for myself.

ROSE I am your wife. Don't push me away.

TROY I ain't pushing nobody away. Just give me some space. That's all. Just give me some room to breathe.

(ROSE exits into the house. TROY walks about the yard.)

TROY

(With a quiet rage that threatens to consume him.) Alright . . . Mr. Death. See now . . . I'm gonna tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna take and build me a fence around this yard. See? I'm gonna build me a fence around what belongs to me. And then I want you to stay on the other side. See? You stay over there until you're ready for me. Then you come on. Bring your army. Bring your sickle. Bring your wrestling clothes. I ain't gonna fall down on my vigilance this time. You ain't gonna sneak up on me no more. When you ready for me . . . when the top of your list say Troy Maxson . . . that's when you come around here. You come up and knock on the front door. Ain't nobody else got nothing to do with this. This is between you and me. Man to man. You stay on the other side of that fence until you ready for me. Then you come up and knock on the front door. Anytime you want. I'll be ready for you.

(The lights go down to black.)

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Act 2, Scene 3

Act Two Scene Three

The lights come up on the porch. It is late evening three days later. ROSE sits listening to the ball game waiting for TROY. The final out of the game is made and ROSE switches off the radio. TROY enters the yard carrying an infant wrapped in blankets. He stands back from the house and calls.

(ROSE enters and stands on the porch. There is a long, awkward silence, the weight of which grows heavier with each passing second.)

TROY Rose . . . I'm standing here with my daughter in my arms. She ain't but a wee bittie little old thing. She don't know nothing about grownups' business. She innocent . . . and she ain't got no mama.

ROSE What you telling me for, Troy?

(She turns and exits into the house.)

TROY Well . . . I guess we'll just sit out here on the porch.

(He sits down on the porch. There is an awkward indelicateness about the way he handles the baby. His largeness

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engulfs and seems to swallow it. He speaks loud enough for ROSE to hear.) A man's got to do what's right for him. I ain't sorry for nothing I done. It felt right in my heart.

(To the baby.) What you smiling at? Your daddy's a big man. Got these great big old hands. But sometimes he's scared. And right now your daddy's scared cause we sitting out here and ain't got no home. Oh, I been homeless before. I ain't had no little baby with me. But I been homeless. You just be out on the road by your lonesome and you see one of them trains coming and you just kinda go like this . . .

(He sings as a lullaby.) Please, Mr. Engineer let a man ride the line Please, Mr. Engineer let a man ride the line I ain't got no ticket please let me ride the blinds

(ROSE enters from the house. TROY hearing her steps behind him, stands and faces her.) She's my daughter, Rose. My own flesh and blood. I can't deny her no more than I can deny them boys.

(Pause.) You and them boys is my family. You and them and this child is all I got in the world. So I guess what I'm saying is . . . I'd appreciate it if you'd help me take care of her.

ROSE Okay, Troy . . . you're right. I'll take care of your baby for you . . . cause . . . like you say . . . she's innocent . . . and you can't visit the sins of the father upon the child. A motherless child has got a hard time.

(She takes the baby from him.) From right now . . . this child got a mother. But you a womanless man.

(ROSE turns and exits into the house with the baby. Lights go down to black.)

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Act 2, Scene 4

Act Two Scene Four

It is two months later. LYONS enters from the street. He knocks on the door and calls

LYONS Hey, Rose!

(Pause.) Rose!

ROSE

(From inside the house.) Stop that yelling. You gonna wake up Raynell. I just got her to sleep.

LYONS I just stopped by to pay Papa this twenty dollars I owe him. Where's Papa at?

ROSE He should be here in a minute. I'm getting ready to go down to the church. Sit down and wait on him.

LYONS I got to go pick up Bonnie over her mother's house.

ROSE Well, sit it down there on the table. He'll get it.

LYONS

(Enters the house and sets the money on the table.) Tell Papa I said thanks. I'll see you again.

ROSE Alright, Lyons. We'll see you.

(LYONS starts to exit as CORY enters)

CORY Hey, Lyons.

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LYONS What's happening, Cory. Say man, I'm sorry I missed your graduation. You know I had a gig and couldn't get away. Otherwise, I would have been there, man. So what you doing?

CORY I'm trying to find a job.

LYONS Yeah I know how that go, man. It's rough out here. Jobs are scarce.

CORY Yeah, I know.

LYONS Look here, I got to run. Talk to Papa . . . he know some people. He'll be able to help get you a job. Talk to him . . . see what he say.

CORY Yeah . . . alright, Lyons.

LYONS You take care. I'll talk to you soon. We'll find some time to talk.

(LYONS exits the yard. CORY wanders over to the tree, picks up the bat and assumes a batting stance. He studies an imaginary pitcher and swings. Dissatisfied with the result, he tries again. TROY enters. They eye each other for a beat. CORY puts the bat down and exits the yard. TROY starts into the house as ROSE exits with RAYNELL. She is carrying a cake.)

TROY I'm coming in and everybody's going out.

ROSE I'm taking this cake down to the church for the bakesale. Lyons was by to see you. He stopped by to pay you your twenty dollars. It's laying in there on the table.

TROY

(Going into his pocket.) Well . . . here go this money.

ROSE Put it in there on the table, Troy. I'll get it.

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TROY What time you coming back?

ROSE Ain't no use in you studying me. It don't matter what time I come back.

TROY I just asked you a question, woman. What's the matter . . . can't I ask you a question?

ROSE Troy, I don't want to go into it. Your dinner's in there on the stove. All you got to do is heat it up. And don't you be eating the rest of them cakes in there. I'm coming back for them. We having a bakesale at the church tomorrow.

(ROSE exits the yard. TROY sits down on the steps, take sa pint bottle from his pocket, opens it and drinks. He begins to sing.)

TROY Hear it ring! Hear it ring! Had an old dog his name was Blue You know Blue was mighty true You know Blue as a good old dog Blue trees a possum in a hollow log You know from that he was a good old dog

(BONO enters the yard.)

BONO Hey, Troy.

TROY Hey, what's happening, Bono?

BONO I just thought I'd stop by to see you.

TROY What you stop by and see me for? You ain't stopped by in a month of Sundays. Hell, I must owe you money or something.

BONO Since you got your promotion I can't keep up with you. Used to see you everyday. Now I don't even know what route you working.

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TROY They keep switching me around. Got me out in Greentree now . . . hauling white folks' garbage.

BONO Greentree, huh? You lucky, at least you ain't got to be lifting them barrels. Damn if they ain't getting heavier. I'm gonna put in my two years and call it quits.

TROY I'm thinking about retiring myself.

BONO You got it easy. You can *drive* for another five years.

TROY It ain't the same, Bono. It ain't like working the back of the truck. Ain't got nobody to talk to . . . feel like you working by yourself. Naw, I'm thinking about retiring. How's Lucille?

BONO She alright. Her arthritis get to acting up on her sometime. Saw Rose on my way in. She going down to the church, huh?

TROY Yeah, she took up going down there. All them preachers looking for somebody to fatten their pockets.

(Pause.) Got some gin here.

BONO Naw, thanks. I just stopped by to say hello.

TROY Hell, nigger . . . you can take a drink. I ain't never known you to say no to a drink. You ain't got to work tomorrow.

BONO I just stopped by. I'm fixing to go over to Skinner's. We got us a domino game going over his house every Friday.

TROY Nigger, you can't play no dominoes. I used to whup you four games out of five.

BONO Well, that learned me. I'm getting better.

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TROY Yeah? Well, that's alright.

BONO Look here . . . I got to be getting on. Stop by sometime, huh?

TROY Yeah, I'll do that, Bono. Lucille told Rose you bought her a new refrigerator.

BONO Yeah, Rose told Lucille you had finally built your fence . . . so I figured we'd call it even.

TROY I knew you would.

BONO Yeah . . . okay. I'll be talking to you.

TROY Yeah, take care, Bono. Good to see you. I'm gonna stop over.

BONO Yeah. Okay, Troy.

(BONO exits. TROY drinks from the bottle.)

TROY Old Blue died and I dig his grave
Let him down with a golden chain
Every night when I hear old Blue bark
I know Blue treed a possum in
Noah's Ark. Hear it ring! Hear it ring!

(CORY enters the yard. They eye each other for a beat. TROY is sitting in the middle of the steps. CORY walks over.)

CORY I got to get by.

TROY Say what? What's you say?

CORY You in my way. I got to get by.

TROY You got to get by where? This is my house. Bought and paid for. In full. Took me fifteen years. And if you wanna go in my house and I'm sitting on the steps . . . you say excuse me. Like your mama taught you.

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CORY Come on, Pop . . . I got to get by.

(CORY starts to maneuver his way past TROY. TROY grabs his leg and shoves him back.)

TROY You just gonna walk over top of me?

CORY I live here too!

TROY

(Advancing toward him.) You just gonna walk over top of me in my own house?

CORY I ain't scared of you.

TROY I ain't asked if you was scared of me. I asked you if you was fixing to walk over top of me in my own house? That's the question. You ain't gonna say excuse me? You just gonna walk over top of me?

CORY If you wanna put it like that.

TROY How else am I gonna put it?

CORY I was walking by you to go into the house cause you sitting on the steps drunk, singing to yourself. You can put it like that.

TROY Without saying excuse me???

(CORY doesn't respond.) I asked you a question. Without saying excuse me???

CORY I ain't got to say excuse me to you. You don't count around here no more.

TROY Oh, I see . . . I don't count around here no more. You ain't got to say excuse me to your daddy. All of a sudden you done got so grown that your daddy don't count around here no more . . . Around here in his own house and yard that he done paid for with the sweat of his brow. You done got so grown to where you gonna take over. You gonna take over my house. Is that right?

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You gonna wear my pants. You gonna go in there and stretch out on my bed. You ain't got to say excuse me cause I don't count around here no more. Is that right?

CORY That's right. You always talking this dumb stuff. Now, why don't you just get out my way.

TROY I guess you got someplace to sleep and something to put in your belly. You got that, huh? You got that? That's what you need. You got that, huh?

CORY You don't know what I got. You ain't got to worry about what I got.

TROY You right! You one hundred percent right! I done spent the last seventeen years worrying about what you got. Now it's your turn, see? I'll tell you what to do. You grown . . . we done established that. You a man. Now, let's see you act like one. Turn your behind around and walk out this yard. And when you get out there in the alley . . . you can forget about this house. See? Cause this is my house. You go on and be a man and get your own house. You can forget about this. 'Cause this is mine. You go on and get yours cause I'm through with doing for you.

CORY You talking about what you did for me . . . what'd you ever give me?

TROY Them feet and bones! That pumping heart, nigger! I give you more than anybody else is ever gonna give you.

CORY You ain't never gave me nothing! You ain't never done nothing but hold me back. Afraid I was gonna be better than you. All you ever did was try and make me scared of you. I used to tremble every time you called my name. Every time I heard your footsteps in the

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house. Wondering all the time . . . what's Papa gonna say if I do this? . . . What's he gonna say if I do that? . . . What's Papa gonna say if I turn on the radio? And Mama, too . . . she tries . . . but she's scared of you.

TROY You leave your mama out of this. She ain't got nothing to do with this.

CORY I don't know how she stand you . . . after what you did to her.

TROY I told you to leave your mama out of this!

(He advances toward CORY.)

CORY What you gonna do . . . give me a whupping? You can't whup me no more. You're too old. You just an old man.

TROY

(Shoves him on his shoulder.) Nigger! That's what you are. You just another nigger on the street to me!

CORY You crazy! You know that?

TROY Go on now! You got the devil in you. Get on away from me!

CORY You just a crazy old man . . . talking about I got the devil in me.

TROY Yeah, I'm crazy! If you don't get on the other side of that yard . . . I'm gonna show you how crazy I am! Go on . . . get the hell out of my yard.

CORY It ain't your yard. You took Uncle Gabe's money he got from the army to buy this house and then you put him out.

TROY

(TROY advances on CORY.) Get your black ass out of my yard!

(TROY's advance backs CORY up against the tree. CORY grabs up the bat.)

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CORY I ain't going nowhere! Come on . . . put me out! I ain't scared of you.

TROY That's my bat!

CORY Come on!

TROY Put my bat down!

CORY Come on, put me out.

(CORY swings at TROY, who backs across the yard.) What's the matter? You so bad . . . put me out!

(TROY advances toward CORY.)

CORY

(Backing up.) Come on! Come on!

TROY You're gonna have to use it! You wanna draw that bat back on me . . . you're gonna have to use it.

CORY Come on! . . . Come on!

(CORY swings the bat at TROY a second time. He misses. TROY continues to advance toward him.)

TROY You're gonna have to kill me! You wanna draw that bat back on me. You're gonna have to kill me.

(CORY, backed up against the tree, can go no farther. TROY taunts him. He sticks out his head and offers him a target.) Come on! Come on!

(CORY is unable to swing the bat. TROY grabs it.)

TROY Then I'll show you.

(CORY and TROY struggle over the bat. The struggle is fierce and fully engaged. TROY ultimately is the stronger, and takes the bat from CORY and stands over him ready to swing. He stops himself.)

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Go on and get away from around my house.

(CORY, stung by his defeat, picks himself up, walks slowly out of the yard and up the alley.)

CORY Tell Mama I'll be back for my things.

TROY They'll be on the other side of that fence.

(CORY exits.)

TROY I can't taste nothing. Helluljah! I can't taste nothing no more.

(TROY assumes a batting posture and begins to taunt Death, the fastball in the outside corner.) Come on! It's between you and me now! Come on! Anytime you want! Come on! I be ready for you . . . but I ain't gonna be easy.

(The lights go down on the scene.)

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Act 2, Scene 5

Act Two Scene Five

The time is 1965. The lights come up in the yard. It is the morning of TROY's funeral. A funeral plaque with a light hangs beside the door. There is a small garden plot off to the side. There is noise and activity in the house as ROSE, LYONS and BONO have gathered. The door opens and RAYNELL, seven years old, enters dressed in a flannel nightgown. She crosses to the garden and pokes around with a stick. ROSE calls from the house.

ROSE Raynell!

MAXSON Mam?

ROSE What you doing out there?

MAXSON Nothing.

(ROSE comes to the door.)

ROSE Girl, get in here and get dressed. What you doing?

MAXSON Seeing if my garden growed.

ROSE I told you it ain't gonna grow overnight. You got to wait.

MAXSON It don't look like it never gonna grow. Dag!

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ROSE I told you a watched pot never boils. Get in here and get dressed.

MAXSON This ain't even no pot, Mama.

ROSE You just have to give it a chance. It'll grow. Now you come on and do what I told you. We got to be getting ready. This ain't no morning to be playing around. You hear me?

MAXSON Yes, mam.

(ROSE exits into the house. RAYNELL continues to poke at her garden with a stick. CORY enters. He is dressed in a Marine corporal's uniform, and carries a duffel bag. His posture is that of a military man, and his speech has a clipped sternness.)

CORY

(To RAYNELL.) Hi.

(Pause.) I bet your name is Raynell.

MAXSON Uh huh.

CORY Is your mama home?

(RAYNELL runs up on the porch and calls through the screendoor.)

MAXSON Mama . . . there's some man out here. Mama?

(ROSE comes to the door.)

ROSE Cory? Lord have mercy! Look here, you all!

(ROSE and CORY embrace in a tearful reunion as BONO and LYONS enter from the house dressed in funeral clothes.)

BONO Aw, looka here . . .

ROSE Done got all grown up!

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CORY Don't cry, Mama. What you crying about?

ROSE I'm just so glad you made it.

CORY Hey Lyons. How you doing, Mr. Bono.

(LYONS goes to embrace CORY.)

LYONS Look at you, man. Look at you. Don't he look good, Rose. Got them Corporal stripes.

ROSE What took you so long.

CORY You know how the Marines are, Mama. They got to get all their paperwork straight before they let you do anything.

ROSE Well, I'm sure glad you made it. They let Lyons come. Your Uncle Gabe's still in the hospital. They don't know if they gonna let him out or not. I just talked to them a little while ago.

LYONS A Corporal in the United States Marines.

BONO Your daddy knew you had it in you. He used to tell me all the time.

LYONS Don't he look good, Mr. Bono?

BONO Yeah, he remind me of Troy when I first met him.

(Pause.) Say, Rose, Lucille's down at the church with the choir. I'm gonna go down and get the pallbearers lined up. I'll be back to get you all.

ROSE Thanks, Jim.

CORY See you, Mr. Bono.

LYONS

(With his arm around RAYNELL.) Cory . . . look at Raynell. Ain't she precious? She gonna break a whole lot of hearts.

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ROSE Raynell, come and say hello to your brother. This is your brother, Cory. You remember Cory.

MAXSON No, Mam.

CORY She don't remember me, Mama.

ROSE Well, we talk about you. She heard us talk about you.

(To RAYNELL.) This is your brother, Cory. Come on and say hello.

MAXSON Hi.

CORY Hi. So you're Raynell. Mama told me a lot about you.

ROSE You all come on into the house and let me fix you some breakfast. Keep up your strength.

CORY I ain't hungry, Mama.

LYONS You can fix me something, Rose. I'll be in there in a minute.

ROSE Cory, you sure you don't want nothing. I know they ain't feeding you right.

CORY No, Mama . . . thanks. I don't feel like eating. I'll get something later.

ROSE Raynell . . . get on upstairs and get that dress on like I told you.

(ROSE and RAYNELL exit into the house.)

LYONS So . . . I hear you thinking about getting married.

CORY Yeah, I done found the right one, Lyons. It's about time.

LYONS Me and Bonnie been split up about four years now. About the time Papa retired. I guess she just got

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tired of all them changes I was putting her through.

(Pause.) I always knew you was gonna make something out yourself. Your head was always in the right direction. So . . . you gonna stay in . . . make it a career . . . put in your twenty years?

CORY I don't know. I got six already, I think that's enough.

LYONS Stick with Uncle Sam and retire early. Ain't nothing out here. I guess Rose told you what happened with me. They got me down the workhouse. I thought I was being slick cashing other people's checks.

CORY How much time you doing?

LYONS They give me three years. I got that beat now. I ain't got but nine more months. It ain't so bad. You learn to deal with it like anything else. You got to take the crooked with the straights. That's what Papa used to say. He used to say that when he struck out. I seen him strike out three times in a row . . . and the next time up he hit the ball over the grandstand. Right out there in Homestead Field. He wasn't satisfied hitting in the seats . . . he want to hit it over everything! After the game he had two hundred people standing around waiting to shake his hand. You got to take the crooked with the straights. Yeah, Papa was something else.

CORY You still playing?

LYONS Cory . . . you know I'm gonna do that. There's some fellows down there we got us a band . . . we gonna try and stay together when we get out . . . but yeah, I'm still playing. It still helps me to get out of bed in the morning. As long as it do that I'm gonna be right there playing and trying to make some sense out of it.

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ROSE

(Calling.) Lyons, I got these eggs in the pan.

LYONS Let me go on and get these eggs, man. Get ready to go bury Papa.

(Pause.) How you doing? You doing alright?

(CORY nods. LYONS touches him on the shoulder and they share a moment of silent grief. LYONS exits into the house. CORY wanders about the yard. RAYNELL enters.)

MAXSON Hi.

CORY Hi.

MAXSON Did you used to sleep in my room?

CORY Yeah . . . that used to be my room.

MAXSON That's what Papa call it "Cory's room." It got your football in the closet.

(ROSE comes to the door.)

ROSE Raynell, get in there and get them good shoes on.

MAXSON Mama, can't I wear these. Them other one hurt my feet.

ROSE Well, they just gonna have to hurt your feet for a while. You ain't said they hurt your feet when you went down to the store and got them.

MAXSON They didn't hurt then. My feet done got bigger.

ROSE Don't you give me no backtalk now. You get in there and get them shoes on.

(RAYNELL exits into the house.) Ain't too much changed. He still got that piece of rag tied to that tree. He was out here swinging that bat. I was just ready to go back in the house. He swung that bat and

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bat and then he just fell over. Seem like he swung it and stood there with this grin on his face . . . and then he just fell over. They carried him on down to the hospital, but I knew there wasn't no need . . . why don't you come on in the house?

CORY Mama . . . I got something to tell you. I don't know how to tell you this . . . but I've got to tell you . . . I'm not going to Papa's funeral.

ROSE Boy, hush your mouth. That's your daddy you talking about. I don't want hear that kind of talk this morning. I done raised you to come to this? You standing there all healthy and grown talking about you ain't going to your daddy's funeral?

CORY Mama . . . listen . . .

ROSE I don't want to hear it, Cory. You just get that thought out of your head.

CORY I can't drag Papa with me everywhere I go. I've got to say no to him. One time in my life I've got to say no.

ROSE Don't nobody have to listen to nothing like that. I know you and your daddy ain't seen eye to eye, but I ain't got to listen to that kind of talk this morning. Whatever was between you and your daddy . . . the time has come to put it aside. Just take it and set it over there on the shelf and forget about it. Disrespecting your daddy ain't gonna make you a man, Cory. You got to find a way to come to that on your own. Not going to your daddy's funeral ain't gonna make you a man.

CORY The whole time I was growing up . . . living in his house . . . Papa was like a shadow that followed you everywhere. It weighed on you and sunk into your flesh.

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It would wrap around you and lay there until you couldn't tell which one was you anymore. That shadow digging in your flesh. Trying to crawl in. Trying to live through you. Everywhere I looked, Troy Maxson was staring back at me . . . hiding under the bed . . . in the closet. I'm just saying I've got to find a way to get rid of that shadow, Mama.

ROSE You just like him. You got him in you good.

CORY Don't tell me that, Mama.

ROSE You Troy Maxson all over again.

CORY I don't want to be Troy Maxson. I want to be me.

ROSE You can't be nobody but who you are, Cory. That shadow wasn't nothing but you growing into yourself. You either got to grow into it or cut it down to fit you. But that's all you got to make life with. That's all you got to measure yourself against that world out there. Your daddy wanted you to be everything he wasn't . . . and at the same time he tried to make you into everything he was. I don't know if he was right or wrong . . . but I do know he meant to do more good than he meant to do harm. He wasn't always right. Sometimes when he touched he bruised. And sometimes when he took me in his arms he cut. When I first met your daddy I thought . . . Here is a man I can lay down with and make a baby. That's the first thing I thought when I seen him. I was thirty years old and had done seen my share of men. But when he walked up to me and said, "I can dance a waltz that'll make you dizzy," I thought, Rose Lee, here is a man that you can open yourself up to and be filled to bursting. Here is a man that can fill all them empty spaces you been tipping around the edges of. One of them empty spaces was being somebody's mother.

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I married your daddy and settled down to cooking his supper and keeping clean sheets on the bed. When your daddy walked through the house he was so big he filled it up. That was my first mistake. Not to make him leave some room for me. For my part in the matter. But at that time I wanted that. I wanted a house that I could sing in. And that's what your daddy gave me. I didn't know to keep up his strength I had to give up little pieces of mine. I did that. I took on his life as mine and mixed up the pieces so that you couldn't hardly tell which was which anymore. It was my choice. It was my life and I didn't have to live it like that. But that's what life offered me in the way of being a woman and I took it. I grabbed hold of it with both hands. By the time Raynell came into the house, me and your daddy had done lost touch with one another. I didn't want to make my blessing off of nobody's misfortune . . . but I took on to Raynell like she was all them babies I had wanted and never had.

(The phone rings.) Like I'd been blessed to relive a part of my life. And if the Lord see fit to keep up my strength . . . I'm gonna do her just like your daddy did you . . . I'm gonna give her the best of what's in me.

MAXSON

(Entering, still with her old shoes.) Mama . . . Reverend Tollivier on the phone.

(ROSE exits into the house.)

MAXSON Hi.

CORY Hi.

MAXSON You in the Army or the Marines?

CORY Marines.

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MAXSON Papa said it was the Army. Did you know Blue?

CORY Blue? Who's Blue?

MAXSON Papa's dog what he sing about all the time.

CORY

(Singing.) Hear it ring! Hear it ring! I had a dog his name was Blue You know Blue was mighty true You know Blue was a good old dog Blue treed a possum in a hollow log You know from that he was a good old dog. Hear it ring! Hear it ring!

(RAYNELL joins in singing.)

CORY AND RAYNELL Blue treed a possum out on a limb Blue looked at me and I looked at him Grabbed that possum and put him in a

sack Blue stayed there till I came back Old Blue's feets was big and round Never allowed a possum to touch the ground. Old Blue died and I dug his grave I dug his grave with a silver spade Let him down with a golden chain And every night I call his name Go on Blue, you good dog you Go on Blue, you good dog you

MAXSON Blue laid down and died like a man Blue laid down and died . . .

BOTH Blue laid down and died like a man Now he's treeing possums in the Promised Land I'm gonna tell you this to let you know Blue's gone where the good dogs go When I hear old Blue bark

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When I hear old Blue bark Blue treed a possum in Noah's Ark Blue treed a possum in Noah's Ark.

(ROSE comes to the screen door.)

ROSE Cory, we gonna be ready to go in a minute.

CORY

(To RAYNELL.) You go on in the house and change them shoes like Mama told you so we can go to Papa's funeral.

MAXSON Okay, I'll be back.

(RAYNELL exits into the house. CORY gets up and crosses over to the tree. ROSE stands in the screen door watching him. GABRIEL enters from the alley.)

GABRIEL

(Calling.) Hey, Rose!

ROSE Gabe?

GABRIEL I'm here, Rose. Hey Rose, I'm here!

(ROSE enters from the house.)

ROSE Lord . . . Look here, Lyons!

LYONS See, I told you, Rose . . . I told you they'd let him come.

CORY How you doing, Uncle Gabe?

LYONS How you doing, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL Hey, Rose. It's time. It's time to tell St. Peter to open the gates. Troy, you ready? You ready, Troy. I'm gonna tell St. Peter to open the gates. You get ready now.

(Gabriel, with great fanfare, braces himself to blow. The trumpet is without a mouthpiece. He puts the end of it into his mouth and blows with great force, like a man

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who has been waiting some twenty-odd years for this single moment. No sound comes out of the trumpet. He braces himself and blows again with the same result. A third time he blows. There is a weight of impossible description that falls away and leaves him bare and exposed to a frightful realization. It is a trauma that a sane and normal mind would be unable to withstand. He begins to dance. A slow, strange dance, eerie and life-

giving. A dance of atavistic signature and ritual. LYONS attempts to embrace him. GABRIEL pushes LYONS away. He begins to howl in what is an attempt at song, or perhaps a song turning back into itself in an attempt at speech. He finishes his dance and the gates of heaven stand open as wide as God's closet.) That's the way that go!

(BLACKOUT.)

END OF PLAY.

B - Fences - Screenplay

FENCES

Screenplay by

August Wilson

Based upon his play

BLACK SCREEN

TITLE: AUGUST WILSON'S FENCES

The screen remains black. The sound of a truck rumbling along a street. Two men are heard talking:

BONO (v.o.): Troy, you ought to stop that lying!

TROY (v.o.): I ain't lying! The nigger had a watermelon this big. Talking about . . . "What watermelon, Mr. Rand?" I like to fell out! "What watermelon, Mr. Rand?" . . . And it sitting there big as life.

BONO (v.o.): What did Mr. Rand say?

TROY (v.o.): Ain't said nothing. Figure if the nigger too dumb to know he carrying a watermelon, he wasn't gonna get much sense out of him. Trying to hide that great big old watermelon under his coat. Afraid to let the white man see him carry it home.

AUGUST WILSON

EXT. WYLIE AVENUE, THE HILL, PITTSBURGH—
EARLY SEPTEMBER—MORNING

The rear of the garbage truck, god's point of view: Troy Maxson and Jim Bono hang on to either side of the truck as it heads toward its next collection point.

Troy is fifty-three years old, a large man with thick, heavy hands; it is this largeness that he strives to fill out and make an accommodation with. Together with his blackness, his largeness informs his sensibilities and the choices he has made in his life.

Of the two men, Bono is obviously the follower. His commitment to their friendship of thirty odd years is rooted in his admiration of Troy's honesty, capacity for hard work, and his strength, which Bono seeks to emulate.

BONO: I'm like you . . . I ain't got no time for them kind of people.

TROY: Now what he look like getting mad 'cause he see the man from the union talking to Mr. Rand?

BONO: He come talking to me about . . . "Troy Maxson gonna get us fired." I told him to get away from

FENCES

me with that. He walked away from me calling you a troublemaker. (anxious) What Mr. Rand say?

TROY: Ain't said nothing. He told me to go down to the commissioner's office next Friday. They called me down there to see them.

The truck halts. Troy gets down and heads for heavy garbage cans at the curb; Bono uses Troy's shoulder to ease himself down.

BONO: Well, as long as you got your complaint filed, they can't fire you. That's what one of them white fellows tell me.

TROY: I ain't worried about them firing me. They gonna fire me 'cause I asked a question? That's all I did. I went to Mr. Rand and asked him—"Why? Why you got the white mens driving and the colored lifting?" Told him, "What's the matter, don't I count?"

TITLE: THE HILL, PITTSBURGH

TITLE: 1957

TROY: You think only white fellows got sense enough to drive a truck? That ain't no paper job. Hell, anybody can drive a truck. How come you got all the whites driving and the coloreds lifting?

The truck's white driver watches the collectors in his side mirror.

AUGUST WILSON

TROY: He told me, "Take it to the union." Well, hell, that's what I done! Now they wanna come up with this pack of lies.

BONO: I told Brownie if the man come and ask him any questions . . . just tell the truth! It ain't nothing but something they done trumped up on you 'cause you filed a complaint on them.

Bono returns the last empty can. Troy climbs up on the truck.

TROY: Brownie don't understand nothing. All I want them to do is change the job description. Give everybody a chance to drive the truck. Brownie can't see that. He ain't got that much sense.

Bono in place, Troy slaps the truck. As it starts moving, Troy pulls a lever and the compactor crushes the trash.

EXT. SANITATION YARD—AFTERNOON

Men stream out of the yard, Troy and Bono among them.

How you figure he be making out with that gal be up at Taylors' all the time . . . that Alberta gal?

TROY: Who?

BONO: Brownie!

FENCES

TROY: Same as you and me. He getting as much as we is.
Which is to say nothing.

BONO: It is, huh? I figure you doing a little better
than me . . . and I ain't saying what I'm doing.

TROY: Aw, nigger, look here . . . I know you. If you
had got anywhere near that gal, twenty minutes
later you be looking to tell somebody. And the
first one you gonna tell . . . that you gonna want
to brag to . . . is gonna be me.

BONO: I ain't saying that. I see where you be eyeing
her.

TROY: I eye all the women. I don't miss nothing. Don't
never let nobody tell you Troy Maxson don't eye
the women.

BONO: You been doing more than eyeing her. You done
bought her a drink or two.

TROY: Hell yeah, I bought her a drink! What that mean?
I bought you one, too. What that mean 'cause I buy
her a drink? I'm just being polite.

BONO: It's all right to buy her one drink. That's what
you call being polite. But when you wanna be buy-
ing two or three . . . that's what you call eye-
ing her.

TROY: Look here, as long as you known me . . . you
ever known me to chase after women?

BONO: Hell yeah! Long as I done known you. You for-
getting I knew you when.

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TROY: Naw, I'm talking about since I been married to Rose?

BONO: Oh, not since you been married to Rose. Now, that's the truth, there. I can say that.

TROY: All right then! Case closed.

EXT. THE HILL DISTRICT—TROY AND ROSE'S STREET—AFTERNOON

Troy and Bono make their way down the street to a narrow house. A pair of lawn chairs sit on the small front porch. They take the short cut through the side alley into the back yard. It is Friday, payday, and the one night of the week the two men engage in a ritual of talk and drink.

BONO: I see you be walking up around Alberta's house. You supposed to be at Taylors' and you be walking up around there.

TROY: What you watching where I'm walking for? I ain't watching after you.

BONO: I seen you walking around there more than once.

TROY: Hell, you liable to see me walking anywhere! That don't mean nothing because you seen me walking around there.

BONO: Where she come from anyway? She just kinda showed up one day.

FENCES

TROY: Tallahassee. You can look at her and tell she one of them Florida gals. They got some big healthy women down there. Grow them right up out the ground. Got a little bit of Indian in her. Most of them niggers down in Florida got some Indian in them.

BONO: I don't know about that Indian part. But she damn sure big and healthy. Woman wears some big stockings. Got them great big old legs and hips as wide as the Mississippi river.

TROY: Legs don't mean nothing. You don't do nothing but push them out of the way. But them hips cushion the ride!

BONO: Troy, you ain't got no sense.

TROY: It's the truth! Like you riding on Goodyears!

Troy cracks the seal of the bottle of gin, pours some out on the ground . . . for the folks that are long gone.

EXT. TROY'S AND ROSE'S BACKYARD— AFTERNOON

In the center of the yard, a large tree, two chairs beneath it. A battered baseball hangs from a rope tied to a tree limb; a big weathered bat leans against the trunk.

The yard is bordered on either side by fences and houses. At the rear,

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there's a derelict wooden house with boarded windows. The remnants of a fence are strewn between the wild lot behind the abandoned house and the Maxsons' yard.

Materials for a new fence . . . a couple of wooden sawhorses waiting for the lumber stacked under a tarp. One or two chairs of dubious value sit at one end where the kitchen window opens onto the porch. An old-fashioned ice box stands silent guard at the other end.

Rose maxson comes out onto the porch, holding a bowl of snap peas. She is ten years younger than troy. Her devotion to him stems from the recognition of the possibilities of her life without him: a succession of abusive men and their babies, a life of partying and running the streets, the church, or aloneness with its attendant pain and frustration. She recognizes troy's spirit as a fine and illuminating one and she either ignores or forgives his faults, only some of which she recognizes. Though she doesn't drink, her presence is an integral part of the friday night rituals.

FENCES

ROSE: What you all out here getting into?

TROY: What you worried about what we getting into for?
This is men talk, woman.

ROSE: What I care what you talking about? Bono, you gonna stay for supper?

BONO: No, I thank you, Rose. But Lucille say she cooking up a pot of pigfeet.

TROY: Pigfeet! Hell, I'm going home with you! Might even stay the night if you got some pigfeet. You got something in there to top them pigfeet, Rose?

ROSE: I'm cooking up some chicken. I got some chicken and collard greens.

TROY: Well, go on back in the house and let me and Bono finish what we was talking about. This is men talk. I got some talk for you later. You know what kind of talk I mean. Go on and powder it up.

ROSE: Troy Maxson, don't you start that now!

TROY (PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HER): Aw, woman . . . come here. Look here, Bono . . . When I met this woman . . . I got out that place, say, "Hitch up my pony, saddle up my mare . . . there's a woman out there for me somewhere. I looked here. Looked there. Saw Rose and latched on to her." I latched on to her and told her—I'm gonna tell you the truth—I told her, "Baby, I don't wanna marry, I just wanna be your man." Rose told me . . . tell him what you told me, Rose.

AUGUST WILSON

ROSE: I told him if he wasn't the marrying kind, then move out the way so the marrying kind could find me.

TROY: That's what she told me. "Nigger, you in my way. You blocking the view! Move out the way so I can find me a husband." I thought it over two or three days. Come back—

ROSE: Ain't no two or three days nothing. You was back the same night.

TROY: Come back, told her . . . "Okay, baby . . . but I'm gonna buy me a banty rooster and put him out there in the backyard . . . and when he see a stranger come, he'll flap his wings and crow . . ." Look here, Bono, I could watch the front door by myself . . . it was that back door I was worried about.

ROSE: Troy, you ought not talk like that. Troy ain't doing nothing but telling a lie.

TROY: Only thing is . . . when we first got married . . . forget the rooster . . . we ain't had no yard!

BONO: I hear you tell it. Me and Lucille was staying down there on Logan Street. Had two rooms with the outhouse in the back. I ain't mind the outhouse none. But when that goddamn wind blow through there in the winter . . . that's what I'm talking about! To this day I wonder why in the hell I ever stayed down there for six long years. But see, I didn't know I could do no better. I thought only white folks had inside toilets and things.

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ROSE: There's a lot of people don't know they can do no better than they doing now. That's just something you got to learn. A lot of folks still shop at Bella's.

TROY: Ain't nothing wrong with shopping at Bella's. She got fresh food.

ROSE: I ain't said nothing about if she got fresh food. I'm talking about what she charge. She charge ten cents more than the A&P.

TROY: The A&P ain't never done nothing for me. I spends my money where I'm treated right. I go down to Bella, say, "I need a loaf of bread, I'll pay you Friday." She give it to me. What sense that make when I got money to go and spend it somewhere else and ignore the person who done right by me? That ain't in the Bible.

ROSE: We ain't talking about what's in the Bible. What sense it make to shop there when she overcharge?

TROY: You shop where you want to. I'll do my shopping where the people been good to me.

ROSE: Well, I don't think it's right for her to overcharge. That's all I was saying.

BONO: Look here . . . I got to get on. Lucille be raising all kind of hell.

TROY: Where you going, nigger? We ain't finished this pint. Come here, finish this pint.

BONO: Well, hell, I am . . . if you ever turn the bottle loose.

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Troy hands him the bottle.

TROY: The only thing I say about the A&P is I'm glad Cory got that job down there. Help him take care of his school clothes and things.

Rose straightens up. Cory is a sore subject.

TROY: Gabe done moved out and things getting tight around here. He got that job . . . he can start to look out for himself.

ROSE: Cory done went and got recruited by a college football team.

TROY: I told that boy about that football stuff. The white man ain't gonna let him get nowhere with that football. I told him when he first come to me with it. Now you come telling me he done went and got more tied up in it. He ought to go and get recruited in how to fix cars or something where he can make a living.

ROSE: He ain't talking about making no living playing football. It's just something the boys in school do. They gonna send a recruiter by to talk to you. He'll tell you he ain't talking about making no living playing football. It's a honor to be recruited.

TROY: It ain't gonna get him nowhere. Bono'll tell you that.

BONO: If he be like you in the sports . . . he's gonna be all right. Ain't but two men ever played base-

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ball as good as you. That's Babe Ruth and Josh Gibson. Them's the only two men ever hit more home runs than you.

TROY: What it ever get me? Ain't got a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of.

ROSE: Times have changed since you was playing baseball, Troy. That was before the war. Times have changed a lot since then.

TROY: How in hell they done changed?

ROSE: They got lots of colored boys playing ball now. Baseball and football.

BONO: You right about that, Rose. Times have changed, Troy. You just come along too early.

TROY: There ought not never have been no time called too early! Now you take that fellow . . . what's that fellow they had playing right field for the Yankees back then? You know who I'm talking about, Bono. Used to play right field for the Yankees.

ROSE: Selkirk?

TROY: Selkirk! That's it! Man batting .269, understand? .269. What kind of sense that make? I was hitting .432 with thirty-seven home runs! Man batting .269 and playing right field for the Yankees! I saw Josh Gibson's daughter yesterday. She walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet. Now I bet you Selkirk's daughter ain't walking around with raggedy shoes on her feet! I bet you that!

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ROSE: They got a lot of colored baseball players now. Jackie Robinson was the first. Folks had to wait for Jackie Robinson.

TROY: I done seen a hundred niggers play baseball better than Jackie Robinson. Hell, I know some teams Jackie Robinson couldn't even make! What you talking about Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson wasn't nobody. I'm talking about if you could play ball then they ought to have let you play. Don't care what color you were. Come telling me I come along too early. If you could play . . . then they ought to have let you play.

Troy takes a long drink.

ROSE: You gonna drink yourself to death. You don't need to be drinking like that.

TROY: Death ain't nothing. I done seen him. Done wrassled with him. You can't tell me nothing about death. Death ain't nothing but a fastball on the outside corner. And you know what I'll do to that! Lookee here, Bono . . . am I lying?

Handing Bono the bottle, Troy picks up the bat and takes a gentle whack at the tethered ball. He assumes a batter's stance.

TROY: You get one of them fastballs, about waist high, over the outside corner of the plate where you can get the meat of the bat on it . . .

(he swings, smacking the ball hard:)

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And good God!

The ball flies in fast circles around the tree limb. Troy looks up into the sky.

TROY: You can kiss it good-bye. Now, am I lying?

BONO: Naw, you telling the truth there. I seen you do it.

TROY: If I'm lying . . . that 450 feet worth of lying! That's all death is to me. A fastball on the outside corner.

ROSE: I don't know why you want to get on talking about death.

TROY: Ain't nothing wrong with talking about death. That's part of life. Everybody gonna die. You gonna die, I'm gonna die. Bono's gonna die. Hell, we all gonna die.

ROSE: But you ain't got to talk about it. I don't like to talk about it.

TROY: You the one brought it up. Me and Bono was talking about baseball . . . you tell me I'm gonna drink myself to death. Ain't that right, Bono? You know I don't drink this but one night out of the week. That's Friday night. I'm gonna drink just enough to where I can handle it. Then I cuts it loose. I leave it alone. So don't you worry about me drinking myself to death. 'Cause I ain't worried about Death. I done seen him. I done wrestled with him.

Rose could recite this story herself.

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TROY: Look here, Bono . . . I looked up one day and Death was marching straight at me. Like Soldiers on Parade! The Army of Death was marching straight at me. The middle of July, 1941. It got real cold just like it be winter. It seem like Death himself reached out and touched me on the shoulder. He touch me just like I touch you. I got cold as ice and Death standing there grinning at me.

ROSE: Troy, why don't you hush that talk.

TROY: I say . . . "What you want, Mr. Death? You be wanting me? You done brought your army to be getting me?" I looked him dead in the eye. I wasn't fearing nothing. I was ready to tangle. Just like I'm ready to tangle now. The bible say be ever vigilant. That's why I don't get but so drunk. I got to keep watch.

ROSE (TO BONO): Troy was right down there in Mercy Hospital. You remember he had pneumonia? Laying there with a fever talking plumb out of his head.

TROY: Death standing there staring at me . . . carrying that sickle in his hand. Finally he say, "You want bound over for another year?" See, just like that . . . "You want bound over for another year?" I told him, "Bound over hell! Let's settle this now!" It seem like he kinda fell back when I said that, and all the cold went out of me. I reached down and grabbed that sickle and threw it just as far as I could throw it . . . and me and him commenced to wrestling. We wrestled for three days and three nights. I can't say where I found the strength

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from. Every time it seemed like he was gonna get the best of me, I'd reach way down deep inside myself and find the strength to do him one better.

ROSE: Every time Troy tell that story he find different ways to tell it. Different things to make up about it.

TROY: I ain't making up nothing. I'm telling you the facts of what happened. I wrestled with Death for three days and three nights and I'm standing here to tell you about it . . . All right. At the end of the third night we done weakened each other to where we can't hardly move. Death stood up, throwed on his robe . . . had him a white robe with a hood on it.

Troy mimics a Klansman's hood. Bono laughs at this; Rose does the same in spite of herself.

TROY: He throwed on that robe and went off to look for his sickle. Say, "I'll be back." Just like that. "I'll be back." I told him say, "Yeah, but . . . you gonna have to find me!" I wasn't no fool. I wasn't going looking for him. Death ain't nothing to play with.

INT. FRONT ROOM—AFTERNOON

Lyons, 34, enters from the street, guitar case in hand. He is troy's son from a previous marriage. Although he fancies himself a musician, he is more caught up in the rituals and "idea" of

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being a musician than in the actual practice of the music. He hears troy's voice and heads to the back door, where he stands, listening.

TROY (o.s.): And I know he's gonna get me. I know I got to join his army . . . his camp followers. But as long as I keep my strength and see him coming . . . as long as I keep up my vigilance . . . he's gonna have to fight to get me. I ain't going easy.

EXT. THE BACK YARD—AFTERNOON

BONO: Well, look here, since you got to keep up your vigilance . . . let me have the bottle.

TROY: Aw hell, I shouldn't have told you that part. I should have left out that part.

ROSE: Troy be talking that stuff and half the time don't even know what he be talking about.

TROY: Bono know me better than that.

BONO: That's right. I know you. I know you got some Uncle Remus in your blood. You got more stories than the devil got sinners.

TROY: Aw hell, I done seen him too! Done talked with the devil.

ROSE: Troy, don't nobody want to be hearing all that stuff.

Lyons comes out on the porch.

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LYONS: Hey, Pop.

TROY: What you come "Hey, Popping" me for?

LYONS: How you doing, Rose?

He kisses her.

LYONS: Mr. Bono. How you doing?

BONO: Hey, Lyons . . . how you been?

TROY: He must have been doing all right. I ain't seen him around here last week.

ROSE: Troy, leave your boy alone. He come by to see you and you wanna start all that nonsense.

TROY: I ain't bothering Lyons.

Troy offers Lyons the bottle.

TROY: Here . . . get you a drink. We got an understanding. I know why he come by to see me and he know I know.

LYONS: Come on, Pop . . . I just stopped by to say hi . . . see how you was doing.

TROY: You ain't stopped by yesterday.

ROSE: You gonna stay for supper, Lyons? I got some chicken cooking in the oven.

As she heads toward the house, Rose picks up Troy's apron and gloves from the back porch, carrying them inside.

LYONS: No, Rose . . . thanks. I was just in the neighborhood and thought I'd stop by for a minute.

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TROY: You was in the neighborhood all right, nigger. You telling the truth there. You was in the neighborhood 'cause it's my payday.

LYONS: Well, hell, since you mentioned it . . . let me have ten dollars.

TROY: I'll be damned! I'll die and go to hell and play blackjack with the devil before I give you ten dollars.

INT. HOUSE—AFTERNOON

Troy heads into the house, making his way up front to the sitting room. Lyons pursues, Bono follows. Troy sits on the sofa, watching Rose set the table.

BONO: That's what I want to know about . . . that devil you done seen.

LYONS: Pop done seen the devil? You too much Pops.

TROY: Yeah, I done seen him. Talked to him too!

ROSE: You ain't seen no devil. I done told you that man ain't had nothing to do with the devil. Anything you can't understand, you want to call it the devil.

TROY: Look here, Bono . . . I went down to see Hertzberger about some furniture. Got three rooms for two- ninety-eight. That what it say on the radio. "Three rooms . . . two- ninety-eight." Even made

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up a little song about it. Go down there . . . man tell me I can't get no credit. I'm working every day and can't get no credit. What to do? I got an empty house with some raggedy furniture in it. Cory ain't got no bed. He's sleeping on a pile of rags on the floor. Working every day and can't get no credit. Come back here—Rose'll tell you—madder than hell. Sit down . . . try to figure what I'm gonna do. Come a knock on the door. Ain't been living here but three days. Who know I'm here? Open the door . . . devil standing there bigger than life. White fellow . . . got on good clothes and everything. Standing there with a clipboard in his hand. I ain't had to say nothing. First words come out of his mouth was . . . "I understand you need some furniture and can't get no credit." I liked to fell over. He say, "I'll give you all the credit you want, but you got to pay the interest on it." I told him, "Give me three rooms' worth and charge whatever you want." Next day a truck pulled up here and two men unloaded them three rooms. Man what drove the truck give me a book. Say send ten dollars, first of every month to the address in the book and everything will be all right. Say if I miss a payment the devil was coming back and it'll be hell to pay. That was fifteen years ago. To this day . . . the first of the month I send my ten dollars, Rose'll tell you.

ROSE: Troy lying.

Rose returns to the kitchen. Troy's voice follows her. As she goes about

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*readying the food with a
perfectionist's care:*

TROY: I ain't never seen that man since. Now you tell me who else that could have been but the devil? I ain't sold my soul or nothing like that, you understand. Naw, I wouldn't have truck with the devil about nothing like that.

*Rose brings a plate of cornbread to
the dining table. Lyons has his guitar
out, tuning it.*

TROY: I got my furniture and pays my ten dollars the first of the month just like clockwork.

BONO: How long you say you been paying this ten dollars a month?

TROY: Fifteen years!

BONO: Hell, ain't you finished paying for it yet? How much the man done charged you?

TROY: Aw hell, I done paid for it. I done paid for it ten times over! The fact is I'm scared to stop paying it.

ROSE: Troy lying. We got that furniture from Mr. Glickman. He ain't paying no ten dollars a month to nobody.

TROY: Aw hell, woman. Bono know I ain't that big a fool.

LYONS: I was just getting ready to say . . . I know where there's a bridge for sale.

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TROY: Look here, I'll tell you this . . . it don't matter to me if he was the devil. It don't matter if the devil give credit. Somebody has got to give it.

ROSE: It ought to matter. You going around talking about having truck with the devil . . . God's the one you gonna have to answer to. He's the one gonna be at the Judgment.

Rose heads back into the kitchen.

LYONS: Yeah, well, look here, Pop . . . let me have that ten dollars. I'll give it back to you. Bonnie got a job working at the hospital.

TROY: What I tell you, Bono? The only time I see this nigger is when he wants something. That's the only time I see him.

LYONS: Come on, Pop, Mr. Bono don't want to hear all that. Let me have the ten dollars. I told you Bonnie working.

TROY: What that mean to me? "Bonnie working." I don't care if she working. Go ask her for the ten dollars if she working. Talking about "Bonnie working." Why ain't you working?

LYONS: Aw, Pop, you know I can't find no decent job. Where am I gonna get a job at? You know I can't get no job.

TROY: I told you I know some people down there. I can get you on the rubbish if you want to work. I told you that the last time you came by here asking me for something.

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LYONS: Naw, Pop . . . thanks. That ain't for me. I don't wanna be carrying nobody's rubbish. I don't want to be punching nobody's time clock

TROY: What's the matter, you too good to carry people's rubbish? Where you think that ten dollars you talking about come from? I'm just supposed to haul people's rubbish and give my money to you 'cause you too lazy to work. You too lazy to work and wanna know why you ain't got what I got.

ROSE: What hospital Bonnie working at? Mercy?

LYONS: She's down at Passavant working in the laundry.

TROY: I ain't got nothing as it is. I give you that ten dollars and I got to eat beans the rest of the week. Naw . . . you ain't getting no ten dollars here.

LYONS: You ain't got to be eating no beans. I don't know why you wanna say that.

TROY: I ain't got no extra money. Gabe done moved over to Miss Pearl's, paying her the rent, and things done got tight around here. I can't afford to be giving you every payday.

LYONS: I ain't asked you to give me nothing. I asked you to loan me ten dollars. I know you got ten dollars.

TROY (ATTACKING): Yeah, I got it. You know why I got it? 'Cause I don't throw my money away out there in the streets. You living the fast life . . . wanna be a musician . . . running around in them clubs and things . . . then, you learn to take care of

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yourself. You ain't gonna find me going and asking nobody for nothing. I done spent too many years without.

LYONS: You and me is two different people, Pop.

TROY: I done learned my mistake and learned to do what's right by it. You still trying to get something for nothing. Life don't owe you nothing. You owe it to yourself. Ask Bono. He'll tell you I'm right.

LYONS: You got your way of dealing with the world . . . I got mine. The only thing that matters to me is the music.

TROY: Yeah, I can see that! It don't matter how you gonna eat . . . where your next dollar is coming from. You telling the truth there.

LYONS (ANNOYED): I know I got to eat. But I got to live too. I need something that gonna help me to get out of the bed in the morning. Make me feel like I belong in the world. I don't bother nobody. I just stay with my music 'cause that's the only way I can find to live in the world. Otherwise there ain't no telling what I might do. Now I don't come criticizing you and how you live. I just come by to ask you for ten dollars . . . I don't wanna hear all that about how I live!

TROY: Boy, your mama did a hell of a job raising you.

LYONS: You can't change me, Pop. I'm thirty-four years old. If you wanted to change me, you should have

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been there when I was growing up. I come by to see you . . . ask for ten dollars and you want to talk about how I was raised. You don't know nothing about how I was raised.

ROSE: Let the boy have ten dollars, Troy.

TROY (TO LYONS): What the hell you looking at me for? I ain't got no ten dollars. You know what I do with my money.

(to Rose)

Give him ten dollars if you want him to have it.

ROSE: I will. Just as soon as you turn it loose.

TROY (REACHING IN HIS POCKET): There it is. Seventy-six dollars and forty-two cents. You see this, Bono? Now, I ain't gonna get but six of that back.

ROSE: You ought to stop telling that lie. Here, Lyons.

She hands him the money.

LYONS (PACKING UP HIS GUITAR): Thanks, Rose. Look . . . I got to run . . . I'll see you later.

TROY: Wait a minute. You gonna say, "thanks, Rose," and ain't gonna look to see where she got that ten dollars from? See how they do me, Bono?

LYONS: I know she got it from you, Pop. Thanks. I'll give it back to you.

TROY: There he go telling another lie. Time I see that ten dollars . . . he'll be owing me thirty more.

LYONS: See you, Mr. Bono.

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BONO: Take care, Lyons!

LYONS: Thanks, Pop. I'll see you again.

Lyons is out the door.

TROY: I don't know why he don't go and get him a decent job and take care of that woman he got.

BONO: He'll be all right, Troy. The boy is still young.

TROY: The boy is thirty-four years old.

ROSE: Let's not get off into all that.

BONO: Look here . . . I got to be going. I got to be getting on. Lucille gonna be waiting.

Troy goes to Rose, puts his arm around her.

TROY: See this woman, Bono? I love this woman. I love this woman so much it hurts. I love her so much . . . I done run out of ways of loving her. So I got to go back to basics. Don't you come by my house Monday morning talking about time to go to work . . . 'cause I'm still gonna be stroking!

ROSE: Troy! Stop it now!

BONO: I ain't paying him no mind, Rose. That ain't nothing but gin-talk. Go on, Troy. I'll see you Monday.

Bono goes through the door. As he does, Troy calls to him:

TROY: Don't you come by my house, nigger!

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EXT. THE FRONT PORCH—LATE AFTERNOON

Bono walks down the front steps as we hear . . .

TROY (o.s.): I done told you what I'm gonna be doing.

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY- TROY AND ROSE'S
BEDROOM DOOR—NIGHT**

Camera slowly pushes in as we hear sounds of lovemaking emanating from inside as we cut to . . .

INT. CORY'S ROOM—NIGHT

Teenager-messy, cleats and football equipment, books and clothes strewn about. On his desk, a photo of Cory and Rose sits next to an envelope with the logo of The Elizabeth City State Teacher's College.

Cory is in bed, pillow clamped over his head to block the sounds of his parents . . .

BLACK SCREEN

The darkness fades to light as Rose is heard singing:

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ROSE (v.o.): . . . Just ask Jesus to be a fence around
you,
And you never have to worry anymore.
Just bow down . . .
Jesus be a fence all around me every day.

INT. TROY'S AND ROSE'S BEDROOM—
MORNING

*Rose's singing hauls Troy up from a
deep slumber . . .*

ROSE (o.s.): *When you get burdened—
Jesus, I want you to protect me
As I travel on the way.
When you get lonely—
He gets slowly out of bed,
disoriented. He looks out of the
window. Rose is in the backyard,
hanging wet clothes on the line.*

ROSE: *Jesus be a fence all around me every day
Jesus, protect me
As I travel on my way.*

INT. SECOND STORY LANDING—MORNING

*Troy comes out of the bedroom. He sees
Cory's bedroom door is closed.*

EXT. BACK YARD—MORNING

Troy comes out of the house feeling like Superman. Rose is at the foot of the porch steps, cranking laundry through a mangle atop a bucket.

ROSE: Morning. You ready for breakfast? I can fix it as soon I finish hanging up these clothes.

TROY: I got the coffee on. That'll be all right. I'll just drink some of that this morning.

ROSE (CRANKING THE MANGLE): That 651 hit yesterday. That's the second time this month. Miss Pearl hit for a dollar . . . seem like those that need the least always get lucky. Poor folks can't get nothing.

TROY: Them numbers don't know nobody. I don't know why you fool with them. You and Lyons both.

ROSE: It's something to do.

TROY: You ain't doing nothing but throwing your money away.

Rose stops wringing out the clothes and takes him on.

ROSE: Troy, you know I don't play foolishly. I just play a nickel here and a nickel there.

TROY: That's two nickels you done thrown away.

ROSE: Now I hit sometimes . . . that makes up for it. It always come in handy when I do hit. I don't hear you complaining then.

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TROY: I ain't complaining now. I just say it's foolish. Trying to guess out of six hundred ways which way the number gonna come. If I had all the money niggers . . . these Negroes, throw away on numbers for one week—just one week—I'd be a rich man.

Troy heads inside as Rose brings the laundry basket to the line and hangs it.

ROSE (TO TROY IN THE KITCHEN): Well, you wishing and calling it foolish ain't gonna stop folks from playing numbers. That's one thing for sure. Besides . . . some good things come from playing numbers. Look where Pope done bought him that restaurant off of numbers.

Troy comes out, cup of coffee in hand.

TROY: I can't stand niggers like that. Man ain't had two dimes to rub together. He walking around with his shoes all run over bumming money for cigarettes. All right. Got lucky there and hit the numbers . . .

ROSE: Troy, I know all about it.

TROY: Had good sense, I'll say that for him. He ain't throwed his money away.

Troy goes down the steps toward the ruined fence.

TROY: I seen niggers hit the numbers and go through two thousand dollars in four days. Man brought him that restaurant down there . . . fixed it up

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real nice . . . and then didn't want nobody to come in it! A Negro go in there and can't get no kind of service. I seen a white fellow come in there and order a bowl of stew. Pope picked all the meat out the pot for him. Man ain't had nothing but a bowl of meat! Negro come behind him and ain't got nothing but the potatoes and carrots. Talking about what numbers do for people, you picked a wrong example. Ain't done nothing but make a worser fool out of him than he was before.

Rose comes out from behind the hanging laundry.

ROSE: Troy, you ought to stop worrying about what happened at work yesterday.

TROY: I ain't worried. Just told me to be down there at the commissioner's office on Friday. Everybody think they gonna fire me. I ain't worried about them firing me. You ain't got to worry about that.

(pause)

Where's Cory? Cory in the house?

(loud)

CORY!

ROSE: He gone out.

TROY: Out, huh? He gone out 'cause he know I want him to help me with this fence. I know how he is. That boy scared of work. He ain't done a lick of work in his life.

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ROSE: He had to go to football practice. Coach wanted them to get in a little extra practice before the season start.

TROY: I got his practice . . . running out of here before he get his chores done.

ROSE: Troy, what is wrong with you this morning?

Troy grabs a shovel goes to a corner of the yard.

ROSE: Don't nothing set right with you. Go on back in there and go to bed . . . get up on the other side.

TROY: Why something got to be wrong with me? I ain't said nothing wrong with me.

ROSE: You got something to say about everything. First it's the numbers . . . then it's the way the man runs his restaurant . . . then you done got on Cory. What's it gonna be next? Take a look up there and see if the weather suits you . . . or is it gonna be how you gonna put up the fence with the clothes hanging in the yard.

TROY: You hit the nail on the head then.

ROSE: I know you like I know the back of my hand. Come on in here and get you some more coffee . . . see if that straighten you up.

(going into the house)

'Cause you ain't right this morning.

Troy starts to pace out the fence

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line . . . He stops at the sound of a young girl's shout which seems to come from the abandoned house. Troy looks, listens: Nothing. Then the unsettling silence is broken by faint singing . . .

GABRIEL (o.s.): *Yes, ma'am, I got plums
You ask me how I sell them
Oh ten cents apiece—Three for a quarter
Come and buy now . . .*

EXT. SIDE ALLEY—MORNING

Troy heads up the dark alley toward the street. The singing gets louder, intermingled with children's voices, chanting, mocking the singer.

EXT. THE STREET IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE—
MORNING

Troy sees his brother gabriel coming down the street, followed by the neighborhood kids. He is seven years younger than troy. Injured in world war ii, he has a metal plate in his head. He carries an old trumpet tied around his waist and believes with every fiber of his being that he is the archangel gabriel. He carries a

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chipped basket with an assortment of discarded fruits and vegetables he has picked up in the strip district and which he attempts to sell.

GABRIEL (SINGING): *'Cause I'm here today and tomorrow I'll be gone.*

As the kids see Troy heading their way, they scatter.

GABRIEL: There's Troy . . . Hey, Troy!

TROY: Hey, Gabe.

Rose comes out on the porch.

GABRIEL: Hey, Rose!

ROSE: How you doing, Gabe?

She continues down the steps, past Troy, and up to Gabe. Troy looks up and down the street, embarrassed. One or two old people are watching from windows and stoops.

ROSE: What you got there?

GABRIEL: You know what I got, Rose. I got fruits and vegetables.

Rose looks through his basket, treating the produce carefully.

ROSE: Where's all these plums you talking about?

GABRIEL: I ain't got no plums today, Rose. I was just

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singing that. Have some tomorrow. Put me in a big order for plums. Have enough plums tomorrow for Saint Peter and everybody.

Gabriel shoots an anxious glance to Troy.

GABRIEL (TO ROSE): Troy's mad at me.

TROY: I ain't mad at you. What I got to be mad at you about? You ain't done nothing to me.

GABRIEL: I just moved over to Miss Pearl's to keep out from in your way. I ain't mean no harm by it.

TROY: Who said anything about that? I ain't said anything about that.

GABRIEL: You ain't mad at me, is you?

TROY: Naw . . . I ain't mad at you, Gabe. If I was mad at you I'd tell you about it.

GABRIEL: Got me two rooms. In the basement. Got my own door too. Wanna see my key?

He fishes out a key on a string and shows Rose and Troy.

GABRIEL: That's my own key! Ain't nobody else got a key like that. That's my key! My two rooms.

TROY: Well, that's good, Gabe. You got your own key . . . that's good.

ROSE: You hungry, Gabe? I was just fixing to cook Troy his breakfast.

FENCES

GABRIEL: I'll take some biscuits. You got some biscuits?

Rose tries to lead Gabriel by the hand into the house.

GABRIEL (TO ROSE): Did you know when I was in Heaven . . . every morning me and Saint Peter would sit down by the Gate and eat some big fat biscuits?

Troy sees a pair of old ladies across the street, whispering.

GABRIEL: Oh, yeah! We had us a good time. We'd sit there and eat us them biscuits and then Saint Peter would go off to sleep and tell me to wake him up when it's time to open the Gates for the Judgment.

ROSE: Well, come on, I'll make up a batch of biscuits.

GABRIEL: Troy . . . Saint Peter got your name in the book. I seen it. It say . . . Troy Maxson. I say . . . I know him! He got the same name like what I got. That's my brother!

TROY: How many times you gonna tell me that, Gabe?

GABRIEL: Ain't got my name in the book. Don't have to have my name. I done died and went to Heaven. He got your name though. One morning Saint Peter was looking at his book . . . marking it up for the Judgment . . . and he let me see your name. Got it in there under M. Got Rose's name . . . I ain't seen it like I seen yours . . . but I know it's in there. He got a great big book. Got everybody's

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name what was ever been born. That's what he told me. But I seen your name. Seen it with my own eyes.

TROY: Go on in the house there. Rose going to fix you something to eat.

GABRIEL: Oh, I ain't hungry. I done had breakfast with Aunt Jemimah. She come by and cooked me up a whole mess of flapjacks. Remember how we used to eat them flapjacks?

TROY: Go on in the house and get you something to eat now.

GABRIEL: I got to go sell my plums. I done sold some tomatoes. Got me two quarters. Wanna see?

He shows his quarters to Troy, then pockets them.

GABRIEL: I'm gonna save them and buy me a new horn so Saint Peter can hear me when it's time to open the Gates.

(turning with a sudden violence)

Hear that? Hear that? That's the hellhounds. I got to chase them out of here. Go on get out of here! Get out!

(singing softly)

*Well, all you hypocrite members,
You wasting your time away.
My God's calling for workmens
And you had better obey.*

(louder)

FENCES

Better get ready for judgment!

Gabriel walks away singing as neighborhood kids give chase. Troy starts after him, then stops, looking at the old ladies, watching. He goes into the house.

INT. THE KITCHEN—MORNING

Troy comes into the kitchen. Rose, apron on, is making biscuit batter.

ROSE: Where's Gabe?

TROY: He gone off somewhere.

ROSE: He ain't eating right. Miss Pearl say she can't get him to eat nothing.

TROY: What you want me to do about it, Rose? I done did everything I can for the man. I can't make him get well. Man got half his head blown away . . . what you expect?

Troy pours himself a second cup of coffee.

ROSE: Seem like something ought to be done to help him.

TROY: Man don't bother nobody. He just mixed up from that metal plate he got in his head. Ain't no sense for him to go back into the hospital.

ROSE: Least he be eating right. They can help him take care of himself.

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TROY: Don't nobody wanna be locked up, Rose. What you wanna lock him up for? Man go over there and fight the war . . . messin' around with them Japs, get half his head blown off . . . and they give him a lousy three thousand dollars. And I had to swoop down on that.

ROSE: Is you fixing to go into that again?

TROY: That's the only way I got a roof over my head . . . 'cause of that metal plate.

ROSE: Ain't no sense you blaming yourself for nothing. Gabe wasn't in no condition to manage that money. You done what was right by him. Can't nobody say you ain't done what was right by him. Look how long you took care of him . . . till he wanted to have his own place and moved over there with Miss Pearl.

TROY: That ain't what I'm saying, woman! I'm just stating the facts. If my brother didn't have that metal plate in his head . . . I wouldn't have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of. And I'm fifty-three years old. Now see if you can understand that!

*He turns and goes to the front door.
He grabs his jacket and hat. Rose is
in the kitchen doorway, holding the
mixing bowl.*

ROSE: Where you going off to? You been running out of here every Saturday for weeks. I thought you was gonna work on this fence?

FENCES

TROY: I'm gonna walk down to Taylors'. Listen to the ball game. I'll be back in a bit. I'll work on it when I get back.

He goes out the front door, closing it hard. Rose looks down at the mixing bowl, surprised that she's holding it. She goes to the kitchen trash can and starts to dump the batter, but she can't. She sits at the table. She finds the ball game on the radio. She gets a metal cooking sheet, returns to the table, wipes her hands and starts lumping batter onto the sheet. Soon her fingers are covered with batter. She scrapes vigorously at her hands to clean them, then stops, her hands shaking. She exerts her will, steadying them. CLOSE UP on her hands; time passes, the light changes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN—DAY

CORY (o.s.): Mama? You all right?

Two hours later. Rose sits, unmoving. The lumps of dough on the sheet have hardened. The game is still in progress. She turns as if waking up. Cory's behind her in his muddy workout clothes, holding his shoulder pads and

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cleats. Rose wipes her hands, switches off the radio, then carries the baking sheet to the trash can, scraping off the ruined biscuits with a knife.

ROSE: Your daddy like to had a fit with you running out of here this morning without doing your chores.

CORY: I told you I had to go to practice.

ROSE: He say you were supposed to help him with the fence.

CORY: He been saying that the last four or five Saturdays, and then he don't never do nothing, but go down to Taylors' . . . Did you tell him about the recruiter?

He opens the refrigerator and imagines the possibilities

ROSE: Yeah, I told him.

CORY: What he say?

ROSE: He ain't said nothing too much. You get up there and get started on your chores before he gets back. Go on and scrub down them steps before he gets back here hollering and carrying on.

Rose tosses the baking sheet in the sink.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH—LATER THAT DAY

Rose, dressed nicely, checks the front door to make sure it's locked. She

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picks up a covered pie that she's put on one of the chairs. Troy comes silently up the front steps, grabbing Rose from behind. Startled, she jumps!

ROSE: Troy!

He laughs.

ROSE: Go on, now. You liked to scared me to death. What was the score of the game? Lucille had me on the phone and I couldn't keep up with it.

TROY: What I care about the game? Come here, woman.

He tries to kiss her.

ROSE: I thought you went down Taylors' to listen to the game. Go on, Troy! You supposed to be putting up the fence.

Attempting to kiss her again.

TROY: I'll put it up when I finish with what is at hand.

ROSE: Go on, Troy. I ain't studying you.

Playfully chasing after her.

TROY: I'm studying you . . . fixing to do my homework!

He lunges again, grabs her.

ROSE: Troy, you better leave me alone.

TROY: Where's Cory? That boy brought his butt home yet?

ROSE: He's in the house doing his chores.

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TROY (CALLING): Cory!! Get your butt out here, boy!

(with lust in his eyes)

When you coming back?

ROSE (ENJOYING THIS:): I'll be right back.

TROY: When?

ROSE: I'm just going down the street.

As Rose leaves, Troy turns, climbs the steps.

EXT. THE BACKYARD—DAY

Troy comes out of the house. He goes to the tarp covering the lumber. Cory comes out onto the porch.

TROY: You just now coming in here from leaving this morning?

CORY: Yeah, I had to go to football practice.

TROY: Yeah, what?

CORY: Yessir.

TROY: I ain't but two seconds off you noway. The garbage sitting in there overflowing . . . you ain't done none of your chores . . . and you come in here talking about, "Yeah."

CORY: I was just getting ready to do my chores now, Pop . . .

FENCES

TROY: Your first chore is to help me with this fence on Saturday. Everything else come after that. Now get that saw and cut them boards.

Cory takes the saw and begins cutting the boards. Troy continues working. There is a long pause.

CORY: Hey, Pop . . . why don't you buy a TV?

TROY: What I want with a TV? What I want one of them for?

CORY: Everybody got one. Earl, Ba Bra . . . Jesse!

TROY: I ain't asked you who had one. I say what I want with one?

CORY: So you can watch it. They got lots of things on TV. Baseball games and everything. We could watch the World Series.

TROY: Yeah . . . And how much this TV cost?

CORY: I don't know. They got them on sale for around two hundred dollars.

TROY: Two hundred dollars, huh?

CORY: That ain't that much, Pop.

TROY: Naw, it's just two hundred dollars.

(pointing with his pencil)

See that roof you got over your head at night? Let me tell you something about that roof. It's been over ten years since that roof was last

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tarred. See now . . . the snow come this winter and sit up there on that roof like it is . . . and it's gonna seep inside. It's just gonna be a little bit . . . ain't gonna hardly notice it. Then the next thing you know, it's gonna be leaking all over the house. Then the wood rot from all that water and you gonna need a whole new roof. Now, how much you think it cost to get that roof tarred?

CORY (STOPS SAWING): I don't know.

TROY: Two hundred and sixty-four dollars . . . cash money. While you thinking about a TV, I got to be thinking about the roof . . . and whatever else go wrong around here. Now if you had two hundred dollars, what would you do . . . fix the roof or buy a TV?

CORY: I'd buy a TV. Then when the roof started to leak . . . when it needed fixing . . . I'd fix it.

*Cory hurls a finished plank aside and
grabs the next one.*

TROY: Where are you gonna get the money from? You done spent it for a TV. You gonna sit up and watch the water run all over your brand-new TV.

CORY: Aw, Pop. You got money. I know you do.

TROY: Where I got it at, huh?

CORY: You got it in the bank.

TROY: You wanna see my bankbook? You wanna see that \$73.22 I got sitting up in there?

FENCES

CORY: You ain't got to pay for it all at one time. You can put a down payment on it and carry it home with you.

TROY: Not me. I ain't gonna owe nobody nothing if I can help it. Miss a payment and they come and snatch it right out your house. Then what you got? Now, soon as I get two hundred dollars clear, then I'll buy a TV. Right now, as soon as I get two hundred and sixty-four dollars, I'm gonna have this roof tarred.

CORY: Aw . . . Pop!

TROY: You go on and get you two hundred dollars and buy one if ya want it. I got better things to do with my money.

CORY: I can't get no two hundred dollars. I ain't never seen two hundred dollars.

TROY: I'll tell you what . . . you get you a hundred dollars and I'll put the other hundred with it.

CORY: All right, I'm gonna show you.

TROY: You gonna show me how you can cut them boards right now.

Cory begins to cut the boards. There is a long pause.

CORY: The Pirates won today. That makes five in a row.

TROY: I ain't thinking about the Pirates. Got an all-white team. Got that boy . . . that Puerto Rican boy . . . Clemente. Don't even half-play him.

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That boy could be something if they give him a chance. Play him one day and sit him on the bench the next.

CORY: He gets a lot of chances to play.

TROY: I'm talking about playing regular. Playing every day so you can get your timing. That's what I'm talking about.

CORY: They got some white guys on the team that don't play every day. You can't play everybody at the same time.

TROY: If they got a white fellow sitting on the bench . . . you can bet your last dollar he can't play! The colored guy got to be twice as good before he get on the team. That's why I don't want you to get all tied up in them sports. Man on the team and what it get him? They got colored on the team and don't use them. Same as not having them. All them teams the same.

CORY: The Braves got Hank Aaron and Wes Covington. Hank Aaron hit two home runs today. That makes forty-three.

TROY: Hank Aaron ain't nobody. That's what you supposed to do. That's how you supposed to play the game. Ain't nothing to it. It's just a matter of timing . . . getting the right follow-through. Hell, I can hit forty-three home runs right now!

CORY: Not off no major-league pitching, you couldn't.

TROY: We had better pitching in the Negro leagues. I

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hit seven home runs off of Satchel Paige. You can't get no better than that!

CORY: Sandy Koufax. He's leading the league in strikeouts.

TROY: I ain't thinking of no Sandy Koufax.

CORY: You got Warren Spahn and Lew Burdette. I bet you couldn't hit no home runs off of Warren Spahn.

TROY: I'm through with it now. You go on and cut them boards.

(pause)

Your mama tell me you done got recruited by a college football team? Is that right?

CORY: Yeah. Coach Zellman say the recruiter gonna be coming by to talk to you. Get you to sign the permission papers.

TROY: I thought you supposed to be working down there at the A&P. Ain't you supposed to be working down there after school?

CORY: Mr. Stawicki say he gonna hold my job for me until after the football season. Say starting next week I can work weekends.

TROY: I thought we had an understanding about this football stuff? You suppose to keep up with your chores and hold that job down at the A&P. Ain't been around here all day on a Saturday. Ain't none of your chores done . . . and now you telling me you done quit your job.

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CORY: I'm gonna be working weekends.

TROY: You damn right you are! And ain't no need for nobody coming around here to talk to me about signing nothing.

CORY: Hey, Pop . . . you can't do that. He's coming all the way from North Carolina.

TROY: I don't care where he coming from. The white man ain't gonna let you get nowhere with that football no way. You go on and get your book-learning so you can work yourself up in that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something can't nobody take away from you. You go on and learn how to put your hands to some good use. Besides hauling people's garbage.

CORY: I get good grades, Pop. That's why the recruiter wants to talk with you. You got to keep up your grades to get recruited. This way I'll be going to college. I'll get a chance . . .

TROY: First you gonna get your butt down there to the A&P and get your job back.

CORY: Mr. Stawicki done already hired somebody else 'cause I told him I was playing football.

TROY: You a bigger fool than I thought . . . to let somebody take away your job so you can play some football. Where you gonna get your money to take out your girlfriend and whatnot? What kind of foolishness is that to let somebody take away your job?

FENCES

CORY: I'm still gonna be working weekends.

TROY: Naw . . . naw. You getting your butt out of here and finding you another job.

CORY: Come on, Pop! I got to practice. I can't work after school and play football too. The team needs me. That's what Coach Zellman say . . .

TROY: I don't care what nobody else say. I'm the boss . . . you understand? I'm the boss around here. I do the only saying what counts.

CORY: Come on, Pop!

Troy comes right up to Cory, in his face.

TROY: I asked you . . . Did you understand?

CORY: Yeah . . .

TROY: What?!

CORY: Yessir.

TROY: Yessir.

CORY (PAUSE): Can I ask you a question?

TROY: What the hell you wanna ask me? Mr. Stawicki the one you got the questions for.

CORY: How come you ain't never liked me?

TROY: Liked you? Who the hell say I got to like you? What law is there say I got to like you? Wanna stand up in my face and ask a damn fool-ass ques-

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tion like that. Talking about liking somebody.
Come here, boy, when I talk to you.

Cory hesitates, then goes to Troy.

TROY: Straighten up, goddamn it!

Cory does.

TROY: I asked you a question . . . what law is there
say I got to like you?

CORY: None.

TROY: Well, all right then! Don't you eat every day?

Cory looks down.

TROY: Answer me when I talk to you! Don't you eat every
day?

CORY: Yeah.

TROY: Nigger, as long as you in my house, you put that
sir on the end of it when you talk to me!

CORY: Yes . . . sir.

TROY: You eat every day.

CORY: Yessir!

TROY: Got a roof over your head.

CORY: Yessir!

TROY: Got clothes on your back.

CORY: Yessir.

TROY: Why you think that is?

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CORY: 'Cause of you.

TROY: Aw, hell, I know it's 'cause of me . . . but why do you think that is?

CORY (HESITANT): 'Cause you like me.

TROY: Like you? I go out of here every morning . . . bust my butt . . . putting up with them crackers every day . . . 'cause I like you? You about the biggest fool I ever saw. It's my job. It's my responsibility! You understand that? A man got to take care of his family. You live in my house . . . sleep your behind on my bedclothes . . . fill you belly up with my food . . . 'cause you my son.

*Rose is in the kitchen, listening
through the screen door.*

TROY: You my flesh and blood. Not 'cause I like you! 'Cause it's my duty to take care of you. I owe a responsibility to you! Let's get this straight right here . . . before it go along any further . . . I ain't got to like you. Mr. Rand don't give me my money come payday 'cause he likes me. He gives me 'cause he owe me. I done give you everything I had to give you. I gave you your life! Me and your mama worked that out between us. And liking your black ass wasn't part of the bargain. Don't you try and go through life worrying about if somebody like you or not. You best be making sure they doing right by you. You understand what I'm saying, boy?

CORY: Yessir.

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TROY: Then get the hell out of my face, and get on down to that A&P.

Cory runs up the stairs, yanks open the screen door to discover Rose, standing there. He pushes past her, letting the door slam. She comes out onto the porch.

ROSE (COMING DOWN INTO THE YARD): Why don't you let the boy go ahead and play football, Troy? Ain't no harm in that. He's just trying to be like you with the sports.

TROY: I don't want him to be like me! I want him to move as far away from my life as he can get. You the only decent thing that ever happened to me. I wish him that. But I don't wish him a thing else from my life.

He starts to put away the sawhorses.

TROY: I decided seventeen years ago that boy wasn't getting involved in no sports. Not after what they did to me in the sports.

ROSE: Troy, why don't you admit you was too old to play in the major leagues? For once . . . why don't you admit that?

TROY: What do you mean too old? Don't come telling me I was too old. I just wasn't the right color. Hell, I'm fifty-three years old and can do better than Selkirk's .269 right now!

ROSE: How's was you gonna play ball when you were

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over forty? Sometimes I can't get no sense out of you.

TROY: I got good sense, woman. I got sense enough not to let my boy get hurt over playing no sports. You been mothering that boy too much. Worried about if people like him.

ROSE: Everything that boy do . . . he do for you. He wants you to say, "Good job, son." That's all.

TROY: Rose, I ain't got time for that. He's alive. He's healthy. He's got to make his own way. I made mine. Ain't nobody gonna hold his hand when he get out there in that world.

ROSE: Times have changed from when you was young, Troy. People change. The world's changing around you and you can't even see it.

TROY (SLOW, METHODICAL): Woman . . . I do the best I can do. I come in here every Friday. I carry a sack of potatoes and a bucket of lard. You all line up at the door with your hands out. I give you the lint from my pockets. I give you my sweat and my blood. I ain't got no tears. I done spent them. We go upstairs in that room at night . . . and I fall down on you and try to blast a hole into forever. I get up Monday morning . . . find my lunch on the table. I go out. Make my way. Find my strength to carry me through to the next Friday. That's all I got, Rose.

Troy starts into the house.

TROY: That's all I got to give. I can't give nothing else!

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He goes inside. The door swings shut behind him. Rose, alone, watching him go.

INT. CITY HALL—AFTERNOON

We're moving at a rapid walking pace looking up at a ceiling fresco of wpa-era heroic worker figures laying sewers. The sound of footsteps. The camera pans down to catch the back of a white deputy commissioner. He hurries past various businessmen and -women, all white, to find Troy sitting in the chair against the opposite wall, looking nervous, hat in hand.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER: Mr. Maxson?

Troy stands.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER: The commissioner will see you now.

Close up on Troy's face.

CUT TO

BLACK SCREEN

In the black we hear Troy and Bono.

BONO (v.o.): He told him the same thing he told you.
Take it to the union.

FENCES

TROY (v.o.): (excited)

Brownie ain't got that much sense. Man wasn't thinking about nothing. He wait until I confront them on it . . . then he wanna come crying seniority.

(calls out)

ROSE! HEY ROSE!

EXT. FRONT OF TROY'S AND ROSE'S HOUSE—
AFTERNOON

Troy peacocking, Bono walks beside him. Across the street, a couple of people look out of their windows.

BONO: I wish I could have seen Mr. Rand's face when he told you.

TROY: He couldn't get it out of his mouth! Liked to bit his tongue! When they called me down there to the commissioner's office . . . he thought they was gonna fire me. Like everybody else.

BONO: I didn't think they was gonna fire you. I thought they was gonna put you on the warning paper.

EXT. SIDE YARD—AFTERNOON

TROY: HEY ROSE!

(to Bono)

Yeah, Mr. Rand like to bit his tongue.

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BONO: I see you run right down to Taylors' and told that Alberta gal.

TROY (CALLING): HEY ROSE!

(to Bono)

I told everybody. HEY ROSE!

(for Bono)

I went down there to cash my check.

EXT. BACK YARD—CONTINUOUS

Rose sticks her head out of the kitchen window.

ROSE: Hush all that hollering, man! I know you out here. What they say down there at the commissioner's office?

TROY (WITH MOCK PRIDE): You supposed to come when I call you, woman. Bono'll tell you that.

(to Bono)

Don't Lucille come when you call her?

ROSE: Man, hush your mouth. I ain't no dog . . . talk about . . . "come when you call me."

Rose pulls her head back in and shuts the window. Troy, still peacocking, heads up the steps and makes a show of opening the back porch door for her.

FENCES

TROY (LOUD FOR ROSE TO HEAR): You hear this, Bono? I had me an old dog used to get uppity like that. You say, "C'mere, Blue!" . . . and he just lay there and look at you.

Rose hurries out onto the back porch.

TROY: End up getting a stick and chasing him away trying to make him come.

ROSE: I ain't studying you and your dog. I remember you used to sing that old song.

TROY (HE SINGS:) *Hear it ring! Hear it ring!
Had an old dog his name was Blue.*

ROSE: Don't nobody want to hear you sing that old song.

TROY (SINGING): *You know Blue was mighty true.*

ROSE: Used to have Cory running around here singing that song.

BONO: Hell, I remember that song myself.

TROY (SINGING): *You know Blue was a good old dog.
Blue treed a possum in a hollow log.*

That was my daddy's song. My daddy made up that song.

ROSE: I don't care who made it up. Don't nobody wanna hear you sing it.

TROY (MAKES A SONG LIKE CALLING A DOG): Come here, woman.

ROSE: You come in here carrying on, I reckon they

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ain't fired you. What they say down there at the commissioner's office?

TROY (PUTS HIS ARM AROUND ROSE): Look here, Rose . . . Mr. Rand called me into his office today when I got back from talking to them people down there . . . it come from up top . . . he called me in and told me they was making me a driver.

ROSE: Troy, you kidding!

TROY: No I ain't. Ask Bono.

ROSE: Well, that's great, Troy. Now you don't have to hassle them people no more.

Lyons comes out from inside.

TROY: Aw hell . . . I wasn't looking to see you today. I thought you was in jail. Got it all over the front page of the Courier about them raiding See-fus' place . . . where you be hanging out with all them thugs.

LYONS: Hey, Pop . . . that ain't got nothing to do with me. I don't go down there gambling. I go down there to sit in with the band. I ain't got nothing to do with the gambling part. They got some good music down there.

TROY: They got some rogues . . . is what they got.

LYONS: How you been, Mr. Bono? Hi, Rose.

BONO: I see where you playing down at the Crawford Grill tonight.

FENCES

ROSE: How come you ain't brought Bonnie like I told you. You should have brought Bonnie with you, she ain't been over in a month of Sundays.

LYONS: I was just in the neighborhood . . . thought I'd stop by.

TROY: Here he come . . .

BONO: Your daddy got a promotion on the rubbish. He's gonna be the first colored driver. Ain't got to do nothing but sit up there and read the paper like them white fellows.

Lyons comes down the steps and joins them.

LYONS: Hey, Pop . . . if you knew how to read you'd be all right.

BONO: Naw . . . naw . . . you mean if the nigger knew how to *drive* he'd be all right. Been fighting with them people about driving and ain't even got a license. Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver's license?

TROY: Driving ain't nothing. All you do is point the truck where you want it to go. Driving ain't nothing.

BONO: Do they know you ain't got no driver's license? That's what I'm talking about. I ain't asked if driving was easy. I asked if Mr. Rand know you ain't got no driver's license.

TROY: He ain't got to know. The man ain't got to know

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my business. Time he find out, I have two or three driver's licenses.

LYONS (GOING INTO HIS POCKET): Say, look here, Pop . . .

TROY: I knew it was coming. Didn't I tell you, Bono? I know what kind of "look here, Pop" that was. The nigger fixing to ask me for some money. It's Friday night. It's my payday. All them rogues down there on the avenue . . . the ones that ain't in jail . . . and Lyons is hopping in his shoes to get down there with them.

Lyons takes out a ten dollar bill and holds it out to Troy.

LYONS: See, Pop . . . if you'd give somebody else a chance to talk sometime—you'd see that I was fixing to pay you back your ten dollars like I told you. Here . . . I told you I'd pay you when Bonnie got paid.

TROY: Naw . . . you go ahead and keep that ten dollars. Put it in the bank. The next time you feel like you wanna come by here and ask me for something . . . you go on down there and get that.

LYONS: Here's your ten dollars, Pop. I told you I don't want you to give me nothing. I just wanted to borrow ten dollars.

TROY: Naw . . . you go on and keep that for the next time you want to ask me.

LYONS: Come on, Pop . . . here go your ten dollars.

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Lyons tries again to hand the money to Troy.

ROSE: Why don't you go on and let the boy pay you back, Troy?

LYONS: Here you go, Rose. If you don't take it I'm gonna have to hear about it for the next six months.

He hands her the money.

ROSE: You can hand yours over here too, Troy.

TROY: You see this Bono, you see how they do me?

BONO: Yeah, Lucille do me the same way.

Gabriel is heard singing . . .

GABRIEL: *Better get ready for the judgement!*

Better get ready for . . .

Hey! . . . Hey! There's Troy's boy!

LYONS: How you doing, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL: Lyons . . . The King of the Jungle!

He surveys the backyard, finding Rose, who's come to greet him.

GABRIEL: Rose . . . hey, Rose. Got a flower for you.

Gabe rummages in his basket till he finds a torn-off branch of a rose vine.

He hands it to Rose.

GABRIEL: Picked it myself. That's the same rose like you is!

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ROSE: That's right nice of you, Gabe.

LYONS: What you been doing, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL: Oh, I been chasing hellhounds and waiting on the time to tell Saint Peter to open the Gates.

LYONS: You been chasing hellhounds, huh? Well . . . you doing the right thing, Uncle Gabe. Somebody got to chase them.

GABRIEL: Oh, yeah . . . I know it. The devil's strong. The devil ain't no pushover. Hellhounds snipping at everybody's heels. But I got my trumpet waiting on the Judgment time.

LYONS: Waiting on the Battle of Armageddon, huh?

GABRIEL: Ain't gonna be too much of a battle when God get to waving that Judgment sword. But the people's gonna have a hell of a time trying to get into Heaven if them Gates ain't open.

LYONS (PUTTING HIS ARMS AROUND GABRIEL): You hear this, Pop? Uncle Gabe, you all right!

GABRIEL (LAUGHING WITH LYONS): Lyons! King of the Jungle.

ROSE: You gonna stay for supper, Gabe? Want me to fix you a plate?

GABRIEL: I'll just take a sandwich, Rose. Don't want no plate. Just wanna eat with my hands. I'll take a sandwich.

ROSE: How about you, Lyons? You staying? Got some short ribs cooking.

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LYONS: Naw, I won't eat nothing till after we finished playing.

(pause)

You ought to come down and listen to me play, Pop.

TROY: I don't like that Chinese music. All that noise.

ROSE: Go on in the house and wash up, Gabe . . . I'll fix you a sandwich.

GABRIEL (TO LYONS AS HE GOES INSIDE): Troy's mad at me.

LYONS: What you mad at Uncle Gabe for, Pop.

ROSE: He thinks Troy's mad at him 'cause he moved over to Miss Pearl's.

TROY: I ain't mad at the man. He can live where he want to live at.

LYONS: What he move over there for? Miss Pearl don't like nobody.

ROSE: She don't mind him none. She treats him real nice. She just don't allow all that singing.

TROY: She don't mind that rent he be paying . . . that's what she don't mind.

ROSE: Troy, I ain't going through that with you no more. He's over there 'cause he want to have his own place. He can come and go as he please.

TROY: Hell, he could come and go as he please here. I wasn't stopping him. I ain't put no rules on him.

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ROSE: It ain't the same thing, Troy. And you know it. Now, that's the last I wanna hear about that. I don't wanna hear nothing else about Gabe and Miss Pearl. And next week . . .

(Gabe calls from the kitchen)

GABRIEL (o.s.): I'm ready for my sandwich, Rose.

ROSE: And next week . . . when that recruiter come from that school . . . I want you to sign that paper and go on and let Cory play football. Then that'll be the last I have to hear about that.

TROY (TO ROSE AS SHE GOES INTO THE KITCHEN): I ain't thinking about Cory nothing.

LYONS: What . . . Cory got recruited? What school he going to?

TROY: That boy walking around here smelling his piss . . . thinking he's grown. Thinking he's gonna do what he want, irrespective of what I say. Look here, Bono . . . I left the commissioner's office and went down to the A&P . . . that boy ain't working down there. He lying to me. Telling me he got his job back . . . telling me he working weekends . . . telling me he working after school . . . Mr. Stawicki tell me he ain't working down there at all!

LYONS: Cory just growing up. He's just busting at the seams trying to fill out your shoes.

TROY: I don't care what he's doing. When he get to the

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point where he wanna disobey me . . . then it's time for him to move on. Bono'll tell you that. I bet he ain't never disobeyed his daddy without paying the consequences.

Troy offers Bono the bottle. Bono takes it.

BONO: I ain't never had a chance. My daddy came on through . . . But I ain't never knew him to see him . . . or what he had on his mind or where he went. Just moving on through. Searching out the New Land. That's what the old folks used to call it. See a fellow moving around from place to place . . . woman to woman . . . called it Searching out the New Land. I can't say if he ever found it. I come along, didn't want no kids. Didn't know if I was gonna be in one place long enough to fix on them right as their daddy. I figured I was going searching too.

Bono sips, hands the bottle to Lyons, who takes a big swig.

BONO: As it turned out I been hooked up with Lucille near about as long as your daddy been with Rose. Going on sixteen years.

TROY: Sometimes I wish I hadn't known my daddy. He ain't cared nothing about no kids. A kid to him wasn't nothing. All he wanted was for you to learn how to walk so he could start you to working. When it come time for eating . . . he ate

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first. If there was anything left over, that's what you got. Man would sit down and eat two chickens and give you the wing.

LYONS: You ought to stop that, Pop. Everybody feed their kids. No matter how hard times is . . . everybody care about their kids. Make sure they have something to eat.

TROY: The only thing my daddy cared about was getting them bales of cotton in to Mr. Lubin. That's the only thing that mattered to him. Sometimes I used to wonder why he was living. Wonder why the devil hadn't come and got him. "Get them bales of cotton in to Mr. Lubin" and find out he owe him money . . .

LYONS: He should have just went on and left when he saw he couldn't get nowhere. That's what I would have done.

TROY: How he gonna leave with eleven kids? And where he gonna go? He ain't knew how to do nothing but farm. No, he was trapped and I think he knew it. But I'll say this for him . . . he felt a responsibility toward us. Maybe he ain't treated us the way I felt he should have . . . but without that responsibility he could have walked off and left us . . . made his own way.

BONO: A lot of them did. Back in those days what you talking about . . . they walk out their front door and just take on down one road or another and keep on walking.

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LYONS: There you go! That's what I'm talking about.

Troy offers Bono the bottle.

BONO: Just keep on walking till you come to something else. Ain't you never heard of nobody having the walking blues? Well, that's what you call it when you just take off like that.

TROY: My daddy ain't had them walking blues! What you talking about? He stayed right there with his family. But he was just as evil as he could be. My mama couldn't stand him. Couldn't stand that evilness. She run off when I was about eight.

EXT. AN ALABAMA COTTON FIELD—DAY

A sharp colorless memory fragment:

TROY'S FATHER, A SHARECROPPER, SEEN FROM BEHIND AS HE STEERS A PLOW PULLED BY A MULE.

TROY (v.o.): She sneaked off one night after he had gone to sleep. Told me she was coming back for me. I ain't never seen her no more. All his women run off and left him. He wasn't good for nobody.

EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

TROY: When my turn come to head out, I was fourteen and got to sniffing around Joe Canewell's daughter.

INT. THE KITCHEN—AFTERNOON

Rose sits next to Gabriel, eating a sandwich, his trumpet on the table. Rose is listening to Troy.

TROY (o.s.): Had us an old mule we called Greyboy. My daddy sent me out to do some plowing and I tied up Greyboy and went to fooling around with Joe Canewell's daughter. We done found us a nice spot, got real cozy with each other. She about thirteen and we done figured we was grown anyway . . . So we down there enjoying ourselves . . . ain't thinking about nothing.

EXT. A WOODS IN ALABAMA—DAY

Memory fragment, no color: The arms, shoulders, legs of a teenaged girl, pushing aside low-growing new foliage, lying down on leaves; a quick glimpse of a pretty face; her laughter heard underneath Troy's voice:

TROY (v.o.): We didn't know Greyboy had got loose and wandered back to the house and my daddy was looking for me. We down there by the creek enjoying ourselves when my daddy come up on us.

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EXT. BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

TROY: Surprised us. He had them leather straps off the mule and commenced to whupping me like there was no tomorrow. I jumped up, mad and embarrassed. I was scared of my daddy.

EXT. A WOODS IN ALABAMA—DAY

Memory fragment: Troy's father's huge arms tearing at branches, scrabbling after something that's scrambling away from his grasping hands.

EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

TROY: When he commenced to whupping on me . . . quite naturally I run to get out of the way. Now I thought he was mad 'cause I ain't done my work. But I see where he was chasing me off so he could have the gal for himself. When I see what the matter of it was, I lost all fear of my daddy. Right there is where I become a man . . . at fourteen years of age.

EXT. A WOODS IN ALABAMA—DAY

Memory fragment: The teenaged girl, running, terrified, deeper into the woods; Troy's father's back, his shirt

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*being torn open by the stroke of a
leather reins; his arms raised against
further lashing.*

TROY (v.o.): Now it was my turn to run him off. I picked up them same reins that he had used on me. I picked up them reins and commenced to whupping on him. The gal jumped up and run off . . . and when my daddy turned to face me, I could see why the devil had never come to get him . . .

*Troy's father grabs the reins,
lowering his arms; a moment in which
we see his face for the first time.*

TROY (v.o.): . . . 'cause he was the devil himself.

INT. THE KITCHEN—AFTERNOON

*Gabriel stands with his trumpet,
sandwich in his other hand. Rose is
still sitting, transfixed.*

EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

TROY: I don't know what happened. When I woke up, I was laying right there by the creek, and Blue . . . this old dog we had . . . was licking my face. I thought I was blind. I couldn't see nothing. Both my eyes were swollen shut. I laid there and cried. I didn't know what I was gonna do.

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He stops, lost someplace inside his head.

TROY: The only thing I knew was the time had come for me to leave my daddy's house. And right there the world suddenly got big. And it was a long time before I could cut it down to where I could handle it.

Gabe comes out on the porch. A beat, then:

LYONS: What you got there, Uncle Gabe?

GABRIEL: Got me a ham sandwich. Rose gave me a ham sandwich.

TROY: I don't know what happened to him. I done lost touch with everybody except Gabriel. But I hope he's dead. I hope he found some peace.

LYONS: That's a heavy story, Pop. I didn't know you left home when you was fourteen.

The phone rings inside the house.

LYONS: Fourteen's kinda young to be out on your own. I don't know what I would have done.

TROY: I got up from the creek and walked on down to Mobile. I was through with farming.

(stands, goes to a safe place . . . his bat, leaning against the tree)

Figured I could do better in the city. So I walked the two hundred miles to Mobile.

AUGUST WILSON

LYONS: Wait a minute . . . you ain't walked no two hundred miles, Pop. Ain't nobody gonna walk no two hundred miles. You talking about some walking there.

BONO: That's the only way you got anywhere back in them days.

LYONS: Shhh. Damn if I wouldn't have hitched a ride with somebody!

TROY: Who you gonna hitch it with? They ain't had no cars and things like they got now.

Swinging his bat . . .

TROY: We talking about 1918.

Rose comes out onto the porch.

ROSE: What you all out here getting into?

TROY (TO ROSE): I'm telling Lyons how good he got it. He don't know nothing about this I'm talking.

ROSE: Lyons, that was Bonnie on the phone. She say you supposed to pick her up.

LYONS: Yeah, okay, Rose.

TROY: I walked on down to Mobile and hitched up with some of them fellows that was heading this way. Got up here and found out . . . not only couldn't you get a job . . . you couldn't find no place to live. I thought I was in freedom. Shhh. Colored folks living down there on the riverbanks in whatever kind of shelter they could find for them-

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selves. Right down there under the Brady Street Bridge. Living in shacks made of sticks and tar paper.

Here we go.

TROY: Messed around there and went from bad to worse. Started stealing. First it was food. Then I figured, hell, if I steal money I can buy me some food. Buy me some shoes too! One thing led to another. Met your mama. I was young and anxious to be a man. Met your mama and had you. What I do that for?

Lyons is unsure if his father is joking.

TROY: Now I got to worry about feeding you and her. Got to steal three times as much. Went out one day looking for somebody to rob . . . that's what I was, a robber. I'll tell you the truth. I'm ashamed of it today. But it's the truth. Went to rob this fellow . . . pulled out my knife . . . and he pulled out a gun. Shot me in the chest. It felt just like somebody had taken a hot branding iron and laid it on me. When he shot me I jumped at him with my knife. They told me I killed him and they put me in the penitentiary and locked me up for fifteen years. That's where I met Bono. That's where I learned how to play baseball. Got out that place and your mama had taken you and went on to make a life without me.

Lyons listens, completely absorbed.

AUGUST WILSON

TROY: Fifteen years was a long time for her to wait. But that fifteen years cured me of that robbing stuff.

(looking at Rose)

Rose'll tell you. She asked me when I met her if I had gotten all that foolishness out of my system. And I told her, "Baby, it's you and baseball all what count with me." You hear me, Bono? I meant it too. She say, "Which one comes first?" I told her, "Baby, ain't no doubt it's baseball . . . but you stick and get old with me and we'll both outlive this baseball." Am I right, Rose? And it's true.

ROSE: Man, hush your mouth. You ain't said no such thing. Talking about, "Baby, you know you'll always be number one with me." That's what you was talking.

TROY: You hear that, Bono. That's why I love her.

BONO: Rose'll keep you straight. You get off the track, she'll straighten you up.

Rose heads to the kitchen.

ROSE: Lyons, you better get on up and get Bonnie. She waiting on you.

LYONS: Hey, Pop, why don't you come on down to the Grill and hear me play?

TROY: I ain't going down there. I'm too old to be sitting around in them clubs.

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BONO: You got to be good to play down at the Grill.

LYONS: Come on, Pop . . .

TROY: I got to get up in the morning.

LYONS: You ain't got to stay long.

TROY (STANDING): Naw, I'm gonna get my supper and go on to bed.

LYONS: Well, I gotta go. I'll see you again.

Lyons heads into the house.

TROY: Don't you come around my house on my payday.

INT. THE KITCHEN—LATE AFTERNOON

Rose is cooking.

ROSE: Pick up the phone and let somebody know you coming. And bring Bonnie with you. You know I'm always glad to see her.

Troy and Bono come into the kitchen.

LYONS: Yeah, I'll do that, Rose. You take care now. See you, Pop. See you, Mr. Bono.

(calling through the screen door)

See you, Uncle Gabe.

Gabe calls in from outside:

GABRIEL (o.s.): Lyons! King of the Jungle!

Lyons grabs his guitar and leaves.

AUGUST WILSON

TROY (TO ROSE): Is supper ready, woman? Me and you got some business to take care of. I'm gonna tear it up too.

ROSE: Troy, I done told you now!

Troy puts his arm around Bono.

TROY: Aw hell, woman . . . this is Bono. Bono like family. I done known this nigger since . . . how long I done know you?

BONO: It's been a long time.

TROY: I done known this nigger since Skippy was a pup. Me and him done been through some times.

BONO: You sure right about that.

TROY: Hell, I done know him longer than I known you. And we still standing shoulder to shoulder. Hey, look here, Bono . . . a man can't ask for no more than that. I love you, nigger.

BONO: Hell, I love you too . . . but I got to get home see my woman. You got yours in hand. I got to go get mine.

EXT. MAXSON HOUSE—FRONT PORCH

*Bono goes out onto the front porch.
Troy follows. They stop when a helmet
comes flying in Troy's direction. Cory
standing in the middle of the street,
dressed in his football uniform, he*

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gives Troy a hard, uncompromising look.

CORY: What you do that for, Pop?

Rose comes out.

ROSE: What's the matter? Cory . . . what's the matter?

CORY: Papa done went up to the school and told Coach Zellman I can't play football no more. Wouldn't even let me play the game. Told him to tell the recruiter not to come.

ROSE: Troy . . .

TROY: What you Troying me for. Yeah, I did it. And the boy know why I did it.

CORY: Why you wanna do that to me? That was the one chance I had.

ROSE: Ain't nothing wrong with Cory playing football, Troy.

TROY: The boy lied to me. I told the nigger if he wanna play football . . . to keep up his chores and hold down that job at the A&P. That was the conditions. Stopped down there to see Mr. Stawicki . . .

CORY: I can't work after school during the football season, Pop! I tried to tell you that Mr. Stawicki's holding my job for me. You don't never want to listen to nobody. And then you wanna go and do this to me!

AUGUST WILSON

TROY: I ain't done nothing to you. You done it to yourself

Gabriel is standing across the street. He lifts the trumpet to his lips and tries to blow. No sound comes out.

CORY: Just 'cause you didn't have a chance! You just scared I'm gonna be better than you, that's all.

Troy comes down onto the street. Cory backs away a little.

TROY: Come here.

Cory reluctantly goes over to Troy.

ROSE (COMING DOWN THE STEPS): Troy . . .

TROY: All right! See. You done made a mistake.

CORY: I didn't even do nothing!

TROY: I'm gonna tell you what your mistake was.

The football helmet is on the street next to Troy. He kicks it with his foot and sends it tumbling down the hill.

TROY: See . . . you swung at the ball and didn't hit it. That's strike one. See, you in the batter's box now. You swung and you missed. That's strike one.

Troy closes the distance, his face leering, terrifying. Cory tries not to flinch. Troy hisses in Cory's ear:

TROY: Don't you strike out!

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EXT. BACKYARD—THE FOLLOWING
MORNING

CLOSE UP: We see a baseball swinging like a pendulum, in and out of focus. Cory is at the tree hitting the ball with the bat. He tries to mimic Troy but his swing is awkward, less sure. Rose watches . . . Cory swings again, misses.

ROSE: Cory, I want you to help me with this cupboard.

CORY: I ain't quitting the team. I don't care what Poppa say.

ROSE: I'll talk to him when he gets back. He had to go see about your Uncle Gabe. The police done arrested him. Say he was disturbing the peace. He'll be back directly. Come on in here and help me clean out the top of this cupboard.

Cory goes into house. Rose sees Troy and Bono enter the backyard from the side yard.

ROSE: Troy . . . What they say down there?

TROY: Ain't said nothing. I give them fifty dollars and they let him go. I'll talk to you about it. Where's Cory?

ROSE: He's in there helping me clean out these cupboards.

TROY: Tell him to get his butt out here.

AUGUST WILSON

Rose goes into the house. Troy and Bono make their way over to the pile of wood.

TROY: All they want is the money. That makes six or seven times I done went down there and got him. See me coming they stick out their hands.

BONO: Yeah. I know what you mean. That's all they care about . . . that money. They don't care about what's right.

(pause)

Nigger, why you got to go and get some hard wood? You ain't doing nothing but building a little old fence. Get you some soft pine wood. That's all you need.

TROY: I know what I'm doing. This is outside wood. You put pine wood inside the house. Pine wood is inside wood. This here is outside wood. Now you tell me where the fence is gonna be?

BONO: You don't need this wood. You can put it up with pine wood and it'll stand as long as you gonna be here looking at it.

TROY: How you know how long I'm gonna be here, nigger? Hell, I might just live forever. Live longer than old man Horsely.

BONO: That's what Magee used to say.

TROY: Magee's a damn fool. Now you tell me who you

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ever heard of gonna pull their own teeth with a pair of rusty pliers.

BONO: The old folks . . . my granddaddy used to pull his teeth with pliers. They ain't had no dentists for the colored folks back then.

TROY: Get clean pliers! You understand? Clean pliers! Sterilize them! Besides we ain't living back then. All Magee had to do was walk over to Doc Goldblum's.

They start to work . . . or not.

BONO: I see where you and that Tallahassee gal . . . that Alberta . . . I see where you all done got tight.

TROY: What you mean "got tight"?

BONO: I see where you be laughing and joking with her all the time.

TROY: I laughs and jokes with all of them, Bono. You know me.

BONO: That ain't the kind of laughing and joking I'm talking about.

Cory comes out from the house.

CORY: How you doing, Mr. Bono?

TROY: Get that saw from Bono and cut some wood. He talking about the wood's too hard to cut.

(to Bono)

AUGUST WILSON

Stand back there, Jim, and let that young boy show you how it's done.

BONO: He's sure welcome to it.

Cory goes to Bono, who hands him the saw. Cory saws fast finishing in seconds, puts the next board in place and saws.

BONO: Whew-e-e! Look at that. Big old strong boy. Look like Joe Louis. Hell, must be getting old the way I'm watching that boy whip through that wood.

CORY: I don't see why Mama want a fence around the yard nowadays.

TROY: Damn if I know either. What the hell she keeping out with it? She ain't got nothing nobody want.

BONO: Some people build fences to keep people out . . . and other people build fences to keep people in. Rose wants to hold on to you all. She loves you.

TROY: Hell, nigger, I don't need nobody to tell me my wife loves me. Cory . . . go on in and see if you can find that other saw.

CORY: Where's it at?

TROY: I said find it! Look for it till you find it!

Cory goes into the house. Troy turns to Bono . . .

TROY: What's that supposed to mean? Wanna keep us in?

BONO (BONO LEADS TROY OUT OF EARSHOT): Troy . . . I done

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known you seem like damn near my whole life. You and Rose both. I done know both of you all for a long time. I remember when you met Rose. When you was hitting them baseballs out the park. A lot of them old gals was after you then. You had the pick of the litter. When you picked Rose, I was happy for you. That was the first time I knew you had any sense. I said . . . My man Troy knows what he's doing . . . I'm gonna follow this nigger . . . he might take me somewhere. I been following you too. I done learned a whole heap of things about life watching you. I done learned how to tell where the shit lies. How to tell it from the alfalfa. You done learned me a lot of things. You showed me how to not make the same mistakes . . . to take life as it comes along and keep putting one foot in front of the other.

(pause)

Rose a good woman, Troy.

TROY: Hell, nigger, I know she a good woman. I been married to her for eighteen years. What you got on your mind, Bono?

BONO: I just say she a good woman. Just like I say anything. I ain't got to have nothing on my mind.

TROY: You just gonna say she a good woman and leave it hanging out there like that? Why you telling me she a good woman?

BONO: She loves you, Troy. Rose loves you.

AUGUST WILSON

TROY: You saying I don't measure up. That's what you trying to say. I don't measure up 'cause I'm seeing this other gal. I know what you trying to say.

BONO: I know what Rose means to you, Troy. I'm just trying to say I don't want to see you mess up.

TROY: Yeah, I appreciate that, Bono. If you was messing around on Lucille I'd be telling you the same thing.

BONO: Well, that's all I got to say. I just say that because I love you both.

Troy takes this in.

TROY: Hell, you know me . . . I wasn't out there looking for nothing. You can't find a better woman than Rose. I know that. But seems like this woman just stuck on to me where I can't shake her loose. I done wrestled with it, tried to throw her off me . . . but she just stuck on tighter. Now she's stuck on for good.

BONO: You's in control . . . that's what you tell me all the time. You responsible for what you do.

TROY: I ain't ducking the responsibility of it. As long as it sets right in my heart . . . then I'm okay. 'Cause that's all I listen to. It'll tell me right from wrong every time. And I ain't talking about doing Rose no bad turn. I love Rose. She done carried me a long ways and I love and respect her for that.

BONO: I know you do. That's why I don't want to see

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you hurt her. But what you gonna do when she find out? What you got then? If you try and juggle both of them . . . sooner or later you gonna drop one of them. That's common sense.

TROY: Yeah, I hear what you saying, Bono. I been trying to figure a way to work it out.

BONO (LEANING IN . . .): Work it out right, Troy. I don't want to be getting all up between you and Rose's business . . . but work it so it come out right.

TROY: Aw hell, I get all up between you and Lucille's business. When you gonna get that woman that refrigerator she been wanting? Don't tell me you ain't got no money now. I know who your banker is. Mellon don't need that money bad as Lucille want that refrigerator. I'll tell you that.

BONO: Tell you what I'll do . . . when you finish building this fence for Rose . . . I'll buy Lucille that refrigerator.

TROY: You done stuck your foot in your mouth now!

Troy stands up, grabs up a board and begins to saw. Bono starts to walk out of the yard.

TROY: Hey, nigger . . . where you going?

BONO: I'm going home. I know you don't expect me to help you now. I'm protecting my money. I wanna see you put up that fence by yourself. That's what I want to see.

AUGUST WILSON

(climbing the steps)

You'll be here another six months without me.

TROY: Nigger, you ain't right . . .

BONO: When it comes to my money . . . I'm right as fireworks on the Fourth of July.

TROY (CALLING AFTER HIM): All right, we gonna see now. You better get out your bankbook.

INT. BASEMENT—AFTERNOON

Cory sits on a crate, doing curls with barbells made from cans, cement and a pipe, an old saw in the dirt at his feet. Above him, Bono's footsteps and the kitchen door open and shut.

EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

Troy continues to work. Rose comes out from the kitchen

ROSE: What they say down there? What's happening with Gabe?

TROY: I went down there and got him out. Cost me fifty dollars. Say he was disturbing the peace. Judge set up a hearing for him in three weeks. Say to show cause why he shouldn't be recommitted.

ROSE: Well, what's you say? What'd you tell the judge?

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TROY: Told him I'd look after him. It didn't make no sense to recommit the man. He stuck out his big greasy palm, and told me to give him fifty dollars and take him on home.

ROSE: Where's he at now? Where'd he go off to?

TROY: He's gone on about his business. He don't need nobody to hold his hand.

ROSE: Well, I don't know. Seem like that would be the best place for him if they did put him into the hospital. I know what you're gonna say. But that's what I think would be best.

TROY: The man done had his life ruined fighting for what? And they wanna take and lock him up. Let him be free. He don't bother nobody.

ROSE: Well, everybody got their own way of looking at it I guess. Come on and get your lunch. I got a bowl of lima beans and some cornbread in the oven. Come on get something to eat. Ain't no sense you fretting over Gabe.

TROY: Rose . . . got something to tell you.

ROSE: Well, come on . . . wait till I get this food on the table.

Rose turns to go into the house. Troy follows.

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INT. KITCHEN—AFTERNOON

TROY: Rose.

She turns around.

TROY: I don't know how to say this.

(pause)

I can't explain it none. It just sort of grows on you till it gets out of hand. It starts out like a little bush . . . and the next thing you know it's a whole forest.

ROSE: Troy . . . what is you talking about?

TROY: I'm talking, woman, let me talk. I'm trying to find a way to tell you . . . I'm gonna be a daddy. I'm gonna be somebody's daddy.

ROSE: Troy . . . you're not telling me this? You're gonna be . . . what?

TROY: Rose . . . now . . . see . . .

ROSE: You telling me you gonna be somebody's daddy? You telling your wife this?

From out in the back yard, Gabriel calls:

GABRIEL (o.s.): Hey, Troy! Hey, Rose!

ROSE: I have to wait eighteen years to hear something like this.

FENCES

Gabriel enters from the back porch. He carries a rose in his hand.

GABRIEL: Hey, Rose . . . I got a flower for you.

(He hands it to her)

That's a rose. Same rose like you is.

ROSE: Thanks, Gabe.

GABRIEL: Troy, you ain't mad at me is you? Them bad mens come and put me away. You ain't mad at me is you?

TROY: Naw, Gabe, I ain't mad at you.

ROSE: Eighteen years and you wanna come with this.

GABRIEL (TAKES A QUARTER OUT OF HIS POCKET): See what I got? Got a brand-new quarter.

TROY: Rose . . . it's just . . .

ROSE: Ain't nothing you can say, Troy. Ain't no way of explaining that.

GABRIEL: Fellow that give me this quarter had a whole mess of them. I'm gonna keep this quarter till it stop shining.

ROSE: Gabe, go on up front now. I got some watermelon in the Frigidaire. I'll get you a piece.

GABRIEL: Say, Rose . . . you know I was chasing hell-hounds and them bad mens come and get me and take me away. Troy helped me. He come down there and

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told them they better let me go before he beat them up. Yeah, he did!

ROSE: You go on up front and I'll get you a piece of watermelon, Gabe. Them bad mens is gone now.

GABRIEL: Okay, Rose . . . gonna bring me some watermelon. The kind with the stripes on it.

Gabriel goes up to the front room.

Then:

ROSE: Why, Troy? Why? After all these years to come dragging this in to me now. It don't make no sense at your age. I could have expected this ten or fifteen years ago, but not now.

TROY: Age ain't got nothing to do with it, Rose.

ROSE: I done tried to be everything a wife should be. Everything a wife could be. Been married eighteen years and I got to live to see the day you tell me you been seeing another woman and done fathered a child by her. And you know I ain't never wanted no half-nothing in my family. My whole family is half. Everybody got different fathers and mothers . . . my two sisters and my brother. Can't hardly tell who's who. Can't never sit down and talk about Papa and Mama. It's your papa and your mama and my papa and my mama . . .

TROY: Rose . . . stop it now.

ROSE: I ain't never wanted that for none of my children. And now you wanna drag your behind in here and tell me something like this.

FENCES

TROY: You ought to know. It's time for you to know.

ROSE: Well, I don't want to know, goddamn it!

Rose, suffocating, heads outside. Troy follows.

INT. BASEMENT—AFTERNOON

Muffled sounds . . . Cory not sure what he is hearing.

EXT. BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

TROY: I can't just make it go away. It's done now. I can't wish the circumstance of the thing away.

ROSE: And you don't want to either. Maybe you want to wish me and my boy away. Maybe that's what you want? Well, you can't wish us away. I've got eighteen years of my life invested in you. You ought to have stayed upstairs in my bed where you belong.

TROY: Rose . . . now listen to me . . . we can get a handle on this thing. We can talk this out . . . come to an understanding.

ROSE: All of a sudden it's "we." Where was "we" at when you was down there rolling around with some godforsaken woman? "We" should have come to an understanding before you started making a damn

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fool of yourself. You're a day late and a dollar short when it comes to an understanding with me.

TROY: It's just . . . She gives me a different idea . . . a different understanding about myself. I can step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems . . . be a different man. I ain't got to wonder how I'm gonna pay the bills or get the roof fixed. I can just be a part of myself that I ain't never been.

ROSE: What I want to know . . . is do you plan to continue seeing her. That's all you can say to me.

TROY: I can sit up in her house and laugh. Do you understand what I'm saying. I can laugh out loud . . . and it feels good. It reaches all the way down to the bottom of my shoes.

(pause)

Rose, I can't give that up.

ROSE: Maybe you ought to go on and stay down there with her . . . if she a better woman than me.

TROY: It ain't about nobody being a better woman or nothing. Rose, you ain't to blame. A man couldn't ask for no woman to be a better wife than you've been. I'm responsible for it. I done locked myself into a pattern trying to take care of you all that I forgot about myself.

ROSE: What the hell was I there for? That was my job, not somebody else's.

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TROY: Rose, I done tried all my life to live decent . . . to live a clean . . . hard . . . useful life. I tried to be a good husband to you. In every way I knew how. Maybe I come into the world backwards, I don't know. But . . . You born with two strikes on you before you come to the plate. You got to guard it closely . . . always looking for the curveball on the inside corner. You can't afford to let none get past you. You can't afford a call strike.

INT. FRONT ROOM—AFTERNOON

Gabriel sits, immobile.

EXT. BACKYARD—CONTINUOUS

TROY: If you going down . . . you going down swinging. Everything lined up against you. What you gonna do. I fooled them, Rose. I bunted. When I found you and Cory and a halfway decent job . . . I was safe. Couldn't nothing touch me. I wasn't gonna strike out no more. I wasn't going back to the penitentiary. I wasn't gonna lay in the streets with a bottle of wine. I was safe. I had me a family. A job. I wasn't gonna get that last strike. I was on first looking for one of them boys to knock me in. To get me home.

ROSE: You should have stayed in my bed, Troy.

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TROY: Then when I saw that gal . . . she firmed up my backbone. And I got to thinking that if I tried . . . I just might be able to steal second. Do you understand, after eighteen years I wanted to steal second.

ROSE: You should have held me tight. You should have grabbed me and held on.

TROY: I stood on first base for eighteen years and I thought . . . well, goddamn it . . . go on for it!

ROSE: We're not talking about baseball! We're talking about you going off to lay in bed with another woman . . . and then bring it home to me. That's what we're talking about. We ain't talking about no baseball.

TROY: Rose, you're not listening to me. I'm trying the best I can to explain it to you. It's not easy for me to admit that I been standing in the same place for eighteen years.

ROSE: I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life too. I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me? Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forget about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good?

FENCES

INT. BASEMENT

*Cory moves toward the basement window,
trying to hear his mother and father.*

EXT. BACKYARD—CONTINUOUS

ROSE: You not the only one who's got wants and needs. But I held on to you, Troy. I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams . . . and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never gonna bloom.

INT. THE FRONT ROOM

*Gabriel lifts up his trumpet, holds it
high in trembling hands. His mouth is
wide-open.*

EXT. BACKYARD—CONTINUOUS

ROSE: But I held on to you, Troy. I held you tighter. You was my husband. I owed you everything I had. Every part of me I could find to give you. And upstairs in that room . . . with the darkness falling in on me . . . I gave everything I had to try and erase the doubt that you wasn't the finest man

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in the world, and wherever you was going . . . I wanted to be there with you. 'Cause you was my husband. 'Cause that's the only way I was gonna survive as your wife. You always talking about what you give . . . and what you don't have to give. But you take too. You take . . . and don't even know nobody's giving!

Rose heads toward the house. Troy grabs her arm.

TROY: You say I take and don't give!

ROSE: Troy! You're hurting me!

TROY: You say I take and don't give.

ROSE: Troy . . . you're hurting my arm! Let go.

TROY: I done give you everything I got. Don't you tell that lie on me.

ROSE: Troy!

TROY: Don't you tell that lie on me!

Cory rushing out of the house.

CORY: Mama!

ROSE: Troy. You're hurting me.

TROY: Don't you tell me about no taking and giving.

Cory comes up from behind Troy and tries to tackle him. Troy, surprised, is thrown off balance just as Cory throws a glancing blow that catches

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*him on the chest and knocks him down.
Troy is stunned, as is Cory.*

ROSE: Troy. Troy. No!

*Troy gets to his feet and starts at
Cory.*

ROSE: Troy . . . no. Please! Troy!

*Rose pulls on Troy to hold him back.
Troy stops himself.*

TROY (TO CORY): All right. That's strike two. You stay
away from around me, boy. Don't you strike out.
You living with a full count. DON'T YOU STRIKE
OUT!

SIX MONTH SEQUENCE

*We hear **Little Jimmy Scott's "Day By
Day"** . . . Somewhere . . .*

Dead leaves falling.

EXT. BACKYARD

*Early winter, the first fence posts are
up.*

INT. BASEMENT

Cory works out feverishly.

EXT. BACKYARD

Winter, snow. Cross beams connect the posts, and the first vertical pickets begin to shut out the abandoned house.

INT. DINING ROOM

An empty room, the table is set.

EXT. BACKYARD—NIGHT

Troy bundled against the lingering cold, works alone. Rose watches him from the kitchen window.

INT. TAYLORS' BAR

Troy drinks heavily in a crowded bar.

EXT. BACKYARD

March: More pickets, the fence half done.

INT. CHURCH

Rose kneeling in prayer.

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EXT. CEMETERY

Gabe sits among the tombstones eating a sandwich.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE—
MORNING

It's early April, and the weather's cool. Rose, looking tired, wears a light jacket and scarf over her head. She locks the front door and starts down the steps. She stops to pull weeds from among the daffodils she's growing in the planter-cans.

EXT. SANITATION YARD—LATER THAT
AFTERNOON

Men stream out of the garage, Troy among them. He sees something that makes him stop. Rose is across the street, waiting for him. He crosses the street slowly. They stand looking at one another; Then:

ROSE: Troy, I want to talk to you.

TROY: All of a sudden, after all this time, you want to talk to me, huh? You ain't wanted to talk to me for months. You ain't wanted to talk to me last

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night. You ain't wanted no part of me then. What you wanna talk to me about now?

Rose looks around at the men who glance at her and Troy as they pass by.

ROSE: Tomorrow's Friday.

TROY: I know what day tomorrow is. You think I don't know tomorrow's Friday? My whole life I ain't done nothing but look to see Friday coming and you got to tell me it's Friday.

ROSE: I want to know if you're coming home.

TROY: I always come home, Rose. You know that. There ain't never been a night I ain't come home.

ROSE: That ain't what I mean . . . and you know it. I want to know if you're coming straight home after work.

TROY: I figure I'd cash my check . . . hang out at Taylors' with the boys . . . maybe play a game of checkers . . .

ROSE: Troy, I can't live like this. I won't live like this. You livin' on borrowed time with me. It's been going on six months now you ain't been coming home.

TROY: I be home every night. Every night of the year. That's 365 days.

ROSE: I want you to come home tomorrow after work.

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TROY: Rose . . . I don't mess up my pay. You know that now. I take my pay and I give it to you. I don't have no money but what you give me back. I just want to have a little time to myself . . . a little time to enjoy life.

ROSE: What about me? When's my time to enjoy life.

TROY: I don't know what to tell you, Rose. I'm doing the best I can.

ROSE: You ain't been coming home from work but time enough to change your clothes and run out . . . and you wanna call that the best you can do?

TROY: I'm going over to the hospital to see Alberta. She went into the hospital this afternoon. Look like she might have the baby early. I won't be gone long.

Troy starts to walk away.

ROSE (STOPPING HIM): Well, you ought to know. They went over to Miss Pearl's and got Gabe today. She said you told them to go ahead and lock him up.

He comes back.

TROY: I ain't said no such thing. Whoever told you that is telling a lie. Pearl ain't doing nothing but telling a big fat lie.

ROSE: She ain't had to tell me. I read it on the papers.

TROY: I ain't told them nothing of the kind.

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ROSE: I saw it right there on the papers.

TROY: What it say, huh?

ROSE: It said you told them to take him.

TROY: Then they screwed that up, just the way they screw up everything. I ain't worried about what they got on the paper.

ROSE: Say the government send part of his check to the hospital and the other part to you.

TROY: I ain't got nothing to do with that if that's the way it works. I ain't made up the rules about how it work.

ROSE: You did Gabe just like you did Cory. You wouldn't sign the paper for Cory . . . but you signed for Gabe. You signed that paper.

TROY: I told you I ain't signed nothing, woman! The only thing I signed was the release form. Hell, I can't read, I don't know what they had on that paper! I ain't signed nothing about sending Gabe away.

*A few men from the garage are watching
across the street.*

ROSE: I said send him to the hospital . . . you said let him be free . . . now you done went down there and signed him to the hospital for half his money. You went back on yourself, Troy. You gonna have to answer for that.

TROY: See now . . . you been over there talking to

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Miss Pearl. She done got mad 'cause she ain't getting Gabe's rent money. That's all it is. She's liable to say anything.

ROSE: Troy, I seen where you signed the paper.

TROY: You ain't seen nothing I signed. What she doing got papers on my brother anyway? Miss Pearl telling a big fat lie. And I'm gonna tell her about it too!

Troy starts to walk away . . . Turns around . . .

TROY: You ain't seen nothing I signed! Say . . . you ain't seen nothing I signed!

Rose disappointed, walks away.

CLOSE UP on Troy, we hear a phone ringing as we cut to . . .

INT. DAY ROOM—WESTERN PSYCHIATRIC
HOSPITAL—DAY

The ringing phone continues over this:

CLOSE UP on Gabe, hospital pajamas, cleaned up, haggard, sedated. A hand brings a spoonful of mashed carrots to Gabe's lips. He opens his mouth. A ruckus in the corridor outside scares him; he closes his mouth. Then he looks at the person who's holding the spoon, and opens his mouth again. The spoon goes in.

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Troy sits across from Gabe, a bowl of mashed carrots on his lap, feeding his brother. Gabe swallows, then grins.

The ringing continues over this, and into:

INT. ROSE AND TROY'S BEDROOM—LATE NIGHT

Lightning flashes.

The phone's ringing downstairs. Rose, barely awake, switches on a small bedside table lamp, then hurries down to the phone. Troy opens his eyes as he hears Rose answering it, then silence. Troy sits up as she climbs the stairs. Cory calls from his room:

CORY (o.s.): Mama?

Rose murmurs to Cory, comes in the bedroom, closes the door.

ROSE: Troy . . . that was the hospital. Alberta had the baby.

TROY: What she have? What is it?

ROSE: It's a girl.

Troy stands, he starts getting dressed.

TROY: I better get on down to the hospital to see her.

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ROSE: Troy . . .

TROY: Rose . . . I got to go see her now. That's only right . . . what's the matter . . . the baby's all right, ain't it?

ROSE: Alberta died having the baby.

TROY (CONFUSED): Died . . . you say she's dead? Alberta's dead?

ROSE: They said they done all they could. They couldn't do nothing for her.

TROY (STUNNED, OFF BALANCE): The baby? How's the baby?

ROSE: They say it's healthy.

Troy looks around as if trying to locate the door. Rose doesn't know what to do.

ROSE: I wonder who's gonna bury her.

TROY: She had family, Rose. She wasn't living in the world by herself.

ROSE: I know she wasn't living in the world by herself.

TROY: Next thing you gonna want to know if she had any insurance.

ROSE: Troy, you ain't got to talk like that.

TROY: That's the first thing that jumped out your mouth. "Who's gonna bury her?" Like I'm fixing to take on that task for myself.

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ROSE: I am your wife. Don't push me away.

TROY: I ain't pushing nobody away.

(starting to put on his shoes)

Just give me some space. That's all.

One shoe on, the other in his hand, he stands and turns on Rose with controlled fury.

TROY: Just give me some room to breathe!

Rose is shocked by his demand. She turns, closes the door, and leaves the room. Alone, Troy realizes he's holding his shoe. He sits heavily on the bed and puts it on. As he does he starts talking to himself.

TROY: All right . . . Mr. Death. See now . . . I'm gonna tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna take and build me a fence around this yard.

He goes to the window and throws it open. He leans out, breathing hard, looking down into the dark yard, the abandoned house beyond the fence. He feels the darkness pull at him, making him lean farther out. He tightens his grip on the windowsill, and says to the darkness:

TROY: See? I'm gonna build me a fence around what belongs to me. And then I want you to stay on the

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other side. See? You stay over there until you're ready for me.

Lights start to come on and windows are being opened in the neighbors' houses.

TROY: Then you come on. Bring your army. Bring your sickle. Bring your wrestling clothes. I ain't gonna fall down on my vigilance this time. You ain't gonna sneak up on me no more.

A few people call: "Shut up!" "Are you crazy?" "Stop making a racket!" etc.

TROY: When you ready for me . . . when the top of your list say Troy Maxson . . . You come up and knock on the front door. Ain't nobody else got nothing to do with this.

We see the closed door behind Troy. Then we're on the other side of the door, on the landing. Rose is leaning hard against the door, hand on the knob, wanting to go in but knowing she mustn't. Troy's voice is loud even through the door.

TROY (o.s.): This is between you and me.

Cory comes out of his room. He walks to his mother as Troy shouts:

TROY (o.s.): Man to man. You stay on the other side of that fence until you ready for me.

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CORY (SOFTLY, SCARED): Mama, what's—

*Rose turns to Cory, shakes her head—
"don't talk" and tries to push him
back toward his room. He won't go.
Rose holds on to him, and they listen,
not moving.*

TROY (O.S.): Then you come up and—

EXT. THE BACKYARD—LATE NIGHT

*We're looking up at Troy, leaning out
the window, shouting:*

TROY: —and you knock on the front door! Anytime you
want!

(waiting for a response)

I'll be ready for you!

*Troy waits again; no response. He
draws himself back into the room,
closes the window. He opens the
bedroom door. Rose and Cory are there.
No one knows what to say. Troy passes
his wife and son. They hear him
descending the stairs, then the front
door opens and slams shut.*

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EXT. THE BACKYARD—1 WEEK LATER—
AFTERNOON

*In the kitchen, the radio's on:
Opening Day for the Pirates. The
broadcast plays throughout the scene.*

*Rose is on her knees, weeding the
garden.*

*She hears the back door open and looks
toward the porch. Troy is there,
holding a small, fair-skinned INFANT IN
HIS ARMS.*

TROY: Rose . . . I'm standing here with my daughter in my arms. She ain't but a wee bitty little old thing. She don't know nothing about grownups' business. She innocent . . . and she ain't got no mama.

ROSE (CLIMBING THE STEPS): What you telling me for, Troy?

*She passes Troy and goes into the
kitchen. Troy stands still. The radio
blares the baseball game.*

*From inside, the sound of running
water, then kitchen clattering, then
the sound of a knife chopping
something, **hard**. The baby starts to
fret. Troy jounces her a little,
talking to her, sitting on the bottom
steps.*

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TROY: Well . . . I guess we'll just sit out here on the porch.

(calling back into the house, to Rose)

A man's got to do what's right for him. I ain't sorry for nothing I done. It felt right in my heart.

Troy waits for a response. The chopping continues. The baby cries. Troy wipes his finger on his shirt and holds a knuckle to her mouth. She fastens on his knuckle. Something that looks like a smile passes across her face.

TROY: What you smiling at? Your daddy's a big man. Got these great big old hands. But sometimes he's scared. And right now your daddy's scared 'cause we sitting out here and ain't got no home. Oh, I been homeless before. I ain't had no little baby with me. But I been homeless.

The chopping has stopped.

INT. THE KITCHEN—AFTERNOON

Rose has chopped a large pile of okra. She holds the knife, listening.

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EXT. THE BACK PORCH—AFTERNOON

TROY: You just be out on the road by your lonesome and you see one of them trains coming and you just kinda go like this . . .

(singing, as a lullaby)

Please, Mr. Engineer, let a man ride the line . . .

Please, Mr. Engineer, let a man ride the line . . .

I ain't got no ticket please let me ride the blinds.

Rose comes out. Troy stands.

TROY: She's my daughter, Rose. My own flesh and blood. I can't deny her no more than I can deny them boys.

(pause)

You and them boys is my family. You and them and this child is all I got in the world. So I guess what I'm saying is . . . I'd appreciate it if you'd help me take care of her.

ROSE: Okay, Troy . . . you're right. I'll take care of your baby for you . . . 'cause . . . like you say . . . she's innocent . . . and you can't visit the sins of the father upon the child. A motherless child has got a hard time.

She takes the baby.

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ROSE: From right now . . . this child got a mother.
But you a womanless man.

*Rose goes back into the house with the
baby. Troy remains, frozen.*

Over this, the sound of a truck idling.

EXT. A STREET IN A WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD—
1 MONTH LATER—EARLY
MORNING

*The lawns and trees along the street
are bright spring green. A garbage
truck idles as two young african-
american collectors lift and empty
cans. Troy's in the driver's seat,
bored, lonely. Through his rearview
mirrors he watches the collectors
talking, laughing.*

*A group of white high school students
come out of one of the houses,
clowning, chatting, several boys in
varsity jackets. Troy watches them.
Then he's startled by a loud thump from
the back: in his rearview mirror, the
collectors step on board. He shifts
into first gear and the truck rolls
through the wealthy neighborhood.*

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EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

Troy comes in through the side yard to the sound of a bat hitting a baseball. Cory, in his A&P uniform, fake bow-tie dangling from his open collar, is hitting the ball. The moment Cory sees Troy, he stops. Troy looks ready to say something. Cory tosses the bat away, carelessly. Making a show of it he buttons his collar, clips the tie into place, and walks out the right side alley, all without giving his father a glance. Troy goes to the bat, picks it up and puts it into its proper place against the tree. He turns and heads into the house.

INT. KITCHEN/FRONT ENTRANCE—
AFTERNOON

Troy comes into the kitchen, which looks different: it's cluttered with baby bottles, nipples, a high chair. Two steaming pots and one cold covered pot are on the stove, the heat turned off. Rose, dressed up, holds the baby in one arm, from which a purse hangs, stuffed with diapers and two warm bottles. With her free hand Rose picks up the cake.

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TROY: I'm coming in and everybody's going out.

ROSE: I'm taking this cake down to the church for the bake sale. Lyons was by to see you. He stopped by to pay you your twenty dollars. It's laying in there on the table.

Troy takes his pay from his pocket.

TROY: Well . . . here go this money.

As Rose leaves the kitchen with the baby and the cake:

ROSE: Put it in there on the table, Troy. I'll get it.

His money still in his hand, Troy follows her to the front door, which he opens for her.

TROY: What time you coming back?

ROSE: Ain't no use in you studying me. It don't matter what time I come back.

TROY: I just asked you a question, woman. What's the matter . . . can't I ask you a question?

ROSE: Troy, I don't want to go into it.

She steps out onto the front porch. He starts to follow, but she stops in the doorway. She puts the cake down on one of the porch chairs, turns to him:

ROSE: Your dinner's in there on the stove. All you got to do is heat it up. And don't you be eating the rest of them cakes in there. I'm coming back for

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them. We having a bake sale at the church tomorrow.

Rose shuts the door firmly. Troy stands there, listening to her going down the steps.

He stands alone in the empty house, unsure of what to do. He flaps the money he's holding. He goes to the dining room table and puts his cash next to Lyons' twenty. He pockets the twenty and starts for the door.

INT. TAYLORS' BAR—LATE AFTERNOON

Troy sits alone at the bar, a generous glass of gin before him. He takes a sip.

Someone pulls out the stool next to him and starts to sit. Troy looks. It's Bono.

BONO: Hey, Troy.

TROY: Hey, what's happening, Bono?

BONO: I just thought I'd stop by to see you. Wasn't no one at the house, so I figured -

TROY: What you stop by and see me for? You ain't stopped by the house in a month of Sundays. Hell, I must owe you money or something.

BONO: Since you got your promotion I can't keep up

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with you. Used to see you every day. Now I don't even know what route you working.

TROY: They keep switching me around. Got me out in Greentree now . . . hauling white folks' garbage.

BONO: Greentree, huh? You lucky, at least you ain't got to be lifting them barrels. Damn if they ain't getting heavier. I'm gonna put in my two years and call it quits.

TROY: I'm thinking about retiring myself.

BONO: You got it easy. You can drive for another five years.

TROY: It ain't the same, Bono. It ain't like working the back of the truck. Ain't got nobody to talk to . . . feel like you working by yourself. Naw, I'm thinking about retiring.

Bono nods. An awkward silence.

TROY: How's Lucille?

BONO: She all right. Her arthritis get to acting up on her sometime. Saw Rose on my way here. She going down to the church, huh?

TROY: Yeah, she took up going down there. All them preachers looking for somebody to fatten their pockets.

(beat)

Got some gin here.

BONO: Naw, thanks. I just stopped in to say hello.

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TROY: Hell, nigger . . . you can take a drink. I ain't never known you to say no to a drink. You ain't got to work tomorrow.

BONO: I just stopped by. I'm fixing to go over to Skinner's. We got us a domino game going over his house every Friday.

TROY: Nigger, you can't play no dominoes. I used to whup you four games out of five.

BONO: Well, that learned me. I'm getting better.

TROY: Yeah? Well, that's all right.

BONO: Look here . . . I got to be getting on.

Troy nods as Bono slides down off the bar stool.

BONO: Stop by sometime, huh?

TROY: Yeah, I'll do that, Bono.

Bono slaps Troy on the back and starts to go.

TROY (NOT WANTING TO BE ALONE): Lucille told Rose you bought her a new refrigerator.

BONO: Yeah, Rose told Lucille you had finally built your fence . . . so I figured we'd call it even.

TROY: I knew you would.

BONO: Yeah . . . okay. I'll be talking to you.

TROY: Yeah, take care, Bono. Good to see you. I'm gonna stop over.

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BONO: Yeah. Okay, Troy.

Bono leaves. Troy downs the rest of his drink in one swallow. Under his breath, he starts to sing:

TROY (SLOWLY): *Hear it ring! Hear it ring!
Had an old dog his name was Blue.*

EXT. WYLIE AVENUE—RECRUITMENT OFFICE—
TWILIGHT

Troy's singing continues over this:

TROY (v.o.): *You know Blue was mighty true . . .
You know Blue was a good old dog . . .*

Cory walks home from work in his A&P uniform. He passes an armed forces recruiting office. In the window, a poster: a big, handsome white Marine, above him: WE AREN'T LOOKING FOR JUST ANYONE.

TROY (v.o.): *Blue treed a possum in a hollow log . . .
You know from that he was a good old dog . . .*

And below: we might be looking for you. Cory stares at it for a long time, as Troy's singing continues:

EXT. BACK YARD—TWILIGHT

Cory approaches the house. He stops when he hears his father singing.

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TROY: *Old Blue died and I dug his grave
Let him down with a golden chain . . .*

*Cory heads into the yard. Troy sits in
the middle of the back steps, blocking
them. The pint bottle in his hand is
nearly empty.*

TROY: *Every night when I hear old Blue bark!*

(pause)

Blue treed a possum in Noah's Ark!

*Cory looks to the right, considering
going around to the front. Then he
decides not to. He walks up to the
steps.*

CORY: I got to get by.

TROY: Say what? What's you say?

CORY: You in my way. I got to get by.

TROY: You got to get by where? This is my house.
Bought and paid for. In full. Took me fifteen
years. And if you wanna go in my house and I'm
sitting on the steps . . . you say excuse me.
Like your mama taught you.

CORY: Come on, Pop . . . I got to get by.

*Cory starts to maneuver his way past
Troy. Troy grabs his leg and shoves
him back.*

TROY: You just gonna walk over top of me?

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CORY: I live here too!

TROY: You just gonna walk over top of me in my own house?

Troy stands, advancing on Cory, who backs away, then stops.

CORY: I ain't scared of you.

TROY: I ain't asked if you was scared of me. I asked you if you was fixing to walk over top of me in my own house? That's the question. You ain't gonna say excuse me? You just gonna walk over top of me?

CORY: If you wanna put it like that.

TROY: How else am I gonna put it?

CORY: I was walking by you to go into the house 'cause you sitting on the steps drunk, singing to yourself. You can put it like that.

TROY: Without saying excuse me???

Cory doesn't respond.

TROY: I asked you a question. Without saying excuse me???

CORY: I ain't got to say excuse me to you. You don't count around here no more.

TROY: Oh, I see . . . I don't count around here no more. You ain't got to say excuse me to your daddy. All of a sudden you done got so grown that your daddy don't count around here no more . . . Around here in his own house and yard that he done

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paid for with the sweat of his brow. You done got so grown to where you gonna take over. You gonna take over my house. Is that right? You gonna wear my pants. You gonna go in there and stretch out on my bed. You ain't got to say excuse me 'cause I don't count around here no more. Is that right?

CORY (HE'S HAD ENOUGH): That's right. You always talking this dumb stuff. Now, why don't you just get out my way.

TROY: I guess you got someplace to sleep and something to put in your belly. You got that, huh? You got that? That's what you need. You got that, huh?

CORY: You don't know what I got. You ain't got to worry about what I got.

TROY: You right! You one hundred percent right! I done spent the last seventeen years worrying about what you got. Now it's your turn, see? I'll tell you what to do. You grown . . . we done established that. You a man. Now, let's see you act like one. Turn your behind around and walk out this yard. And when you get out there in the alley . . . you can forget about this house. See? 'Cause this is my house. You go on and be a man and get your own house. You can forget about this. 'Cause this is mine. You go on and get yours 'cause I'm through with doing for you.

CORY: You talking about what you did for me . . . what'd you ever give me?

TROY: Them feet and bones! That pumping heart, nigger!

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I give you more than anybody else is ever gonna give you.

CORY: You ain't never gave me nothing! You ain't never done nothing but hold me back. Afraid I was gonna be better than you. All you ever did was try and make me scared of you. I used to tremble every time you called my name. Every time I heard your foot-steps in the house. Wondering all the time . . . what's Papa gonna say if I do this? . . . What's he gonna say if I do that? . . . What's Papa gonna say if I turn on the radio? And Mama, too . . . she tries . . . but she's scared of you.

TROY: You leave your mama out of this. She ain't got nothing to do with this.

CORY: I don't know how she stand you . . . after what you did to her.

TROY: I told you to leave your mama out of this!

Troy advances toward Cory.

CORY: What you gonna do . . . give me a whupping? You can't whup me no more. You're too old. You just an old man.

Troy grabs Cory's shirt and pulls Cory to him.

TROY: Nigger! That's what you are! You just another nigger on the street to me!

Troy throws Cory backward in the dirt.

CORY: You crazy! You know that?

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TROY: Go on now! You got the devil in you. Get on away from me!

CORY: You just a crazy old man . . . talking about I got the devil in me.

Troy advances on Cory.

TROY: Yeah, I'm crazy! If you don't get on the other side of that yard . . . I'm gonna show you how crazy I am! Go on . . . get the hell out of my yard.

CORY: It ain't your yard. You took Uncle Gabe's money he got from the Army to buy this house and then you put him out.

TROY: Get your black ass out of my yard!

Troy's advance backs Cory up against the tree. Cory grabs up the bat.

CORY: I ain't going nowhere! Come on . . . put me out! I ain't scared of you.

TROY: That's my bat!

CORY: Come on!
Troy walks toward Cory.

TROY: Put my bat down!

CORY: Come on, put me out!

Cory swings at Troy, who backs across the yard.

CORY: What's the matter? You so bad . . . Put me out!

Troy advances toward Cory.

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CORY (BACKING UP): Come on! Come on!

TROY: You're gonna have to use it! You wanna draw that bat back on me . . . you're gonna have to use it.

CORY: Come on! . . . Come on!

Cory swings that bat at Troy a second time. He misses. Troy continues to advance toward him.

TROY: You're gonna have to kill me! You wanna draw that bat back on me. You're gonna have to kill me.

Cory, backed up against the tree, can go no farther. Troy taunts him. He sticks out his head and offers him a target.

TROY: Come on! Come on!

Cory is unable to swing the bat. Troy grabs it.

TROY: Then I'll show you.

Cory and Troy struggle over the bat. The struggle is fierce and fully engaged. Troy ultimately is the stronger, and takes the bat from Cory and stands over him ready to swing. He stops himself.

TROY: Go on and get away from around my house.

Cory, stung by his defeat, picks

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himself up, walks slowly out of the yard and up the alley.

CORY: Tell Mama I'll be back for my things.

TROY (CALLING AFTER HIM): They'll be on the other side of that fence!

Troy starts toward the tree with the bat, staggering, sick exhausted, his mouth horribly dry. He tries to moisten it with this tongue: no use.

TROY: I can't taste nothing. *Hallelujah!*
I can't taste nothing no more.

He assumes a batting posture and begins to taunt Death, the fastball in the outside corner.

TROY: Come on! It's between you and me now!

A static-y growl starts, building into a roar. Troy taunts the pitcher as the light gives way to complete darkness:

TROY: Come on! Anytime you want! Come on! I be ready for you . . . but I ain't gonna be easy.

BLACK SCREEN

In the blackness, Rose's voice:

ROSE (v.o.): Raynell!

RAYNELL (v.o.): Ma'am?

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ROSE (v.o.): What you doing out there?

RAYNELL (v.o.): Nothing.

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ROSE (v.o.): Girl, get in here and get dressed. What you doing?

EXT. THE BACKYARD—MORNING

The sky is gray, dark clouds roll in. Raynell, 7, in her nightgown, kneels in rose's garden, which is now much larger. She looks up at the bedroom window.

RAYNELL: Seeing if my garden grewed.

Rose leans out of the window, her hair up, wearing black.

ROSE: I told you it ain't gonna grow overnight. You got to wait.

RAYNELL: It don't look like it never gonna grow. Dag!

ROSE: I told you a watched pot never boils.

RAYNELL: This ain't even no pot, Mama.

ROSE: Get in here and get dressed. This ain't no morn- ing to be playing around. You hear me?

RAYNELL: Yes, ma'am.

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INT. THE KITCHEN AND FRONT ROOMS—
MORNING

Raynell dawdles past Bono and Lyons in dark suits, drinking coffee. She starts upstairs. There's a knock at the door. She looks up to see if her mother is coming to answer it. She decides to answer it herself, but it opens. Cory comes in.

He's 25 now, a Marine Corporal. He carries a duffel bag. Raynell stares at him in his dress uniform, agog.

CORY: Hi.

(pause)

I bet your name is Raynell.

RAYNELL: Uh-huh.

CORY: Is your mama home?

RAYNELL: Mama . . . there's some man down here. Mama?

Raynell flies up the stairs. Cory puts down his bag and looks around.

ROSE: Cory? Cory! Lord have mercy!

Rose runs down, then stops, looking at her son. She calls back into the kitchen:

ROSE: Look here, you all!

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*She runs to Cory, and they embrace.
Bono and Lyons come in from the
kitchen. Raynell watches from midway
on the stairs.*

BONO: Aw, looka here . . .

*Rose steps back, looking at him,
wiping tears away.*

ROSE: Done got all grown up!

CORY: Don't cry, Mama. What you crying about?

ROSE: I'm just so glad you made it.

CORY: Hey, Lyons. How you doing, Mr. Bono.

LYONS: Look at you, man. Look at you. Don't he look good, Rose. Got them corporal stripes.

ROSE: What took you so long?

CORY: You know how the Marines are, Mama. They got to get all their paperwork straight before they let you do anything.

ROSE: Well, I'm sure glad you made it. They let Lyons come. Your Uncle Gabe's still in the hospital. They don't know if they gonna let him out or not. I just talked to them a little while ago.

LYONS: A corporal in the United States Marines.

BONO: Your daddy knew you had it in you. He used to tell me all the time.

LYONS: Don't he look good, Mr. Bono?

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BONO: Yeah, he remind me of Troy when I first met him.

(pause)

Say, Rose, Lucille's down at the church with the choir. I'm gonna go down and get the pallbearers lined up. I'll be back to get you all.

ROSE: Thanks, Jim.

CORY: See you, Mr. Bono.

Bono goes out the front door.

No one speaks. Then Lyons points to Raynell on the stairs.

LYONS: Cory, look at Raynell. Ain't she precious? She gonna break a whole lot of hearts.

Raynell hides behind the banisters.

ROSE: Raynell, come and say hello to your brother. This is your brother, Cory. You remember Cory.

RAYNELL: No, ma'am.

CORY: She don't remember me, Mama.

ROSE: Well, we talk about you. She heard us talk about you. This is your brother, Cory.

(to Raynell)

Come on and say hello.

RAYNELL: Hi.

CORY: Hi. So you're Raynell. Mama told me a lot about you.

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ROSE (STARTING FOR THE KITCHEN): You all c'mon and let me fix you some breakfast. Keep up your strength.

CORY: I ain't hungry, Mama.

LYONS: You can fix me something, Rose. I'll be there in a minute.

ROSE (TO CORY): Cory, You sure you don't want nothing. I know they ain't feeding you right.

CORY: No, Mama . . . thanks. I don't feel like eating. I'll get something later.

ROSE: Raynell . . . get on upstairs and get that dress on like I told you.

Raynell scrambles upstairs as Rose goes into the kitchen.

LYONS (PAUSE): I always knew you was gonna make something out yourself. Your head was always in the right direction. So . . . you gonna stay in . . . make it a career . . . put in your twenty years?

CORY: I don't know. I got six already, I think that's enough.

LYONS: Stick with Uncle Sam and retire early. Ain't nothing out here. I guess Rose told you what happened with me. They got me down the workhouse. I thought I was being slick cashing other people's checks.

CORY: How much time you doing?

LYONS: They give me three years. I got that beat now. I ain't got but nine more months. It ain't so bad.

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You learn to deal with it like anything else. You got to take the crookeds with the straights. That's what Papa used to say. He used to say that when he struck out. I seen him strike out three times in a row . . . and the next time up he hit the ball over the grandstand. Right out there in Homestead Field. He wasn't satisfied hitting in the seats . . . he wanted to hit it over everything! After the game he had two hundred people standing around waiting to shake his hand. You got to take the crookeds with the straights. Yeah, Papa was something else.

CORY: You still playing?

LYONS: Cory . . . you know I'm gonna do that. There's some fellows down there we got us a band . . . we gonna try and stay together when we get out . . . but yeah, I'm still playing.

Rose calls from the kitchen:

ROSE: Lyons, I got these eggs in the pan.

LYONS: Let me go on and get these eggs, man. Get ready to go bury Papa.

(a beat, then)

How you doing? You doing all right?

Cory nods. Lyons touches him on the shoulder and they share a moment of silent grief. Lyons goes into the kitchen. Cory looks up to the top of the stairs and sees Raynell, in her

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dress, studying him with excited curiosity.

RAYNELL: Hi.

CORY: Hi.

She comes down a couple of steps, curious.

RAYNELL: Did you used to sleep in my room?

CORY: Yeah . . . that used to be my room.

RAYNELL: That's what Papa call it. "Cory's room." It got your football in the closet.

Rose calling from the kitchen . . .

ROSE: Raynell, get in there and get them good shoes on!

RAYNELL: Mama, can't I wear these? Them other one hurt my feet.

ROSE: Well, they just gonna have to hurt your feet for a while. You ain't said they hurt your feet when you went down to the store and got them.

RAYNELL: They didn't hurt then. My feet done got bigger.

ROSE: Don't you give me no back talk now. You get in there and get them shoes on.

Raynell looks at her brand-new brother . . . reluctantly, she obeys her mother. Cory makes his way to the

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kitchen, passing his brother who is wiping his plate clean.

INT. KITCHEN—MORNING

Cory enters the kitchen. He looks at the photos on the wall noticing that JFK and Martin Luther King have been added next to the photo of Jesus. He looks at his mother, then heads out into the yard.

EXT. BACKYARD—MORNING

Cory comes down the steps into the yard, taking it all in. He sees Troy's bat leaning against the tree. He walks toward it as he hears . . .

ROSE (AS SHE COMES DOWN BACK STEPS): Ain't too much changed. He still got that piece of rag tied to that tree. He was out here swinging that bat. I was just ready to go back in the house. He swung that bat and then he just fell over. Seem like he swung it and stood there with this grin on his face . . . and then he just fell over. They carried him on down to the hospital but I knew there wasn't no need . . . why don't you come on in the house.

CORY: Mama . . . I got something to tell you. I don't

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know how to tell you this . . . but I've got to tell you . . . I'm not going to Papa's funeral.

ROSE: Boy, hush your mouth. That's your daddy you talking about. I don't want hear that kind of talk this morning. I done raised you to come to this? You standing there all healthy and grown talking about you ain't going to your daddy's funeral?

CORY: Mama . . . listen . . .

ROSE: I don't want to hear it, Cory. You just get that thought out of your head.

CORY: I've got to say no to him. One time in my life I've got to say no.

ROSE: Don't nobody have to listen to nothing like that. I know you and your daddy ain't seen eye to eye, but I ain't gotta listen to that kind of talk this morning. Disrespecting your daddy ain't gonna make you a man, Cory. You got to find a way to come to that on your own. Not going to your daddy's funeral ain't gonna make you a man.

Cory looks around, trying to find what to say. Then:

CORY: The whole time I was growing up . . . living in his house . . . Papa was like a shadow that followed you everywhere. It weighed on you and sunk into your flesh. It would wrap around you and lay there until you couldn't tell which one was you anymore. That shadow digging in your flesh. Trying to crawl in. Trying to live through you. I'm just

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saying I've got to find a way to get rid of that shadow, Mama.

ROSE: You just like him. You got him in you good.

CORY: Don't tell me that, Mama.

ROSE: You Troy Maxson all over again.

CORY: I don't want to be Troy Maxson. I want to be me.

ROSE: You can't be nobody but who you are, Cory. That shadow wasn't nothing but you growing into yourself. You either got to grow into it or cut it down to fit you. But that's all you got to make life with. That's all you got to measure yourself against that world out there. Your daddy wanted you to be everything he wasn't . . . and at the same time he tried to make you into everything he was. I don't know if he was right or wrong . . . but I do know he meant to do more good than he meant to do harm.

She stops, overwhelmed. Cory puts his hand on her hand. She takes his hand, squeezes it, turns it over, holding on.

ROSE: Sometimes when he touched he bruised. And sometimes when he took me in his arms he cut.

(beat)

When I first met your daddy I thought, "Here is a man I can lay down with and make a baby." That's the first thing I thought when I seen him . . . "Rose Lee, here is a man that you can open your-

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self up to and be filled to bursting. Here is a man that can fill all them empty spaces you been tipping around the edges of."

(beat)

When your daddy walked through the house he was so big he filled it up. That was my first mistake. Not to make him leave some room for me. But I wanted a house that I could sing in, and that's what your daddy gave me. I didn't know to keep up his strength I had to give up little pieces of mine. I took on his life as mine and mixed up the pieces so that you couldn't hardly tell which was which anymore. It was my choice. It was my life and I didn't have to live it like that. But that's what life offered me in the way of being a woman and I took it. I grabbed hold of it with both hands. By the time Raynell came into the house . . . I didn't want to make my blessing off of nobody's misfortune, but I took on to Raynell like she was all them babies I had wanted and never had.

The phone rings.

ROSE: Like I'd been blessed to relive a part of my life. And if the Lord see fit to keep up my strength . . . I'm gonna do her just like your daddy did you . . . I'm gonna give her the best of what's in me.

Raynell comes out with her old shoes on.

RAYNELL: Mama . . . Reverend Tolliver on the phone.

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Rose goes into the house.

RAYNELL: Hi.

CORY: Hi.

RAYNELL: You in the Army or the Marines?

CORY: Marines.

RAYNELL: Papa said it was the Army. Did you know Blue?

CORY: Blue? Who's Blue?

RAYNELL: Papa's dog what he sing about all the time.

CORY (SINGING): *Hear it ring! Hear it ring!*

*I had a dog his name was Blue
You know Blue was mighty true
You know Blue was a good old dog
Blue treed a possum in a hollow log
You know from that he was a good old dog.
Hear it ring!*

*Raynell, embarrassed, delighted, joins
in.*

CORY AND RAYNELL: *Blue treed a possum out on a limb
Blue looked at me and I looked at him
Grabbed that possum and put him in a sack
Blue stayed there till I came back
Old Blue's feets was big and round
Never allowed a possum to touch the ground.
Old Blue died and I dug his grave
I dug his grave with a silver spade
Let him down with a golden chain*

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*And every night I call his name
Go on Blue, you good dog you
Go on Blue, you good dog you*

RAYNELL: *Blue laid down and died like a man
Blue laid down and died . . .*

CORY (STRUGGLING): *Blue laid down and died like a man
Now he's treeing possums in the Promised Land.*

CORY AND RAYNELL: *I'm gonna tell you this to let you
know . . .*

Blue's gone where the good dogs go.

Rose comes to the door.

ROSE: Cory, we gonna be ready to go in a minute.

CORY (TO RAYNELL): You go on in the house and change them shoes like Mama told you so we can go to Pa-pa's funeral.

RAYNELL: Okay, I'll be back.

Raynell hurries into the house. Cory gets up, crosses over to the tree. Rose stands at the screen door watching him. She takes a look at the threatening sky, about to return to the house, when she sees Gabriel. He's older but healthier, more vital, in a new suit and a hat. One arm is behind his back. Rose is speechless with surprise.

GABRIEL: Hey, Rose!

ROSE: Gabe?

GABRIEL: I'm here, Rose. Hey Rose, I'm here.

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ROSE: Lord . . .

(calling back to the house)

Look here, Lyons!

Lyons, then Bono come out from the house.

LYONS: See, I told you, Rose . . . I told you they'd let him come.

CORY: How you doing, Uncle Gabe?

LYONS: How you doing, Uncle Gabe?

Gabriel looks at each of them, then back to Rose. He takes his hand from behind him and holds his trumpet aloft.

GABRIEL: Hey, Rose. It's time. It's time to tell Saint Peter to open the Gates.

Not knowing what she's agreeing to, Rose nods.

GABRIEL: Troy, you ready?

Gabriel waits for an answer. Raynell comes out on the porch and hides behind Rose, shy. Gabe smiles at her, and she returns his smile.

GABRIEL: You ready, Troy. I'm gonna tell Saint Peter to open the Gates. You get ready now.

Gabriel puts the trumpet to his lips, two decades of waiting for this moment

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finally over. He inhales and blows into the horn. No sound. Gabriel blows again, a huge effort: Nothing.

Then Gabe begins to dance, slow and strange, eerie, skeletal and life-giving, a dance of atavistic signature and ritual. Lyons goes to Gabe, embracing him, trying to stop him. Gabriel pushes Lyons away.

He points the trumpet at the ground and inhales as he arcs the horn upwards till he's on his toes, closing his eyes, putting the mouthpiece to his lips; Gabriel blows once more, and:

From the tarnished, battered bell of the broken trumpet comes an ear-splitting note, growing higher and louder till it's almost like a woman's scream.

In the clouds directly above Gabe, a small aperture opens up and a pillar of brilliant light descends, bathing Gabriel and his horn in gold. The trumpet's blast stops; the silence is huge and abrupt.

CLOSE-UP: Gabriel, his face raised up, bathed in light. He lowers his trumpet. He says to God:

GABRIEL: That's the way that go!

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The camera begins to pull away, up and up. Rose goes to Gabriel, Raynell following behind her. Then Raynell runs ahead of her mother.

CLOSE-UP: Raynell's small hand taking hold of Gabe's hand. The camera is high above the yard; the men have gone inside, and Rose is behind them. Raynell leads Gabriel behind Rose.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Bono leaves the house first, followed by Cory and Lyons.

Twenty black cars wait at the curb, a flower car behind them, and then the hearse. Neighbors have begun gathering on both sides of the street.

Bono goes to the first car as Lyons gets into the second.

Cory waits outside by the open car door. Raynell comes out of the house, leading Gabe; Bono motions for her to come to the first car, and she does. He opens the rear door for them, and Raynell and Gabe get in.

Rose comes out of the house, Bono watches. She walks up to Cory, grabs

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him and holds him tight. She gets in the car and Cory climbs in after her.

Bono gives the roof of the car a loud slap, then climbs in and shuts the door. The first car pulls out; the others follow.

People line the street. Men take off their hats as the funeral cortege goes down the hill. Beyond the Hill, the towers of Pittsburgh rising.