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# Fences

By August Wilson

**BLACK SCREEN:**

**TITLE:**

The screen remains black. The sound of a truck rumbling along a street. Two men are heard talking:

**bono (v.o.):**

**troy (v.o.):**

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.):**

**troy (v.o.):**

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.

EXT. WYLIE AVENUE, THE HILL, PITTSBURGH—  
EARLY SEPTEMBER—MORNING

The rear of the garbage truck, god's

**point of view:**

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:**

kind of people.

**troy:**

the man from the union talking to Mr. Rand?

**bono:**

gonna get us fired." I told him to get away from me with that. He walked away from me calling you a troublemaker. (anxious) What Mr. Rand say?

**troy:**

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:**

they can't fire you. That's what one of them white fellows tell me.

**troy:**

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:**

**TITLE:**

**troy:**

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.

**troy:**

that's what I done! Now they wanna come up with this pack of lies.

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:**

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:**

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:**

**bono:**

**troy:**

Which is to say nothing.

Same as you and me. He getting as much as we is.

Which is to say nothing.

**bono:**

than me . . . and I ain't saying what I'm doing.

**troy:**

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:**

her.

**troy:**

never let nobody tell you Troy Maxson don't eye the women.

**bono:**

bought her a drink or two.

**troy:**

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

**bono:**

you call being polite. But when you wanna be buying two or three . . . that's what you call eyeing her.

**troy:**

ever known me to chase after women?

**bono:**

I knew you when.

**troy:**

Rose?

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

**bono:**

that's the truth, there. I can say that.

**troy:**

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:**

You supposed to be at Taylors' and you be walking up around there.

**troy:**

watching after you.

**bono:**

**troy:**

That don't mean nothing because you seen me walking around there.

**bono:**

showed up one day.

**troy:**

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. 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:**

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:**

but push them out of the way. But them hips cushion the ride!

**bono:**

**troy:**

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, 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.

**rose:**

getting into?

**troy:**

This is men talk, woman.

**rose:**

gonna stay for supper?

**bono:**

up a pot of pigfeet.

**troy:**

even stay the night if you got some pigfeet. You got something in there to top them pigfeet, Rose?

**rose:**

and collard greens.

**troy:**

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 (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:**

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

**troy:**

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:**

the same night.

**troy:**

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:**

doing nothing but telling a lie.

**troy:**

. . . forget the rooster . . . we ain't had no yard!

**bono:**

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:**

no better than they doing now. That's just someThere'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:**

She got fresh food.

**rose:**

food. I'm talking about what she charge. She charge ten cents more than the A&P.

**troy:**

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:**

sense it make to shop there when she overcharge?

**troy:**

where the people been good to me.

**rose:**

That's all I was saying.

**bono:**

raising all kind of hell.

**troy:**

pint. Come here, finish this pint.

**bono:**

loose.

Troy hands him the bottle.

**troy:**

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:**

around here. He got that job . . . he can start to look out for himself.

**rose:**

football team.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

that.

**bono:**

be all right. Ain't but two men ever played base 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:**

or a window to throw it out of.

**rose:**

Troy. That was before the war. Times have changed a lot since then.

**troy:**

**rose:**

Baseball and football.

**bono:**

Troy. You just come along too early.

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

.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:**

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

**troy:**

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:**

need to be drinking like that.

**troy:**

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:**

over the outside corner of the plate where you  
can get the meat of the bat on it . . .  
(he swings, smacking the ball hard:)  
And good God!

The ball flies in fast circles around the tree limb. Troy looks up into the sky.

**troy:**

**bono:**

it.

**troy:**

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

**rose:**

about death.

**troy:**

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:**

to talk about it.

**troy:**

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.

**troy:**

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 him 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:**

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):**

You remember he had pneumonia? Laying there with a fever talking plumb out of his head.

**troy:**

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 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:**

ways to tell it. Different things to make up about it.

**troy:**

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,

threwed 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:**

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 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.):**

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:**

vigilance . . . let me have the bottle.

**troy:**

should have left out that part.

**rose:**

don't even know what he be talking about.

**troy:**

**bono:**

Uncle Remus in your blood. You got more stories than the devil got sinners.

**troy:**

the devil.

**rose:**

stuff.

Lyons comes out on the porch.

**lyons:**

**troy:**

**lyons:**

He kisses her.

**lyons:**

**bono:**

**troy:**

him around here last week.

**rose:**

you and you wanna start all that nonsense.

**troy:**

Troy offers Lyons the bottle.

**troy:**

I know why he come by to see me and he  
know I know.

**lyons:**

hi . . . see how you was doing.

**troy:**

**rose:**

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:**



and thought I'd stop by for a minute.

**troy:**

You telling the truth there. You was in the neighYou was in the neighborhood all right, nigger.

You telling the truth there. You was in the neighborhood 'cause it's my payday.

**lyons:**

have ten dollars.

**troy:**

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:**

devil you done seen.

**lyons:**

**troy:**

**rose:**

man ain't had nothing to do with the devil. Anything you can't understand, you want to call it the devil.

**troy:**

about some furniture. Got three rooms for two- ninety-eight. 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 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:**

Rose returns to the kitchen. Troy's voice follows her. As she goes about readying the food with a perfectionist's care:

**troy:**

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:**

first of the month just like clockwork.

**bono:**

a month?

**troy:**

**bono:**

much the man done charged you?

**troy:**

ten times over! The fact is I'm scared to stop paying it.

**rose:**

Glickman. He ain't paying no ten dollars a month to nobody.

**troy:**

fool.

**lyons:**

where there's a bridge for sale.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

that ten dollars. I'll give it back to you. Bonnie got a job working at the hospital.

**troy:**

nigger is when he wants something. That's the only time I see him.

**lyons:**

that. Let me have the ten dollars. I told you Bonnie working.

**troy:**

care if she working. Go ask her for the ten dollars if she working. Talking about "Bonnie working."

Why ain't you working?

**lyons:**

Where am I gonna get a job at? You know I can't get no job.

**troy:**

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:**

don't wanna be carrying nobody's rubbish. I don't want to be punching nobody's time clock  
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:**

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:**

**lyons:**

**troy:**

dollars and I got to eat beans the rest of the week. Naw . . . you ain't getting no ten dollars here.

**lyons:**

know why you wanna say that.

**troy:**

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:**

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  
yourself. You ain't gonna find me going and asking  
nobody for nothing. I done spent too many years  
without.

**lyons:**

**troy:**

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:**

I got mine. The only thing that matters to me is  
the music.

**troy:**

gonna eat . . . where your next dollar is coming  
from. You telling the truth there.

**lyons (annoyed):**

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:**

**lyons:**

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:**

**troy (to lyons):**

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:**

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:**

She hands him the money.

lyons (packing up his guitar): Thanks, Rose. Look . . . I got to run . . . I'll see you later.

**troy:**

and ain't gonna look to see where she got that ten dollars from? See how they do me, Bono?

**lyons:**

give it back to you.

**troy:**

ten dollars . . . he'll be owing me thirty more.

**lyons:**

**bono:**

**lyons:**

Lyons is out the door.

**troy:**

job and take care of that woman he got.

**bono:**

**troy:**

**rose:**

**bono:**

getting on. Lucille gonna be waiting.  
Troy goes to Rose, puts his arm around  
her.

**troy:**

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:**

**bono:**

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:**

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH--LATE AFTERNOON  
Bono walks down the front steps as we  
hear . . .

**troy (o.s.):**

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:**

**rose (v.o.):**

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.):**

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, 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:**

as soon I finish hanging up these clothes.

**troy:**

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:**

you fool with them. You and Lyons both.

**rose:**

**troy:**

away.

Rose stops wringing out the clothes  
and takes him on.

**rose:**

play a nickel here and a nickel there.

**troy:**

**rose:**

It always come in handy when I do hit. I don't  
hear you complaining then.

**troy:**

Trying to guess out of six hundred ways which way  
the number gonna come. If I had all the money nigI 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:**

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:**

threwed his money away.

Troy goes down the steps toward the ruined fence.

**troy:**

two thousand dollars in four days. Man brought him that restaurant down there . . . fixed it up 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:**

at work yesterday.

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

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.

**rose:**

them to get in a little extra practice before the season start.

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

**troy:**

before he get his chores done.

**rose:**

Troy grabs a shovel goes to a corner of the yard.

**rose:**

there and go to bed . . . get up on the other side.

**troy:**

said nothing wrong with me.

**rose:**

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:**

**rose:**

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 line . . . He stops at the sound of a young girl's shout which seems to come from the abandoned house. Troy looks,

**listens:**

silence is broken by faint singing . . .

**gabriel (o.s.):**

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  
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:**

**troy:**

Rose comes out on the porch.

**gabriel:**

**rose:**

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:**

**gabriel:**

vegetables.

Rose looks through his basket,  
treating the produce carefully.

**rose:**

**gabriel:**

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:**

about? You ain't done nothing to me.

**gabriel:**

out from in your way. I ain't mean no harm by  
it.

**troy:**

about that.

**gabriel:**

**troy:**

at you I'd tell you about it.

**gabriel:**

door too. Wanna see my key?  
He fishes out a key on a string and  
shows Rose and Troy.

**gabriel:**

like that. That's my key! My two rooms.

**troy:**

key . . . that's good.

**rose:**

his breakfast.

**gabriel:**

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:**

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:**

**gabriel:**

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:**

**gabriel:**

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 name what was ever been born. That's what he told me. But I seen your name. Seen it with my own eyes.

**troy:**

something to eat.

**gabriel:**

Aunt Jemimah. She come by and cooked me up a whole mess of flapjacks. Remember how we used to eat

them flapjacks?

**troy:**

now.

**gabriel:**

tomatoes. Got me two quarters. Wanna see?

He shows his quarters to Troy, then pockets them.

**gabriel:**

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)

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:**

**troy:**

**rose:**

get him to eat nothing.

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

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

**rose:**

care of himself.

**troy:**

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.

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:**

**troy:**

head . . . 'cause of that metal plate.

**rose:**

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:**

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:**

here every Saturday for weeks. I thought you was gonna work on this fence?

**troy:**

ball game. I'll be back in a bit. I'll work on it when I get back.

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.):**

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 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:**

of here this morning without doing your chores.

**cory:**

**rose:**

fence.

**cory:**

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:**

**cory:**

**rose:**

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  
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:**

He laughs.

**rose:**

What was the score of the game? Lucille had me on  
the phone and I couldn't keep up with it.

**troy:**

He tries to kiss her.

**rose:**

the game. Go on, Troy! You supposed to be putting up the fence.

Attempting to kiss her again.

**troy:**

hand.

**rose:**

Playfully chasing after her.

**troy:**

He lunges again, grabs her.

**rose:**

**troy:**

**rose:**

**troy (calling):**

butt out here, boy!

(with lust in his eyes)

When you coming back?

rose (enjoying this:) I'll be right back.

**troy:**

**rose:**

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:**

morning?

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

sitting in there overflowing . . . you ain't  
done none of your chores . . . and you come in  
here talking about, "Yeah."

**cory:**

Pop . . .

**troy:**

on Saturday. Everything else come after that. Now  
get that saw and cut them boards.  
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:**

**troy:**

for?

**cory:**

**troy:**

with one?

**cory:**

TV. Baseball games and everything. We could watch  
the World Series.

**troy:**

**cory:**

two hundred dollars.

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

(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  
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:**

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:**

leak . . . when it needed fixing . . . I'd fix it.  
Cory hurls a finished plank aside and  
grabs the next one.

**troy:**

spent it for a TV. You gonna sit up and watch the  
water run all over your brand-new TV.

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

\$73.22 I got sitting up in there?

**cory:**

can put a down payment on it and carry it home  
with you.  
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:**

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:**

**troy:**

buy one if ya want it. I got better things to do with my money.

**cory:**

never seen two hundred dollars.

**troy:**

dollars and I'll put the other hundred with it.

**cory:**

**troy:**

right now.  
Cory begins to cut the boards. There is a long pause.

**cory:**

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

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

**cory:**

play every day. You can't play everybody at the same time.

**troy:**

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:**

Hank Aaron hit two home runs today. That makes forty-three.

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

hit seven home runs off of Satchel Paige. You can't get no better than that!

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

couldn't hit no home runs off of Warren Spahn.

**troy:**

boards.

(pause)

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

**cory:**

coming by to talk to you. Get you to sign the permission papers.

**troy:**

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

**cory:**

until after the football season. Say starting next week I can work weekends.

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

nobody coming around here to talk to me about signing nothing.

**cory:**

all the way from North Carolina.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

A&P and get your job back.



**cory:**

'cause I told him I was playing football.

**troy:**

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:**

working weekends.

**troy:**

and finding you another job.

**cory:**

after school and play football too. The team needs me. That's what Coach Zellman say . . .

**troy:**

boss . . . you understand? I'm the boss around here. I do the only saying what counts.

**cory:**

Troy comes right up to Cory, in his face.

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory (pause):**

**troy:**

one you got the questions for.

**cory:**

**troy:**

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 hesitates, then goes to Troy.

**troy:**

Cory does.

**troy:**

say I got to like you?

**cory:**

**troy:**

Cory looks down.

**troy:**

day?

**cory:**

**troy:**

sir on the end of it when you talk to me!

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

do you think that is?

**cory (hesitant):**

**troy:**

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:**

'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:**

**troy:**

down to that A&P.

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:**

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:**

getting involved in no sports. Not after what they did to me in the sports.

**rose:**

play in the major leagues? For once . . . why don't you admit that?

**troy:**

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:**

over forty? Sometimes I can't get no sense out of you.

**troy:**

to let my boy get hurt over playing no sports. You been mothering that boy too much. Worried about if people like him.

**rose:**

wants you to say, "Good job, son." That's all.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

else!

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.):**

Take it to the union.

**troy (v.o.):**

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 se(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:**

he told you.

**troy:**

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:**

they was gonna put you on the warning paper.

EXT. SIDE YARD—AFTERNOON

**troy:**

(to Bono)

Yeah, Mr. Rand like to bit his tongue.

**bono:**

that Alberta gal.

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

**troy (calling):**

(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:**

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:**

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.

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.

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:**

to make him come.

**rose:**

you used to sing that old song.

**troy (he sings):**

Had an old dog his name was Blue.

**rose:**

song.

**troy (singing):**

**rose:**

that song.

**bono:**

**troy (singing):**

Blue treed a possum in a hollow log.  
That was my daddy's song. My daddy made up that  
song.

**rose:**

hear you sing it.

troy (makes a song like calling a dog): Come here, woman.

**rose:**

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:**

**rose:**

hassle them people no more.  
Lyons comes out from inside.

**troy:**

I thought you was in jail. Got it all over the  
front page of the Courier about them raiding Seefus'  
place . . . where you be hanging out with  
all them thugs.

**lyons:**

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:**

**lyons:**

**bono:**

Grill tonight.



**rose:**

you. You should have brought Bonnie with you, she ain't been over in a month of Sundays.

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'd stop by.

**troy:**

**bono:**

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:**

all right.

**bono:**

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:**

truck where you want it to go. Driving ain't nothing.

**bono:**

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:**

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 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:**

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:**

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:**

don't want you to give me nothing. I just wanted to borrow ten dollars.

**troy:**

time you want to ask me.

**lyons:**

Lyons tries again to hand the money to Troy.

**rose:**

back, Troy?

**lyons:**

gonna have to hear about it for the next six months.

He hands her the money.

**rose:**

**troy:**

**bono:**

Gabriel is heard singing . . .

**gabriel:**

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

**lyons:**

**gabriel:**

He surveys the backyard, finding Rose,  
who's come to greet him.

**gabriel:**

Gabe rummages in his basket till he  
finds a torn-off branch of a rose vine.  
He hands it to Rose.

**gabriel:**

you is!

**rose:**

Gabe.

**lyons:**

**gabriel:**

the time to tell Saint Peter to open the Gates.

**lyons:**

you doing the right thing, Uncle Gabe. Somebody  
got to chase them.

**gabriel:**

The devil ain't no pushover. Hellhounds snipping  
at everybody's heels. But I got my trumpet waiting  
on the Judgment time.

**lyons:**

**gabriel:**

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 a plate?

**gabriel:**

no plate. Just wanna eat with my hands. I'll take a sandwich.

**rose:**

short ribs cooking.

**lyons:**

playing.

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

(pause)

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

**troy:**

**rose:**

fix you a sandwich.

gabriel (to lyons as he goes inside): Troy's mad at me.

**lyons:**

**rose:**

to Miss Pearl's.

**troy:**

want to live at.

**lyons:**

like nobody.

**rose:**

nice. She just don't allow all that singing.

**troy:**

that's what she don't mind.

**rose:**

more. He's over there 'cause he want to have his own place. He can come and go as he please.

**troy:**

wasn't stopping him. I ain't put no rules on him.

**rose:**

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 . . .

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.):**

**rose:**

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:**

going to?

**troy:**

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:**

seams trying to fill out your shoes.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

near about as long as your daddy been with Rose. Going on sixteen years.

**troy:**

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:**

their kids. No matter how hard times is . . . everybody care about their kids. Make sure they have something to eat.

**troy:**

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:**

saw he couldn't get nowhere. That's what I would  
have done.

**troy:**

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:**

talking about . . . they walk out their front  
door and just take on down one road or another and  
keep on walking.

**lyons:**

That's what I'm talking about.  
Troy offers Bono the bottle.

**bono:**

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:**

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.):**

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:**

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.):**

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.):**

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.

EXT. BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

**troy:**

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:**

arms tearing at branches, scrabbling after something that's scrambling away from his grasping hands.

EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

**troy:**



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:**

running, terrified, deeper into the woods; Troy's father's back, his shirt being torn open by the stroke of a leather reins; his arms raised against further lashing.

**troy (v.o.):**

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.):**

INT. THE KITCHEN—AFTERNOON

Gabriel stands with his trumpet, sandwich in his other hand. Rose is still sitting, transfixed.

EXT. THE BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

**troy:**

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. He stops, lost someplace inside his head.

**troy:**

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:**

**gabriel:**

sandwich.

**troy:**

touch with everybody except Gabriel. But I hope he's dead. I hope he found some peace.

**lyons:**

left home when you was fourteen.  
The phone rings inside the house.

**lyons:**

I don't know what I would have done.

**troy:**

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.

**lyons:**

hundred miles, Pop. Ain't nobody gonna walk no  
two hundred miles. You talking about some walking  
there.

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:**

them days.

**lyons:**

with somebody!

**troy:**

cars and things like they got now.  
Swinging his bat . . .

**troy:**

Rose comes out onto the porch.

**rose:**

**troy (to rose):**

He don't know nothing about this I'm talking.

**rose:**

supposed to pick her up.

**lyons:**

**troy:**

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  
selves. Right down there under the Brady Street  
Bridge. Living in shacks made of sticks and tar  
paper.  
Here we go.

**troy:**

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:**

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.

**troy:**

But that fifteen years cured me of that robbing stuff.

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:**

thing. Talking about, "Baby, you know you'll always be number one with me." That's what you was talking.

**troy:**

**bono:**

track, she'll straighten you up.  
Rose heads to the kitchen.

**rose:**

waiting on you.

**lyons:**

Grill and hear me play?

**troy:**

around in them clubs.

**bono:**

to play down at the Grill.

**lyons:**

**troy:**

**lyons:**

**troy (standing):**

to bed.

**lyons:**

Lyons heads into the house.

**troy:**

INT. THE KITCHEN—LATE AFTERNOON

Rose is cooking.

**rose:**

And bring Bonnie with you. You know I'm always  
glad to see her.

Troy and Bono come into the kitchen.

**lyons:**

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 grabs his guitar and leaves.

**troy (to rose):**

some business to take care of. I'm gonna tear it  
up too.

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

up too.

**rose:**

Troy puts his arm around Bono.

**troy:**

family. I done known this nigger since . . . how long I done know you?

**bono:**

**troy:**

Me and him done been through some times.

**bono:**

**troy:**

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:**

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 gives Troy a hard, uncompromising look.

**cory:**

Rose comes out.

**rose:**

**cory:**

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:**

boy know why I did it.

**cory:**

chance I had.

**rose:**

Troy.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

yourself  
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:**

scared I'm gonna be better than you, that's all.  
Troy comes down onto the street. Cory  
backs away a little.

**troy:**

Cory reluctantly goes over to Troy.  
rose (coming down the steps): Troy . . .

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

The football helmet is on the street next to Troy. He kicks it with his foot and sends it tumbling down the hill.

**troy:**

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:**

EXT. BACKYARD—THE FOLLOWING

**MORNING:**

**CLOSE UP:**

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:**

Poppa say.

**rose:**

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:**

they let him go. I'll talk to you about it. Where's Cory?



**rose:**

**troy:**

Rose goes into the house. Troy and Bono make their way over to the pile of wood.

**troy:**

seven times I done went down there and got him. See me coming they stick out their hands.

**bono:**

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:**

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:**

pine wood and it'll stand as long as you gonna be here looking at it.

**troy:**

Hell, I might just live forever. Live longer than old man Horsely.

**bono:**

**troy:**

ever heard of gonna pull their own teeth with a pair of rusty pliers.

**bono:**

his teeth with pliers. They ain't had no dentists for the colored folks back then.

**troy:**

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:**

that Alberta . . . I see where you all done got tight.

**troy:**

**bono:**

all the time.

**troy:**

know me.

**bono:**

talking about.

Cory comes out from the house.

**cory:**

**troy:**

talking about the wood's too hard to cut.

(to Bono)

Stand back there, Jim, and let that young boy show you how it's done.

**bono:**

Cory goes to Bono, who hands him the saw. Cory saws fast finishing in seconds, puts the next board in place and saws.

**bono:**

like Joe Louis. Hell, must be getting old the way I'm watching that boy whip through that wood.

**cory:**

yard noways.

**troy:**

out with it? She ain't got nothing nobody want.

**bono:**

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

**troy:**

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

**cory:**

**troy:**

Cory goes into the house. Troy turns  
to Bono . . .

**troy:**

bono (bono leads troy out of earshot): 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 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:**

married to her for eighteen years. What you got  
on your mind, Bono?

**bono:**

anything. I ain't got to have nothing on my mind.

**troy:**

it hanging out there like that? Why you telling me she a good woman?

**bono:**

**troy:**

trying to say. I don't measure up 'cause I'm seeYou 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:**

trying to say I don't want to see you mess up.

**troy:**

around on Lucille I'd be telling you the same thing.

**bono:**

because I love you both.  
Troy takes this in.

**troy:**

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:**

all the time. You responsible for what you do.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

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:**

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:**

building this fence for Rose . . . I'll buy Lucille that refrigerator.

**troy:**

Troy stands up, grabs up a board and begins to saw. Bono starts to walk out of the yard.

**troy:**

**bono:**

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.

(climbing the steps)

You'll be here another six months without me.

**troy:**

**bono:**

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:**

Gabe?

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

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.

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:**

**troy:**

nobody to hold his hand.

**rose:**

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:**

what? And they wanna take and lock him up. Let him be free. He don't bother nobody.

**rose:**

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:**

on the table.

Rose turns to go into the house. Troy follows.

INT. KITCHEN—AFTERNOON

**troy:**

She turns around.

**troy:**

(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:**

find a way to tell you . . . I'm gonna be a daddy. I'm gonna be somebody's daddy.

**rose:**

gonna be . . . what?

**troy:**

**rose:**

You telling your wife this?  
From out in the back yard, Gabriel

**calls:**

**gabriel (o.s.):**

**rose:**

like this.  
Gabriel enters from the back porch. He

carries a rose in his hand.

**gabriel:**

(He hands it to her)

That's a rose. Same rose like you is.

**rose:**

**gabriel:**

mens come and put me away. You ain't mad at me is you?

**troy:**

**rose:**

gabriel (takes a quarter out of his pocket): See what I got? Got a brand-new quarter.

**troy:**

**rose:**

of explaining that.

**gabriel:**

mess of them. I'm gonna keep this quarter till it stop shining.

**rose:**

in the Frigidaire. I'll get you a piece.

**gabriel:**

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:**

watermelon, Gabe. Them bad mens is gone now.

**gabriel:**

The kind with the stripes on it.  
Gabriel goes up to the front room.

**Then:**



**rose:**

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:**

**rose:**

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:**

And now you wanna drag your behind in here and tell me something like this.

**troy:**

know. It's time for you to know.

**rose:**

Rose, suffocating, heads outside. Troy follows.

INT. BASEMENT—AFTERNOON

Muffled sounds . . . Cory not sure what he is hearing.

EXT. BACKYARD—AFTERNOON

**troy:**

can't wish the circumstance of the thing away.

**rose:**

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:**

handle on this thing. We can talk this out . . . come to an understanding.

**rose:**

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:**

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:**

seeing her. That's all you can say to me.

**troy:**

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:**

with her . . . if she a better woman than me.

**troy:**

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:**

not somebody else's.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

**troy:**

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.  
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:**

grabbed me and held on.

**troy:**

thought . . . well, goddamn it . . . go on for it!

**rose:**

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:**

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:**

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?

INT. BASEMENT

Cory moves toward the basement window, trying to hear his mother and father.

EXT. BACKYARD—CONTINUOUS

**rose:**

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:**

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 heads toward the house. Troy grabs her arm.

**troy:**

**rose:**

**troy:**

**rose:**

**troy:**

that lie on me.

**rose:**

**troy:**

Cory rushing out of the house.

**cory:**

**rose:**

**troy:**

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 him on the chest and knocks him down. Troy is stunned, as is Cory.

**rose:**

Troy gets to his feet and starts at Cory.

**rose:**

Rose pulls on Troy to hold him back.  
Troy stops himself.

**troy (to cory):**

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:**

done.

INT. CHURCH

Rose kneeling in prayer.

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:**

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 looks around at the men who glance at her and Troy as they pass by.

**rose:**

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

ain't never been a night I ain't come home.

**rose:**

want to know if you're coming straight home after work.

**troy:**

with the boys . . . maybe play a game of  
checkers . . .

**rose:**

this. You livin' on borrowed time with me. It's  
been going on six months now you ain't been coming  
home.

**troy:**

That's 365 days.

**rose:**

**troy:**

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 litRose . . . 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:**

**troy:**

the best I can.

**rose:**

enough to change your clothes and run out . . .  
and you wanna call that the best you can do?

**troy:**

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:**

that is telling a lie. Pearl ain't doing nothing but telling a big fat lie.

**rose:**

**troy:**

**rose:**

the papers.

**troy:**

**rose:**

**troy:**

screw up everything. I ain't worried about what they got on the paper.

**rose:**

hospital and the other part to you.

**troy:**

the way it works. I ain't made up the rules about how it work.

**rose:**

sign the paper for Cory . . . but you signed for Gabe. You signed that paper.

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

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:**

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:**

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.

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.):**

Rose murmurs to Cory, comes in the bedroom, closes the door.

**rose:**

the baby.

**troy:**

**rose:**

Troy stands, he starts getting dressed.

**troy:**

**rose:**

**troy:**

right . . . what's the matter . . . the baby's all right, ain't it?

**rose:**

**troy (confused):**

dead?

**rose:**

do nothing for her.

troy (stunned, off balance): The baby? How's the baby?

**rose:**

Troy looks around as if trying to locate the door. Rose doesn't know what to do.

**rose:**

**troy:**

world by herself.

**rose:**

**troy:**

insurance.

**rose:**

**troy:**

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

**rose:**

me away.

**troy:**

(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:**

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:**

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:**

to me. And then I want you to stay on the 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:**

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:**

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.):**

Cory comes out of his room. He walks to his mother as Troy shouts:

**troy (o.s.):**

that fence until you ready for me.

cory (softly, scared): Mama, what's— 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.):**

EXT. THE BACKYARD—LATE NIGHT

We're looking up at Troy, leaning out the window, shouting:

**troy:**

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.

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:**

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.

**troy:**

the porch.

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:**

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.

EXT. THE BACK PORCH—AFTERNOON

**troy:**

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:**

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:**

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.

**rose:**

But you a womanless man.  
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 africanamerican 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:**

collectors step on board. He shifts into first gear and the truck rolls through the wealthy neighborhood.  
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:**

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.

**troy:**

everybody's going out.

**rose:**

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:**

As Rose leaves the kitchen with the baby and the cake:

**rose:**

His money still in his hand, Troy follows her to the front door, which he opens for her.

**troy:**

**rose:**

what time I come back.

**troy:**

matter . . . can't I ask you a question?

**rose:**

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:**

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 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:**

**troy:**

**bono:**

no one at the house, so I figured

**troy:**

stopped by the house in a month of Sundays. Hell, I must owe you money or something.

**bono:**

with you. Used to see you every day. Now I don't even know what route you working.

**troy:**

Greentree now . . . hauling white folks' garbage.

**bono:**

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:**

**bono:**

years.

**troy:**

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:**

**bono:**

on her sometime. Saw Rose on my way here. She going down to the church, huh?

**troy:**

preachers looking for somebody to fatten their pockets.

(beat)

Got some gin here.

**bono:**

**troy:**

never known you to say no to a drink. You ain't got to work tomorrow.

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:**

We got us a domino game going over his house every Friday.

**troy:**

whup you four games out of five.

**bono:**

**troy:**

**bono:**

Troy nods as Bono slides down off the bar stool.

**bono:**

**troy:**

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:**

your fence . . . so I figured we'd call it even.

**troy:**

**bono:**

**troy:**

gonna stop over.

**bono:**

Bono leaves. Troy downs the rest of his drink in one swallow. Under his breath, he starts to sing:

**troy (slowly):**

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 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:**

**above him:**

**troy (v.o.):**

You know from that he was a good old dog . . .

**And below:**

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.

**troy:**

Let him down with a golden chain . . .  
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:**

(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:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

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:**

Cory starts to maneuver his way past  
Troy. Troy grabs his leg and shoves  
him back.

**troy:**

**cory:**

**troy:**

house?

Troy stands, advancing on Cory, who  
backs away, then stops.

**cory:**

**troy:**

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:**

**troy:**

**cory:**

you sitting on the steps drunk, singing to yourself.  
You can put it like that.

**troy:**

Cory doesn't respond.

**troy:**

me???

**cory:**

count around here no more.

**troy:**

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? 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:**

to put in your belly. You got that, huh? You got  
that? That's what you need. You got that, huh?

**cory:**

worry about what I got.

**troy:**

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:**

what'd you ever give me?

**troy:**

I give you more than anybody else is ever gonna  
give you.

**cory:**

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 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:**

nothing to do with this.

**cory:**

you did to her.

**troy:**

Troy advances toward Cory.

**cory:**

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 on the street to me!

Troy throws Cory backward in the dirt.

**cory:**

**troy:**

from me!

Go on now! You got the devil in you. Get on away  
from me!

**cory:**

got the devil in me.

Troy advances on Cory.

**troy:**

side of that yard . . . I'm gonna show you how  
crazy I am! Go on . . . get the hell out of my yard.

**cory:**

he got from the Army to buy this house and then  
you put him out.



**troy:**

Troy's advance backs Cory up against the tree. Cory grabs up the bat.

**cory:**

I ain't scared of you.

**troy:**

**cory:**

Troy walks toward Cory.

**troy:**

**cory:**

Cory swings at Troy, who backs across the yard.

**cory:**

Troy advances toward Cory.

cory (backing up): Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on!

**troy:**

bat back on me . . . you're gonna have to use it.

**cory:**

Cory swings that bat at Troy a second time. He misses. Troy continues to advance toward him.

**troy:**

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:**

Cory is unable to swing the bat. Troy grabs it.

**troy:**

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:**

Cory, stung by his defeat, picks himself up, walks slowly out of the yard and up the alley.

**cory:**

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 no more. He assumes a batting posture and begins to taunt Death, the fastball in the outside corner.

**troy:**

A static-y growl starts, building into a roar. Troy taunts the pitcher as the light gives way to complete darkness:

**troy:**

for you . . . but I ain't gonna be easy.

**BLACK SCREEN:**

In the blackness, Rose's voice:

**rose (v.o.):**

**raynell (v.o.):**

**rose (v.o.):**

**raynell (v.o.):**

**TITLE:**

**rose (v.o.):**

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:**

Rose leans out of the window, her hair up, wearing black.

**rose:**

got to wait.

**raynell:**

**rose:**

**raynell:**

**rose:**

to be playing around. You hear me?

**raynell:**

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:**

(pause)

I bet your name is Raynell.

**raynell:**

**cory:**

**raynell:**

Raynell flies up the stairs. Cory puts down his bag and looks around.

**rose:**

Rose runs down, then stops, looking at her son. She calls back into the

**kitchen:**

**rose:**

She runs to Cory, and they embrace. Bono and Lyons come in from the kitchen. Raynell watches from midway on the stairs.

**bono:**

Rose steps back, looking at him, wiping tears away.

**rose:**

**cory:**

**rose:**

**cory:**

**lyons:**

good, Rose. Got them corporal stripes.

**rose:**

**cory:**

get all their paperwork straight before they let you do anything.

**rose:**

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:**

**bono:**

tell me all the time.

**lyons:**

**bono:**

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:**

**cory:**

Bono goes out the front door.

No one speaks. Then Lyons points to  
Raynell on the stairs.

**lyons:**

gonna break a whole lot of hearts.  
Raynell hides behind the banisters.

**rose:**

This is your brother, Cory. You remember Cory.

**raynell:**

**cory:**

**rose:**

you. This is your brother, Cory.  
(to Raynell)  
Come on and say hello.

**raynell:**

**cory:**

you.

rose (starting for the kitchen): You all c'mon and let me  
fix you some breakfast. Keep up your strength.

: You all c'mon and let me  
fix you some breakfast. Keep up your strength.

**cory:**

**lyons:**

a minute.

**rose (to cory):**

I know they ain't feeding you right.

**cory:**

I'll get something later.

**rose:**

on like I told you.

Raynell scrambles upstairs as Rose  
goes into the kitchen.

**lyons (pause):**

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:**

enough.

**lyons:**

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:**

**lyons:**

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 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 crooked with the straights. Yeah, Papa was something else.

**cory:**

**lyons:**

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:**

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 dress, studying him with excited curiosity.

**raynell:**

**cory:**

She comes down a couple of steps, curious.

**raynell:**

**cory:**

**raynell:**

got your football in the closet.  
Rose calling from the kitchen . . .

**rose:**

on!

**raynell:**

my feet.

**rose:**

a while. You ain't said they hurt your feet when you went down to the store and got them.

**raynell:**

**rose:**

there and get them shoes on.

Raynell looks at her brand-new brother . . . reluctantly, she obeys her mother. Cory makes his way to the 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:**

know how to tell you this . . . but I've got to tell you . . . I'm not going to Papa's funeral.



**rose:**

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:**

**rose:**

thought out of your head.

**cory:**

I've got to say no.

**rose:**

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:**

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 saying I've got to find a way to get rid of that shadow, Mama.

**rose:**

**cory:**

**rose:**

**cory:**

**rose:**

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:**

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 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:**

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:**

Rose goes into the house.

**raynell:**

**cory:**

**raynell:**

**cory:**

**raynell:**

**cory:**

**raynell:**

**cory (singing):**

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 feet 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

**raynell:**

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 (to raynell): You go on in the house and change them shoes like Mama told you so we can go to Papa's funeral.

**raynell:**

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:**

**rose:**

**gabriel:**

**rose:**

(calling back to the house)

Look here, Lyons!

Lyons, then Bono come out from the house.

**lyons:**

let him come.

**cory:**

**lyons:**

Gabriel looks at each of them, then

back to Rose. He takes his hand from behind him and holds his trumpet aloft.

**gabriel:**

Peter to open the Gates.

Not knowing what she's agreeing to, Rose nods.

**gabriel:**

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:**

to open the Gates. You get ready now. Gabriel puts the trumpet to his lips, two decades of waiting for this moment 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 earsplitting 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:**

bathed in light. He lowers his trumpet. He says to God:

**gabriel:**

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:**

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 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.