

Coconut Cake
by
(Melda Beaty)
A Play in Two Acts

Contact:

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CAST OF CHARACTERS:

EDDIE	African-American male. Retired. Married to Iris. Ladies man.	Late 60s
JOE	African-American male. Retired. Eddie's best friend. Cocky know-it-all.	Early 70s
MARTY	African-American male. Retired. Church deacon. Voice of reason.	Mid-70s
HANK	Caucasian male. Retired. Marty's brother-in-law. Widower. Quiet.	Early 70s
GOTDAMNIT	African-American male. Mentally ill beggar.	Early 60s

SETTING:

Chicago, IL- McDonalds

TIME:

Summer

ACT I

SCENE ONE.

Monday morning at McDonald's. HANK, early 70s, looks older than he is. He always wears a button down shirt with a pocket. He is drinking coffee and wiping off a table that seats four. After he sets out the morning papers on the table, he starts setting up his chess game. EDDIE enters. EDDIE, late 60s very handsome, but frail. He is clearly frustrated. He holds a bottle in his hands.

HANK

Good morning, Eddie. How you doing?

EDDIE

(Pacing)

You seen Marty?

HANK

No, not yet, but I'm sure he'll be here. You okay?

EDDIE

Nope.

HANK

You want me to get you some coffee?

EDDIE

Naw. I'll just wait for Marty.

HANK

Anything I can do?

EDDIE

Naw, Hank, thanks. I just need to speak to Marty that's all. Lot of shit happening at home.

(Remembers something and takes a seat)

Wait, isn't one of your daughters a lawyer?

HANK

Yeah, Kimberly who's getting married.

EDDIE

I need her number.

(CONTINUED)

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HANK

Did you get hurt while fixing something?

EDDIE

Naw.

HANK

Did Iris or someone in your family get hurt?

EDDIE

Naw, why? I need a divorce lawyer.

HANK

Oh, Kimberly's a personal injury lawyer. She doesn't handle divorces, but she knows some, if that's what you really want.

EDDIE

Hell yeah that's what I want. Should have done this a long time ago. Should have followed my first mind back when Iris forced me to marry her ass in the first place. I'm done. Done, I tell you.

MARTY enters, mid-70s, walks in pre-occupied talking on the phone. He heads over to the table joining the men. HANK motions if MARTY wants coffee and leaves to get it. EDDIE grows impatient.

MARTY

(On phone)

He can do it himself if he wants...I don't quite know, but lately he's been real possessive of his things...What?...Okay, put him on...Hey man what's going on?...No, she doesn't have to do it, but she usually does, that's all...I know...She must be in the pool...I know...Yeah, we'll be back later... Later...Yes, you can do it if you want...Alright, have your breakfast so you can go for a walk with Ms. Green...Yup, later...I already told you, now put Ms. Green back on the phone...Love you too.

EDDIE starts to speak. HANK returns in the middle of MARTY's conversation with a cup of coffee.

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MARTY (CONT'D)

(On phone)

Alright so, if he wants to do it just let him. He'll be okay until I get back. Yeah, okay good-bye.

(Beat)

Thanks, Hank.

HANK

Everything alright with Manny?

MARTY

Yeah, he's just giving Ms. Green a hard time about making up his bed. Mary's got that water aerobics on Mondays, so she called me. I don't know man, he's been real up and down lately, so we've been giving him some space. I'm surprised he's acting this way with Ms. Green because any other time he acts like he's in love with her. Say he likes the way she smells.

(Laughs)

Hell, who knows. He's still a man--

EDDIE

(Abruptly)

Marty, where you been, man? I called you twice last night and you didn't return my calls.

MARTY

Sorry man, been so busy with Emmanuel. It's like he's having mood swings these days. I didn't even check my phone until this morning. You didn't leave a message no way, so I figured I would see you here. What's going on?

EDDIE

Iris pulled a knife on me last night.

MARTY

(Shocked)

She did what?

EDDIE

That crazy bitch pulled a knife on me last night. A butcher knife.

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CONTINUED: (3)

MARTY

Wait a minute. What happened? Iris ain't never done anything like that before.

EDDIE

You don't know Iris.

MARTY

So what happened?

EDDIE

Hell if I know. I ain't been sleeping too well lately with this arthritis so I got up to get me a little snack in the middle of the night and just when I closed the refrigerator, she jumped out at me with a butcher knife. She was sitting in the dark the whole damn time. Scared the shit out of me, that's what happened.

MARTY

(Looks suspicious)

Eddie, that doesn't make sense to nobody. Something had to set her off.

EDDIE

She started yelling something about being in Vi's house and how I'm trying to kill her and some other nonsense. I think she was drunk.

MARTY

Trying to kill her and drunk? That just don't sound like Iris.

EDDIE

You just don't want to believe she's crazy cause y'all be up there at that church all the time, but you ain't never lived with her.

MARTY

No, but being crazy is one thing and pulling a knife on your husband is another. What does Vi have to do with this?

(Snaps his fingers)

Oh yeah, that reminds me.

(MORE)

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MARTY (CONT'D)

I ran into Smith down at the bank Saturday and he said he can't get in touch with you. Say he needs you to come back and take a look at them rails again. I thought you finished that job days ago.

EDDIE

I did but I ran into some problems at the end and just ain't had time to go back over there.

(Wrings his hands and stretches his neck. Takes out a pill bottle and pops some pills and takes a swig from his water bottle)

MARTY

Well, he sounded pretty upset that he ain't heard from you. I guess he's getting tired of having to wash Vi's butt himself. You know she ain't no small woman no more.

(MARTY and HANK laugh)

EDDIE

Man, if Iris would stop riding my ass about being over there, I woulda been done and now she wants to pull a knife on me. I'm telling you, last time someone pulled a knife on me I broke their collar bone.

MARTY

So Iris thinks you and Vi fooling around?

EDDIE

And everyone else. I told her 'you do know Vi's in a wheelchair?' She said '*like that would stop you.*' She's still mad cause I was at Vi's house too long installing them rails and ran late for her retirement party last week, so she ain't been talking to me. Hell, the silent treatment ain't been that bad, but now I see that all that silent treatment was just her way of plotting how to kill me.

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MARTY

Iris ain't going to kill you, man. She woulda done it by now. I told you a long time ago Eddie, other women are more trouble than they're worth. When they're gone you still got the wife to deal with and they're like elephants. They don't forget nothing.

EDDIE

I ain't never met a woman who wakes up angry. She is the most unforgiving woman I know. I got a good mind to call Pastor Gregg and tell him to preach on forgiveness Sunday. You know right before her retirement party, she started a fight with me because I got that trait. Seem like every damn week she want to argue about something.

MARTY

What trait?

EDDIE

That sickle cell trait. They rushed Lil' Jason to the hospital a couple days ago. He had another crisis but it was mild this time. She got mad, *again*, and said it's because of me Jaime has the trait in the first place. I told her I didn't even know I had it and what if it were sugar or cancer? Would she blame me for that too? I swear now that she's retired, I may be getting here before McDonald's opens.

MARTY

She just needs to get a hobby. You know you can't just go from working a job for over forty years to nothing.

EDDIE

Talking about she has plenty of things to do and none of them involve sitting around taking care of me. I looked her dead in the eye and told her, 'Woman, I'm sixty-nine years old.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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EDDIE (CONT'D)

I've been taking care of myself since I was seventeen. Now you can talk or not, but nobody takes care of Eddie Lee.'

MARTY

Well, that's probably not what she meant. Shoot, I remember I couldn't wait to retire from the steel mill, but then after the first couple of weeks after I retired, I began to have thoughts of recidivism.

EDDIE

Re who?

MARTY

Recidivism. You know when convicts are released from prison and then do something stupid on the outside to land right back in prison. They don't know what to do when they get out and wish they could go back cause prison is all they know. I remember that feeling of wanting to go back to work just to have something to do everyday.

EDDIE

Yeah, but Mary ain't never gave you a day of trouble.

MARTY

Well you know Mary and I have a different kind of relationship. She ain't never really had no long-term job so she stay in the gym or at the church or just taking care of Emmanuel, so she was never the issue. Iris just got to find something to keep her busy. Maybe she can take those water aerobics classes with Mary. She's in that pool about three times a week.

EDDIE

Iris ain't getting her hair wet for nobody. It don't matter no way. I'm just going to keep doing what I been doing before she stopped working, but I'ma keep my eye on her ass.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I'll run by Smith's today after I finish this drywall for Joe.

(Pops another pill in his mouth and takes another swig of water)

MARTY

(Notices the chess game and starts to play but stops)

Eddie, why don't you play this game with Hank? He's still learning but he can teach you what he knows. It'll calm you down.

EDDIE

I'm not in the mood to learn how to play today. Plus, I'm not going to be here long. What time is it anyway?

HANK

Seven fifty.

EDDIE

Man, I left without getting breakfast. Let me get something to eat and some coffee.

MARTY & HANK start playing chess. Hitting the timer after each turn. HANK is not as experienced as MARTY and is slower and often frustrated with his choice of moves. MARTY occasionally nods and waves at someone in McDonald's while waiting for HANK to make his move

MARTY

Look at ole' Willie over there. That's who you need to play, Hank. Willie the one who started us playing chess over here on Mondays in the first place and now all these young boys want to come in here and learn. Calls himself a Grandmaster. That's who you need to play.

HANK

Oh I'm not good enough to play with Willie. Beside, I still have a lot to learn, but I bet you can take him Marty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

MARTY

Naw, my days of playing against Willie have come and gone. He has his way of playing and I have mine.

MARTY makes his move. He notices the headline on the paper and pauses to read it while he waits on HANK to move. The game continues throughout. EDDIE returns.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I'll be dog gone. They only got Blagojevich on one of the twenty four counts against him. Making some false statements to the F-B-I.

EDDIE

If it were me and I got caught stealing the senate seat, I'd sit my ass down somewhere and be quiet.

HANK

Did you see him on that episode of Celebrity Apprentice? He didn't know how to send a text message or email so Trump fired him. My grand kids said, 'Grandpa, even you know how to do that.'

EDDIE

Blagojevich ain't nothing but a gangsta. He ain't do nothing different from what others before him did; except he was recorded. Hell, he saw an opportunity to profit from that senate seat and he took it; just like a true gangsta.

MARTY

That doesn't make it right.

EDDIE

We're not talking about right or wrong. We're talking politicians; Illinois politicians and don't get me started on these local politicians in Chicago. You mark my words. Blagojevich wasn't the first and he definitely won't be the last.

MARTY's phone rings again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

MARTY

Yeah. What's going on Emmanuel?

Makes his move before he steps away. HANK is stumped so he picks up the paper while he waits on MARTY, looks disgusted and grumbles.

EDDIE

What's wrong, Hank?

HANK

Just reading more about this
Obamacare fiasco.

EDDIE

Fiasco? What you got against it?

JOE, early 70s, enters. JOE always enters McDonald's by pausing in front of the doors to look around like he's casing the place with a sly grin on his face looking for something of interest. Then and only then does he proceed to the other men sitting at the table with his signature strut. JOE always dresses flashy as if going out to a party everyday.

JOE

(Ignoring HANK)

Eddie, I been calling you all
morning. Where your phone, man? You
finish that drywall yet?

EDDIE

(Pats his pockets to find
his phone)

Damn, I forgot to turn it back on.
I just needed to get some rest man
after that shit with Iris last
night.

JOE

What she mad about now?

EDDIE

She pulled a knife on me last
night.

JOE

What?!

(Takes a seat)

I told you Iris is crazy. She cut
you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

EDDIE

Almost. She was waving that thing close to my damn face.

JOE

Something got to be done about Iris. You call the police?

EDDIE

Naw, I just left and slept in my car.

JOE

Man, I remember when my oldest boy's mama pulled a gun on me down in Macon. Damn woman didn't even know how to hold it let alone fire it. I wasn't stupid neither. Once, I moved in with her, I put the safety lock on it right away. I just had this feeling about her; the same damn feeling you need to have about Iris. You want to stay in one of my places for awhile?

EDDIE

Naw, I'll be alright. I'm on my way over there right now.

JOE

Aw hell, man. I thought you was done with that job. I need you to run with me over to the Jones' old place.

EDDIE

The Jones' place? Down the street from me? What's over there?

JOE

(Gloating)

My new house. Closed on it last month.

EDDIE

Last month? Iris was just talking about that place last month. She wants the city to tear it down.

JOE

Ain't nobody tearing down nothing. It's a good house, just need some work done on it.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED: (11)

JOE (CONT'D)

The foundation is solid. Figured you and my boys could do some of the basic inside stuff and I can get them Mexican boys for the yard work.

EDDIE

Why you moving again Joe? You just moved into your new house.

JOE

I ain't moving. I'm flipping now.

MARTY returns

MARTY

Hey Joe.

JOE

Hey Deac.

EDDIE

Joe just bought the Jones' place.

JOE

Y'all can stop calling it the Jones' place now.

MARTY

So you went ahead and bought it, huh? You gone turn it into another apartment building?

JOE

Hell, naw. I'm selling one of them now, if Eddie ever finish the damn drywall. That's all that's left to do.

EDDIE

I didn't know you were selling that building man. Damn Joe, you talk about everything else, but you don't say a word about your properties.

JOE

My properties are on a need to know basis.

MARTY

Who you sell the building to?

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CONTINUED: (12)

JOE

Two frantic white boys with a lot of their daddy's money burning a hole in their pockets. They saw the size of that building and the location by the train and damn near peed in their pants. I heard one of them whisper to the other that it was a 'gold-mine.'

MARTY

Funny, that's what you called it.
(Resumes game with HANK)

JOE

And it was, but things have changed so much. It ain't like it was ten years ago when I bought it. Can't find good help no mo' and you should see the monkeys that moved into that place. Letting their dogs shit all in front of the building and even in the hallways. One tenant moved out earlier this month and left her old stanky ass mattress and couch in the middle of the alley. Just right in the damn middle. She can kiss that security deposit goodbye. Then two young cats moving their stuff out of storage knocked holes in all the walls in the laundry room which is why I need all the drywall work done today.

EDDIE

I thought your son, Oscar, was managing it for you or was supposed to buy it from you?

JOE

Yeah that cat supposed to do a lot of things. You know I still ain't so sure he's mine anyway.

MARTY

(Chuckles)

Joe that boy forty something years old. Ain't you been taking care of him since he was a baby? What you not sure about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

JOE

That don't mean nothin'. Tell em Eddie. Women say anything when they think you got some money.

EDDIE

How the hell I know? I ain't got no money that Iris don't take.

JOE

Oh that's right. You don't need no money. I forgot, you just a regular ole' Richard Roundtree from Shaft. That's what the ladies used to call him before he got all skinny.

(Says in a woman's voice.)

"Where your friend that look like Richard Roundtree from Shaft?"

(Everyone laughs)

All you got to do is flash that devilish smile and lay that game on them and they melt like butter, right? You don't need no money. Shoot, I got game too, but money and my little blue diamonds always help.

(Pulls out a pill bottle and shakes it before setting it on the table)

Hell, I laid down with that woman one time after I got out the army and nine months later she come knocking on my door with a baby in her arms. I ain't sign no birth certificate. I already had three by then, but out of all six of 'em, Oscar was the only one who helped me the most with my properties before his divorce. Joe Jr., the doctor, in Texas so he don't count, but Oscar just living in one of my apartments for free now cause that ex-wife of his took him for everything he got. He was suppose to be managing the place for me, but he don't do nothing now but whine about getting a second job, but that's alright cause I'ma turn him and his whining over to them white boys. He can tell all his problems and plans to them.

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CONTINUED: (14)

MARTY

You selling the other two?

JOE

Naw not yet. They're okay for now. Only got six tenants in one and most of them are old so they ain't no trouble. I ain't had the two-flat that long to sell it, but I'm watching them young cats over there in Raceland. They got too much free time on their hands, like they just waiting on trouble.

EDDIE

So what's this about flipping?

JOE

It's where the money's at. You buy these foreclosed or government distressed properties for a little or nothing, get the government to pay for fixing them up then flip them for a nice little profit to someone else to do whatever the hell they want to do with them. I just can't deal with another rental. I'm getting too old for the two I got.

MARTY calls check mate. HANK is frustrated.

MARTY

Want to play, Joe?

JOE

You know I don't understand that damn game. Bunch of old men sitting around all day moving statues around a board. Now, when y'all start playing some bid whist up in here, we can talk.

HANK

Want to play again, Marty?

MARTY

Naw, I'm gonna read the paper for few.

EDDIE

(Remembers conversation
with HANK)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Speaking of the paper, Hank and I were talking about Obamacare before Joe came. So, what you got against it, Hank?

HANK

Well, it threatens to destroy all private practices with all these federal requirements. In the end it's going to end up costing an average family of four more money than it's suppose to save them and it's just not Constitutional.

MARTY

(Chuckles)

That's right, Hank here is a faithful Republican.

JOE

And we all know Republicans don't need health care.

MARTY

I don't think that's what he's saying.

JOE

That's exactly what he said *and* let this man speak for himself. Republicans don't care about no one that don't make as much money as they do. It's called the good ole' boys network, if you white.

HANK

Everyone needs good health care but mandating everyone to buy it with the promise that it will save them money is just not true and not constitutional.

JOE

What you know about constitutional? Hell, it's not constitutional for black people to be treated like second class citizens or not allowed to vote or having to damn near sell their first born to get a bank loan.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED: (16)

JOE (CONT'D)

So don't tell me about what's not constitutional when Republicans, like Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson wrote the damn Constitution.

HANK

Jefferson didn't write the Constitution.

JOE

(Angry)
What?

HANK

Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence not the Constitution.

JOE

He was one of the founding founders, wasn't he?

HANK

Yes, but--

JOE

Then he wrote the Constitution. Don't tell me. I took History.

MARTY

What are you talking about Joe? We talking about health care not civil rights.

JOE

Health care is a civil right, but Republican here don't think so.

MARTY

He just said he believes everyone needs good health care.

JOE

And I said let that man speak for himself.

MARTY

(Rising Anger)
He would if you would shut your mouth for a second and let him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

EDDIE

Hey, hey. I get enough of this shit at home. Now, ain't no need to get upset. It's too early in the morning for that. The way I see it, it's just another tax like we pay taxes for clothes, food, property, and everything else. We'll just pay for our health care the same way. Anyway, all of us are over sixty-five and on Medicare already so I don't think you have to worry too much about paying Hank.

HANK

What I was trying--

JOE

I just need the government to keep taking care of me like I took care of them during that damn war, and I need them to keep paying for my little blue diamonds, so we don't fall in no more donut holes.

(JOE shakes the bottle again. HANK eyes the bottle.)

MARTY

Seems like every time we see you that bottle sounds emptier and emptier. You know just because you old don't mean you can't make no more babies. I know a man down in Mound Bayou older than you with a bunch of lil' toddlers running around all over the place. Those little blue diamonds don't protect against that or anything else.

JOE

Deac, you may be older than everyone at this table, but that don't make you smarter than everyone. I know what the hell I'm doing and I'm doing it quite well thank you very much.

(High-fives EDDIE)

It's just them young women you got to watch out for. These older ones couldn't make a baby if you paid 'em.

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CONTINUED: (18)

JOE (CONT'D)

Plus, I ain't fathered a child in thirty-five years and I plan to keep it that way.

MARTY

Like I said, it ain't just about making babies no more.

JOE

Aw hell man, I ain't stupid. I learned all about them nasty woman diseases over in Nam. I got something for that too.

(Pats his back pocket and notices a woman out the window. All four men pause and stare out the window in silence)

Mmm.Mmm. There she goes. Gooood morning, sweetheart.

(Looks at his phone)

Eight-thirty like clockwork.

HANK

She dresses very nice.

EDDIE

Man, I love a woman in some sexy heels. Iris won't wear 'em.

JOE

I bet Iris won't do a lot of things that woman would do.

MARTY

Yeah, but she always looks so sad. Like she got the weight of the world on her mind.

JOE

Who gives a damn what's on her mind? I don't like no woman who talks too much anyway.

(Beat)

Oh hell, here he come.

EDDIE

(Sarcastically)

Like clockwork.

JOE

Why don't he leave that woman alone?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

JOE (CONT'D)

Probably why she so sad cause she got to see his begging ass first thing every morning.

HANK

I've never seen her give him any money.

MARTY

And you won't.

EDDIE

Well, one thing I can say about Goddamnit is that he's persistent.

JOE

Like a cockroach.

GOTDAMNIT enters the restaurant and comes straight to their table. His clothes are too big and hang off him. He carries his belongings in a bag. GOTDAMNIT talks fast and always stands.

GOTDAMNIT

What's up there fellas?

JOE

I see she told you *no* again.

GODDAMNIT

I don't give a damn about somebody telling me no. What I care about somebody telling me no? Shoot, plenty of people say no. You just need one person to say yes.

MARTY

You got a point there.

GOTDAMNIT

I know I got a point, goddamnit. That's what the man behind the pulpit talked about at church Sunday.

EDDIE

You go to church?

GOTDAMNIT

Yeah, I go. I see Marty up there passing out the bread and wine. I see Iris too, but I don't never see you Eddie or Joe.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

I see Iris talking with Marty all the time, but I ain't never ever seen you Eddie. I ain't seen you or Joe take the bread or wine. I even see Hank with his daughters. They take the bread and wine.

JOE

I bet that's why you go to church, for the wine and something to eat.

MARTY

It's not wine. It's grape juice and he comes faithfully every first Sunday.

GOTDAMNIT

I sit up high so I can be closer to Him. I can see all the lights up high. It's some lights up there too, but I see the lights real good up high. Some lights don't shine as bright. They dim. Bright lights next to dim lights all over the house of God. Dim lights sit in the same seats every time I go--

(Looks at HANK. HANK is uneasy so he plays with the chess board again)

but bright lights all over the church. The choir sing

(Sings lyrics)

this lil light of mine, I'ma let it shine and the man behind the pulpit say the truth will set you free. All the bright lights shout real loud, but them dim lights just sit there in they same seats. Just sit there.

(GOTDAMNIT freezes like a statue.)

JOE

(Annoyed)

What the hell you talking about, man?

GOTDAMNIT

For as often as ye eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

(He makes the motion of eating the bread and drinking the wine. Then takes his chain of the cross out of his shirt and kisses it. Then quickly changes subjects.)

Iris real mad at you, gotdamnit.

EDDIE

(Rising anger)

What you know about me and Iris and what goes on in our house?

GOTDAMNIT

She told Marty. I see Iris talking to Marty all the time, but I don't ever see you at church, Eddie.

(EDDIE looks at MARTY suspiciously.)

MARTY

He's talking about the retirement party.

EDDIE

What she take out an ad in the damn paper?

GOTDAMNIT

I can help you with them rails at the Smith house. You just got to use studs. Won't take me nothing but a couple of hours. You can give me seventy-five dollars.

EDDIE

Man, I know how to install railings. I don't need your help.

GOTDAMNIT

(To JOE)

They gonna make condos out your building.

JOE

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

GOTDAMNIT

(Excited)

They gonna make nice condos out yo'
building and make a whole lot of
money, gotdamnit.

JOE

Who told you that?

GOTDAMNIT

Yup, they gonna make a lot of
money, but you got a lot of work to
do on that Jones' place though.

EDDIE

Damn, even Gotdamnit know you
bought the Jones' place.

JOE

That's cause he don't do nothing
but walk up and down the street in
everybody's business.

GOTDAMNIT

You got to pull them weeds out at
the root. I'll pull em for you and
cut that grass too. You can give me
fifty dollars.

JOE

Man you crazy. I ain't paying you
fifty nothing.

MARTY

Come around the church this week,
sir. We got some work you can do.

GOTDAMNIT

See it only take one yes. Now y'all
give me a dollar so I can get me
some coffee.

All the men reach into their pockets for a quarter and slide
them toward him. JOE is hesitant but slides his quarter too.
GOTDAMNIT slowly gathers the quarters

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

(To HANK)

You got to learn the threat. It's
all about the threat.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)
 (GOTDAMNIT mumbles to
 himself as he leaves.
 HANK looks confused.)

JOE
 You sure he ain't fall again?

HANK
 Fall?

MARTY
 Yeah about five years ago he was
 working a construction job downtown
 and fell off a steel beam about
 forty feet in the air. Landed on
 his back but he still hit his head
 even with the hard hat on. Hurt his
 back real bad. Remember he walked
 with a cane for about two years
 after that.

JOE
 But he was crazy even before the
 fall.

MARTY
 He just had some bad breaks that's
 all. His wife left him and his
 family won't have nothing to do
 with him no more, so he comes in
 here everyday.

EDDIE
 They say he got that schizo too. He
 talks to himself all day long when
 he ain't begging.

MARTY
 Well, I just think God talks to
 everybody differently.

JOE
 Then God must speak crazy cause
 Goddamnit is crazy.

A car pulls up outside the window. HANK motions to the window
 that he will be right out.

MARTY
 Is that the girls?
 (MARTY waves and blows
 kisses)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

HANK

Yeah, they want to take me shopping for a new TV. Say I need to get rid of that TV in the living room and get a flat screen.

JOE

I just put a fifty-five inch in my basement last month. Got that plasma cause it uses less energy than them L-C-Ds.

MARTY

Hank don't spend that kind of money like you do, Joe. We're retired, remember?

JOE

Why not? He's a Republican ain't he? I thought they had plenty of money.

MARTY

It ain't got nothing to do with being a Republican. He just manages his money differently, that's all.

JOE

Oh yeah, his daughters manage it for him. Don't let him spend it unless they say so.

A horn is heard. HANK packs up his chess game and gets up to leave.

HANK

Well, that's my cue. See you fellas next week?

Everyone nods.

EDDIE

Let me know if you need any help installing it.

HANK

Thanks, Eddie.

MARTY

Alright there, Hank. See you later.

HANK exits

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

JOE

I will say this though, he got some of the prettiest daughters this side of heaven. Look like young Dorothy Dandridge, all of 'em. It's one thing to have a controlling woman but controlling daughters is too much for any man.

MARTY

They're just protective of him since Nora died this year.

JOE

See that's why I never married and made all boys, six of 'em. I can't deal with no controlling woman. I don't know how you do it, Eddie.

EDDIE

Iris don't control me.

JOE

The hell she don't. She control you and Jamie.

EDDIE

She may think she does, but I don't pay Iris no mind. She just stay mad all the damn time.

JOE

That's what I mean. She uses her anger to control you. Like not talking until you do what she wants and now pulling knives and shit. Now take, Mary. Mary don't give Deac no trouble, do she? She ain't interested in controlling nobody. She just happy taking care of Deac and Manny ain't that right, Deac? She knows her place at home obeying her husband. Now, that's in the Bible.

MARTY

Well, it ain't so much about Mary knowing her place. Plus, me and Mary got a different kind of relationship anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

JOE

The kind of relationship we all need. A woman who knows her place. Iris goes to church too like Mary or did she miss that Sunday when they talked about obeying yo' husbands and shutting the hell up?

MARTY

Joe it ain't just about doing what your husband says. What if a woman's husband is a fool? It's also about respect and husbands respecting and loving God. It's more about submitting to a husband that follows God. If not, he's a fool plain and simple.

JOE

I don't remember all of that in the Bible.

MARTY

That's because you ain't been to a church since you left Macon.

JOE

That ain't got nothing to do with it. I don't have to sit in a church to know God. Tell 'em, Eddie. God is everywhere, right? See, that's the problem with black folks now-a-days running to four walls every Sunday to listen to a man tell them about God like they can't read or experience God for themselves, and I know what I'm talking about. I been a Jehovah Witness, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ, Catholic. You name it; I done tried it. Hell, I even dated a woman who was a Buddhist.

EDDIE

What ever happened to her?

JOE

Living in a tent somewhere in California. Point is, I've had my fair share of preachers. Remember that joker with that church over on the west side?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

JOE (CONT'D)

You want to talk about a fool. That was one for sure. Had that whole congregation fooled talking about they needed a new church parking lot. Them dummies giving their rent money and selling fish dinners to buy my parking lot.

MARTY

You didn't do nothing with it. You had that building for three years and didn't do nothing with it. Why shouldn't the church use it for a parking lot?

JOE

Cause it was mine. The problem is Deac, you don't know the first thing about business. I buy it. I own it. I can wipe my ass with it if I want, cause it's mine.

EDDIE

(Laughing)

Remember that day we went over there and they were all standing in the middle of the parking lot holding hands and praying over it. I thought you were going to hell for sure that day the way you cussed them people out.

JOE

I bet they never came back on my property again after that day.

MARTY

Probably cause they thought you were a fool.

JOE

Call me what you want, but that property and parking lot belonged to me.

EDDIE

But they ended up getting the lot.

MARTY

(To EDDIE)

Prayer works.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

JOE

That wasn't prayer. That preacher paid off some inspector with the city. Come sending me some letter with all these made up code violations. I was still truck driving then and couldn't keep up with all the court dates, so yeah they got it, so what? Don't mean shit cause they stole it right from under me. They going to have to answer for that one day.

EDDIE'S phone rings

EDDIE

Hey baby girl...I'm here with the fellas.

(Nervous)

What she tell you?..That's all?.. Everything will be alright...You know how me and your mama do...What's going on?..Oh okay, what time y'all coming over?..Okay, I'll try to get done in time...Alright, baby girl...Bye-bye.

(EDDIE looks worried)

MARTY

Was that Jamie? Everything alright?

EDDIE

Yeah man. Iris got her spooked about me not coming home after last night.

JOE

That Iris is something else. You know she called me three times the night of her retirement party looking for you like you was a little boy who didn't come home after school.

EDDIE

I was working over at Smiths and didn't have my phone on me.

JOE

See what I mean? Control.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

MARTY

Or it could have been concern
because he was late for her
retirement party.

JOE

She didn't sound concerned. She
sounded mad as hell and didn't
believe me when I told her I hadn't
seen you all day. Sometimes I swear
I hate Iris has my cell number.

EDDIE

I'll talk to her about that.
(Excited)
Lil' Jason got out the hospital
yesterday so they all coming over
for dinner tonight. I tell you boy,
he's a fighter. You know he's
playing football for his school
now.

MARTY

Oh yeah, what position?

EDDIE

Safety.

MARTY

A defense man. You got to let me
know the next time he plays so I
can come out and watch him. I used
to play when I was Lil' Jason's age
and probably could have done
something with it before the
military and life got all messed
up, but man I still love the game.
Ain't nothing like a game of
football.

EDDIE's phone rings again.

EDDIE

(On phone)

Hey Vi...Yeah, I know...I've been
meaning to get back over there...
Today?...Yeah, I can come this
afternoon...Yeah...They're
uneven?...Smith measured them?...
Okay, tell Smith I'll come by later
today for sure...Okay, alright Vi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

JOE

How the hell you gone go over there this afternoon and make it home in time for dinner and you ain't even started the drywall in my laundry room?

EDDIE

That ain't gone take but a minute. Didn't you say one of your sons had started already?

JOE

Just one wall, but I got two more that need fixing.

EDDIE

I got it.

(Pops a couple pills in his mouth and drinks the rest of his coffee. He never touches his food.)

MARTY

What's them pills you popping all the time, man?

EDDIE

It ain't nothing. Just some Ibuprofen and Advil.

(To JOE)

Come on, let's go. What you doing today, Marty?

MARTY

Just cutting the grass and taking Emmanuel to the dentist later. Then I got a deacon's meeting at the church at six-thirty.

EDDIE

Alright now. We'll see ya later.

JOE

Later Deac.

EDDIE and JOE exit.

(Beat)

MARTY's phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

MARTY

Hello...Iris?

(Looks around)

No, no he left...Where are you?...

You're breaking up something bad...

What?...Calm down...Calm down.

EDDIE reenters. MARTY is sitting with his back to EDDIE.
EDDIE stops and listens when he hears IRIS name.

Iris?...Iris?...Yeah, I can hear you now...Where are you?...Want me to come over?...Yeah, he told me...Why did you do it?...I know Eddie hasn't been faithful, but what's the point of putting a knife in his face?...You got to be careful pulling a knife on man...Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord, you know that...You mess around and do something you will regret and spend the rest of your life behind bars, and trust me, that ain't the life you want and I don't want that for you...I know...I know...Well, what did he do?...Alright...Alright...Whenever you're ready to talk about it, I'm here for you...I'll always be here for you, Iris...I'll talk to you later, bye-bye.

EDDIE is visibly angry and surprises MARTY.

EDDIE

What the hell going on here, Marty?

MARTY

Eddie, I thought you--

EDDIE

Yeah, you thought I wouldn't find out?

MARTY

What you getting at, Eddie?

EDDIE

All this time, Iris been watching me when I shoulda been watching her *and* you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

MARTY

(Stands)

I say what you getting at, Eddie?

EDDIE

(Raises his voice)

I came back in here to talk you and I heard you telling my wife that you always going to be there for her. That's what I'm getting at. Goddamnit said you and Iris talk all the time up there at that church. I want to know why you talking to my wife all the time?

MARTY

You need to have a seat, sir.

EDDIE

(Raising anger)

I'm sixty-nine years old. Don't nobody tell me when to have a seat. I'll sit when I'm good and goddamn ready--

(Blacks out and falls
over)

MARTY

(Yells)

Eddie!

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE TWO

It's the next Monday morning and HANK is the first to arrive. He wipes off the table and sets out newspapers. Then he sets up his chess board and sits with his coffee studying the board. MARTY arrives first.

MARTY
Morning, Hank.

HANK
Hey there, Marty. Want me to get your coffee?

MARTY
No, I'll get some in a minute.
(Beat)
No Eddie yet?

HANK
Not yet. I called him last week to check on him. He said he'll be here today, but I don't think he should come.

MARTY
Eddie's stubborn. They thought it was a heart attack when the ambulance arrived but thank God it wasn't. Say he just blacked out.

HANK
Hmm, has he done that before?

MARTY
Not that I've known. He just ain't been himself lately. He said it was his pressure.

HANK
He has hypotension?

MARTY
Hell, who doesn't?
(Beat)
I just feel bad cause we got into an argument right before he passed out.

HANK
About what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

Well, Iris called me after he left last week and he must of come back in and overheard me and Iris on the phone and he thought we were having an affair. So, we got into a fight about that.

HANK

(Nervously)

Are you Marty?

MARTY

Naw, man. Iris and I are just good friends and she confides in me sometimes. That's all.

(Changing the subject)

Hey did you enjoy service yesterday? I didn't get a chance to see you before you and the girls left.

HANK

Oh, we met with Rev. Gregg about the wedding right after service.

MARTY

Yeah, how's all that coming along? Is Kimberly still excited?

HANK

Oh yeah, but why someone would want a December wedding in Chicago, I'll never understand.

(Beat)

But she wants to get married on Nora's birthday, so...

(Point of tears)

MARTY

Well then it's going to be a good day. My sister's memory lives on, right?

(Reaches across the table to taps HANK)

Don't worry man, it's going to be beautiful. Then you'll have all your daughters married off and you can really do what you want, like fishing. When was the last time you went anyway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HANK

About three weeks ago. The girls are always trying to keep me busy with something, so I just got up early one morning, grabbed my fishing pole and left my phone on the dresser. Boy, when I got back home, they were furious at me.

MARTY

So what? You should do that more often. My mother used to be like that with me and my brother and sisters. Before sugar got her legs, she would go up and down the road looking for us, and we were teenagers. That's where the girls get it from. They think you need tending to now that Nora's gone.

HANK

I know they mean well, but you know, Marty, loneliness is rough. Even though Nora was sick and couldn't get out the bed, at least she was there, you know. And when the nurses stopped coming, I took care of her. I'd read the paper to her or just lay next to her watching tv. I never understood what loneliness meant until I had to come home to an empty house. Although the girls call and come by almost every day with the grand kids, some days they're all I have to look forward to.

(Wipes his eyes)

MARTY

Well, that's why I invited you here to hang out with me and the fellas and play a little chess. Half the time we don't do nothing but sit around and tell stories, but it's alright.

(Motions to the chess board)

You been practicing?

MARTY makes the first move. The game begins and is played throughout the scene.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HANK

The grand kids showed me how to play online so I play every night before I go to bed.

MARTY

Aw man, ain't no strategy on a computer. You got to learn from someone who knows the game. Someone with years of experience, like Willie over there.

HANK

(Looks over his shoulder and whispers)

I don't think Willie likes me. I speak to him every Monday but he never speaks back. He just stares at me.

MARTY

Willie don't like nobody. He sees new people coming in here with their own chess boards and he takes offense. Let him beat you few times then he'll be your new best friend, and you'll learn strategy.

EDDIE arrives with a cup of coffee.

EDDIE

Hey there now.

MARTY

Hey, Eddie. How you feeling, man?

HANK

Hey Eddie? How's it going?

EDDIE

Fair to middling. I went to get my coffee first cause you two seemed to be in some deep conversation. I didn't know if it was family talk.

(Opens a pill bottle and pops some pills in his mouth with the coffee. Stretches his neck a lot)

MARTY

Glad to see you feeling better.

(Beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARTY (CONT'D)

Eddie, you know I ain't messing around with Iris. I've been knowing Iris longer than you, but we're just friends. No more no less. She was upset and she feels she can talk to me sometimes.

EDDIE

(Accepting)

What else did she tell you?

MARTY

Pretty much what you told me. That she pulled a knife on you. She didn't want to go into anymore details, so I told her whenever she wanted to talk more about it, I would be here for her. That's it.

EDDIE

Yeah well, I don't want to talk about that no more. So, what's going on?

MARTY

Just talking about Kimberly's wedding in December.

EDDIE

Tell her don't do it or better yet tell her fiance don't do it. Hell, give me his number and I'll tell him my damn self.

MARTY

Every marriage ain't like you and Iris. This guy's a good guy. I met him a few times and he's crazy about Kimberly. Said he can't see himself with nobody else.

EDDIE

Shit, you believe that? One person only for the rest of your life? I never thought that way.

MARTY

Yeah, we know, but you ain't left Iris so you must believe something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

EDDIE

I believe it's cheaper to keep her. Plus man when you get to be a certain age, you just get used to certain things. Don't mean you like it. You just used to it, but I ain't never believed in one woman for the rest of my life. Hell, I like too many things about too many women.

HANK

Eddie, you mind me asking why did you marry Iris in the first place?

EDDIE

Pregnant, but we lost that one. I had already gotten a girl pregnant in high school but her parents sent her away and I never saw her or the baby again. They were what we called highflutin folks and since I wasn't, they sent her away.

MARTY

You ain't never try to find them?

EDDIE

Man, I was a kid. All I cared about was playing ball. What I know about taking care of a family? I figured they were better off anyway.

HANK

I couldn't imagine having a child and not knowing it.

EDDIE

Yeah well, life happens, but Iris wasn't always so bad. In high school, she was a good girl and real smart. She was even the valedictorian of our class, but when she got pregnant in college, she damn near made me marry her. Said she didn't want to have a child and not be married. Since, I already had a job waiting for me up here in Chicago, I figured I could take care of them both, but that didn't mean I thought she was the *only* one.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Shit, when I saw all these fine ass women in Chicago, I thought I had died and went to heaven. I knew right then I couldn't just be with one woman. Ain't no man in my family ever just been with one woman. No sir.

MARTY

Bible say it's better to marry than to burn.

EDDIE

(Cocky)

Well, there you go. I'm good then.

MARTY

Just cause you marry one woman but cheat with many women doesn't mean you're good. The Bible also speaks of adultery.

EDDIE reaches in his pocket and slams twenty dollars on the table.

EDDIE

Whichever one of you have never cheated or thought about cheating on your wife, you can take that twenty dollars right now.

JOE enters and struts over to the table.

JOE

When I see money on the table my hand starts itching. What we betting?

EDDIE

That these two gentleman have never cheated or thought about cheating on their wives before. The one without sin is twenty dollars richer.

JOE

Shit, I'll add my last two blue diamonds to that bet.

(Slams two Viagra pills
on the table)

Ain't no married man alive, deacon or not, winning that bet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MARTY

Why you put it on me? Hank right here.

JOE

I ain't got nothing to do with Republican. Plus, he was married to your sister, remember? He probably scared *not* to take the money and the pills, but then he knows he would be lying and stealing.

EDDIE

(Puts the money back in his pocket)

I rest my case, but for a minute Marty, I thought you might at least reach for it. Long as you and Mary been married, I figure you only had eyes for her.

MARTY

I told you, me and Mary got--

JOE

(Mocking)

A different type of relationship. What the hell that mean anyway? You been saying it forever.

MARTY

You wouldn't understand cause you've never been married.

JOE

I ain't got to be married to know that a different type of relationship is code for trouble in paradise. Deac., you ain't fooling nobody. I see guys like you all the time professing to be so righteous but on the inside. Let's just say, no one knows the true heart of a man.

(Beat)

You good, Eddie?

EDDIE

You know nothing can keep Eddie Lee down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

JOE

Good, cause I got some good news.
(Clears his throat)
Speaking of women, I rented that house I bought to a fine ass woman name Pat Brule`. Don't that sound sexy. Bru-le`. Got an accent over the "e" and everything. She one of them Creole gals from Louisiana with gray eyes and butterscotch skin. I swear if I didn't know better I woulda thought she was Lena Horne, but forty years younger. Can't be more than about fifty-seven or fifty-eight.

EDDIE

The Jones' house? Down the street from me?

JOE

I said you can stop calling it the Jones' house and yes sir directly down the street from you, but Iris gonna be watching yo ass like a hawk now, cause this woman is beautiful *and* rich. She paid up three months in advance plus first month and last month's rent. I like her already. Not like them monkeys over in Raceland. They three months behind on their rent and now I got to go to court to try and get them out.

MARTY

I thought you said you didn't want another rental?

JOE

I don't want another rental from jokers who don't have money to pay rent. There's a difference.

MARTY

Is it just her?

JOE

Yup, just her. No husband. Say she never been married.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

MARTY

How come she got all this money?
What she do for a living?

JOE

I really don't give a damn, but if you must know she's a baker and she used to dance with Alvin Ailey back in the day. Body still tight and curvy, just like I like. Today, she just bakes and teaches piano lessons. Got a baby grand piano coming too. Say she's going to put it in the middle of the living room. Now, that's high cotton. She showed me pictures of her days dancing while we drank tea and ate some of the best damn coconut cake you ever tasted.

EDDIE

Aw man, I love some coconut cake. My mama used to ground her own coconut and make it four layers high with a cherry on top. She would make it for my birthday every year before I left Mississippi cause it was my favorite. Couldn't nobody make it like her.

JOE

I don't know, Eddie. This cake so damn good it make you want to slap yo mama.

EDDIE

Iris is allergic to coconut so making a coconut cake is out of the question.

HANK

Is she allergic to nuts?

EDDIE

I don't think so, why?

HANK

Cause allergies to just coconut are rare, but a person who is allergic to tree nuts should avoid coconut. My oldest daughter has had a nut allergy since she was seven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

JOE

(Annoyed)

I'm sure Iris knows what she is or isn't allergic to, thank you very much. I'll ask Joe Jr., the doctor, for you if you want.

EDDIE

It don't matter no way. I've asked her a hundred times. She won't make it, but I do miss it.

JOE

Well now it's right down the street.

MARTY

You better be careful with that, Eddie.

EDDIE

I'm just going to go over and welcome her to the neighborhood, that's all.

MARTY

You just don't like peace do you?

JOE

Ain't no peace living with Iris. Hell, he might as well go over and say hi. Just don't let her catch you doing it. Take your time, though. I got a feeling Ms. Brule' gone be around for awhile. She even talking about opening up a bakery in the neighborhood.

EDDIE

Good, she can replace Jasper.

MARTY

What happened to Jasper?

EDDIE

Opening up a liquor store on 69th & Halsted.

MARTY

A liquor store? What the hell he want to do that for? His mom had that place for twenty years and he can't even keep it for four.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

EDDIE

He say ain't no money in candy and potato chips.

JOE

Opening up a liquor store ain't no big deal. You just got to get your liquor license then buy your liquor.

MARTY

We just don't need anymore liquor stores in our neighborhoods. Why isn't he opening it on the north side or in the suburbs? Pushing that poison in our neighborhoods. There are churches around there.

EDDIE

That's where I mostly see liquor stores. A church then a liquor store.

JOE

A black man can get a loan for a liquor store before anything else, especially in our neighborhoods. When I was trying to get a loan for my first couple of properties, I damn near had to give up one of my sons. White man walk in to get a loan and they handing him the keys to the place before the bank close. Ain't that right, Republican?

HANK

(Distracted with the game)
Huh?

JOE

I said ain't that right?

HANK

I've never tried to get a loan for any property, other than my house, so I wouldn't know.

JOE

You know alright. Me and you go down the street to Champion right now and see who leave out with a loan the same day. No questions asked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

HANK
(Innocently)
You?

JOE
So, you trying to be smart now?

MARTY
Joe, leave it alone.

JOE
(Upset)
Leave what alone? Republican don't believe racism still alive and well.

MARTY
That's not what he said.

JOE
Damn Deac., we all just heard what he said and Republican is a grown ass man who can speak for himself.

MARTY
(Gets agitated)
His name is not Republican. It's Hank. H-A-N-K. Hank.

EDDIE
Hey! Weren't we just talking about Pat Brule` and her coconut cake? I don't give a damn what Jasper does. I want to talk about Ms. Brule` some more.

MARTY
I'm through with it. I'm going to get me some coffee.
(Exits to get coffee)

JOE and EDDIE continue talking ignoring HANK.

JOE
If you up to it, I need you to come over there with me this morning to look at the fence in that backyard after I get back from evicting some of these monkeys.

EDDIE
What's wrong with the fence?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

JOE

It's leaning. I wasn't going to bother fixing it, but for Ms. Brule, I'm making an exception. Plus, I'm sure she'll have some goodies for us.

(They both chuckle)

EDDIE

You gone have to make it later cause I have doctor's appointment today.

JOE

I thought you said you're good.

EDDIE

And I am. They just making me come back for a follow-up. I told them about these muscle aches in my neck and hands and how I can't seem to keep nothing down.

JOE

Iris ain't trying to poison you is she?

EDDIE

Naw, it's probably just a stomach virus. Just tired, man, and I keep waking up with these sweats. I think I just need some rest.

HANK looks at EDDIE curiously.

JOE

After that prostrate mess, Joe Jr, the doctor, makes all my doctor appointments for me all the way from Texas. He puts it in his calendar or something, then sends me texts everyday for about a week. He's a good son, about the best thing that came out of that relationship with his mama.

(Beat. Pauses and stares out the window)

Uh-Oh. There she goes.

(Looks at his phone)

Everyday, like clockwork.

EDDIE and HANK stare out the window too as EDDIE pops more pills in his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

EDDIE

Mmm, mmm. If I were thirty years younger.

JOE

What's wrong with your age now?
Hell, a lot of women her age
looking for a father figure.

EDDIE

Hank, what you think? You think I
can still pull a woman like that?

HANK

I don't know Eddie. She is very
attractive, but she looks like
she's Jamie's age. Marty's right.
She looks awfully sad. You can see
it in her eyes.

EDDIE

I think we can blame Goddamnit for
that.

JOE

Speaking of Goddamnit, there he
goes messing up the view again.
Damn.

MARTY returns frantic and upset.

HANK

You okay, Marty?

MARTY

Emmanuel fell and hit his head.
They took him to Christ hospital
because he was bleeding real bad.
Ms. Green just called me. I got to
go.

HANK

Want me to come with you?

MARTY

No, I'll call you later.
(Gathers his things)

EDDIE

If it ain't one thing it's another.

JOE

I'm going to head out too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

EDDIE

Alright Hank, we heading out. Talk
to you later.

JOE and EDDIE exit with MARTY. HANK remains and watches them get into their cars. He finishes his coffee and starts to put away his chess board and then the newspapers and notices the two Viagra pills JOE left on the table under a newspaper. He picks them up as if to go and give them to JOE but hesitates, stares at them before slowly putting them in his shirt pocket. When he looks up, GOTDAMNIT stares blankly at him through the window.)

(END OF SCENE)

INTERMISSION

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

ACT II

SCENE ONE.

The following Monday morning at McDonald's. HANK has set out the chess board and newspapers. This time he leaves to get his coffee. MARTY enters on the phone before HANK returns.

MARTY

(On phone)

She forgot to leave it out for you?...It's in the kitchen cabinet...The one closest to the refrigerator on the second shelf... Yes, that's it...Right, eight hundred milligrams...Only if he complains of pain, now...Mary gave him one this morning before she went to the gym, so he should be okay...Alright, see you later.

HANK returns

HANK

Is Manny doing better?

MARTY

Oh yeah much better. I'm going to take him to the barber today. His hair is starting to grow back over where they put the stitches in. Thanks for stopping by to see him. He really likes you.

HANK

He's a good guy.

EDDIE comes in disheveled and angry.

MARTY

What happened to you?

EDDIE

Iris!

MARTY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

EDDIE

(Yelling)

I guess that talk you two had didn't work, cause she has moved from putting knives in people's faces to putting them in people's food.

MARTY

What are you talking about, man?

EDDIE

Last night I found a piece of my cake on the kitchen counter with that same damn butcher knife stuck in it.

MARTY

(Figures it out)

You went over to that woman's house and got a piece of that coconut cake?

EDDIE

So what? I didn't bring Iris a piece. I know she's allergic to coconut. She done just went crazy.

MARTY

I told you not to go over to that woman's house, Eddie. Nothing good would come of it. Iris don't give a damn about that coconut cake. She's fed up with your cheating ways.

EDDIE

Something told me you would take her side on this cause Mary don't give you no problems so you don't have no reason to tip out on her. I should have known *you*, the good deacon, wouldn't understand.

MARTY

It ain't about sides. It's about...

(Beat)

Listen. You know how I always say me and Mary got a different type of relationship?

EDDIE

Yeah

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

MARTY

(Sighs)

Well, it's because I've never been in love with Mary, and she knows it. I mean don't get me wrong, I care about her and I love her because she is my wife, but Mary wasn't the woman I wanted to marry. Right before, I went off to the army, I proposed to another woman, Dorothy Arnold. This Pat Brule' couldn't touch her with a ten foot pole. Man, she was the absolute love of my life. We were going to get married as soon as I got back from Korea, and she was right there waiting on me like she said, but... I got in some trouble and had to deal with that first. And well, her family didn't want her to wait on me that long. Mary was a cousin of a guy I knew in Parchman and I was about ready to give up on life when she started writing me, so I started writing her and one thing led to another I guess, but she wasn't Dorothy. Yeah, in the beginning, I tipped out on Mary, a lot, but Mary was saved and she introduced me to the Lord and that's when I accepted my role as a husband and I promised God that I would honor and respect her to death do us part, and I've never broken that promise since. What I'm trying to say, Eddie is that it's about respecting each other.

EDDIE

(Missing the point)

Well, that's Iris' problem then. She don't respect me.

MARTY

Respect begets respect.

(Moves the chess game closer. Holds up pieces and moves them to demonstrate)

Look at this way. This is the king. Now, he's the most important piece on this board, but he's also the weakest.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

MARTY (CONT'D)

He can only move one square at a time. Now, here is the queen. She is the *most powerful* piece on this board. She can move as many squares she desires in any direction. Her power is so great that she is worth more than any two pieces on this entire board. You would be a fool to risk losing her cause losing the queen is like losing the game.

(Beat)

I had to learn that about Mary and you got learn that about Iris. Man, you ain't got to love somebody to respect them, but if you do love them, then respect them and don't risk losing them. The problem is you don't respect or love Iris and she knows it and she's tired of it. You lucky she didn't cut your balls off with that butcher knife.

(HANK and MARTY laugh)

EDDIE

That ain't funny.

JOE struts over to the table with a cup of coffee. Looks at EDDIE.

JOE

What the hell wrong with you? I called you back last night but you didn't answer.

EDDIE

Slept in my car again last night.

JOE

What now?

EDDIE

Iris and that knife again.

JOE

Damn man. How many times you gone let that woman pull a knife on you?

MARTY

(Chuckles)

She didn't. She pulled it on a piece of cake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

JOE

She did what?

(Beat)

Wait a damn minute, you went over there and got a piece of that coconut cake and brought Iris a piece? I told you don't let Iris catch you. I told you. Did she catch you coming out of her house?

EDDIE

Naw and I didn't bring her no cake.

JOE

So what the hell happened?

EDDIE

Iris found the cake and put a butcher knife in it.

JOE

Now that's some crazy shit.

EDDIE

So, I just left and slept in my car again. I didn't trust her in that house.

JOE

Don't trust her anywhere. A woman who likes to pull knives ain't to be trusted period.

(Beat)

Well, I hate to say it, but something ain't quite right with Ms. Brule`.

MARTY

Why you say that?

JOE

For one, she got too many men coming in and out of her house. She ain't doing that much damn baking.

EDDIE

You think she hoeing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

JOE

I ain't saying that, but I was in her bathroom the other day and she got more pills in little boxes than the drug store. I don't know if she selling prescription drugs or what and that is how she is able to buy all them fancy things and pay her rent. I can't quite put my finger on it, but give me some time and I will.

MARTY

Why you over there so much to know what she's doing?

JOE

Cause that's my property.

MARTY

Yeah, but you have someone living in your property now.

JOE

So, it's still my property and I have to know what's going on. Plus her toilet was acting up and Oscar can't ever be found, so I went over there myself. And speaking of pills, what happened to my blue diamonds I put on this table?

HANK looks away.

MARTY

You put them on this table?

JOE

Yeah, we were betting remember and I can't find them now.

EDDIE

I don't remember, man. I thought you took them.

HANK

I didn't see them.

MARTY

They probably threw them away when they cleaned off the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

JOE

I hope not. I'm going to talk to the manager before I leave.

MARTY

(Sarcastic)

About two pills you left on this table a week ago? You really think they saved them for you?

JOE

Them things prescription not them fake ones you can buy anywhere.

MARTY

Well, I guess you out business for awhile.

JOE

Oh, I got refills. I just got to wait a little bit, but I can tell you one thing, I won't be using them with Ms. Brule` until I can figure out what the hell she got going on over there.

MARTY

All that glitters ain't gold.

JOE

She still fine as hell.

EDDIE

Yes she is, but I'm going to lay low for awhile too.

JOE

(Looks at his watch)

She should be coming any minute now.

EDDIE

That's a new watch?

JOE

Yes sir. Bought it Saturday. Ain't she pretty. Stainless steel Rolex. Business Insider magazine said it's one of the watches to have if you want to impress people and since I am a business man, I got myself one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

HANK

Those watches are about five thousand dollars.

JOE

Your point?

EDDIE

Man Joe, it's shining like new money. You know what I could do with five thousand dollars?

JOE

Get a divorce.

EDDIE

I ain't thinking about, Iris. I would have just enough for that Lexus GX truck we went to look at last year. Now, that's a pretty car.

MARTY

You ought to get that Cadillac C-T-6. Drives like butter. Pastor Gregg just got him one.

JOE

(Sarcastic)

I bet he did.

MARTY

It's okay for you to buy a five thousand dollar watch to wear to McDonalds, but a man of God can't have a new car?

JOE

The difference is I didn't pay for mine with offering money.

MARTY

He gets a salary, Joe. Members or tenants, what's the difference or should I say members or gambling?

JOE

See, you don't know what you talking about? I'm a business man who knows how to invest and double my income. My honest income and I don't have to save nobody's soul to get it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

JOE (CONT'D)

That preaching business ain't nothing but a racquet. Hell, I just might open me up a church when I get out of the real estate business. What you say, Deac.? You want to be a deacon in my church.

MARTY

When hell freezes over.

JOE

That's alright. Eddie, how about you? Want to be a deacon in my church?

EDDIE

I'll pass, man.

JOE

Republican? Oh, excuse me, Hank, you can be a deacon too cause it's going to be a church for blacks and whites. That way, you won't feel left out.

HANK

I think I'll stay where I am.

JOE

Suit yourself.

EDDIE notices the woman first. Clears his throat before popping a couple pills. All four men stare out the window at her at the same time.

JOE (CONT'D)

Now that's a lovely sun dress.

EDDIE

See what I really like about her is that she's classy. Her hair and nails are always done, and she just dresses classy. I like a woman who cares about her appearance.

MARTY

Cleanliness is next to godliness.

JOE

Well, somebody needs to tell Goddamnit that cause he walks next to her every morning like he don't smell like a goat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

HANK

I wonder why she just doesn't take
a different route to the train.

JOE

Why should she have to change her
route because of an annoying beggar
and deprive us of the lovely view?
Gotdamnit just needs to get the
hint and leave her the hell alone.

MARTY

I'll talk to him about it.

GOTDAMNIT enters the restaurant and comes straight to their
table. His clothes are too big and hang off him. He carries
his belongings in a bag. GOTDAMNIT talks fast and stands the
entire time. HANK fidgets.

GOTDAMNIT

Hey there fellas.

MARTY

Hey sir. We were just talking about
you.

GOTDAMNIT

What y'all talking about me for,
gotdamnit?

MARTY

Well, just that you---

JOE

Why you always bothering that
woman?

GOTDAMNIT

What woman? I ain't bothering
nobody.

MARTY

The woman who passes by every
morning on her way to work.

JOE

You don't even know her.

GOTDAMNIT

(Rising anger)

I do know her. How you gone tell me
who I know, gotdamnit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

MARTY

Hey man, I told you if you need
some money come on by the church.
We got plenty of work you can do
and we'll pay you.

GOTDAMNIT

Church is for the bread and wine. I
go to church for the bread and
wine.

JOE

Here we go.

GOTDAMNIT

'But let a man examine himself, and
so let him eat of that bread and
drink of that cup.'

(He motions as if eating
the bread and drinking
the wine. Then takes his
chain of the cross out of
his shirt and kisses it
and stares at HANK before
switching subjects.
Addresses EDDIE.)

I saw you coming out the Jones'
house. You don't never ever go to
the house of God but you go to the
Jones' house.

MARTY chuckles

EDDIE

You need to get you some damn
business.

GOTDAMNIT

Yup, I sit up real high in His
house so I can be closer to Him and
see all the lights. Dim ones too,
but ain't no lights in the Jones'
house. You can bring your own light
over there but when you leave
there, your light is dim and then
you take that dim light into your
house and now everybody in there
got a dim light too. Why would
somebody want to do that?

(Beat)

Iris don't like coconut cake,
gotdamnit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

EDDIE

(Stands to face GOTDAMNIT
with rising anger)
What the hell you just say?

MARTY

(To GOTDAMNIT)
Alright now, that's enough sir.

JOE

Get gone.

GOTDAMNIT

Y'all give me a dollar so I can get
me a hash brown.

Only MARTY and HANK reach in their pockets for a quarter.
GOTDAMNIT gives HANK the same look from the window and HANK
gives two more quarters. GOTDAMNIT gathers the quarters and
addresses HANK.

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

Tactics and the whole board. That's
all it is. That's all it is.

GOTDAMNIT exits mumbling to himself. HANK contemplates.

JOE

Somebody needs to get a hold of his
family and have him committed.

MARTY

I told you they won't have anything
to do with him anymore. Pastor
already tried to reach them.

JOE

Well, according to my Rolex, it's
time for me to get going.
(Points to EDDIE)
You need to stay at one of my
places tonight?

EDDIE

Naw, I'm going to wait until she
goes to sleep to go home. Give her
a few days to cool off.

JOE

If you say so. Later, Deac.
(JOE exits. EDDIE looks
worried again.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

MARTY

You alright, Eddie?

EDDIE

Yeah, I'm alright. Just tired. I got a lot to do today, so I'ma take off.

(EDDIE exits)

MARTY

Well, what you got going on today, Hank?

HANK is pre-occupied.

Hank?

HANK

Uh yeah, going to buy me a new fishing pole and then I got to get fitted for my tuxedo for the wedding later. You?

MARTY

It's my time to visit with the sick and shut-in at the church, so I got to go see about a few members before I take Emmanuel to the barber.

(Beat)

Hank, you know Joe is full of it, right? Don't let him get to you.

HANK

He doesn't.

MARTY

His bark is bigger than his bite.

HANK

How did you two become friends?

MARTY

I wouldn't say we're friends. I met Joe through Eddie and I met Eddie through Iris. I've been knowing Iris for years. You've seen her. She's one of the ushers at our church. She thought maybe I could convince Eddie to come to church. You know Eddie's a good guy deep down.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

MARTY (CONT'D)

Now, he and Joe have been friends for years, ever since Eddie came to Chicago and they used to meet here all the time. Smith was here too before Vi had the accident. Once Smith left, Eddie invited me to join them and that's how I come to know Joe. He's entertaining but a fool.

HANK

I'm sorry to hear about you and Mary.

MARTY

Ain't nothing to be sorry about. I respect Mary and it works and sometimes that's the best you can ask for.

(Beat)

Well, I best get going. I got two nursing homes to visit and I heard they serve tapioca pudding on Mondays.

They share a laugh before MARTY exits. As HANK puts everything away GOTDAMNIT returns upset.

GOTDAMNIT

Where Marty go?

HANK

He had to leave.

GOTDAMNIT

I'm mad. I'm real mad now.

HANK

What's wrong?

GOTDAMNIT

I ain't got to cheat.

(Yells over his shoulder)

I ain't got to cheat, gotdamnit.

HANK

(Stands)

Hey, hey it's okay. Who said you were cheating?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

GOTDAMNIT

He ain't no Grandmaster. God's the only Grandmaster. He teaches us all we can ever know.

HANK

Right, but what happened?

GOTDAMNIT

Willie don't ever have time to play when I want to play him. So, I say we play fifteen minute blitz. He know what blitz is. Willie ran out of time that's what happened, so he call me a cheat in front of them young boys. Said I made an illegal move. I ain't got to cheat. Willie don't know the threat stronger than the execution. It's tactics and the whole board. You got to know the whole story. That's all it is.

HANK finally understands.

GOTDAMNIT (CONTD) (CONT'D)

I know a little girl who been playing this game since she was seven years old.

(Point of tears)

Her daddy taught her. I got to go find out if she still playing. I got to go find out.

GOTDAMNIT leaves in a hurry. HANK sits in silence.

(END OF SCENE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

SCENE TWO.

The following Monday morning at McDonalds. HANK is the first to arrive. He whistles as he cleans off the table sets out the morning papers and his chess game.

MARTY
(Carries a Bible)
Hey now, Hank.

HANK
Hey Marty. You're earlier than usual.

MARTY
Yeah, I have to go to the hospital again to visit one of the mothers of the church this morning. The good news is that she is recovering and may even go home today, so I thought I would stop by here first, grab some coffee, play a little chess with you and see you fellas before I go.

HANK
Manny all situated this morning?

MARTY
Yeah, Mary's home with him today. Ms. Green wasn't feeling well.

HANK
Since you have to go soon, want to play a fifteen minute game?

MARTY
Fifteen minutes?

HANK
Yeah, whoever is ahead or has time left in fifteen minutes wins.

MARTY
You sure you ready for that? Where you learn this? On that computer?

HANK smiles and makes the first move. EDDIE comes in looking disheveled again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

MARTY (CONT'D)

(to EDDIE)

Man, are you sleeping?

EDDIE

Yeah, in my damn car.

MARTY

Still?

EDDIE

Where else am I supposed to sleep?

MARTY

Your bed or at least the couch.

EDDIE

I'll be alright.

MARTY

So, how long do you plan to sleep
in your car?

EDDIE

I don't know.

HANK

I have extra bedrooms in my house
if you want.

EDDIE

Naw, thanks Hank. I'll be alright.

MARTY

Eddie, you want me to pray with
you?

JOE interrupts in a panic. He looks more disheveled than
EDDIE.

JOE

They robbed me, man.

MARTY

EDDIE

What?

What?

EDDIE

Who? Where?

JOE

Some young bloods over in Raceland.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (33)

EDDIE

Just now?

JOE

Yesterday about seven. I been driving around all night trying to find them bastards.

EDDIE

What happened?

JOE

Oscar was supposed to go over there to collect the rent, but his lazy ass full of excuses. I called them folks all day about my money but they weren't answering so I went over there cause they already three months behind. One of them punks, in the neighborhood, walked past the house while I was ringing the bell. I went around the back to see if I could get in that way, but they didn't answer but I know they were in there cause I could hear the TV and a baby. When I went back around the front that same punk was inside the gate and another one walked up from around the other side of the house. He walked up the steps with me and that's when he turned around in front of me and told me to give him my watch and my wallet. I told him he had the wrong man now. I wasn't giving him nothing and he better move the hell out my way. Then the other one walked up the steps with one hand behind his back.

(Yelling)

That's when I reached for mine and before I could grab it, the one in front had a gun pointed in my face.

EDDIE

Shit, Joe.

JOE

You know what that little punk said to me? He said 'don't make me lay you down old man,' and then he cocked it right in my goddamn face.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (34)

JOE (CONT'D)

I used to eat punks like that for breakfast. He don't know who he messing with.

EDDIE

But these kids today, they ain't got nothing to live for. They will take you out and go home and go to sleep.

JOE

Yeah, well, he better sleep with one eye open. Cause I'm coming for him.

MARTY

(Calmly to JOE while making his move on the chessboard)
Too flashy.

JOE

What?

MARTY

I said you too flashy.

JOE

What the hell you talking about?

MARTY

You come around people who barely have any money advertising all your money. What you expect?

JOE

You trying to say this is my fault.

MARTY

I'm saying you have to be careful how you treat people. Respect begets respect.

JOE

I don't have to respect anyone young enough to be my damn grandson. They better respect me.

MARTY

And they would if you treated people right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (35)

JOE

Deac., you better make your point
real quick or--

MARTY

Or what? Hmm? You rent these
apartments and you don't bother to
fix them up the way they need
fixing and then you get mad when
the people don't pay the rent.
Round here talking about being a
business man. News flash, a real
business man don't drive around
with a five thousand dollar watch
and party clothes on collecting his
own rent. He pays someone else to
do that for him. These kids know
when someone is genuine or not.
They see how you treat people. Like
that widow who you put out last
year three weeks after her husband
died.

JOE

You don't know what you talking
about?

MARTY

I don't? Cause you came in here
bragging about it the next day.

JOE

She was behind on her rent.

MARTY

Because her husband died, Joe.

JOE

She was behind before her husband
died. Way behind.

MARTY

You don't think the people in the
neighborhood knew about that? Of
course they did and they knew you
were the one who put her out.

JOE

(Yelling)

Let me tell you something, Deac.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (36)

JOE (CONT'D)

When I left Macon in sixty-one, my grandmother gave me her last two dollars and I turned that two dollars into real money so I don't give a damn what people think. If I want to wear my money on my wrist or on my back, nobody suppose to take it from me.

EDDIE

Joe, Joe. Calm down, man.

JOE

No, you better tell deacon here to calm down. Ever since you invited him here, he acts like he's better than me. Always trying to preach about what I'm doing and then he ups and invites some white man to the group without asking anyone.

MARTY

I asked Eddie.

JOE

But you didn't ask me. You didn't ask me because you don't respect me. You think because I don't go to church or because I'm not married, I don't deserve respect. Well, that's where you're wrong, Deac. I deserve and I demand respect and I'm going to get it whether you say so or not.

(Turns to EDDIE)

Eddie, I need you to roll back over there with me.

EDDIE

(Hesitates)

Back over to Raceland?

JOE

Yeah. I'm getting my shit back.

EDDIE

I don't know, Joe. These kids trigger happy.

JOE

Ain't you got your piece?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (37)

EDDIE

Yeah, but...I don't know, man.

JOE

What you don't feel well now?
 (Notices MARTY's Bible)
 Oh I see what's going on here.
 Y'all just had bible study and now
 you spooked.

EDDIE

Naw, Joe. We ain't twenty-five no
 more, man. Chump disrespect us back
 in the day, we beat him down and he
 never disrespects us again. But
 today, they don't fight the same.
 You know that. They'll take your
 life, and right now I'm trying to
 live.

HANK

Did you got a good look at them?
 Maybe you can file a police report.

JOE

(Laughs)
 A police report? That's just what a
 white man who ain't experienced a
 day of racism in his life would
 say. Man, the police don't give a
 damn about me getting robbed.

MARTY

This probably ain't the first time
 they've robbed someone. Your police
 report just might help catch them.

JOE

I can't believe this. I thought I
 could count on y'all, but forget
 you chumps, I'll get my boys to go
 with me.
 (Starts to leave but
 pauses)
 Oh yeah, I just remembered
 something. I know who stole my blue
 diamonds. See, I got to thinking
 about it later and me and Eddie
 left together so that left Deac and
 Republican.

HANK averts his eyes.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (38)

JOE (CONT'D)

But Deac's boy was bleeding in the head that day so he headed out right before us. So the only person left was Republican and my diamonds.

MARTY

He said he didn't see them.

JOE

There you go again speaking for a grown ass man. Yeah, he took him. Right Republican?

HANK doesn't respond.

JOE (CONT'D)

You waiting on Deac to answer for you?

MARTY

(Rising anger)
Joe, back off.

JOE

(Keeps addressing HANK)
I don't often agree with Deac, but he was right about one thing. Blue diamonds don't protect you from diseases. Yeah, that's right. You better get yourself checked out, Republican, and I hope you got some good insurance since you don't believe in Obamacare.

EDDIE

What you talking about, Joe?

JOE

I'm surprised you ain't run into him by now coming out of Ms. Brule's house.

Everyone looks at HANK

JOE (CONT'D)

Republican here been visiting just about every night, but the funny thing is, I ain't never seen him leave with no coconut cake.

MARTY

What is he talking about, Hank?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (39)

HANK tries to respond but JOE interrupts.

JOE

I had Joe Jr, the doctor, look up
some of them pills Ms. Brule' got.
I got the names right here.

(Takes out a piece of
paper)

Truvada. Sustiva. Norvir. Oh she
got tons of pills with names like
this. You know what she taking
these pills for, Republican? Huh?
Ms. Brule' got AIDS. A-I-D-S.

EDDIE

What the--?!

JOE

I guess you better get yourself
checked out too.

EDDIE

I didn't sleep with that woman.

JOE

Yeah right. That's just what Bill
Clinton said.

MARTY

(Agitated)

Hank, what the hell is he talking
about?

HANK

(Looks away and talks low)

She doesn't have AIDS. She's H-I-V
positive.

MARTY

(Rising anger)

How the hell you know what this
woman got? My sister ain't been
dead a year.

HANK

(Fearful)

Cause I'm H-I-V positive too

MARTY

You better tell me something, Hank.
Right now. When you get H-I-V?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (40)

HANK

When I married Nora.

MARTY

You son of a bitch--
(Grabs his Bible and
raises it in the air as
he leaps towards HANK.
Chess pieces fly. EDDIE
jumps up to stop him. JOE
just watches.)

EDDIE

Marty, no!

HANK begins to cry

HANK

We never told anyone. You know Nora was married to a horrible man before me. He was a drug addict and he infected her. I didn't know it when we met and she didn't either, but we were already married. I couldn't just turn my back on her especially when I knew it wasn't her fault and all she had gone through. I wasn't trying to disrespect you or Nora by going over to Ms. Brule's house. When Joe said she gives piano lessons, I thought here was my chance to finally learn. I wasn't planning on doing nothing, Marty, I swear, but I've been so lonely and depressed since Nora died. I knew Ms. Brule' was H-I-V positive too, because the law says you have to disclose your status if you're going to be intimate with someone and since we are both positive, the risk is less and I guess one thing led to another and--

JOE

And that shit will kill you. All y'all been shaking his hand and letting him get your coffee.

HANK

You can't catch H-I-V that way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (41)

JOE

He probably got them sores all over his body.

HANK

(Visibly angry)
Go to hell, Joe.

MARTY

(Yells)
Shut-up. All y'all, just shut the hell up.
(Beat)
(Distruight)
Nora was my baby sister. My other sister had that mental retardation. We figure that's where Emmanuel gets it from, but Nora was smart as a whip. First one in our family to go to college until she met Levi. He was trouble from the start even made her quit school and then started keeping her away from the family. After sugar took my mama's legs in fifty-two, Nora would come by the house to cook and clean for her but Levi stopped all that. Came over there one day while Nora was helping mama to the bathroom and dragged her out of there by her hair. Right in front of my mama.

(MARTY gets choked up)

A few months later, I was home on leave. Me and my twin brother, Mason, went over there to get Nora away from him. He had the house so locked up, we had to break the windows just to get in. When he came back, he was high as a kite on that junk. You could see the devil in his eyes. Just as we were trying to leave with Nora, he grabbed his gun and shot Mason in the back. That's when I turned around and unloaded five bullets in him. Woulda done more, if Nora hadn't begged me to stop. I put her on a train headed for Chicago that night.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (42)

MARTY (CONT'D)

Did ten years for involuntary
manslaughter at Parchman Farm for
it and I'd do it again if it meant
saving my baby sister's life.

(Beat)

JOE

You coming, Eddie?

EDDIE

(Shakes his head slowly)

No.

JOE storms off.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Joe, man, don't go.

HANK

(Slowly gathers his things
to leave)

I loved Nora more than anything in
this world. Even when society said
I wasn't supposed to love her, and
I miss her everyday. I wasn't going
to turn my back on her because of H-
I-V. I didn't mean for you to find
out this way, Marty.

(Starts to leave, but
turns around to address
EDDIE)

Eddie, you should get yourself
checked out. The weight loss, lost
of appetite, muscle aches and night
sweats...just get yourself checked
out.

(EDDIE looks away in
shame.)

HANK exits. MARTY puts his head in his hands. EDDIE sits in
silence staring at the Bible lying in the middle of the table
surrounded by chess pieces.

(END OF SCENE)

(CONT'D)

SCENE THREE

The following Monday morning back at McDonalds. The table is empty because HANK isn't there. MARTY arrives first. He sits at the table reading his Bible while drinking coffee. EDDIE enters shortly after no longer looking disheveled.

EDDIE
Morning, Marty.

MARTY
Eddie.

EDDIE
Didn't think anyone would be here.
(Beat)
No Hank, huh?

MARTY
Nope.

EDDIE
I guess he's not coming back.

MARTY
Probably not.

EDDIE
Man, now I can't find Joe. He's not answering his phone. I been going by his place but he's not answering the door and all the lights are off. I don't have Oscar's number or none of his boys. Shit, I don't know what to do.

MARTY
He's fine. Probably didn't even go back over there.

EDDIE
Then you don't know, Joe. He won't rest until he gets the last word and if that means going looking for them boys, he will do it. He's crazy like that but he's been my friend for over forty years. And well, I just hope he's okay.
(Beat)
Marty, I didn't sleep with that woman.

MARTY shrugs indifference.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I mean I feel like I can tell you that. It wasn't that I didn't want to, and I'm not used to women telling me no, but she made it real clear that she don't sleep with married men.

MARTY

So, why were you going over there?

EDDIE

To talk. I swear on my mama's grave. It was just nice to talk with someone who wasn't angry and...and...who wasn't Iris, you know? I mean we laughed and she played the piano and we talked. That's it.

MARTY

Well, I guess if I got a chance to see Dorothy again that's about all we would do too.

EDDIE

Do you know what happened to her?

MARTY

Last I heard from some folks back home is that she lives in California with her husband and family. She was a school teacher. She always talked about being a teacher. That's all I know.

EDDIE

Life is something ain't it?

MARTY

I guess. You back in the house, yet?

EDDIE

Yeah, but I been sleeping on the couch.

(Beat)

Marty, about what Hank said.

MARTY

What about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDDIE

I know it wasn't right, but I've
slept with a lot of women in my
life and I...I wasn't always safe,
and Iris wasn't always angry. It's
just lately...

(Gets choked up)

MARTY

What's this got to do with what
Hank said?

EDDIE

(Slowly)

It's why she pulled a knife on me
in the first place.

MARTY sits back and shakes his head.

MARTY

You risked the queen's life.

EDDIE

I know.

(Beat)

I know.

MARTY

Go home, Eddie.

EDDIE hesitates

MARTY (CONT'D)

Go home to your wife.

EDDIE exits.

(Beat)

GOTDAMNIT enters wearing a suit. It fits loosely on him. He
has a hair cut and a shave. He still carries his belongings
in a bag. He heads straight to the table where MARTY sits.
GOTDAMNIT stands.

MARTY (CONT'D)

(Shocked)

Well hello, sir.

GOTDAMNIT

(Points at MARTY'S Bible)

That's the same Bible you use when
you give the bread and the wine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARTY

Yes it is. Why you so dressed up?

GOTDAMNIT

As they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed it and brake it and gave it to the disciples, and said, take eat, this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remissions of sins.

MARTY

Actually Pastor Gregg reads that scripture.

GOTDAMNIT ignores him and motions as if eating the bread and drinking the wine. Then pulls out his chain of the cross from under his shirt and kisses it. He changes subjects.

GOTDAMNIT

Hank didn't come to get the bread and wine Sunday.

MARTY

Well, he's a grown man.

GOTDAMNIT

I sit up high so I can be closer to Him, but I missed Hank's light. I figured it wouldn't be dim no more now that everyone knows the truth.

MARTY

The truth? You knew about Hank?

GOTDAMNIT

The truth will set you free. The choir sang

(Sings the lyrics)

this little light of mine. I'm gonna let it shine. I wanted to see his light Sunday. Eddie don't ever take the bread and wine for the remission of his sins, but he needs to cause you can't eat everybody's coconut cake. Joe's light is always dim, but now that them boys shot him--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARTY

(Shocked)

(Stands)

My Lord, Joe's been shot?

GOTDAMNIT

God had to get his light to shine,
that's all.

MARTY looks confused and frustrated.

MARTY

Did you see who shot him?

GOTDAMNIT

Them boys in Raceland didn't like
Joe coming around there. They light
already dim so they don't care. I
saw Joe and his sons riding through
there and then POW, POW, POW was
all that you heard. All the lights
in the neighborhood went dim.

MARTY

Is he dead?

GOTDAMNIT

God had to get his light to shine,
that's all.

MARTY

Why don't you just have a seat,
sir? I got to call Eddie.

GOTDAMNIT sits down clutching his bag. MARTY dials EDDIE's
number but gets his voice mail.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Eddie, it's Marty...Joe's been
shot...Check the hospitals...Let me
know.

(MARTY whispers a prayer.)

(Beat)

You never told me why you're all
dressed up.

GOTDAMNIT

She gave me her number.

MARTY

Who gave you their number?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GOTDAMNIT

She's gonna pick me up right here
for dinner at six o'clock.

MARTY

Who are you talking about?

GOTDAMNIT

I can tell you because you like the
man behind the pulpit.

MARTY

I'm not a preacher.

GOTDAMNIT

But you give out the bread and the
wine.

(Slowly opens his bag and
empties it out on the
table. A few clothes, a
chess board, clock, some
pieces and a picture fall
out. He hands the picture
to MARTY. MARTY takes out
his glasses to look at
the picture.)

MARTY

Oh, what a pretty little girl and a
pretty dress. She got some long
hair too. Who's this man with her?

GOTDAMNIT is silent. MARTY realizes who it is.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. Is this you? Is this
your daughter?

GOTDAMNIT

That was first Sunday nineteen-
seventy-nine.

(Begins to cry)

She was seven. I bought her a chess
board for her birthday and taught
her how to play. I ain't seen her
since. Her mama just up and moved
one day and took her, but she left
me this note though.

He reaches in his shoe and removes a folded and weathered
piece of paper and reads it matter-of-factly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

'You ain't right in the head no more.'

Folds the paper back and places it back in his shoe.

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

But yesterday she gave me her number.

MARTY

How did you find her?

GOTDAMNIT

She walk pass me everyday. I knew who she was from the moment she first walked pass me ninety-one days ago, but I see the way y'all look at her.

MARTY

You mean to tell me the woman you been asking for money is your daughter?

GOTDAMNIT

(Raises anger)

(Stands abruptly)

I ain't ask her for no money. What I ask her for money for?

MARTY

Okay, okay. Calm down, now. Have a seat. Wow, this is a blessing.

GOTDAMNIT

She say she going pick me up at six o'clock right here at McDonald's.

MARTY

Well, you got a long time to wait but you look nice, sir.

GOTDAMNIT

MacArthur.

MARTY

Huh?

GOTDAMNIT

You the only one don't call me Goddamnit. My name is MacArthur.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

GOTDAMNIT (CONT'D)

MacArthur Jackson. It's my
granddaddy's name.

MARTY

(Reaches to shake his
hand)

Well, it's nice to meet you, Mr.
Jackson.

(Beat)

Come on. Let me buy you some
breakfast before I head out. You
got a big day today.

MARTY closes his Bible and both men gather up their belongings and leave the table. One chess piece, the king, is left on the table. After a long beat, JOE peeks his head in the door and looks around like he's casing the joint. He looks over at the table, slowly starts his signature strut. When he sees it's empty he starts to walk away, but notices the chess piece. He grabs it and examines it before standing it upright on the table.

JOE

(Forlon)

Checkmate.

END OF PLAY.

BLACKOUT.

"PARCHMAN FARM
BLUES" PLAYS