

Red Line

Excerpt - Act 1:Sc 6

Written by

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CHARACTERS

WIL SCHNEIDER (The older)	Son of Harriet. Quixotic, yet struggles to find his purpose. Lamenting loss of his father. 18s/25s.
WIL SCHNEIDER (The younger)	The 13 year old Wil. A naive dreamer, impressionable and daring.
HARRIET SCHNEIDER	Mother of Wil. Stoic with racist beliefs. Finds solace in status quo; fears change. 50s/60s.
JAMES MOORE (The older)	Son of Lilly Moore. Smart, ambitious and fearless Black man who challenges the status quo during the 1940s. 18/25.
JAMES MOORE (The younger)	The 13 year old James. An intelligent, gifted mind full of self-determination.
LILLY MOORE	Mother of James. Compassionate, caring, keeper of the peace. 50s/60s.

SETTING & TIME

SETTING:	The adjacent backyards of the Schneider and Moore families in the White town of Berkeley and Black town of Kinloch respectively, both in St. Louis county.
TIME:	1940'S during and after World War II when segregation defined the neighborhoods.

SCENE SIX

A few days later, in HARRIET's backyard. HARRIET has hired WIL to pick up the old construction parts and remove them from the backyard. HARRIET is planting seeds in her small pots on the porch.

HARRIET

'Get rid of all those rusty old construction parts, especially the sharp items that are trip hazards. I'm tired of hurting myself getting to the garage.

WIL

These old parts are made out of steel. I could sell them for you.

HARRIET

You could use the money to save for a car. Your brother Herb wants to buy your father's old car. Since you spend most of your time at the gym, I told him he could buy it.

WIL

Mom, I need that car to get to the boxing tournaments and to my road building jobs!

HARRIET

Take the bus! Herb has landed a good-paying job doing accounting for a lawyers' firm downtown. He's offering \$300 to buy the old Ford unless you have enough for a better offer?

WIL

Mom, I've taken on a full time job training the boys at the gym and working the road construction when I need the cash.

HARRIET

Seems a bit short-sighted, Wil, putting so much energy into teaching for free. Ask for a salary!

WIL

Those kids don't have the money to pay for their training.

HARRIET

There are plenty of full time jobs that pay a salary; in fact, I know Arthur's been wanting to hire you full time-

WIL

Mom, I don't see a future for myself in road construction!

HARRIET

Your father started that business...(pauses) Arthur's been getting more work than he can handle. (more persuasively) Wil, if you worked full time, you could eventually become a co-owner!

WIL

Mom, I want to coach boxing!

HARRIET

Wil, boxing is a losing proposition.

WIL

I have my Golden Gloves pin to remind me that hard work pays off.

HARRIET

You mean winning bets on whose going to knock the other man out first.

WIL

So, I was going to ask you for a loan to buy the Kinloch Gym.

(HARRIET stops and stares at her son.)

HARRIET

I was hoping this was just a phase you're going through.

WIL

This phase? So that's how YOU see my life-

HARRIET

Your father set up a trust fund for each of his sons. As power of attorney, I decide how that trust money is spent.

WIL

I know dad would have supported my boxing competitions and what I'm doin' now...teaching-

HARRIET

I wouldn't be too sure. Your father's hopes and plans for your success did NOT include the Kinloch gym!

WIL

Mom, you never believed in anything I wanted to do-

HARRIET

I supported you...I fed you...clothed you...took care of you when you were sick...I just wish you spent more time with your brothers growing up than with James nextdoor.

WIL

I'm four years younger than Herb, six years younger than Emil and eight years younger than Arthur. We had little in common, mom. James and I are the same age. We were best friends!

HARRIET

James has been a bad influence on you.

WIL

James is a fighter, maybe not in the ring, but he's a Negro fighting to make something of his life.

HARRIET

I don't doubt he's worked hard. Working in his father's machine shop is his future. Your future is NOT with those Negroes!

WIL

We each see what we want to see, mom. James sees himself as a journalist; you see him as a second-class machine shop assistant...James has been an inspiration to me-

HARRIET

Negroes will always be ranked lower than Whites! Looking towards James as a role model cannot help you achieve your goals.

WIL

Mom, Hitler thought that way about the Jews.

HARRIET

Adolph Hitler was a maniac with a vile hatred towards Jews!

WIL

Slave holding families didn't exactly love their slaves... like in "Gone with the Wind"...

HARRIET

Our dark history was treating Negroes as "property." But even Lincoln referred to the Whites as "superior" and the Blacks "inferior". Call Lincoln racist if you want but the history supports his claims.

WIL

You mean our slave history! Remember Jesse Owens' four gold medals in Berlin? Hitler ignored all of the Negro athletes who won events; treated them as if they didn't exist.

HARRIET

If Hitler didn't recognize Jewish athletes, why would he recognize Negro athletes?

WIL

I remember dad quoting some English writer who said "Prejudice is the child of ignorance." (pause) I see potential in my boxing students. Leonard and Travis are going to be winners! I know they will.

HARRIET

Well, if you are so sure, then you will just have to carry on at the gym with your tribe of Negro boxers without any support from your family.

WIL

James taught me how to build things out of junk!...things that actually worked! My brothers couldn't begin to make something out of nothing.

HARRIET

Wil, your father never intended the Negro community to live alongside our White neighbors. While he was extremely generous, he knew his place and their place in our neighborhood.

WIL

I remember dad working hard to maintain those asphalt roads he built in Kinloch, fixing their potholes, resurfacing when the road got washed out.

HARRIET

Your father took pride in his work as a road builder. He had an impeccable reputation.

WIL

So you agree that Dad took pride in his road building, even in Kinloch!

HARRIET

Of course-

WIL

Which is why I KNOW dad would never agree to put concrete blockades across the roads he built!

HARRIET

Those blockades were decided by a vote in our community.

WIL

You mean the White community of Berkeley and Ferguson.

HARRIET

The neighborhoods felt there should be a clear separation between Kinloch and their own town.

WIL

Did dad agree with their decision?

HARRIET

Why wouldn't he?

WIL

But did he ever say he was for putting in those concrete blockades?

HARRIET

You must know that your father did everything to keep the peace in our neighborhood. He was a fair player and considered everyone's feelings-

WIL

Including the Kinloch folks?

HARRIET

Wil, I don't have to defend your father...his reputation was his best defense.

WIL

(pauses) No, I see that you don't.

HARRIET

What are you implying?

WIL

Mom, you put up that chain link fence in our backyard knowing our Kinloch neighbors were against it, especially James' dad!

HARRIET

The fence complies with the racial covenants adopted by our neighborhoods years ago. It was way over due...Your father would have wanted it.

WIL

I doubt it.

HARRIET

Your father believed in preserving what was ours, securing our property value for posterity-

WIL

but NOT by denying our Negro neighbors the same privilege!

HARRIET

I don't have to listen to you. Either get a real job or move out!

WIL

So I'm the hostile one here!

HARRIET

Take all the scrap metal you want to pay for your gym of Negroes! I'm not investing in a losing proposition.

WIL

So winning is all YOU care about?

HARRIET

Winning is all WE care about!

(HARRIET storms off the porch while WIL watches her leave, turns to his pile and throws some of the spare parts at the pile.)

END OF ACT ONE