

**SMOKED**

By

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## CHARACTERS

**JOE** (60s African American Male)

Part owner of Flint's BBQ. Brother of Jake. He recently lost his wife Laura and is trying to hold things together.

**JAKE** (60s African American Male)

Part owner of Flint's BBQ and brother of Joe. He is edgy and haunted by sins of his past.

**MICHAELA** (20s to 30s Black-Latina mixed Female) Strong-willed, full of energy and ambitious. She is smart, quick and a beacon of hope in a lost place.

**DOC** (60s African American Male) The storyteller of the group and glue that holds everyone together. He knows Joe and Jake better than anyone. He is always looking for a free meal and knows what is truly going on in every moment.

**RODNEY** (Early 30s African American Male) 'Returning Citizen' who works for the construction company that has been demolishing all of the area for the new condos and homes being built. Feels slightly guilty, but knows he has to do this or it could mean returning to prison.

**PATILLO** (60s White Male) A real estate investor and construction owner who is making moves in East Austin. Responsible for the mass gentrification. He has his eyes on taking down Flint's BBQ. Has a classic southern flair to him.

**QUINN** (50s African American Male)

Estranged father of Michaela. A drug addict who is always in and out of trouble or dealing with problems in life. Wants badly to reconnect with his daughter.

## NOTE

*The play should move with a quick driving energy. The characters are in sync with one another, thinking as they speak for the most part. The stories told by Doc serve to transport us to another time and place, and can live in their own rhythm and space.*

SCENE 1

Morning. Present Day. A college town in Texas. Winter. Flint's Bar-B-Que. We can smell the smoked bar-b-que from the kitchen. The restaurant has a champion fading into the sunset vibe. It's still classy, yet old and fading. There is a bar with various beer taps and a wall filled with spirits and liquors behind it. The bar counter is lined with wooden bar chairs. Behind a row of protective glass sits condiments like sweet potato casserole, coleslaw, and baked beans. Beside it sits a large wooden cutting board with a large butcher knife on it. This is where the meat is cut. Tables with napkin dispensers and chairs are placed around the restaurant for customers. Two arcade machines and a pinball machine sit quietly with a sign that says "Out of Order" on each of them. After a moment though, the machines flicker magically as if they all will magically turn on, but then they don't, falling silent once again. A knock at the door is heard. Silence. Then the knock becomes louder and rapid. JAKE comes out of the kitchen behind the bar and grabs a baseball bat. He goes to unlock the front door. DOC stands on the other side. Clearly freezing.

JAKE

Nigga what the hell you doing? You knocking like the damn cops.

DOC

Cold as hell out here.

JAKE

Get a coat.

DOC

Let me in, man! You act like you don't know a brother.

JAKE lets DOC inside. DOC takes in the place and warms himself up.

You got any ribs ready?

JAKE

You got money?

DOC

Put it on my tab.

JAKE

Joe said no more "tabs" for you until you start paying up Doc.

DOC

Nigga, I don't care what your brother say.

JAKE

Look now, you gotta start paying us something.

DOC

I pay with good company and small talk.

JAKE

I can't spend that.

DOC

Have a heart.

JAKE

Have a dollar.

DOC

I get my government check in a couple of days.

JAKE

It's the first of the month, don't you got it already?

DOC

You know the government drag their feet getting us that money. Heard from Sue on down near the Oak Woods Retirement Center. She say she think the orderlies been taking her checks. Social security say her checks been cashed, when she say they be missing.

JAKE

What that got to do with you?

DOC

I don't know, but I had something for it. Just let me get some leftovers Jake. I'm starving.

JAKE

I got to talk with Joe first when he get here.

DOC

It's Christmas.

JAKE

In twenty four days nigga.

DOC

You know what I mean.

JAKE

Fine. If I give you some leftover ribs, will you get me a pack of Marlboro Reds?

DOC

I thought you were supposed to be quitting.

JAKE

Baby steps.

DOC

Uh huh. I don't know why you smoke cigarettes anyways. Hell, being around all them bar-b-que smokers out back, you'd think you'd just suck in that smoke. I'd be a just a regular...

(Mimes breathing in smoke)

Sucking all that in!

JAKE

That'll kill you fool.

DOC

So will dem Marlboro Reds.

JAKE

You gonna get them for me or not?

DOC

You know I got you brother.

JAKE

My man.

*JAKE hands DOC a ten dollar bill*

And I want my change.

DOC

Alright now. Scrooge.

JAKE

Let me cut you these ribs. Take a seat.

DOC

Can you make sure it's from the middle of the rack? There's more meat on the bones there.

JAKE

Man...

*JAKE exits into the kitchen*

DOC

I love you brother! Did you manage to hire someone yet?

JAKE

(Offstage)

Nah. Kids these days don't understand hard work. Minute I tell them what we do they look at me like I'm gonna ask them to move a mountain. I got someone coming in though today to interview. Hopefully they don't run off. I hadn't told Joe I was trying to find us some help, so keep that between us ok?

*JAKE enters with a hot tray of ribs. He places them down, opens an oven shaam and puts the tray of ribs inside. He takes a fresh rack off of the tray and lays it on the cutting board. He starts to cut DOC some ribs.*

DOC

Your secret is safe with me brother. Let me get six off that rack from ya.

JAKE

Man please, you getting four. This ain't the salvation army.

DOC

That new spot over on twelfth let me get six ribs every time.

JAKE

Hold up. You been going to that new bougie joint? The one that just moved in here?

DOC

Yeah they had a grand opening. They sell coffee too. Why don't y'all?

JAKE

Because this a bar-b-que joint, not no damn barista coffee house. You mean to tell me you been paying them whack asses and not us?

DOC

They ain't family like y'all.

JAKE

I can't believe you brother. We been here since we were kids. Your daddy was one of the first meat cutters and smoke masons my daddy trained. Now you gonna sell out and support the colonizers?

DOC

The who?

JAKE

They ain't from here and sure as hell don't know the community like we do.

DOC

Well they tryin' to get to know the people. They ask my name and write it on a cup every time I come in.

JAKE

Nigga I know your first, middle and last name! I know your first, second and third wife!

DOC

Damn. It like that Jake?

JAKE

Take these ribs before I cut out yours and feed 'em to you.

DOC

Look man. They were cheaper than y'all.

JAKE

Was their ribs smoked?

DOC

Nah. Grilled.

JAKE

Shit, and how'd they taste?

DOC

Like hammered shit. But they were affordable.

JAKE

Quality over quantity my brother.

DOC

Jake, come on now. These ribs from the ends. I want them from the middle.

JAKE

Don't try me right now Doc. I got to check these briskets. Judas.

DOC

Aw come on man.

*JAKE exits to the kitchen*

I came back didn't I?

JAKE

(Offstage)

Like a dog with his tail between his legs.

*There is a knock at the door. DOC goes to answer it, revealing QUINN, a homeless man.*

DOC

Aw hell, of all people...

QUINN

Morning brother. Got something to eat for a vet?

*QUINN walks in past DOC. DOC makes a face as he takes in the smell of QUINN.*

DOC

Damn, you smell like shit.

*QUINN after a moment of taking in the place notices the ribs and makes a bee line for them. DOC heads him off getting between QUINN and the ribs*

Look now, take your homeless tail on somewhere. There can only be one trifling negro up in here at a time, and we got no vacancies. So skat.

*QUINN tries a series of moves to get past DOC. DOC shoves QUINN back each time. Finally DOC sees an opportunity to get rid of QUINN for good.*

Oh lord, what's that!?

*QUINN turns to look at where DOC has pointed and DOC snatches QUINN by the collar of his jacket and starts to drag him towards the door, but QUINN surprisingly is slick and slips out of his jacket by dropping down and is now shirtless and makes a run for DOC's ribs and gets them too.*



You mother...!

*DOC makes chase at QUINN as QUINN eats at the ribs while trying not to get caught. DOC can't get to him after a few tries, and then grabs the bat behind the counter. QUINN notices and dashes out the front door with the ribs without his jacket.*

Don't you come back here again you here! Damn!

*DOC annoyed picks up the dirty shirt left behind by QUINN with the bat and throws it outside the door. He turns back inside and goes to the bar to put the bat away. He smells himself and makes a face and rushes offstage right to the bathroom. We hear the sounds of DOC washing himself up. The lights in the room and on the arcade machines and the pinball machine flicker as if they may turn on. DOC re-enters and notices this and looks around at the room suspiciously. The machines stop flickering. JAKE enters from the kitchen with a tray of hot briskets.*

JAKE

What's the matter with you?

DOC

Your friendly neighborhood crack head popped in here and stole my damn ribs.

JAKE

Why'd you let him in?

DOC

I thought it was Joe. I swear that fool gonna catch a cap in his behind he don't be careful. When y'all gonna get these machines fixed?

JAKE

Joe don't want to touch them.

*JAKE finishes putting the briskets in an oven-shaam.*

DOC

That's a shame. Sure would liven this place up if you had them machines working. That new bar-b-que joint that got the coffee, they got games too. High tech games. Like that D.R. stuff.

JAKE

D.R. stuff?

DOC

Yeah you know that "Digitally Real" stuff, where you put the goggles on and you go all Avatar and stuff.

JAKE

That ain't D.R. Doc, that's V.R. Virtual Reality!

DOC

Whatever. Y'all should get one of those is all I'm saying.

JAKE

Not our style.

DOC

I'd rather y'all be in-style than out of it, know what I'm saying.

JAKE

Ain't nothing wrong with a little old school pinball and classic arcade games.

DOC

If they worked. You should get a pool table in here.

JAKE

What for?

DOC

Help liven up the place! I'm trying to help you old hats out. Ever since Donmar's went down, it's been hard to find a decent pool hall with folks like us up in the joint.

JAKE

Whatever happened to Donmar's?

DOC

You don't know?

JAKE

Nah.

DOC

Well how about that? "Mr. Com-mun-ity" don't know something about his community.

JAKE

What happened clown?

DOC

Let me get a glass of whiskey and I'll tell you.

JAKE

It's barely ten in the morning.

DOC

It's Saturday and I just got had by a stanky ass rib thief.

*JAKE gets DOC a glass and pours.*

Thank you my brother.

JAKE

So what happened at Donmar's?

*During this JAKE sets up the condiments on the bar line.*

DOC

The Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole.

JAKE

Here you go with that "Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole" mess.

DOC

The Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole are real!

JAKE

Nah uh. Bunch of made up nonsense to make people scared around here.

DOC

That's what old Donmar thought. Until things started happening around his place.

JAKE

Like what?

DOC

He'd be all alone at his pool hall, step out for a smoke, and he'd come back in, and all them pool tables had perfectly racked balls on 'em. On top of that, some nights, the lights would flicker on their own.

JAKE

OOOOO AWWWW. Man please, bunch of hocus pocus.

DOC

Them lights flickered brother. I think I saw yours flickering too. Hey y'all have any strange things happen over here? 'Cause you know Laura, God rest her soul...

JAKE

Hey. Enough. You need to lay off the crack brother.

DOC

Alright, alright. All I is saying is when Donmar went on his little summer vacation, his pool hall imploded. Said when he came back he saw a bunch of badly burned black men and women staring at him in the rubble. Next thing he know, it was like they fell through the earth and disappeared. The Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole.

JAKE

I don't want to hear no more about no Ghosts of nothing. Bunch of nonsense.

DOC

Just because something seems unreal to you, don't make it nonsense.

*JOE enters*

JOE

Morning Doc. Jake, sorry I'm late.

DOC AND JAKE

Morning Joe.

DOC (CONT'D)

How cold is it out there?

JAKE

It ain't changed since you been in here.

DOC

I'm trying to make conversation with your brother. Can I make conversation?

JAKE

You need to make some money.

JOE

What you getting into today Doc?

DOC

Oh you know Joe. Figured I'd watch the college game a bit today over at that new spot, uh, what ya ma call it...

JOE

Shake n' Bake BBQ?

JAKE

Shake, Bake and BBQ should never go together.

DOC

Whatever, they got a killer Bangkok Chicken Sandwich.

*JAKE gives DOC a look of disapproval*

What!? Y'all don't play the games here! Damn. They offering services you old timers ain't.

JAKE

Joe plays it on the radio every weekend. You know he'd rather hear it. It reminds him of growing up.

DOC

Hell with that. By the time the announcer gets to telling you what done happened, I could have seen two or three instant replays.

JOE

I ain't studying you. Jake you on cutting board today, I'll run the register. We been short the past few days.

JAKE

Joe, that ain't my fault.

JOE

Well it's somebodies.

DOC

Hey Joe. Let me get a twenty off of you from that there register. I'll pay you back.

JAKE

See.

JOE

Doc, now why don't you just get a job?

DOC

It ain't for me. It for your brother Jake. Mr. Marlboro Man over here need his Reds.

JOE

I thought you was quitting.

JAKE

Baby steps, and I gave you ten bucks already for them big mouth.

DOC

That's the delivery fee. So can I get them twenty dollars?

JAKE

No.

JOE

Hell no.

DOC

Y'all some stingy ass niggas.

*DOC starts to leave*

JAKE

Hey! Make sure you come back here with my Reds Doc!

*DOC rolls his eyes and leaves.*

JOE

Did you give him some ribs?

JAKE

Yep. But that ole homeless crack head came up in here and stole them from him. What? 'Tis the season baby brother.

JOE

Bah Humbug. What was our time yesterday?

JAKE

Let's see...

*JAKE takes out a small notebook under the counter and looks at a page.*

One minute, forty three seconds.

***Note that this time is for how long it takes JAKE and JOE to set up and clean the tables and chairs.***

***During a run of the show the actors can use the amount of time it took them the performance before to make a game of this during production.***

JOE

Oh, I'm sure we can beat that.

*JAKE nods and sets a timer on his smart watch and they hop to it. JAKE sets up chairs at the tables. JOE comes by and wipes them down with a spray bottle and cloth. They are like a well oiled machine. When they finish...*

JOE (CONT'D)

Time!?

JAKE

\_\_\_\_ minute and \_\_\_\_ seconds.

*There is a knock at the door.*

JOE

What in the...Doc? Unless you got our money, we're closed!

*JOE opens the door revealing MICHAELA in a puffer jacket, jeans and boots, with a beanie on, carrying a backpack.*

JOE (CONT'D)

Who are you?

MICHAELA

Um. I'm Michaela Potts.

JOE

So?

MICHAELA

I have an interview for the job.

JOE

What job?

MICHAELA

The one I applied to online.

JOE

You've got the wrong place. I didn't post any job listing online.

JAKE

Actually you did. Well, I did.

JOE

What? Why?

*JAKE pulls Joe aside away from Michaela who stays waiting outside in the cold*

JAKE

Look Joe, we need help in the kitchen.

JOE

What are you talking about? I help out.

JAKE

You do...but...

JOE

But what?

JAKE

When you help, we get complaints.

JOE

Wait what?

JAKE

We've gotten complaints-

JOE

I heard that. Like what though?

JAKE

Too much sauce. Brisket too fatty.

JOE

It's brisket, it's supposed to be fatty.

JAKE

What about you giving out the wrong sides to the wrong customers? You move slow during the lunch rush like it's too much for you. We need help.



MICHAELA

(Offstage)

Hey not for nothing, but are you gonna let me in? It's cold out here.

JOE

Hold on. You're telling me that people have complained about the food I've made and put out? My bar-b-que? I know these recipes inside out like you do Jake.

JAKE

You've been starting to slip ever since...

JOE

Hey. That has nothing to do with it.

JAKE

You sure about that?

JOE

I don't have to listen to this.

MICHAELA

I think I'm losing feeling in my toes.

JOE

Hold on!

JAKE

Joe. Baby brother. You've been through a lot. No one is faulting you for having your struggles this past year. But me and you, bro, we're not getting any younger.

JOE

Ouch.

JAKE

If we want this place to survive Joe, we are going to need fresh blood.

JOE

You know Jake I never thought you'd stab me in the back.

JAKE

Joe. This is for the best. We need this. You need this.

JOE

Well Jake. You interview her. Let's see what the "new blood" can do.

*JOE sits at the bar, ready to observe. JAKE takes off his apron and motions for MICHAELA to come inside.*

MICHAELA

Whew, it's cold! Thank you.

JAKE

I'm Jake.

MICHAELA

Michaela.

JAKE

Sorry to keep you out there.

MICHAELA

All good. Weather here is so odd. It's summer one minute, fall the next, then winter, all in one day. Mmmm. Smells good in here.

JAKE

Thanks. This is my brother...

JOE

Joe Flint. The old guy.

MICHAELA

Flint. Joe Flint. Flint's! Oh dude! You're the owner!

JOE

Yep. Along with my brother Jake.

MICHAELA

Pleasure to meet you! How long have y'all had this place?

JOE

Too long it seems.

*JOE exits into the kitchen*

MICHAELA

I'm sorry. Did I say something wrong?

JAKE

No, not at all. Let's sit over here. We uh...I want a chance to get to know you but...first a little about Flint's...

MICHAELA

Before we waste anyone's time, I've got one question. What's the pay?

JAKE

It's above minimum wage.

MICHAELA

Which is?

JAKE

Minimum wage is seven twenty five an hour.

MICHAELA

I know. I'm saying here. What's the pay here?

JAKE

Eighteen an hour. Plus tips. We believe in a living wage. Have you worked in Texas before?

MICHAELA

How soon can I get promoted and get a raise?

JAKE

Depends.

MICHAELA

On what?

JAKE

How good you are. You ever work in a kitchen?

MICHAELA

Yeah. Bar-B-Que joint up in Frisco for a while.

JAKE

What brought you down here?

MICHAELA

College. I graduated with a Bachelor's in Business this past summer. Here's my resume.

*JAKE looks it over. He looks back at MICHAELA. Jake then gets up with Michaela's resume and goes to the kitchen. Michaela a little nervous wonders what is going on. After a moment Jake and JOE enter from the kitchen. Joe is looking at Michaela's resume.*

JAKE

What do you think you can bring to Flint's that we could use?

MICHAELA

Do you want the lame answer that makes you feel good, or the truth?

JAKE

The truth.

MICHAELA

My mother, god rest her soul, always told me to never let someone tell you what you can't do, and to make your own way. I've constantly stood up against the odds as a woman here. So naturally I root for the underdogs. One could argue that Flint's is the underdog in a time of change. Your Yelp and Google ratings have been declining consistently like clockwork the past year. Mostly the people like the food, but the service and experience not so much. Biggest complaint, too slow and that the game machines never work. You're always out of the best beer. Biggest issue, you're too old fashioned.

JAKE

It is a kind of an old school venue.

MICHAELA

Which is what I love. But if you're gonna stay afloat against the new kids on the block like uh that uh...

JAKE

Shake and Bake Bar-B-Que?

MICHAELA

Yeah, who bakes bar-b-que?

JAKE

I know right!

MICHAELA

It's so lame. Anyways, you're gonna have to offer customers an experience those places don't.

JAKE

Which is?

MICHAELA

The personal experience. The one where folks come and we know their name. We offer a platform for the community to come and connect again on a personal level. The kind where they look back and say, "remember when at Flint's?"

JAKE

OK. How do we do that?

*JOE comes out of the kitchen*

MICHAELA

First, I know how to smoke meats. Been doing it since I was a kid, and I am sure I can pick up your recipe like that. From the smell of it in here, I'd say you smoke over cherry and apple wood?

JOE

That's right.

MICHAELA

I can repair the game machines on the fly because I'm a geek like that, and very handy. May I?

*MICHAELA indicates the pinball machine. JAKE looks at JOE and JOE grabs a tool bag under the counter and places it on the bar and nods. MICHAELA takes the bag and sets to work on the machine.*

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

I'd offer to host events. Not just birthdays, but trivia nights, poetry nights, game nights, contests, you name it. I'll even do the marketing. Speaking of which we need a website. Not just the listing on Google. I'll do that for a flat fee. Five hundred dollars. You get domain name, site hosting, email, the works. You got a sixth-eighths crescent wrench?

JAKE

Just that adjustable.

MICHAELA

I can make it work. I got a tool bag I can bring. It'll make things easier. But lastly, bring in a new fun hip vibe.

JOE

And how might you do that?

*The pinball machine turns on and works*

MICHAELA

Music. It's dead in here. Get a sound system, some live bands, maybe even a grand piano.

JOE

We can't afford all that.

MICHAELA

I've got ways.

JOE

We've had this place since I was born. Sixty two years. It's lasted this long-

MICHAELA

On the backs of you two.

JAKE

Well actually...There was someone else, but they...

JOE

Jake. Not another word. And you?

(Looks at Michaela)

Get out.

JAKE

Wait. Joe.

MICHAELA

What?

JOE

I said get out. Now.

(Michaela stunned, grabs her  
backpack and exits. Jake  
looks at Joe)

Not a word Jake. Not one word.

(Joe exits into the kitchen as  
Jake holds Michaela's resume)

SCENE 2

*JOE sits at the bar with DOC. DOC is eating away at some ribs and having a drink.*

DOC

What you worried about Joe? From what I heard the girl was a real knockout. Jake say she was smart, ambitious. Hell, she was even latina.

JOE

What that got to do with anything?

DOC

What? Latina? Shhhhhitttt. Latina women work hard. They smart. Efficient. And they don't take no mess. I dated this one Latina chick one time. Lord. She was a spark fire. Beautiful. She loved to cook. Could make some mean ass paella too.

JOE

And?

DOC

What?

JOE

Besides that racist ass comment what was special about her?

DOC

Besides the food and sex? What else is there?

JOE

Doc?!

DOC

I'm just kidding. She wanted to be a doctor. I said you go on ahead baby.

JOE

That's nice.

DOC

No that's not nice. My dumb ass was playing her, see. I was sleeping around with other women at the time. You know me. Brother, I'm getting it on with a classmate of hers in a utility closet late one night. Lawd have mercy, that woman was fine! I didn't think no one was in the building. Turns out, *she* was.

JOE

Damn. What happened?

DOC

I got home and she done made me some of that delicious paella. I start eating. Talking about my day. She just smiling. Ain't saying nothing. Next thing I know I started feeling the bubble guts in my stomach and down to the seat of my pants. I ran like my ass was on fire to that bathroom. She done put ex-lax in the paella and I blew shit out my ass all night. Don't laugh that shit ain't funny. She done took all the toilet paper, newspapers, magazines, all of it out of the house. Magazines brother! You know how angry you gotta be to make sure there ain't nothing in the house for me to wipe my ass? I had stank ass all night. She also made sure I couldn't flush. She ripped the damn pump out of the toilet. Left my ass high and dry on the toilet. Took no mess. Don't laugh it ain't funny nigga.

JOE

I'm sorry, but damn she got you fool.

DOC

Don't underestimate these latina women. They tenacious.

JOE

Message was received brother.

DOC

Good. So when you gonna call her and have her start?

JOE

I don't know, Doc. She just...she reminded me a little too much of Laura. I mean, we ain't had a woman working here since her, and...I guess I'm still upset that Jake thought I wasn't contributing enough.

DOC

Change is good my brother, and Jake...well...he just don't want you to struggle.

JOE

I guess. Have I really been slipping though?

DOC

Yeah. You have. And you know I will always be honest with you. Ever since Laura died you have been out of sorts. Coming in late to work. Forgetting stuff around the place. The register been short a few times too.



JOE

Because of you and your shenanigans.

DOC

I don't know what you talking about.

JOE

I swear I'm OK Doc. I mean, it's been over...

DOC

*Only* a year.

JOE

Nah.

DOC

Yeah man. A year this month.

JOE

Lord. Seemed longer.

DOC

I know.

JOE

It's really just been a year?

DOC

Yeah. It's alright. You still wear the ring so I imagine you think about her still.

JOE

All the time. It comes at me like a wave sometimes. The memories. That night...

DOC

It wasn't your fault Joe.

JOE

Aw man. Maybe I am just getting too old for this. Maybe Jake is right. I ain't got it in me anymore. My knees are shot. My hair is going. My eyes aren't all there. Damn. Like I'm fading out in slow motion. How your ribs?

DOC

Always good.

JOE

Good. At least I can do one thing right.

*The door opens and enters QUINN, fully clothed, yet dirty and disheveled. They look as if they have been beaten up.*

DOC

Oh this two timin' motha here. Go on now, git!

JOE

Hold on Doc.

QUINN

Have you seen her?

JOE

Seen who brother?

*QUINN stumbles and falls*

Damn. Doc get me some water from the bar. Come on now, take a seat.

*JOE helps QUINN take a seat*

DOC

Don't know why you help this dude. Brotha came up in here few days ago and stole my damn ribs. Always up in here, like a damn stray cat. You know if you feed them they always come back.

JOE

Doc, we feed you all the time.

DOC

Yeah but I at least don't smell like doo-doo and piss-piss.

JOE

He's a fellow vet. Least we can do is try and help him.

*DOC hands JOE the water*

DOC

Fair enough.

JOE

Thanks. Here ya go, drink this. Now tell us brother, what happened to you?

QUINN

Life.

DOC

Yeah no shit.

JOE

Doc. Come on now. Look, I know you ain't get knicked up like this on your own. Who did this to you?

DOC

Whoever it was, they was on him like flies on shit.

QUINN

You got a filthy mouth for a Doctor.

DOC

Two tours as a medic will do that to you. Now what the hell happened to ya?

QUINN

They all fall. They all fall down. Here. Right here.

JOE

Say what now?

QUINN

Here. They all fall down. Here. There. There. And over there. I see them. See them falling. They all fall. Down. Down. Down.

DOC

Shit. This nigga so cracked out, he talking nonsense.

QUINN

Nonsense. Words that have no meaning or make no sense. I sense things. I sense them. I sense her. Lost. So lost.

DOC

Don't worry brotha, I'll direct you where you need to go. Right out the door.

JOE

Doc, stop, leave him be now.

QUINN

It will cost you, everything. To find your way. To be free.  
To not be shackled. To not be lost. To not be alone. The key.  
It is coming. I sense it. I sense them.

*QUINN gets up and walks over to the pinball machine.  
It lights up as he touches it. DOC and JOE are  
mesmerized by this moment. QUINN stands there for a  
moment in silence, eyes closed, taking in the machine  
he holds in his hands. Then he starts to hump and bump  
up against the machine.*

Take me. Take me away.

DOC

Aw what the...see Joe! Damn!

JOE

OK, now! OK!

*JOE and DOC pull QUINN away from the machine which  
goes dark. QUINN turns violent and aggressive*

QUINN

You can't have her! You can't have her! She must be free! She  
must be free! She is coming! She is coming! Let me go!

*QUINN runs out of the restaurant. Leaving JOE and DOC  
stunned, then they laugh.*

JOE

Holy!

DOC

Lord have mercy!

JOE

I got to clean myself up. Goodness.

*JOE goes into the bathroom. DOC looks over at the  
pinball machine. It flickers for a moment. DOC gives a  
look, shakes his head. Goes behind the counter to get  
a rag and cleaning spray to go wipe down the machine.  
As he gets close to the machine to clean it he stops  
as if he can sense something emanating from the  
machine. He is still, in a mesmerized state looking at  
it, and then he looks up as if someone could be  
standing behind it, but no one is there. JOE comes out  
the bathroom.*

JOE (CONT'D)

Bathroom is free if you want to use it Doc. Doc?

DOC

Huh?

JOE

You ok brotha?

DOC

Yeah. Yeah. Just uh...it was nothing. Here, you should wipe that puppy down. No telling where that nut had been.

*DOC hands JOE the cleaning supplies and goes to the bathroom. JOE cleans the pinball machine. He takes a moment after he is done cleaning it to look at it. Almost as if he feels something compelling him. The machine lights up. JOE grins and starts playing the machine. DOC comes out and notices. DOC seems to know something, but doesn't speak. He just watches as JOE seems to have lit up in this moment like he hasn't in years. JAKE and MICHAELA enter through the front door. JOE and DOC take notice.*

JAKE

Now before you say anything Joe...

JOE

Nah, it's alright. Saves me a phone call. Uh...Michaela...I uh...well I'm sorry. And uh...I...we...would like for you to join us...as a member of Flint's Bar-B-Que.

MICHAELA

Wow. That was kind of easy.

JAKE

I'd say.

MICHAELA

You should have heard your brother on the way over here. We were stuck in traffic and he was playing out this whole argument between you two, voices and all, and I have to say I'm a little sad I won't get to see it. Must have smoked a whole pack on the way. I can't imagine that's any good for you.

JOE

It's not.

JAKE

I'm gonna make a run for another pack. You need anything?

MICHAELA

Thanks, but I'm good.

*JAKE exits. Michaela and Joe and Doc all stand looking at one another awkwardly*

DOC

I'm Doc.

MICHAELA

Michaela.

*Awkward silence in the room again. DOC gives JOE a look. JOE catches on.*

JOE

So uh, Michaela?

MICHAELA

Yeah?

JOE

I've been thinking about your ideas.

MICHAELA

Oh already?

JOE

Now before you get too excited I want you to know that a lot of things you suggested I'm just not sure we are gonna be able to do right away.

MICHAELA

It'll be a process. I get it. Rome wasn't built in a day.

JOE

Right. I can get behind the remodeling. Be nice to give the place a new paint job. Maybe even bring in some new artwork. But see, that gets expensive.

MICHAELA

Not if we take donations. There are a ton of local homegrown artists I am sure would love the chance to have their work displayed. We could even curate local college students' work as well.

JOE

OK. Yeah, I see. But I don't want just any old artwork in here.

DOC

You should get one of them Obama posters in here. You know the one that say HOPE. That'd be real nice.

JOE

Mmm hmmm.

MICHAELA

Well, let's make a posting online, that asks for donations of artwork that embodies...what?

JOE

It should embody the spirit of our culture and this neighborhood.

MICHAELA

Cool. I like it. Done.

JOE

Now about this idea of having some music.

MICHAELA

Yeah?

JOE

I'm not one for this new age rap mess they putting out these days.

MICHAELA

Me neither. What? You guys thought I was into rap?

JOE

Uh, well-

DOC

I did.

JOE

Don't listen to him. Got these college kids always coming around here humming and jiving-

MICHAELA

Jiving?

JOE

You know jiving. Juking and jiving? Come on now, I ain't that old am I?

MICHAELA

I'm messing with you. You were saying?

JOE

They always freestyling that new age stuff around me. "Coming straight from the underground, young brother got it bad cause I'm brown"

DOC

Man that ain't new age rap!

MICHAELA

That's Straight Outta Compton.

DOC

N.W.A.

MICHAELA

Niggas with attitude.

JOE

Hmmph. I must have missed that one.

DOC

Where you been, under a rock?

JOE

Same place you been partna. I just don't like all that gangsta rap ok. I want some jazz, funk, r and b, soul, disco..

MICHAELA

Aw, no no boo boo.

JOE AND DOC

What?

MICHAELA

Disco? Come on now. No one wants to hear that.

DOC

Say what now?

JOE

What's wrong with disco?



MICHAELA

Everything.

JOE

Aw come on now!

MICHAELA

The clothes, platform shoes, bell bottoms? Oversized glasses? Flashy belts?

JOE

And these clowns today in their gucci belts, neon suits and stilettos are better?

MICHAELA

Good point.

JOE

Take it from us old timers. Disco was all about getting down and having some fun. Am I telling it right brother?

DOC

You know it.

MICHAELA

And rap isn't like that for people today?

DOC

Yeah, she got us there Joe.

JOE

No. Gangsta. Rap. That's all I'm asking.

MICHAELA

What about Kendrick Lamar?

JOE

Who?

MICHAELA

Hold up now!

JOE

I'm kidding, I'm kidding! He's an exception.

DOC

Pimp a Butterfly was a hot album.

MICHAELA

You know it.

DOC

Now I gotta know one thing from the young blood. What you know about old school music?

MICHAELA

I got down back home. Temptations, James Brown, Aretha, Whitney. Yo the 70s through the early 90s was my jam.

DOC

Old soul. I like that.

MICHAELA

What you know about new age music Doc?

DOC

I get around. Ain't nobody got the moves like I got. I'm talking real dancing, none of that pop jerking mess they doing today.

MICHAELA

Show me.

DOC

What?

MICHAELA

Show me your dance moves.

DOC

Nah. Nah, young blood. I don't think so. I'll end up breaking a hip in here.

MICHAELA

All bark, no bite. Come on. Show me.

DOC

You trying to kill me?

MICHAELA

I'm just trying to see what you workin' with?

DOC

Ladies first.

MICHAELA

What?

DOC

You show me your moves, and I'll show you mine.

MICHAELA

I don't dance without music.

*JOE whips out and turns on an old CD player from under the bar*

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

Damn! How old is that thing?

JOE

It's not old. It plays CDs.

MICHAELA

Who buys CDs anymore?

JOE

I got just the song.

*JOE pulls out a dusty book jacket, filled with CDs*

MICHAELA

Ugh! It's like you pulled out an old sarcophagus.

JOE

Here we go now. OK young blood. Let's see what you got.

*Toni Toni Toné's "It Feels Good" comes on. MICHAELA and DOC have a classic dance battle. They perform mostly old school hip hop moves. JOE joins in and manages to do some disco moves as well. After a moment JAKE enters and records the event on his cell phone. It should feel joyous and fun. Then PATILLO enters. All turn and notice him and they all stop and turn off the music.*

PATILLO

Please continue.

JOE

Sorry, can we help you?

PATILLO

I certainly hope so. I'm Clarence Patillo, of Patillo and Son. Well, now just son, seeing as my father has passed.

JOE

Sorry to hear that. But I'm not familiar with the Patillo family, I'm afraid.

PATILLO

That's understandable. We hail from a great distance from here. From the great state of Mississippi. Jackson, Mississippi to be exact. You got a fine establishment here. Smells nice. Is it too early for a drink?

DOC

It's never too early for a drink.

JOE

What's your poison?

PATILLO

Bulleit Rye. Neat. Y'all got any of them delicious spare ribs I've been hearing about?

JAKE

Sure do.

PATILLO

I'll take a rack of 'em. Half now, half later. Think you can handle that for me, boy?

*This "boy" lands like a meteor in the room. Stunned silence and then JAKE gives a little chuckle and look as he makes his way to the cutting board*

JAKE

Uh. Yeah.

*JAKE sets to cutting the ribs on the cutting board*

JOE

Michaela? Can you get Mr. Patillo his drink please?

*MICHAELA nods and heads behind the bar to make PATILLO's drink. PATILLO sits at a table. He takes out a dinner cloth and unrolls it. Inside lay a silver fork and knife. He smiles at JOE as he brings him his drink*

JOE (CONT'D)

You know, we have utensils.

PATILLO

I know.

*PATILLO takes a sip of his drink*

Mmm. That is good. Please take a seat Joe.

JOE

How you know my name?

PATILLO

I do my research. Please.

*PATILLO motions for JOE to sit. After a moment, JOE takes a seat.*

I'm a man of simple tastes, and when I see something I like, I seize it. You get out much Joe?

JOE

Not really.

PATILLO

*Awkward silence as PATILLO stares at JOE and JOE stares right back. The two sizing each other up. JAKE comes over with a plate of ribs and a paper bag holding the rest.*

Thank you. Now son, can you put them ribs that are in the bag someplace to stay warm while I scarf down this delicious looking sextet of ribs?

JAKE

Sure thing. Sir.

*JAKE walks off into the kitchen. PATILLO takes a bite of one of the ribs.*

PATILLO

Mmm. Hmmm. Delicious. My word. You smoked this?

JOE

Yep.

PATILLO

How long?

JOE

Twenty four hours.

PATILLO

Over what kind of wood?

JOE

Cherry and Apple.

PATILLO

Mmm. I've heard of maple smoked, but cherry and apple? That something else. I like that. Where you keep your smokers?

JOE

In the back. You want a tour?

PATILLO

Oh no. That won't be necessary.

JOE

Well I take it that you didn't come down here just to have me sit here and watch you eat and compliment my ribs. So, how can I help you Mr. Patillo?

PATILLO

I'm interested in your establishment.

JOE

Well, we're not interested in partnerships or franchising so..

PATILLO

Oh no no. You mistake me. The bar b que business is like a gas station in Texas. They're everywhere. I don't want to be a part of that or a part of your business. I just want to own it. The land. I want to buy it off of you.

JOE

The land?

*PATILLO takes out an envelope from his suit jacket and lays it on the table*

PATILLO

I'm a gambler Joe. An investor, but all investments are gambles one way or another. And I must say I have been on one hell of a lucky streak. Patillo and Son has been a major presence in the economic development along the gulf coast for over seventy years.

PATILLO (CONT'D)

Casinos, restaurants, apartment complexes, condos. Now we've begun to look into a new venture. Colleges.

JOE

Colleges?

PATILLO

Yes. You know the one thing you can bank on? It's that college towns will thrive as long as the college thrives.

JOE

Uh huh.

PATILLO

A college wins the National Title, new luxury dorm rooms. College expands their engineering program, or wins a huge new government grant, tech companies start building up factories and warehouses down the street. Causing more and more people to come here. Making things change. See...change is my business, and business is good. I think you've felt the brunt of that change. You've got uh...what's that place called...

JOE

Shake and Bake Bar-B-Que?

PATILLO

Yes! They got one hell of a Bangkok Chicken Sandwich!

DOC

See!

*JOE shoots DOC a look*

PATILLO

You've got coffee shops, bike rentals, hell it is basically looking like Brooklyn New York around here.

MICHAELA

It ain't like everyone happy about it though.

PATILLO

I don't believe I was talking to you girl. Now be a good little darlin' and pour me another glass will you?

*Everyone is stunned at this. Silence as MICHAELA walks over and takes PATILLO's glass and goes behind the bar to pour a new glass. Then she brings the glass back and sets it on the table as PATILLO takes a sip. She goes back to the bar in silence.*

PATILLO (CONT'D)

I've already convinced other proprietary owners, such as yourself, to go in on my proposal for this area. You're the last domino I need to drop.

JOE

Mr. Patillo. My family has owned this land here since I was born. My brother Jake, who cut your ribs, learned to walk on this floor. My father built this place with his bare hands when, and I mean this with all my heart, when Jim Crow fucks like you didn't give him or us the light of day.

PATILLO

You're not even going to look at how much I am offering, boy?

JOE

I see you're not hearing me. So let me tell you a story, that may get your attention. There was a boy who met a girl.

PATILLO

Ha. I like it already.

JOE

They were Black. And they had dreams together. Beautiful dreams in good ole Texas. Filled with pride they farmed their land. Land given to them, by the man. They planted their seeds. Sowed their oats. Even built a little house. Well one day, the man comes by and says, "we need this land now". Many families tried to stand their ground. But the man forced them out now, see. He cut off their water. Cut off their electricity. Stopped paving the roads so they could get to work. The man even dumped the trash from his neighborhood in their neighborhood. And if that didn't work...well...I think you know where I'm getting at. So the boy and girl didn't want anything to do with all that, so they left without much of a fight, see. They came here. To Austin, Texas. Like so many others. But this time, they said "we are staying and we are planting roots that are gonna outlive the man". They opened this restaurant, and serve some of the best damn bar-b-que around. Soon after that, they started a family, and had two lovely boys, named Joe and Jake. The restaurant got popular, and was the talk of the town. But this upsets the man. So the man calls up some of his pals, in white hoods if you get me? They come riding at night on horses, burning crosses in folks yards, and they burn this place to the ground. All that is left is a sign those men put up. A sign that reads "Charred Nigger Brisket. Two cents". The mother and father are devastated. The town aggravated. But the man? Oh they liberated. But the father was determined to not be defeated. So he strapped up his boots and brick by brick he built this place anew, stronger than every before.



JOE (CONT'D)

Sadly, it would be the last thing he ever did. He rebuilt this place until his last dying breath. He put his legacy within these walls. These walls you sitting in Mr. Patillo. And that man's young boys are sitting across from you here today to tell you that you can take these damn papers and shove them where the sun don't shine.

*PATILLO pulls out some money. Drops it on the table*

PATILLO

Thank you for the story. And the ribs. Keep the change. Two cents. I'll be seeing you Joe.

*JAKE stops PATILLO at the door as he exits. Hands him the bag of ribs. PATILLO exits*

SCENE 3

*Four days later. DOC, RODNEY and JAKE are playing dominos while eating bar b que. JOE and MICHAELA are putting up a new menu above the bar. MICHAELA is painting while JOE holds a ladder. RODNEY ponders his move.*

DOC

Rodney? You sitting there rubbing them bones together ain't gonna change what's on them. Go on and play and get this butt whoopin' now.

RODNEY

I'm counting man. Let me count.

DOC

You telling me you can't add between one and six?

JAKE

Let the man count Doc.

DOC

I'm letting him count Jake. Hell I thought he'd be able to figure he can't get much more than-

RODNEY

(Plays his domino)

Fifteen.

DOC

Damn.

JAKE

Not bad. Twenty five.

RODNEY

Ok now.

DOC

Whew-eeee! Ya'll bringing it today now! Yeah! Ya'll bringing it now!

RODNEY

Bring your domino on the board brother. Get this butt whoopin'.

DOC

I'm counting.

JOE

How much y'all playing for?

DOC

Twenty a piece. Sixty dollar pot.

JOE

Good. You can pay up on your tab.

JAKE

If he win.

RODNEY

He ain't winning. Come on Doc. Put it on down.

DOC

(Playing a domino)

Y'all ain't about nothing. Blocked all my moves.

RODNEY

Ten. Thank you brother.

JAKE

Stop setting him up Doc.

DOC

I play the bones the way they lay.

JAKE

You gotta play them the way you want them to lay. Make your own way.

DOC

OK Dr. Seuss, how am I supposed to do that? I gots to play the bones that are dealt to me.

JAKE

Got to learn how to work with what you got. Eliminate what you know everyone else got by process of elimination. That way...hold up...fifteen! Haha! That way you can control the outcome by using what your opponent got against them.

DOC

Well use this!? Twenty five baby.

RODNEY

That's good, you finally scored. Good for you.

DOC

Come on with it then Rodney. Haha! Thought you had me cornered huh? That's how I get you. Make you think you gots me and then I strike back like a cobra.

JAKE

Man please, you just got lucky.

DOC

Luck ain't got nothing to do with it partna. Especially when I'm playing you knuckleheads.

RODNEY

Big talk Doc.

DOC

Just play Rodney. I ain't getting any younger.

RODNEY

Hey Joe. Y'all gonna have a domino's night?

JOE

I don't know. Ask Michaela. She in charge of events.

MICHAELA

What you thinking Rodney?

RODNEY

Please, just call me Rod.

DOC

Ain't nobody call you just Rod.

RODNEY

Kick rocks Doc. What I was thinking was that y'all could host tournaments. Don't give cash prizes, cause that's illegal. But like, you know, a free rack of ribs or two pounds of brisket.

MICHAELA

Do people still play dominos?

DOC

What that supposed to mean?

MICHAELA

Just seems a little old fashioned.

DOC

Girl. First you don't like disco, now you hating on dominos. Let me tell you something young blood. Dominos will never go out of style. Like the recipe for these here ribs...it'll live on forever. Cause it's that damn good!

MICHAELA

As long as people want to eat Joe's food and people want to keep playing the game right?

RODNEY

Whoa, whoa. That just got real philosophical all of a sudden.

DOC

You can't spell philosophical.

RODNEY

Phil. O. SOFT. Uh Call.

DOC

Were you on hooked on phonics as a kid?

RODNEY

Keep joking man, keep joking.

MICHAELA

On the real though, if Joe and Jake don't tell people the recipe it would just die off with them. It's like that saying you only are known as long as the last person that speaks your name.

JAKE

Well say my name, and remember it forever. Cause I just scored big twenty! Count it.

DOC

Damn Rodney, you keep setting him up!

RODNEY

He cheating.

JAKE

How on earth am I cheating?

RODNEY

I don't know, but you is.

JAKE

Man please.

JOE

How is the construction going Rodney?

RODNEY

It's alright. We've been having a lot of faulty equipment though lately. Machines and trucks not starting. Damn gear drive on the CAT yesterday got stuck and busted the hydraulics. Gonna be a week to replace it. I still get paid either way.

JAKE

Hey. Is it true that Donmar's imploded?

RODNEY

Yeah.

DOC

What I tell you, Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole.

JAKE

Aw man!

JOE

There you go!

JAKE

Ain't nobody want to hear all that!

DOC

Look, legend has it that the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole...

JAKE

Nobody want to hear your crazy urban legends!

RODNEY

Plus, I'm pretty sure it wasn't no ghosts that tore down Donmar's.

JAKE

Thank you.

DOC

What happened then?

RODNEY

Well, if you ask me, Donmar planned it all out. See, turns out that the gas line broke and for a whole day it was just leaking. No one called it in. Right when Donmar was on that vacation. Construction crew set demolition charges on that building next door. Once they blew the charges...the spark caught the gas leak and blew up Donmar's too.

JAKE

So you think Donmar cut the gas line on purpose?

RODNEY

Yep. He was ready to close up shop years ago. Folks say he had an insurance policy that was going to give him more than that Patillo fella was offering.

JOE

Patillo tried buying him out too?

RODNEY

Yeah. Wait, Patillo tried buying you out?

JOE

Yeah. Just last week.

MICHAELA

But Joe told him off.

JAKE

Sure did.

RODNEY

Patillo a bad dude. Be careful Joe. Man a snake.

*A moment as the men play a round of placing Dominos  
and its quiet, until...*

DOC

I still say the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole was behind Donmar's going down.

JOE

Oh my...!

JAKE

Come on man! We past that now. Damn. You heard Rodney.

DOC

And I heard from Donmar himself he saw them Ghosts standing in that rubble.

JAKE

Nothing but of bunch lies and urban myths.

JOE

Everyone has they stories, Jake. Laura used to talk about seeing the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole right inside here.

DOC

Sure did.

MICHAELA

Who's Laura?

JOE

My late wife.

RODNEY

Wish you could have met her Michaela. She was so lovely. Full of life, and...

DOC

Took no mess.

MICHAELA

What y'all miss most about her?

DOC

Free food!

RODNEY

Your 'ole trifling ass! Thirsty for a handout!

DOC

Land of the free my brother.



JOE

Her spirit. I miss her spirit.

JAKE

Mmmm. Yeah. We can agree on that.

*Silent for a bit*

DOC

You know her spirit may still be here. Folks say the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole are spirits of...

JAKE

Would you shut up about them darn ghosts!

MICHAELA

What are the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole?

DOC

Well now, long ago-

JAKE

Lord, you done got him started.

DOC

Let me tell her the story brother. We gots to pass down the story so the ghosts live on. Am I right?

RODNEY

Play your domino first. We been waiting on you. I'm gonna be a ghost by the time you play.

DOC

Wait longer. Come close now young blood. Listen to the tale of the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole.

JAKE

Lord have mercy.

DOC

Now this story go way back. During the civil war, see. Back to a time when this place was only filled with slaves and they masters. And one of them slaves was a girl named Rose. Now, Rose was a sweet girl. Say she loved to play "games" too. Checkers. Cards. You know. Simple stuff, but...she was good. Too good. To the point where a group of good ole boys thought she must have been taught.

DOC (CONT'D)

And for a slave to be taught anything...well...that was not to be done. So they called in the fire-eaters.

MICHAELA

Fire eaters?

DOC

Yeah. A bunch of white boys who didn't take kindly to anyone that opposed the Confederacy, or would be Union sympathizers. And a soft master who didn't keep his slaves in line, was ripe for their picking. So these fire eaters went to Rose's master, Mr. McCullough. Mr. McCullough told them he didn't know how she learned them games. So they beat her black and blue right there in front of Mr. McCullough until he confessed that he was the one that taught her. To teach all slave masters a lesson, they burned McCullough's estate to the ground, and they took Mr. McCullough and Rose and dragged them out to this hole in the woods. The hole was only about seven feet wide, but over 15 stories deep. They beat them within an inch of their life and dropped them down that hole to their deaths. Few days passed and those men who beat and killed Rose and Mr. McCullough, started to have mysterious deaths. One died sleeping in his bed in a fire. Another fell down a well. Others were found hung from that same tree near Dead Man's Hole with a deck of cards below their feet. Legend has it, that Rose's spirit remains here. Protecting this area from those that mean to do it wrong.

MICHAELA

But why would she destroy Donmar's though? Ain't he black?

DOC

Don't matter what color you are. What matters is what you do. That's how you will be judged by the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole. Donmar was always a shady brother. Cheated on his wife, cheated people out of their money, he was a low down dirty shame and got what was coming to him.

JAKE

Now look. I'm gonna say it how I see it. Ain't no damn ghosts of Dead Man's Hole. Y'all make this stuff up to scare people.

DOC

I ain't making it up! Ask Joe! Laura would always tell us the stories. You're calling her liar?

*JAKE gets up with such rage it is almost as if he could beat the life out of DOC. The tension is palpable in the room. RODNEY tries to break it.*

RODNEY

Look man, all I know is that Donmar was a sleazy man and maybe part of what Doc saying is true. I mean are we ever really safe from the great beyond? They know everything. All our deepest secrets...

JAKE

Nah. I don't believe that.

DOC

What you scared of Jake?

*DOC looks deep into JAKE as if he knows something, but is unsure. JAKE doesn't like that feeling one bit.*

JAKE

I'm gonna take a smoke.

JOE

I thought you were quitting.

JAKE

Just a quick fix.

JOE

Quick fixes lead to a whole lot more problems.

JAKE

More than you know.

JOE

What?

JAKE

Nothing. Just let me take a break baby brother.

JOE

Alright. As long as you stop calling me that shit.

*JAKE exits*

RODNEY

I'm gonna take one for myself too.

*RODNEY exits. Quiet for a moment as DOC ponders something.*

DOC

There's a deep and dark rage within your brother Joe. I can't quite figure out why, but there's something going on in him that ain't right. You two should talk. Just sayin'. I'm gonna call it night. If it's alright by you, I'm gonna go the back way out.

*JOE nods to DOC. DOC exits through the kitchen. MICHAELA looks at JOE concerned, as if she can feel that something has been released into the space that has changed his energy.*

MICHAELA

Hey Joe. You alright?

JOE

Yeah. I think so. Let's call it a night eh kid. We can pick this up tomorrow in the morning.

MICHAELA

Sure. I'll just...

JOE

Don't worry about all that. I'll clean it up myself. I gotta go to the restroom. See you tomorrow.

*JOE goes to the restroom. MICHAELA gets her coat from the kitchen. When she comes back out we hear JOE crying to himself in the bathroom. MICHAELA starts to go to the bathroom, but halfway there she stops and thinks better and leaves out the front door. The pinball machine flickers on and then shuts off.*

SCENE 4

*Late night. JAKE is closing down the restaurant by himself. He stands at the register counting the money from the till. After a moment a knock at the door is heard. JAKE stops and takes a moment to check if he heard correctly, then we hear another knock. He goes to the door and opens it, revealing PATILLO.*

JAKE

What on earth do you want?

PATILLO

Jake. Just the man I wanted to see.

JAKE

Joe ain't here.

PATILLO

He is of no importance. May I come in? I promise I'll make it worth your while. Come on Jake, it's colder than a witch's teet out here.

*JAKE ponders, then steps aside and motions for PATILLO to enter*

JAKE

Spit.

PATILLO

I beg your pardon?

JAKE

Say what's you got to say man.

PATILLO

The state of the English language continues to surprise me. We went from Shakespeare to Tweets and ebonics in a span of a century. Crying shame.

JAKE

Look man, I ain't got time for your Kentucky Fried Chicken racist shit. I'm trying to be nice by letting you in here and speak to me.

PATILLO

No no, that ain't why you let me in here. See there, it's contagious, I said ain't. Ain't. Mmm. Feels kind of nice actually. Ain't. Got a bite to it.

JAKE

What planet you from dude?

PATILLO

Oh it must burn you up on the inside knowing what I can offer you. Hm? A way out of this dump. Knowing that I can offer you that same opportunity you saw slip through your fingers just about a year ago? Ah yes. There it is. I see it in your eyes Jake. You're a man of vision. A man who will do whatever it takes to get what he wants. Even if it means costing you your family. Like Laura. God rest her soul. I can only imagine the guilt you must feel.

JAKE

My guy, you keep on with this, and I swear I'll shove my fist so far down your throat you'll be pulling teeth out your ass.

PATILLO

Now there is the colorful language that makes our vernacular so potent. Jake, I have come to take away your pain. To take away that guilt hanging over you like a dark cloud.

*PATILLO eyes the pack of Marlboro reds sitting on the counter, empty*

How many packs is that for you today? Three? Jake you must understand that I have eyes everywhere. Folks see something, they tell me something. Like your little affair with Laura. The brother in law taking his brother's wife. Now that is some Hamlet shit if I don't say so myself. Minus the dark and brooding offspring of course, not for lack of trying.

JAKE

What the fuck you want man?

PATILLO

Bulleit Rye, with a splash of aperol, and a squeeze of lemon, on the rocks, and whatever you'd like to drink. I'm buying.

*PATILLO takes out two crisp twenty dollar bills and puts them on the counter. JAKE seethes and after a moment obliges. PATILLO takes out a pack of American Spirits and lights up a cigarette as they stand in silence watching JAKE make two drinks. JAKE finishes making the two drinks and gives one to PATILLO and holds one for himself. PATILLO raises the glass.*

Cheers.

*The two take a sip of their respective drinks*

Do you remember where you were when Kennedy was assassinated?

JAKE

What?

PATILLO

Please. Indulge me.

JAKE

I was right here. Just a teenager.

PATILLO

I was back in Mississippi. Hunting with my pa. You know, I always imagined that at the exact moment when the gun that killed Kennedy was shot, my shot, that killed my first buck that day, went off at the exact same time. I got home with my kill and my mother was watching the aftermath on the news. Kennedy announced dead. Oswald arrested. Such a tragedy. Yet, my mother was numb. No emotion. Like she didn't really care. My father though was relieved. He said it was about time somebody killed that coon lover. But, I didn't know what to feel. I kind of actually admired the man. He put a man on the moon for God's sake. He was, such a visionary. Always looking forward. Just last year I went to the Kennedy museum in Dallas. It was an eye opening experience. Not because of the "history" I learned, no. It was the fact that the museum was filled with only foreigners. Barely any at that. It was practically a ghost town. Like Flint's. All alone. It was like Americans had stopped really caring. This current generation don't truly know the magnitude of what that day meant to many across this country. I mean, how could they? They learn about it in school, sure, hopefully. But it's not the same as having been there or having been around. I imagine the memory of that day will just be another timely Facebook post or rehashed Hollywood movie. Basically, in time, that museum will become pointless. Just like this place we sitting in. Because no one will truly care in the end. I've been plowing down parts of Austin for over a year now. Buying up property like my own Monopoly board. Hearing how I've been destroying legacies, taking away the heart and history of these little old streets in the name of gentrification. But all of those people are all talk and no bite. You go out on these streets, and it's like the infamous grassy knoll. Dead quiet. No protest. No angry mob in the street. No picket lines. Just another day in Austin, full of deadlock traffic and a never ending cycle of construction. Change is inevitable, growth is optional.

*PATILLO takes out an envelope*

Inside this here envelope is a check. Worth more than you'll ever get for this place. More than enough to start your own retirement, or hell, the chance to build a new and better Flint's. Elsewhere of course. Three times the amount that Laura was murdered in cold blood for outside these walls.

JAKE

How do you know about that?

PATILLO

Jake. Like I said. I have eyes everywhere. Eyes that were pointed at this place for a very long time. Now don't look at me like that. It's not like I hired somebody to stalk Laura and gun her down and take that bag of money. What kind of man do you take me for? No, no, that was just some junkie that robbed and murdered an unsuspecting gentle soul. I didn't kill Laura. This community did. When they stop caring for their neighborhoods and their people. When they put themselves above others and became divided. Pushing out the weak and meek, making them fend for themselves. I imagine it was just some poor sap that needed a meal, and got desperate. Damn shame. Now, Jake? I bought the bank that owns your loan on this place. I am offering to clear you of that debt and then some. I know that you, being the oldest sibling, are the only one on the deed for this place. So this decision lies with you. But if you don't take this offer by next Tuesday, well, I'll make your life a living hell to the point where you won't have a quarter left to roll a cart at ALDI's. Do I make myself clear? Think about it Jake. And, uh, please tell Joe I said hi when you break the news to him. I'll see you Tuesday.

*PATILLO exits. JAKE sits alone staring at the envelope on the counter. After a moment he downs a pour of whiskey and starts cleaning up Patillo's glass and his own. After a moment MICHAELA comes in in a hurry quickly closing the door behind her and locking it. She is out of breath and looks out the side window.*

JAKE

Michaela? What you doing here at this time of night?

MICHAELA

I think I'm being followed.

JAKE

By who?

MICHAELA

I don't know. I mean, I think I have an idea. But it would be impossible.

JAKE

Well you can exit out back with me and I'll drive you home.



MICHAELA

It's OK, Rodney was coming to pick me up from here.

JAKE

Oh.

MICHAELA

It's not what you think. We're just friends.

JAKE

I see.

MICHAELA

God, that was so creepy.

JAKE

Your stalker?

MICHAELA

Yeah.

JAKE

It's not safe to be on these streets by yourself at night.  
What were you doing?

MICHAELA

I went out with some of my girlfriends tonight, and I was gonna catch the bus home. Next thing I know, this guy...was following me. He...he looked like my father.

JAKE

Huh.

MICHAELA

I hadn't seen him since...since he went to prison.

JAKE

How long ago was that?

MICHAELA

Fifteen years.

JAKE

Mmm. Do you mind if I ask, what for?

MICHAELA

Why he went to prison? DUI. Vehicular Manslaughter. He uh...I was in the car when it happened. Me and my mother. She uh...he was having one of his episodes, and...he was upset because my mother found out he was sleeping around on her. I was in the backseat and they were arguing outside the car. He got behind the wheel, my mother panicked and rushed inside the passenger side. She was so concerned she didn't put on her seatbelt. We were going so fast, I just remember being so scared and he hit a speed bump really hard and my mother's head slammed against the roof of the car and the dashboard and my father lost control of the car and we flipped over in a ditch. Paramedics said she died on impact. My father was taken away and I was in and out of foster homes for the next twelve years until college. He fucked up my whole life.

JAKE

Damn.

MICHAELA

You ever wonder why certain people survive tragedies? Or like, why the best of us, tend to always be the ones who suffer the worst fates? I mean, why couldn't it have been him? Why did she have to die for his mistakes?

*JAKE is silent. This hits him deeply.*

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

I honestly have no clue what I would do if I ever saw him again, or if he tried to even talk to me.

JAKE

Forgiveness is hard. But forgiveness of ones own self...sometimes I think that can be even harder.

*JAKE takes the envelope from PATILLO and puts it in his back pocket.*

MICHAELA

What's that?

JAKE

Junk mail.

*MICHAELA'S phone rings and she answers.*

MICHAELA

Hey Rodney...Rod. Yes. I'm here. Ok. I'm on my way out. Thank you.

*MICHAELA hangs up. Looks at JAKE who is deep in thought.*

MICHAELA (CONT'D)

That's Rodney. I'm gonna head out. I'm glad you were here Jake. You ok?

JAKE

Yeah. Yeah, I'm good.

MICHAELA

Ok. Well don't stay here too late now.

*MICHAELA exits out the front door. JAKE after a moment turns out the lights and closes up, locking the front door. He exits through the kitchen.*

SCENE 5

*Tuesday, a week later and a day before the planned Grand Opening. JOE is dressed very nicely in a suit and vest. His suit jacket rests on the counter. He is working at the register alone. He glances at his watch. Clearly annoyed. QUINN enters the front door. Looking more disheveled than before. This scene between these two should be long and awkward.*

JOE

Hey, you're late...Oh, it's you. Look brother, I don't really have time for your mess today.

QUINN

Is Michaela around?

JOE

Uh. She not in today.

QUINN

Oh. OK.

JOE

Did you need something? Something to eat? I might be able to spare some...

QUINN

You got kids?

JOE

No, no I don't.

QUINN

Hm. I got too many. Done lost count.

JOE

Uh. OK?

QUINN

When the next time Michaela come in here?

JOE

I'm not at the liberty to say...Mr...?

QUINN

Quinn.

JOE

Quinn. I be damn, you got a name.

QUINN

Who are you?

JOE

Joe Flint.

QUINN

OK.

*QUINN sits down at the bar. Long moment.*

JOE

Brother. She ain't here.

QUINN

I know.

JOE

So you just gonna sit there?

QUINN

Huh?

JOE

I said are you gonna just sit there? Knowing she ain't here. There ain't no loitering here.

QUINN

What you pay around here?

JOE

What?

QUINN

What you pay my baby girl?

JOE

Your baby girl?

QUINN

My daughter nigga. Michaela.

JOE

She ain't mentioned no daddy.

QUINN

What?

JOE

I said she ain't ever mentioned you before.

QUINN

She getting paid good?

JOE

She getting paid good.

QUINN

Good. How often she get paid?

JOE

Why you want to know?

QUINN

Huh?

JOE

Why you want to know?

QUINN

I'm gonna try and get my whip out the shop.

JOE

Huh?

QUINN

I'm gonna try and get my whip out the shop.

JOE

Your whip?

QUINN

My truck.

JOE

You got a truck? I thought you was homeless.

QUINN

You got fifty dollars?

JOE

Uh. Nah man. I don't got fifty dollars.

*QUINN takes out a gun*

QUINN

How about now?

JOE

Look man. I'm going to give you the chance to put that away before you do something stupid.

QUINN

You want to get smoked?

JOE

Smoked?

QUINN

Killed!

JOE

Look man, put the gun down.

QUINN

You smoke nigger?

JOE

Smoke what?

QUINN

Crack, what else!?

JOE

Well I could think of a lot of other things. What the hell is that?

*QUINN turns around to look at what JOE pointed out.  
JOE wrestles the gun away from QUINN and punches him,  
knocking him to the ground. JOE holds the gun on QUINN*

Now get your ass up and out of my joint partna. Get your ass up.

QUINN

Damn. You punched me.

JOE

Go on now.

QUINN

Give me the money.

JOE

Get your crazy ass out my joint.

QUINN

Just give me the money man. I got to get my whip out.

JOE

Don't come closer you hear. Stay back. Alright now I got the right to stand my ground nigga.

*QUINN has gotten close on JOE. JOE pulls the trigger but the gun is empty. No bullets*

Shit. What the hell?

*QUINN jumps on JOE and they tussle. It should be a long, rough awkward fight between two older men who shouldn't be fighting at all. In the midst of the fight JAKE and DOC enter*

DOC

Oh damn! What in the-

JOE

Get this man off me y'all. Damn!

*DOC and JAKE rush in to break up the tussle between QUINN and JOE. QUINN and JOE are exhausted*

JAKE

What is going on here man?

JOE

This crazy tried to rob me, with a gun, that has no bullets.

QUINN

I thought the gun would do the trick by itself.

JOE

You crazy fool. I could of had a shotgun under this counter. Be done blow your damn head off.

QUINN

I got to get my whip out the yard. They towed my whip and I needs to get it out. Say fifty dollars cash and they'd give it to me.



JOE

Where the hell you been? You know what time it is?

JAKE

Calm down man. I'm only about ten minutes late.

DOC

Few more minutes and Joe may have been dead to the wind.

JOE

I had it under control.

DOC

That ain't what it look like.

JOE

Kick rocks Doc.

QUINN

I think you hurt my head.

JOE

Good, maybe knock some sense into you.

JAKE

Doc, can you go in the kitchen and get him some ice.

DOC

Only if I can get a rib off of it.

JAKE

Get your ole trifling tail in there and get that man some ice!

*DOC runs into the kitchen*

Here Joe let me look at you.

JOE

I'm fine. Where were you? Huh?

JAKE

I...had to run this errand. Took longer than I thought.

JOE

Do you know what today is? Huh?

*DOC returns with a small bag of ice and a plate of ribs. He goes to QUINN and puts it on the back of his head. QUINN holds the ice bag in place*

JAKE

Yeah I know what today is.

JOE

And you just gonna be late on me?

JAKE

What's your problem? I'm sorry, hell.

JOE

This day is extremely hard for me, and I have a schedule to keep. I made a promise and I intend to keep it.

JAKE

Listen to you. A schedule to keep? Man, please. She ain't going nowhere.

JOE

What you say?

JAKE

She's dead Joe. Dead in the ground. You can visit her anytime you want! Just because it's "the day" don't mean you got to be there right at this time, this moment, with your damn three piece suit on like it's some hot date! Damn. Just go nigga.

JOE

Take that back Jake.

JAKE

Hell no. You know I'm right.

JOE

Take it back.

JAKE

You better hurry, she may not be there if you don't leave right now.

*JOE punches JAKE who is a taken back. JAKE then lurches at JOE and another fight ensues. DOC tries breaking it up*

DOC

Come on now. Stop. Stop!

JOE

Get off me. Get off me!

JAKE

I'm cool. I'm cool!

DOC

What is gotten into y'all?

JOE

This nigga has no respect for the dead.

JAKE

Yeah whatever.

JOE

I'm supposed to go speak to Laura at one o'clock. I said I would be there. I said it. I promised that I'd be there. And now I'm not. I'm not! Just like...because of *this* NIGGER!

JAKE

Hey brother, call me nigger one more time and see what happen.

JOE

You stand there like you ain't got a care about it in the world. The way you talk to me about her? It's like she wasn't important to you at all.

JAKE

She meant a lot more to me than you know Joe.

JOE

You have a funny way of showing it.

JAKE

Just because you show up on time today, tomorrow, next year, it won't change the fact that she is gone now. Accept it already.

*JOE lunges at JAKE. DOC holds him back*

DOC

Joe. Joe. Dammit, just stay over there now. Jake, come on man. Sit over here.

QUINN

Y'all got something to eat?

DOC

Here take my ribs man.

QUINN

Thank you brother.

DOC

Now look. I may be old, but I will wax y'all asses all over this floor like I'm your daddy.

JAKE

He started it.

JOE

My ass.

DOC

Shut up. Bunch of kids.

*MICHAELA enters. They just stare at them for a moment.*

MICHAELA

Yo, what is going on in here?

QUINN

Baby girl?

MICHAELA

Daddy? What are you...what happened?

JOE

Your father tried to rob me, gun point, with no bullets.

QUINN

I need to get my whip out.

MICHAELA

What? Are you OK Joe?

JOE

Yeah. Yeah I'm fine.

*This next section with the conversations between JOE and JAKE, and MICHAELA and QUINN should overlap*

QUINN

Baby girl.

JOE (CONT'D)

I need to get going. Get to Laura.

MICHAELA

Don't you baby girl me.

JAKE

Joe. Let me drive you.

QUINN

Baby girl. You mad at me?

JOE

No.

MICHAELA

How could you? Huh? What if it was me behind that counter. You gonna pull a gun on me?

JAKE

Look Joe. I have to tell you something. It's important.

QUINN

You know I wouldn't-

JOE

I don't want to hear it Jake.

MICHAELA

I don't know what you'd do Quinn! You are a fucking virus. You just take and take, and latch on to people and take everything they got. You need money? Huh? Here. Take this. Take my fucking money. Take it.

JAKE

Let me talk. Now there are some things we can never take back. And I want to say before I start, that I am extremely sorry brother. I ain't never meant to ever hurt -

QUINN

Michaela...

JOE

Jake. I forgive you. I was upset. I blamed you for something I have to deal with. It's fine. I just want to be alone -

MICHAELA

Take that money and go. You hear me? Right now! Go! I don't want to see you. I don't want to hear you. I don't want to smell you. You take this last bit of my blood, sweat and tears and you use it for another bump and fix.

JAKE

No Joe, you're not hearing me. This isn't -

DOC

Jake, I'm not sure this the right time brother.

JOE

What you mean right time Doc? What you saying Jake?

JAKE

I know I did wrong. I'm trying to make right by you.

*PATILLO has entered during this and at the end of the commotion he rings the bell on the counter to get everyone's attention*

PATILLO

I hope I'm not interrupting?

MICHAELA

Mr. Patillo? How can we help you? I hope it ain't about another offer, because as you can see by the sign on the door we have a grand re-opening next week and are expecting a great turn out.

PATILLO

Oh I take it you haven't told your brother about our little arrangement, huh Jake?

JOE

Arrangement? What's going on here?

JAKE

Joe, can we go someplace and talk in private?

JOE

No. Whatever you got to say you can say right here.

JAKE

I uh...Joe...I was late because...

DOC

Damn Jake.

JAKE

No Doc. I got to say it. Joe. I sold it. Flint's. I was late because I sold it to Mr. Patillo. I already put your half of what he gave me in your account. So...

JOE

What is this a joke? You're joking right? I mean, hell...you can't do that.

PATILLO

Actually he can Joe. See, your father only put his oldest son, Jake here, down on the deed to the property. The property he rebuilt with his bare hands as you say.

JOE

Impossible. He wouldn't.

JAKE

Pa thought that with you marrying Laura, you two would want to go your own separate ways from this place. So he made sure you wouldn't have anything tying you down here.

JOE

No. No. Hold on now. Pa wouldn't do that.

PATILLO

I'm afraid so Joe. But listen, I am making sure your brother gets a very generous amount to ensure you both can move on comfortably.

JOE

You would give up what our daddy built for this man's money?

PATILLO

I assure you Joe the amount was substantial.

JOE

Shut the fuck up. I'm talking to *him*. Jake. My older brother. My blood. My father's eldest son. The one that was supposed to protect our legacy.

JAKE

You don't understand. I can't be here anymore Joe. This place...

JOE

This place was built from our father's flesh!

*This rings out in the restaurant. Everyone stunned and silent as Joe stares at Jake who is crumbling inside*

Why? After all we've been through. After all we lost. Momma. Papa. Laura!

JAKE

God help me.

JOE

Speak up!

JAKE

Joe. There's no easy way for me to say this...but...Laura and I was having an affair. It was going on for a long time. We were planning to leave together. She was going to meet me that night when I was about to sign the deed over to Donmar. We were going to only take a portion of what we made from the sell and leave you with more than enough to move on. That night she died...I had to handle some last minute stuff at home, and she was closing the restaurant by herself and was going to meet up with me after she closed down. I didn't mean for her...Oh God...it was dark, she was alone...and she must have...she must have thought it was me surprising her...when...she opened the door and...I'm sorry.

PATILLO

You see Joe. The man ain't never the one you got to worry about. It's the snakes in the grass that you think are your friends who will strike you in the back. In this case, family. I was coming by to pay my respects and wish you all the best. But I see none of that matters now. So long Joe. Gentleman. Lady.

*PATILLO exits*

MICHAELA

Joe? Jake? Someone say something, please.

DOC

I think we should just go.

JOE

She was going to leave me? With you? Why?

JAKE

There ain't no easy way to say it.

JOE

Just say it.

DOC

Why don't we just-

JOE

Shut up Doc. I want to hear him say it.



MICHAELA

Guys.

JAKE

You ate, slept, breathed and slaved for this place Joe. We couldn't handle it no more. We had been standing in these walls for over forty years brother. Forty long ass years! It was time to go. Our time was done. But you lost track of everything that loved you. You lost track of mama. Me. Laura. Nothing else mattered. You kept chasing our daddy's shadow like you couldn't imagine life without him. You had a most beautiful woman, who would have done anything for you. But you left her alone for way too long.

JOE

So you just gonna swoop in and take her?

JAKE

Your marriage was no fairy tale nigga. You know it. Tell the truth. You got skeletons in your closet too. Don't act like you didn't. She knew. How many late nights she stay up waiting for you? How many nights you showed up drunk off your ass with the smell of another woman all over you, huh? Yeah. We all have our sins to bear brother.

JOE

I loved her.

JAKE

I loved her too. But I wasn't going to let her stand here and get smoked up by you from the inside like one of your two bit whores.

*JOE goes behind the counter and grabs the baseball bat. He crosses in towards JAKE. as if he would strike him.*

MICHAELA AND DOC

Joe! No! Stop! Hold on now!

*Suddenly the lights flicker and the pinball machine and arcade games starts to work and play on their own. Music plays from the new sound system*

QUINN

Ya'll see that?

*Suddenly a fire starts in the kitchen on its own. It causes everyone to go into shock for a moment. JOE drops the bat. MICHAELA, and DOC rush to put out the fire.*

*QUINN gets up and paces around freaked out a bit. JOE is stunned at what is happening, as well as JAKE. A large howl is heard and it's as if the walls could crash in on themselves.*

QUINN (CONT'D)

Y'all see her? Y'all see her? Take me. Take me.

*QUINN picks up the gun*

I got it. Yes I do. Right here.

*QUINN pulls a bullet from inside his pocket and puts it into the gun*

It's time baby. Oh yes. It's time.

*JAKE and JOE notice what QUINN is doing. They make to stop him, but are blown backwards by an unseen force*

QUINN (CONT'D)

I see you. Take me.

*MICHAELA comes out of the kitchen with DOC as they spray fire extinguishers at the fire. MICHAELA notices QUINN putting the gun to his head*

MICHAELA

Quinn?

QUINN

Just leave my baby alone. Please. Fix it. That's all I ask.

MICHAELA

Dad?

QUINN

Fix everything. Take me.

*QUINN pulls the trigger and a loud bang is heard. He has shot himself in the head. Immediately the lights stop flickering, music stops. The fire stops in the kitchen and smoke fills the space. MICHAELA rushes to QUINN's dead body lying on the floor*

MICHAELA

Dad? DADDY!? Oh my god. Oh my god. Daddy!?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 6

Day of the demolition. RODNEY is moving boxes, tables, etc. They do this in and out of the scene until all the tables and chairs are moved out. JOE stands at the counter staring into space.

RODNEY

I know this cat that got mad bank for liquidating his shop. Check it. When I was inside for them ten years, this one brotha that got out with me started selling furniture that he built himself. He like got in this program when we was locked up that helped him learn carpentry and shit like that. I went into this engineering and construction program myself. It was nice. Anyways, he got married, and his woman wanted them to move up out of the South. Said it ain't safe here. He like, "Baby, I can't, I got to meet my parole officer every week". Shit, she made sure they got up north as fast as possible. Think they settled in Laredo or some shit. At least until he get done with all that government check up business they got us doing, ya know. Anyways, he needed money for the move, so he sold everything in his shop. Made a killing because, get it, it was authentic. Brotha, I look at your place and it's all authentic from the floors to the roof. Old school is in brotha. Folks will pay a premium for this stuff.

*JOE doesn't respond*

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Hey Joe? Joe.

JOE

Huh?

RODNEY

You good?

JOE

Yeah. Thanks Rodney.

RODNEY

Alright. Well after this load I gotta to be going brother. The man gonna be showing up soon and, well, you know I got to do my demolition thing. So... You just got these tables and chairs left over here and I think you and Jake can decide on what you want to do with those and you're good.

JOE

Yeah.

*RODNEY takes JOE in for a moment, then pats him on the back. JOE doesn't respond. RODNEY exits. PATILLO after a moment enters.*

PATILLO

There is so much more space in here once you move out the riff raff.

JOE

Hope you don't mind I put Rodney to work to move some stuff out. I know he work for you and all but, I needed the help. Figure it couldn't hurt.

PATILLO

No problem at all.

JOE

No use in demolishing a place with a bunch of stuff in it that can be of use to someone else right? Jake ain't been around and Michaela had to deal with her pa's funeral.

PATILLO

Such a tragedy.

JOE

Mr. Patillo? I have to ask. What do you plan to do with this area?

PATILLO

Well. This stretch will be most profitable as new housing. I suppose I'll give you first choice on leasing one of the new homes.

JOE

No thanks.

PATILLO

Joe. It was only a matter of time. You've seen it. Times are changing. The new generation deserve to make their own place in history. And in history, someone is always getting displaced. Confederate statues are taken down in the name of activist groups. A museum on slavery is given more money and resources than one on the holocaust. Bar-B-Que joints changed out for Buffalo Wild Wings. Who are we to step in the way of progress?

JOE

Sensible people don't tear down the holocaust museum for an African American one. This ain't the wild west. There's room for the both of them.

PATILLO

Until people wish to forget the past altogether. Listen. I get no pleasure out of doing this. Yes I come in here and appear to be enjoying myself, but you have to understand, even when you're born with the silver spoon, the weight of carrying on that legacy is just as heavy as the one you had to carry within these walls. You know, my father named his company Patillo and Son before I was born. Talk about pre-meditated insanity. He hijacked my mother's future and mine. He made sure she birthed and raised a son, and made sure that I was tied to his hip at every turn. I had to find something within this life of destruction and construction that made it worthwhile for me. My father had me as a vessel to carry on his work. But Joe. I have no sons. No daughters. No wife. Nothing. Once I'm gone, my father's legacy will go with me. *That's* why I do what I do. Because one day I'm gonna sit back and give all of this away to someone else. Preferably to someone that will piss my father off to the point that he rolls in his grave, but none the less I will be getting rid of this burden.

JOE

Why not just do that now?

PATILLO

Why didn't you give up Flint's years ago when Laura asked you to?

JOE

How did you...?

PATILLO

It's just a guess actually. I remember my mother begging my father to give it all up. See like your father, my father worked himself to death. It's a sad way to go. Because it will cost you everything, and you will be all alone. I guess we are all destined to be disappointments to somebody in the end.

*RODNEY enters as PATILLO starts to exit*

PATILLO (CONT'D)

I want the demolition started in ten minutes, boy.

RODNEY

You watch how you talk to me.

PATILLO

Excuse me?

RODNEY

You heard me.

PATILLO

Ten minutes. I'm gonna miss you Joe.

*PATILLO exits*

RODNEY

That man is such a dick. You want to take this Joe?

*RODNEY points to the pinball machine*

JOE

Yeah, but don't worry about it. I'll take it out.

RODNEY

By yourself? OK. Well, brother, I got to get the crew ready outside so-

JOE

You do what you gotta do Rod.

RODNEY

Hey. I'm just doing my job. I'm sorry man.

*MICHAELA enters*

MICHAELA

Don't be sorry.

JOE

Michaela. I thought...

MICHAELA

Rodney here gave me a call to see how I was doing. Said today they were tearing this all down. Felt I should at least stop by and see how you were doing. See this place for one last time.

JOE

I'm sorry Michaela. About your father.

MICHAELA

Hopefully he's at peace now.

RODNEY

What about you?

MICHAELA

We'll see. Jake been by?

JOE

No. We haven't talked since.

RODNEY

Well I gotta go. Glad you came by Michaela. Again, I'm sorry for your loss. Joe.

JOE

Bye brother.

*RODNEY exits*

MICHAELA

You took out all the stuff. You selling it?

JOE

Um...You want a drink?

MICHAELA

You still got glasses?

JOE

You know it.

*DOC and JAKE enter. Everyone freezes a moment*

DOC

I found him on the street. Y'all owe each other a chance to clear the air.

JAKE

I don't owe him...

DOC

You owe Laura. You both do. The way I see it, this was a long time coming. The Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole...

JAKE

Here you go-

DOC

Shut your mouth Jake and listen. Now, a few weeks ago, I saw Laura standing right over there.

*DOC points to the pinball machine*

She was surrounded by the Ghosts of Dead Man's Hole. I didn't know what to think, and I sure as hell wasn't gonna tell you clowns because you'd never believe me. But they were there, just as clear as I see y'all. They were there, and then they sunk through the floor and were gone. I took some time to think about that moment. Once Jake told us what he done, that's when I knew. The ghosts marked you both. They say the ghosts require a sacrifice. That sacrifice would have been this building. That's why there was that fire. Would have burnt this place to the ground. But sadly, I believe, Michaela's father, Quinn, sacrificed himself so you two had another chance. You may have lost this place, but dammit you got the chance to preserve all the memories of this place here.

(Points to his heart)

And to touch people here. It goes beyond these walls. It's your father's name. Laura's name. Quinn's name. Y'all name. Don't destroy that too.

*A moment.*

JOE

Michaela...you once told me that your mother always told you to never let someone tell you what you can't do. To make your own way. Well...

MICHAELA

What?

JOE

I am giving you my half of what Patillo gave us for this place.

*JOE hands MICHAELA a check. She is stunned at the amount.*

MICHAELA

Why?

JOE

Because you deserve the chance to make your own way. You have the tools now. You don't need to ever wait on anybody to give you a job. You make your own. You smart. Tenacious. And take no mess. Go build your own bar-b-que joint, or Mediterranean grill, whatever.



JOE (CONT'D)

Just sew some roots of your own, where you want, and be a better person than I was to your friends. To your family.

MICHAELA

Joe, I...thank you. Thank you.

*MICHAELA embraces JOE.*

DOC

My man.

*DOC embraces JOE. JAKE looks on alone. DOC releases from JOE and turns to MICHAELA.*

Come on young blood. Let's give Joe and Jake some privacy. We'll see you brothers outside.

*A moment as MICHAELA looks at JAKE. They make eye contact. She nods and exits with DOC. A moment as JOE and JAKE are alone.*

JOE

This the last half of the ribs I made. Want some?

*JAKE doesn't answer*

It was the best thing to do. That girl got a fire to her. Like Laura did. Be a shame to let it go out.

*Beat*

I had Rodney put the stuff in that Uhaul for her. Got a storage unit set up on Clayton that will hold the stuff for three months until she find somewhere to get started. I think she gonna be fine.

*Beat*

Well shit I ain't gonna let these ribs go to waste brother.

JAKE

I made her do it. Laura. She wasn't going to do it. She was gonna stay with you. Even though you...I just couldn't...I didn't understand how she could...

JOE

Because you didn't know her. Not like me. But I don't blame you. Or her. I blame myself. I was weak and hollow. I had nothing to give in the end. Not to her. But, I never stopped loving her. And I will never stop loving you brother.

JAKE

You think we just gonna hug it out?

JOE

No. I know what this means.

JAKE

What does it mean?

JOE

It means I will have to live with the fact that I tarnished our relationship, and pushed away you, Laura and what we built.

JAKE

We both did that.

JOE

Well we both be some tarnishing motherfuckers huh?

JAKE

Ha! Yeah.

JOE

But we can fix it. In time. Together.

JAKE

How?

*We hear the demolition machines start up outside. JOE and JAKE take note and start to exit.*

For starters, I was thinking of the two of us writing a memoir together. About a boy who met a girl...

JAKE (CONT'D)

I like it already.

*They stop. Turn around and together turn out the lights. The pinball machine flickers. They take a second and rush over to grab it.*

JOE

On three we lift.

JAKE

On three or after three?

JOE

On three man. One. Two...Three.

*The lift and carry the machine out*

JAKE

I am getting too old for this.

JOE

Ain't we all brother. Ain't we all.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY