

Hey, I was looking to take you out. Let's go out. What was that name of that club out in East Liberty?

RUBY: That's been gone.

ELMORE: That was a nice little club. We had us a good time there. Come on, let's go out somewhere.

RUBY: I ain't got nothing to wear.

ELMORE: You with me. The only time you got to worry about what to wear is if you out there looking. You ain't looking for nobody. Come on, put on anything.

RUBY: Come on, let's go to the bar around the corner.

ELMORE: I can't go right now. I got to go back down there and see if these niggers got any more money. I'll come back and then we can go out.

RUBY: Where you going?

ELMORE: I'm going in here to change clothes. I can't go back down there wearing the same clothes.

(Tonya enters from the house. She is dressed for work.)

Hey, Tonya. You on your way to work?

TONYA: Yeah, I'm going down here to pull these cards for the insurance people. That's the only way I pay my bills.

(Elmore exits into the house.)

RUBY: You all go on and make up. You need each other.

KING: I ain't got nothing to make up about.

RUBY: Go on now. *(She exits into the house.)*

KING: Tonya. Here.

(King gives Tonya some money.)

TONYA: What's this? Where'd you get this from? *(She counts the money.)* This is five hundred dollars. Where'd you get it from?

KING: I got it from the same place Elmore get his. You don't ask him where he get his from.

TONYA: Here. I don't want it.

KING: What you talking about you don't want it?

TONYA: I don't want to go to jail. You going back to jail. You gonna be right down there with J.C. Talking about you wanna have a baby and time he one or two years old you look up and he ain't gonna see you again till he's a slave. I got to sleep by myself. Naw, you take it and keep it. I don't want it. I don't want you to be saying you did it for me. Don't do it for me. I ain't gonna make the same mistake twice. I'm wearing every day, I'll pay my bills the best way I can. But I ain't gonna have you sitting down there in the jail talking about you did it for me.

KING: Money, green. That's all you got to know. What difference it make? Money is money. They make it with a machine. I ain't got no machine. I gotta get mine the best way I can. It's legal. That's what it say on there. Say it's legal for all debts public and private. That's all anybody care about money. Can you spend it.

TONYA: I got to go to work. But I'm telling you don't do it for me. You hear me, King. Don't do it for me. *(She exits the yard.)*
 KING *(Calling after her)*: Who else I'm gonna do it for? Money's money; woman. Who else I'm gonna do it for?

(The lights go down on the scene.)

SCENE 3 Start

The lights come up on Ruby and Tonya in the yard.

RUBY: Where's King?

TONYA: He said he was going out to Homewood to look for Pernell's cousin. He walking around carryin' that gun. Now you got to wonder if he ever gonna come through the door again or not. Every time he go out somewhere I hold my breath. I'm tired of it. I'm suffocating myself. I done told him if he go back to jail I'm through with it. I gonna pack up

my little stuff and leave. I ain't goin' through that again. I ain't visiting any more jailhouses.

RUBY: That was the same with Elmore down in East St. Louis. They don't know it's hard on you. They don't think about that. I buried one man, I don't want to bury no more. King just like Hedley. Hedley had his own way about him. He wanted to be somebody and couldn't figure out how.

TONYA: I wish I had known Hedley. 'Cause I can see that's half of King's problem. He try and do everything the way he think Hedley would do it. Louise used to tell him all the time, "Be yourself. That's enough."

RUBY: She used to tell me the same thing. That's what I tried to do. Even when I didn't know who I was, I guessed at it. Sometimes I was right and sometimes I got it all wrong. I used to be really something back then. All the men was after me. They use to crawl all over me. That's when I was singing. I used to sing with Walter Kelly's band. I always did like to sing. Seem like that was a better way of talking. You could put more meaning to it.

TONYA: I let Aretha do my singing for me. I can't do it better than her so I need to shut up.

RUBY: Walter Kelly was a big man with jet black hair. Brown-skinned man played a trumpet and I sang in his band for a while. He tried to make love to me but I didn't want no part of him 'cause he was too good-looking and he already had a gang of women. Everybody expected 'cause I sang in his band that he could have do with me like he wanted. He thought that at one time himself but I got him straight on that. We was sitting in his car. He had a car with a top you could put down. We was having a drink and just laughing and singing and fooling around when he put his hand under my dress. I had men put their hand under my dress before. They want to see what you got. They like to see how it fit in their hand. They say they can tell what kind of woman you is. Walter Kelly got his hand all the way up under my dress and he touched me there. I told him to stop. He just

laughed. We was drinking from a pint bottle. I took the bottle and broke it on the car handle. I cut my hand pretty bad but I put the glass up to his throat. Blood was running all down my hand and everywhere. I told him to lick it. I told him I wanted him to taste my blood 'cause if he didn't move his hand from under my dress I was gonna taste his. I rubbed my hand all over his face. There was blood everywhere. My hand looked like it wasn't gonna stop bleeding. He moved his hand and I got out of the car. I found out later I was on my period and I got mad. I told myself I wished I had cut him 'cause there wasn't nobody's blood in the car but mine.

TONYA: You should have cut him.

RUBY: He never did mess with me no more. We became good friends. Walter Kelly... I left out of East St. Louis and lost touch with him. I hear tell he died about eight years ago. I felt real sad when I heard it. I stopped singing about two years after that night in the car. I just stopped for no reason. I did it to myself. Said I don't want to sing no more. It had done lost something. The melody or something I couldn't tell. I just know it stopped having any meaning for me. There was lots of things like that. Where the meaning all got mixed up with something else.

After I quit singing my hair turned gray. My hair turned gray and I didn't even know it. I was staying in a room up on Wooster Street. I went upstairs to the bathroom and seen I had gray hair. Seem like I didn't have nothing to show for it. I said, "I'm gonna die and ain't nobody gonna miss me." I got dressed and said, "I'm going go find me a man... if nothing else he might miss me in the morning when I'm gone." We went to the Ellis Hotel. He had a mustache and a big hat. It was that hat that made him look nice. He was a rough man. He turned me over his knee and spanked me. That was the first time anybody ever did that. He asked me did I like it. I told him I didn't know, he'd have to do it again. It had been a long time since anybody had touched me. It kinda felt good. Just to know I had been

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Cut some of the monologues down

touched. We had a good time. Then it was time to go. I asked him if he was gonna miss me. He said he was, but I don't know if he was telling the truth. I went back and looked in the mirror and my hair was still gray. I told myself, "I'm still a woman. Gray hair and all."

Stool
(*Stool Pigeon enters carrying flowers and peanuts.*)

STOOL PIGEON: They had to take Aunt Ester back down there.

They wanna do an autopsy but Mr. Eli fighting them on that. The coroner say he want to see if he can figure out what made her live so long. He don't know she died too soon. She wasn't supposed to die at all. She wasn't but three hundred and sixty-six years old. (*He goes over to the cat's grave*)

TONYA: You done buried that cat out there . . . why don't you just leave it alone?

STOOL PIGEON: I give her some peanuts. Some goobers. That's what my mama called them. See if God satisfied with that. (*He lays the flowers on the grave*)

The Mighty God

His name shall be called Wonderful

Who made the fire

May all that is passed be joined together

The Mighty God

Made the wind

Mighty is His name

Who made the water

Called man our of the dust

The Mighty God

Made the firmament

Called forth Lazarus

The Mighty God

Who makes hallowed the ground

The Mighty God

You a bad motherfucker.

(*Turning back to Tonya and Ruby*) They got goats out at the zoo but they won't give me none. I went out there and asked them. They told us they want to keep them for the kids. I'm on my way to ask Hop. See if he loan me his truck to go out to one of them farms and get a fatted calf. Tim's running out. But I'm gonna get some blood on that grave. (*He exits the yard*)

RUBY: That old fool. You watch and see if he don't end up in Mayview.

(*Mister enters.*)

MISTER: King here?

TONYA: I thought King was with you.

MISTER: He said he was going down to the courthouse. Hop was having his hearing today to see if they was gonna give him the contract.

TONYA: I hope he don't go down there acting a fool. I know King. He liable to go down there and cuss out the judge. I done told him. I'll pack up my little sruff in a minute. (*She exits into the house*)

RUBY: What you got there in your hand? Look like a tin cup.

MISTER: You wasn't supposed to see it. This a derringer Elmore sold me. Only it's too big to hide in your hand. Everybody can see it.

RUBY: That's what I need. In case somebody mess with me. These kids is something else. They robbed Stool Pigeon and robbed and beat up that little old woman live on Casset Street. Put her in the hospital. I need something like that in case somebody mess with me. I'm gonna get me one.

MISTER: Here . . . you can have this one. Only thing, you have to pull back the hammer if you want to fire it. (*He gives her the derringer*) Here go two bullets. That's all I got. If you need some more I'll get them for you.

RUBY: I wanna see somebody mess with me now.

MISTER: They got Little Buddy Will's mother in jail. She shot the boy who she say killed her son. She shot him but only