

(CORY swings at TROY, who backs across the yard.)

CORY. What's the matter? You so bad ... put me out!

(TROY advances toward CORY.)

CORY. *(Backing up.)* Come on! Come on!

TROY. You're gonna have to use it! You wanna draw that bat back on me ... you're gonna have to use it.

CORY. Come on! ... Come on!

(CORY swings the bat at TROY a second time. HE misses. TROY continues to advance toward him.)

TROY. You're gonna have to kill me! You wanna draw that bat back on me. You're gonna have to kill me.

(CORY, backed up against the tree, can go no farther. TROY taunts him. HE sticks out his head and offers him a target.)

TROY. Come on! Come on!

(CORY is unable to swing the bat. TROY grabs it.)

TROY. Then I'll show you.

(CORY and TROY struggle over the bat. The struggle is fierce and fully engaged. TROY ultimately is the stronger, and takes the bat from CORY and stands over him ready to swing. HE stops himself.)

TROY. Go on and get away from around my house.

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

CORY. Tell Mama I'll be back for my things.

TROY. They'll be on the other side of that fence.

(CORY exits.)

TROY. I can't taste nothing. Hallelujah! I can't taste nothing no more. *(TROY assumes a batting posture and begins to taunt Death, the fastball in the outside corner.)* Come on! It's between you and me now! Come on! Anytime you want! Come on! I be ready for you ... but I ain't gonna be easy.

(The LIGHTS go down on the scene.)

ACT II

Scene 5

The time is 1965. The LIGHTS come up in the yard. It is the morning of TROY'S funeral. A funeral plaque with a light hangs beside the door. There is a small garden plot off to the side. There is NOISE and activity in the house as ROSE, GABRIEL and BONO have gathered. The door opens and RAYNELL, seven years old, enters dressed in a flannel nightgown. SHE crosses to the garden and pokes around with a stick. ROSE calls from the house.

ROSE. Raynell!

RAYNELL. Mam?

ROSE. What you doing out there?

RAYNELL. Nothing.

ROSE. *(Comes to the door.)* Girl, get in here and get dressed. What you doing?

RAYNELL. Seeing if my garden growed.

ROSE. I told you it ain't gonna grow overnight. You got to wait.

RAYNELL. It don't look like it never gonna grow. Dag!

ROSE. I told you a watched pot never boils. Get in here and get dressed.

RAYNELL. This ain't even no pot, Mama.

ROSE. You just have to give it a chance. It'll grow. Now you come on and do what I told you. We got to be getting ready. This ain't no morning to be playing around. You hear me?

RAYNELL. Yes, Mam.

(ROSE exits into the house. RAYNELL continues to poke at her garden with a stick. CORY enters. He is dressed in a Marine corporal's uniform, and carries a duffel bag. His posture is that of a military man, and his speech has a clipped sternness.)

CORY. *(To RAYNELL.)* Hi. *(Pause.)* I bet your name is Raynell.

RAYNELL. Uh huh.

CORY. Is your mama home?

(RAYNELL runs up on the porch and calls through the screen door.)

RAYNELL. Mama ... there's some man out here. Mama?

ROSE. *(Comes to the door.)* Cory? Lord have mercy! Look here, you all!

(ROSE and CORY embrace in a tearful reunion as BONO and LYONS enter from the house dressed in funeral clothes.)

BONO. Aw, looka here ...

ROSE. Done got all grown up!

CORY. Don't cry, Mama. What you crying about?

ROSE. I'm just so glad you made it.

CORY. Hey Lyons. How you doing, Mr. Bono.

LYONS. *(Goes to embrace CORY.)* Look at you, man. Look at you. Don't he look good, Rose. Got them Corporal stripes.

ROSE. What took you so long?

CORY. You know how the Marines are, Mama. They got to get all their paperwork straight before they let you do anything.

ROSE. Well, I'm sure glad you made it. They let Lyons come. Your Uncle Gabe's still in the hospital. They don't know if they gonna let him out or not. I just talked to them a little while ago.

LYONS. A Corporal in the United States Marines.

BONO. Your daddy knew you had it in you. He used to tell me all the time.

LYONS. Don't he look good, Mr. Bono?

BONO. Yeah, he remind me of Troy when I first met him. *(Pause.)* Say, Rose, Lucille's down at the church with the choir. I'm gonna go down and get the pallbearers lined up. I'll be back to get you all.

ROSE. Thanks, Jim.

CORY. See you, Mr. Bono.