



James Brady

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

CAJUN POKER
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For Roger Cornish

CAJUN POKER

DRAMA. Set in New Orleans, the land of voodoo queens and slot machines, this unique American tragedy tells the story of Rufus Theriot, a lonely landlord who has dedicated his life to caring for his only daughter after his wife's unexpected death. When Rufus' pregnant daughter, Camille, and her unemployed husband, Cody, move in with Rufus, an all-out battle ensues. Rufus and Cody begin to compete for Camille's love and attention, and Rufus finds it impossible to relinquish control over Camille. Soon the battle between Cody and Rufus escalates into a game of Cajun poker, where they try to bluff, manipulate, and control each other. Rufus says, "Ya gotta think quick so ya opponent can't figure out what ya got...and at the same time, ya gotta know what they got." And it's this desire to win at any cost that leads to the discovery of Rufus' secret—one that he has been hiding for more than 20 years, and one that threatens to destroy him.

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 1 F)

RUFUS THERIOT: 40s.

CAMILLE: 20, Rufus' daughter.

CODY: 20s, Camille's husband.

GAINES: 30s, works for Rufus.

SETTING

New Orleans, present day.

Rufus Theriot's house in the suburbs of New Orleans. The living-dining room. There is a fireplace, reclining chair, sofa, coffee table, end table, telephone, record player, pool cue and case, and a television. A newspaper and a deck of cards are on the coffee table. There is a dining table and four chairs. A partially eaten chocolate cake is on the table. To the left is Rufus's office. There are two doors at the rear, one to the left that leads to the entrance hall, another to the right that leads to the bedrooms.

Rufus's office. There is the standard office furniture; a desk and chair, two chairs that face the desk, a bookshelf, and a filing cabinet. A phone and a picture of Rufus's deceased wife are on the desk. A rack of keys is on the wall and a wooden sign is leaning against the desk.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Rufus's home, late afternoon.

Scene 2: Rufus's office, the next morning.

Scene 3: The living/dining room and Rufus's office, late afternoon.

ACT II

Scene 1: The living/ dining room, late evening.

Scene 2: The living/ dining room and Rufus's office, the next morning.

Scene 3: Rufus's office and the living/ dining room, a half hour later.

Scene 4: The living/ dining room and Rufus's office, ten days later, morning.

PROPS

Weed eater	Mobile with angels
2 Shopping bags	Scrapbook
2 Beepers	Ice-cream cone
Paperback book	Stacks of money
Credit card	Case of beer
Newspaper	Briefcase
Phonebook	Baseball bat
Purse	Wooden sign that reads, "Rufus Theriot and Son Rental Properties"
Grocery bag	Folder
Baby clothes	Keys
Baby cowboy outfit	Map
Baby shirt with "Lil Cajun" on the back	Handkerchief
Bottle of soda	Baby doll
Pool cue and case	Screwdriver
Thermostat	Teddy bear
Videotapes	Baby crib
Deck of cards	3 Travel bags
Notepad	Check
Poker chips	2 Blankets (one for sofa and one for crib)
Blood pressure kit	Pillow
Record player	Baseball
Record	Plastic bag
Business card	Map
Notebook	Papers
Eviction notice	
Ironing board and iron	

SOUND EFFECTS

"Louisiana 1927" or another suitable song
Car arriving
Car departing
Phone ringing
Cajun song
Answering machine recording
Baby crying

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"DIS IS CAJUN POKER,
YA GOTTA T'INK FAS."

-RUFUS

ACT I SCENE 1

(AT RISE: Rufus's home, late afternoon. The song, "Louisiana 1927" by Randy Newman or another suitable song plays. Cody is playing a Nintendo game on the television. A weed eater, grass, and dirt are on the floor. There is the sound of a car arriving. The music fades. Cody jumps up, turns the television off, and begins working on the weed eater. Rufus, carrying a shopping bag, enters. He's wearing a beeper and has a paperback book in his back pocket.)

RUFUS: *(Notices the cake.)* Aw, naw...why does dat woman keep bringin' me dese cakes?

CODY: She's got the hots for you. *(Mimics a woman.)* "Is Rufus here? *(Rufus sets the shopping bag on the dining table.)* You make sure and tell him that Louise stopped by." *(Normal voice.)* She said to give her a call.

RUFUS: I ain' got time for no widow from Plaquemine. *(Walks over to Cody.)*

CODY: *(Indicates weed eater.)* We've got a slight problem.

RUFUS: Why'd ya bring dat in da house?

CODY: Because it's not functioning properly, and I'm trying to fix it.

RUFUS: Fix it outside.

CODY: I can't get the string out.

RUFUS: Take da cover off.

(Strains as he tries to take the cover off.)

CODY: I think it's rusted together.

RUFUS: Take it outside an' I'll get ya a screwdriver. *(Cody bangs the weed eater on the floor.)* What ya doin'?

(The weed eater comes apart. Parts and string are scattered on the floor.)

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CODY: I got it open.

RUFUS: Got dog!

(Rufus picks up the weed eater and pulls the trigger.)

CODY: What's the matter?

(Cody reaches for the weed eater. Rufus jerks it away.)

RUFUS: Ya broke it.

CODY: Can't you fix it?

(Rufus hands Cody the weed eater.)

RUFUS: T'row it away.

CODY: But—

RUFUS: T'row it away!

CODY: You needed a new one anyway. Look at this relic.

(Holds up the weed eater.) It weighs a ton. The new ones are a lot lighter...

RUFUS: 'Cause dere made o' plastic.

CODY: And they got more power. Modern technology, Rufus.

RUFUS: T'row it away...

(Cody sets the weed eater down.)

CODY: I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you. I'm going to go to Sears and buy you a new one.

RUFUS: Shoot, son. You cain buy a roll o' toilet paper.

CODY: I've got credit. *(Pulls out his credit card and tries to show it to Rufus.)* A brand new Sears credit card.

RUFUS: Jus' t'row it away, an' clean up da mess you made... Where's Camille?

CODY: She and Darcy went shopping.

RUFUS: Shoppin'?

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CODY: Darcy wanted to buy little Cody something.

RUFUS: She's 'posed da stay off 'er feet.

CODY: A little exercise won't hurt her. I don't want her to get too fat. I won't be able to get my arms around her. (*Mimes putting his arms around someone.*)

RUFUS: Son, ya bedder stop worryin' 'bout... (*Mimes putting his arms around someone.*) ...dis, an' start worryin' 'bout ya wife an' baby.

CODY: She's doing fine.

RUFUS: So was 'er mama an'... (*Sits in the reclining chair, looks at Cody.*) I had dat weed eader for twenny years. Never had a problem wit'it. An' Gaines never had a problem. Den you come 'long.

CODY: I'll buy you a new one.

RUFUS: Las' week da loan moder [*lawn mower*] an' dis week da weed eader. Ya killin'me.

CODY: It was your idea for me to do yard work.

RUFUS: Gotta do somet'in' 'sides sit 'roun' all day playin' dose cartoon games on da television.

CODY: Don't start that again.

RUFUS: Six years o' college.

CODY: I'm going to get a job.

RUFUS: Ya been sayin' dat for t'ree mont's.

CODY: I'm waiting for the right job to come along.

RUFUS: You cain jus' sit 'ere an' wait for a job da come da you.

CODY: Rufus, you know I check the *Times-Picayune* every morning. (*Gets a newspaper.*) There are no jobs.

RUFUS: Dere's plenny o' jobs. (*Cody tries to show him the newspaper.*) Like I tol' ya, ya gotta get out dere an' poun' da pavemen'. Go down to da wharf. Dey awways need workers da load an' unload da ships. (*Cody, behind the newspaper, begins silently speaking with Rufus.*) Ship comes in da dock. Ya take da cargo off da ship. Den ya load da cargo's dat's bein' shipped out. Den da ship leaves. (*Cody*

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sets the newspaper on the table.) It's steady, good pay, an' don' take no rocket scientis'.

CODY: How many times do I have to tell you? I didn't go to college so I could work on the docks. I want to work with computers.

RUFUS: What exac'ly is it dat ya wanna do wit' computders?

CODY: Networks. They're used by companies to link computers together.

(Rufus stands.)

RUFUS: Big comp'nies, my ass. *(He turns on the television. A Nintendo game begins playing.)* Got dog!

(Cody rushes up to the television and begins disconnecting the Nintendo game.)

CODY: Sorry about that. I'll have you back in business in a jiffy. *(The television comes on.)* There you are...you want to watch the news? I better start cleaning up this mess. *(Walks away.)*

RUFUS: Wait a minute. *(Cody stops.)* Middle Sout' Util' dies.

CODY: Can you amplify that?

(Rufus turns the television off.)

RUFUS: Have ya tried da get a job wit' Middle Sout' Util' dies?

CODY: I sent them a resume two months ago.

RUFUS: An'?

CODY: I never heard anything from them.

(Rufus shoves the phone into Cody's hand.)

RUFUS: Den call 'em. Ac' like ya want da job.

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(Cody hangs up the phone.)

CODY: I'll call them tomorrow.

RUFUS: Ya an' aggressive enough. Dat's da problem.

CODY: That is not the problem. *(Opens the newspaper and reads.)* "Boomtown Belle Casino. Blackjack dealer wanted. Delivery boy needed for Italian restaurant. Eight dollars an hour plus tips." Oh, here's one that's perfect me. "Experienced donut cutter." *(Turns pages.)* Pages and pages of this crap. *(Stops turning pages.)* Computers... Data entry, data entry, keypunch operator. Three lousy data input jobs. There are no real computer jobs because the politicians have chased all the big corporations away.

RUFUS: Dere ya go again. Blamin' da pol'ticians.

CODY: They're the problem.

RUFUS: 'Pecific'ly, which pol'ticians ya talkin' 'bout?

CODY: All of them. It started with Huey Long.

RUFUS: Huey Long? Huey Long built highways, an' put up bridges, an' built schools an' hospidals.

CODY: By taxing the big corporations to death.

RUFUS: Sure, he stepped on a few toes, but sometimes a man's gotta do what he's gotta do. Don' try da use da "Kingfish" for no excuse.

CODY: He doubled state income tax on corporations.

RUFUS: Da fat cats should pay more taxes.

CODY: Not when they can relocate to another state where they don't have to pay taxes. Which is what most of them have done.

RUFUS: Let 'em go.

CODY: Let them go?

RUFUS: We still got da oil an' gas. Da rev'nue an' taxes from dat alone will keep dis state afloat.

CODY: But there're no jobs.

RUFUS: I'm gonna show ya how da get a job. *(Gets the yellow pages and slams it down on the coffee table.)* Da yellow pages.

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(Opens the telephone book and turns some pages.) Oo-wee.
Look at all da stevedorin' comp'nies.
(Rufus picks up the phone. Cody grabs the phone and hangs it up.)

CODY: I am not working on the docks...I'll go to Houston
before I work on the docks.

RUFUS: Houston?

CODY: That's where the computer jobs are. Good computer
jobs, too.

(There is the sound of a car arriving.)

RUFUS: Houston's da crime cap'dal o' da worl'.

CODY: I'm sure there's some safe neighborhoods.

RUFUS: It ain' no place da raise a fam'ly.

CODY: I've got to go where the jobs are.

RUFUS: Ya wanna go live in dat asphal' jungle, go ahead.

You can come back on weekends da see Camille an' da
baby.

CODY: If I go to Houston, Camille's coming with me.

RUFUS: Camille ain' goin' da Houston.

*(Camille, holding her purse, a shopping bag, and a grocery bag,
enters. She looks at Rufus and Cody. Silence. She sees the cake.)*

CAMILLE: Another cake?

(Cody approaches her.)

CODY: Chocolate doberge. *(Camille sets her purse and the bag of
groceries on the dining table.)* It's excellent.

*(Rufus rushes past Cody, kisses Camille on the cheek, and takes the
shopping bag.)*

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RUFUS: Ya shouldn' be carryin' all dose bags. *(He sets the shopping bag on the dining table. Camille takes two bags out of the shopping bag.)* Whatcha got dere?

CAMILLE: I'll show you.

RUFUS: Le' me see.

CAMILLE: Just a minute. I want Cody to see, too.

(Camille approaches Cody.)

CODY: How's Mama?

CAMILLE: I'm okay. *(They kiss.)* I missed you.

(They kiss again.)

CODY: I missed you, too.

RUFUS: Camille, ya need da get off ya feet.

(Camille and Cody sit on the sofa. Rufus takes her shoes off and massages her feet. Camille takes some baby clothes out of one of the bags.)

CAMILLE: Look at what Aunt Darcy bought little Cody.

(Shows Cody the clothes.)

CODY: He'll look cool as a cowboy.

RUFUS: Cowboy? *(Gets his shopping bag.)* He ain' gonna be no cowboy. *(Takes out some baby clothes and shows Camille.)* He's gonna be a Cajun.

(Camille looks at the writing on the back of the shirt.)

CAMILLE: The Lil' Cajun. How cute. He'll be a Cajun cowboy. *(Kisses Rufus.)* Thanks, Daddy. *(To Cody.)* Would you get me a soda?

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(Cody stands.)

RUFUS: I'll get it.

(Rufus goes to get the soda. Camille looks at the clothes that Rufus gave her.)

CAMILLE: Oh, I love this.

(Rufus gets the soda.)

CODY: *(To Rufus.)* She asked me to get it!

(Rufus returns and slams the bottle of soda into Cody's stomach.)

RUFUS: Give it to 'er. *(Cody coughs and strains as he tries to open the bottle of soda. Rufus takes the soda and unscrews the cap easily. He gives Camille the soda and sits next to her.)* How is da liddle guy?

(Camille takes a sip of the soda and sits it down.)

CAMILLE: Alive and kickin'.

(Rufus puts his hand on Camille's stomach.)

RUFUS: How 'bout dat?

CAMILLE: Cody... *(Motions for him to put his hand on her stomach.)*

(Cody sits next to her. She puts his hand on her stomach.)

CODY: Oh, my God.

(Rufus backs away.)

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CAMILLE: *(To Cody.)* I bought you something.

(Camille takes a box containing cologne out of the other shopping bag and gives it to Cody.)

CODY: Aramis, your favorite.

CAMILLE: Put some on.

(Cody takes the cologne out of the box and sprays some on his neck. Camille smells his neck and kisses him.)

RUFUS: I got some work da do. *(Stands and stares at the mess on the floor. To Cody.)* How 'bout cleanin' up dis mess? *(Camille and Cody continue kissing.)* Hey...hey! *(Camille and Cody stop kissing and look at Rufus.)* How 'bout cleanin' up dis mess? *(Cody begins putting the dirt and grass in a plastic bag. Rufus shows Camille the weed eater.)* Look wha' he did.

CODY: *(To Camille.)* It was an accident. I was trying to get the string out.

RUFUS: He banged it on da floor 'til he broke it.

CODY: *(To Camille.)* I offered to buy him a new one.

RUFUS: I don' wan' a new one. I've had dis weed eater for twenny years. Firs' he breaks da loan moder an' den da weed eater.

CODY: *(Holds up his hands.)* I can't listen to this again.

CAMILLE: Daddy, please.

(Cody disassembles the pool cue and puts it in the case.)

CODY: I'm going out for a few beers.

CAMILLE: Wait, Cody. *(Approaches him.)* Let's order a pizza and watch a movie. You can drink here.

RUFUS: I'm watchin' da news.

CODY: I've got to get out of here.

CAMILLE: Cody.

RUFUS: Let 'im go, Camille.

CAMILLE: *(To Rufus.)* Please stay out of this.

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CODY: *(To Camille.)* Can I talk to you in private?

(They exit through the rear door SR.)

RUFUS: You can hang meat in 'ere. *(Goes over to the thermostat.)* He don' have da pay da 'lectric bill. *(Adjusts the thermostat.)* Friggin' Sponge.

(Ruffus sits down and puts the cowboy outfit back in the shopping bag. He picks up the Cajun outfit, looks at it for a moment, folds it and sets it on top of the shopping bag. Camille and Cody enter. Cody puts his hand on her stomach.)

CODY: Take care of little Cody, okay.

RUFUS: Jeez...

CAMILLE: Okay.

CODY: I'll be back in an hour. I'll be at the Faux Paux. *(Kisses her on the cheek.)* Call me if you need me.

(Cody exits through the rear door SL. Camille walks slowly to the sofa and sits down.)

CAMILLE: You promised me that you would try to get along with him.

RUFUS: I know. I know I promised. An' I tried. But dis guy, I mean, I give 'im a simple job da do an' 'e breaks my weed eater.

CAMILLE: That weed eater's older than I am. It've could've just as easily broke when you or Gaines were using it. You needed a new one, anyway.

RUFUS: Dat ain' da poin'. Da man don' respec' my tools.

(Sound of a car leaving.)

CAMILLE: I know you're still upset because we had to get married but—

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RUFUS: Dat ain' da problem.

CAMILLE: I'm just as much to blame as he is. So stop taking it out on him. Okay?

RUFUS: Da man's gotta wife an' baby da support, an' he won't get a job. Dat's my problem wit' Cody.

CAMILLE: Cody sent out over a hundred resumes—

RUFUS: Lookin' for a job an' prayin' da God dat 'e don't get one.

CAMILLE: And it's very frustrating to keep getting rejected, and he doesn't need you to keep reminding him about it.

RUFUS: He doesn't wanna work. He's lazy.

CAMILLE: Why don't you help him instead of always criticizing him?

RUFUS: I did. I tol' him da go down to da wharf an' 'e said, (*Mimics Cody.*) "I didn't go da college da work on da docks."

CAMILLE: He did go to college.

RUFUS: I know he went da college. Six years da get a four-year degree. Six years, an' 'e sits on da sofa all day playin' dose cartoon games on da television. Figure dat out.

CAMILLE: Why can't he work with you on the rental houses until he finds something?

RUFUS: Are ya kiddin'? I don't wan' 'im anywhere near my ren' houses.

CAMILLE: Why not?

RUFUS: He ain' got no common sense. Udder day, I sen' 'im da get me a board stretcher. He looked for an hour. He acchuly t'ought ya could stretch a board. Now, take Gaines. He ain' got no college degree but he can fix anyt'ing... 'Sides, Cody might get hurt.

CAMILLE: He'll be careful.

RUFUS: I ain' talkin' 'bout fallin' off a roof. I'm talkin' 'bout dealin' wit' tenan's. Remember da guy dat got flip wit' ya on da phone? I wen' over dere an' tol' 'im if 'e ever talked da my daughder like dat again, I'd break 'im in ha'f. He t'rew me down t'ree flights o' stairs. Would o' killed me if I hadn' o' pulled my huntin' knife on 'im.

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CAMILLE: Isn't there something you can give him to do?

RUFUS: I gave 'im somet'in' da do. (*Points at the weed eater.*)

I'm tellin' ya. Da boy's got a loose wingnut.

(*Camille stands.*)

CAMILLE: I'll get the vacuum cleaner.

(*Rufus jumps up and grabs her.*)

RUFUS: You will do no sucha t'ing. (*Helps her to sit down.*) I'll draw ya a bat', an' while ya takin' ya bat', I'll fix us some jambalaya.

CAMILLE: I'm not hungry.

RUFUS: Wanna watch a movie? (*Looks through some video tapes.*) "Gigi"? "Sleepless in Seattle"? "Officer an' a Gen'leman"?

CAMILLE: I don't want to watch a movie.

(*Rufus picks up a deck of cards.*)

RUFUS: Wanna play some boure? (*She shakes her head. Rufus looks at a notepad.*) Ya owe me two hunerd sevenny five dollars...sure you don' wanna try da win some money back? (*He shuffles the cards. Silence.*)

CAMILLE: Just because Cody is from Wyoming doesn't mean he's got a loose wingnut. Cody is very smart. And he's not lazy. He put himself through college by working in the computer lab. And he's going to get a job, if you'll just give him a chance. So cut him some slack. Okay?

RUFUS: Hokay.

CAMILLE: Deal 'em. (*Rufus gets some chips and divides them with her.*) How much are we playing for?

RUFUS: How much can ya stan' da lose?

CAMILLE: We'll see who loses.

(*Rufus shuffles the cards.*)

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RUFUS: Ten dollars.

CAMILLE: It's your money. (*Rufus deals the cards. She looks at her cards.*) I can't believe these cards I'm getting.

RUFUS: Me, too.

(*Rufus tries to look at her cards. Camille hides her cards.*)

CAMILLE: Quit trying to look at my cards.

RUFUS: Whatcha talkin' 'bout? I don' need da see ya cards da beat you. How many ya wan'?

CAMILLE: Two. (*Rufus deals her two cards.*) How many are you taking?

RUFUS: I got my han'.

CAMILLE: You sure about that?

RUFUS: You jus' play. (*Camille stares at her cards.*) Come on.

CAMILLE: Hold your horses.

RUFUS: Dis is Cajun poker. Ya gotta t'ink fas'.

(*They play. Thinking she's going to win a trick, Camille reaches for the cards. Rufus trumps her.*)

CAMILLE: You dog.

(*They continue playing. Rufus wins another trick.*)

RUFUS: Dat's two. (*Wins another trick.*) Dat's t'ree. (*Wins another trick.*) Dat's four. Maybe you can get da las' one? (*Wins the last trick.*) Oo-wee!

CAMILLE: Darn.

(*Rufus takes the chips.*)

RUFUS: Ya boured. Match da pot.

CAMILLE: (*Antes.*) I thought you were bluffing.

RUFUS: You t'ought wrong. (*Camille shuffles the cards.*) Sure I cain in'res' you in some jambalaya?

CAMILLE: Cody's getting a pizza.

RUFUS: Ya shouldn' be eatin' dat junk.

CAMILLE: Cody likes it.

RUFUS: He ain' seven an' a ha'f mont's pregnan' wit' high blood pressure. Sponge.

CAMILLE: Please don't call him that...he's really a good guy...he really is...

RUFUS: When you was born an' ya mama died, da las' t'ing she tol' me was da take care o' ya. An' I have. For twenny-one years. Da problem wit' Cody is dat he don' take care o' ya, an' —

CAMILLE: He does—

RUFUS: I got no respec' for a man dat don' take care o' 'is wife. (*Takes the paperback book out of his pocket.*) He needs da read da chapder on givin' ya wife support in dis book. "Da Fadda's Guide da Parendin'."

CAMILLE: Cody waits on me hand and foot. He gets up at night and gets me something to drink, and he goes out and gets me ice cream.

RUFUS: He jus' wen' out drinkin'.

CAMILLE: The only reason he went out drinking is because of you.

(*Rufus puts the book back in his pocket.*)

RUFUS: I wouldn' be so sure 'bout dat.

CAMILLE: What exactly does that mean?

RUFUS: Da Faux Paux?

CAMILLE: It's a sports bar. Cody goes there to play pool.

RUFUS: It's a sleazy dive where a buncha low-class women hang out.

CAMILLE: I don't have anything to worry about with Cody. I know I can trust him.

RUFUS: How da ya know?

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CAMILLE: Because he loves me. He's the first guy that's ever loved me.

RUFUS: What about me? I love ya.

CAMILLE: I know you do. And I love you.

RUFUS: I love ya more dan life. La petite fille da papa. I would do anyt'ing for ya.

CAMILLE: Then, please try to get along with Cody.

RUFUS: Da man ain' good 'nough for ya.

CAMILLE: You found something wrong with every guy I dated. *(She stands. Rufus stands.)* You ran off every guy I dated.

RUFUS: Camille—

CAMILLE: And now you're running Cody off. *(Walks away.)* I love Cody. *(She staggers. Rufus grabs her.)* I can make it.

(She closes her eyes and wobbles. Rufus helps her to the sofa.)

RUFUS: Lie down. *(Camille lies down. Rufus gets a blood pressure kit and begins checking her blood pressure.)* Ya got da stop worryin'!

CAMILLE: I want you to get along with Cody.

RUFUS: Don' t'ink 'bout it.

CAMILLE: Will you please try to get along with him? For me?

RUFUS: Yeah, I'll try.

CAMILLE: And help him find a job? Don't you know someone who works with computers? He'll work hard...don't you know someone...?

RUFUS: I'll make some phone calls an' see wha' I can I do.

CAMILLE: Thank you.

(Rufus finishes the blood-pressure test and checks the results.)

RUFUS: Shoot.

CAMILLE: What is it?

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RUFUS: 140 over 95. *(Forces her to roll over on her side.)* On ya side for two hours.

(He turns the lights down. The phone rings. He moves to answer it and stops.)

CAMILLE: Are you going to answer it? Daddy, answer the phone.

(The phone continues ringing. She reaches for it. Rufus stops her.)

RUFUS: No.

CAMILLE: What is the matter with you?

RUFUS: It might be da widow from Plaquemine.

(Camille picks up the phone.)

CAMILLE: Hello... *(Pause.)* Hi, Louise... *(Rufus waves his hands in the air.)* We're doing okay... *(Pause.)* Doctor says another six weeks... *(Motions for Rufus to come to the phone.)* I don't think it's going to be that long... *(Pause.)* Oh, that's so nice of you... *(Pause.)* Okay... *(Pause.)* He l-o-o-o-oved the cake. *(Rufus walks toward his office.)* Hold on a second. *(Covers the phone with her hand.)*

RUFUS: Tell 'er dat I'll call 'er back. *(She motions for him to come back.)* No.

CAMILLE: *(Into phone.)* Louise, can he call you back? *(Pause.)* Hold on. *(Covers the phone with her hand.)* She wants to know what time you're picking her up for the AA meeting.

RUFUS: Tell 'er dat I cain make it.

CAMILLE: Why not?

RUFUS: I gotta stay 'ere in case ya need me.

CAMILLE: I'll be fine.

RUFUS: Camille, your blood pressure is 140 over 95.

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CAMILLE: I can beep you if I need you. (*Into phone.*) He'll be right with you. (*Covers the phone with her hand.*) This is your only night out. Take the phone...now.

(*Rufus takes the phone.*)

RUFUS: Hello... (*Pause.*) Oh, hi Louise...I, uh, I cain make it tonight. I gotta stay wit' Camille...her blood pressure...it's way up...165 over 125... (*Pause.*) Yeah...t'anks...I'll talk to ya lader...hokay...bye. (*Hangs up the phone.*) See what you made me do.

CAMILLE: Did you two have a fight? What happened?

RUFUS: Nuttin' happened. It's jus' dat I don' t'ink da widow's a good influence for me.

CAMILLE: I like Louise. She's really nice.

RUFUS: She is nice but, ya see, wha's happ'nin' is dat, afder da AA meetin', she an' a bunch of 'em go da Café du Monde for coffee an' den dey go out to da bars an' lissen da music an' dance.

CAMILLE: What's wrong with that?

RUFUS: Dey stay out 'til all hours o' da mornin', an' I gotta bidness da run.

CAMILLE: Go out for a couple of hours and then tell them that you've got to leave.

RUFUS: Tonight, dey goin' to da Maple Leaf. Louise wan'ed me da teach'er how da Cajun dance.

CAMILLE: That would be fun.

RUFUS: As tall an' clumsy as she is, it'd take all night. I'd never get oudda dere.

CAMILLE: Daddy. (*Picks up the phone and offers it to Rufus.*) Call her and tell her you're going.

RUFUS: I'd rudder stay home wit' you an' watch da television or play boure.... Me out Cajun dancin'...wit' you alone an' having dose dizzy spells? No way. (*Camille hangs up the phone.*) Can ya believe a woman from Plaquemine don' know how da Cajun dance? Now, ya mama, she knew how da Cajun dance... Aw, she was somet'in'. Not even five feet

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tall but a heart as big as Lake Pontchartrain. Big brown eyes
an' high cheekbones. We used da go da a fais-do-do ev'ry
Sat'd'y night. Da bes' couple on da floor.

CAMILLE: Show me.

RUFUS: Wha's dat?

CAMILLE: Show me how you and Mama used to dance.

RUFUS: Aw, dat was over twenny years ago.

CAMILLE: Come on...I want to see you dance. Please...dance
for me, Daddy.

*(Rufus walks over to the record player and puts a record on. The
song "Jole Blon" or another suitable Cajun song begins playing. He
dances around the room as the lights fade to black.)*

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Rufus's office, the next morning. The weed eater is on the desk. Rufus, holding a business card, is sitting behind the desk and talking on the phone.)

RUFUS: *(Into phone.)* Yeah, he's gotta degree...computer science...U.S.L...He worked in da computer lab at da school. Put 'imse'f t'rough school... *(Pause.)* Today? *(Pause.)* I'm sure he can...I'll check wit' 'im an' call ya back... *(Gaines, wearing a beeper, enters.)* I really 'prec'ate dis, Ron...hokay. *(Hangs up the phone and sets the business card down.)* Where ya at, Gaines?

GAINES: Where ya yat, Rufus? *(Sits in one of the chairs facing the desk.)* Brothuh-in-law an' 'em wen' fishin' yesderd'y.

RUFUS: Redfish bitin' preddy good?

GAINES: Dey caught dere limit in two hours.

RUFUS: I'd love da catch some redfish.

GAINES: Dey awways lookin' fo' somebody to go wit' 'em. Othuh day, dey took dis dude dey didn' even know.

RUFUS: He must o' bought da beer.

GAINES: Naw. Las' week dey wen' out an' when dey come in, dis dude ax brothuh-in-law where he was catchin' all dose reds. Brothuh-in-law says, "I tell ya what, I'm goin' again in da mornin'. Meet me 'ere an' I'll show ya." So da dude meets 'im da nex' mornin'. It's 'bout daylight. Dey get out in da shallows, sout' o' Lafitte's Landin'. Brothuh-in-law opens up 'is tackle box, 'ch-ching', pulls out a stick o' dynamite, lights it, throws it in da water. Boom! Fishes floatin' up ev'rywhere. Brothuh-in-law is pickin' 'em up an' puttin' 'em on da string. Da dude says, "Do you know whatcha doin' is not only irregular, but highly illegal?" He says, "I work fo' da state. I'm whatcha call da game warden, an' whatcha doin' could get ya a heavy fine, an' might even get ya put in jail." So brothuh-in-law opens 'is tackle box,

'ch-ching', takes out anothuh stick o' dynamite, lights it up, puts it in da dude's han', an' says, "Are you goan fish or are ya goan talk about where you work?"

RUFUS: (*Laughs.*) Dat's a keeper.

GAINES: Seriously, Rufus. You wanna go out wit 'em?

RUFUS: I wish I could but—

GAINES: I'm goin' out wit 'em Sat'd'y. Why dontcha go wit us?

RUFUS: I got some t'ings da do 'roun' 'ere.

GAINES: We be back by noon...whatcha say? Do ya good da get out...fresh air, cool breeze, schools of cherry-colored redfish feedin' in da shallow water. (*Closes his eyes and sniffs.*) I can smell 'em.

RUFUS: Dat's temptin' but—

GAINES: Mama have some red beans an' rice waitin' fo' us when we get back.

RUFUS: I bedder stay 'roun' 'ere an' keep my eye on Camille. I'll go witcha afder she has da baby.

GAINES: Why cain Cody stay wit' Camille?

RUFUS: He's useless. Yesderd'y, I give him a simple job. (*Shows Gaines the weed eater.*) He breaks my weed eader.

GAINES: Aw, man. I showed 'im how da work it. He was bangin' it on da sidewalk, tryin' da get da line out. I tol' 'im da jus' tap it lightly.

RUFUS: He couldn' pour piss out o' a boot wit' da instructions on da side. College boy.

GAINES: (*Mimics Cody.*) "Can you amplify that?"

RUFUS: Sits on da sofa all day playin' dose cartoon games on my television. An' Camille pregnan' an' standin' on 'er feet for ten hours a day at Dillard's. Dey had da make 'er quit. An' he has da nerve da blame Huey Long 'cause he don' have no job.

GAINES: Aw, man. Dat is one bad dude.

RUFUS: Ya got dat right. (*Gets the picture of his wife.*) When Marie died, da las' t'ing she tol' me was da take care o' dat baby. An' I've spen' twenny-one years doin' dat. An' I

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didn' raise 'er da marry no sponge. If ya knew how many times a day I look at dis picture an' ax 'er, "Wha am I gonna do 'bout dis guy?"

GAINES: I can tell ya what da do.

(Rufus sets the picture down.)

RUFUS: She's gotta be rollin' over in 'er grave.

GAINES: Ya wanna get rid o' 'im?

RUFUS: It ain' dat easy.

GAINES: Whatcha talkin' 'bout?

RUFUS: Camille might go wit' 'im. She believes all 'is crap.

(Mimics Camille.) "Cody is very smart. An' he's not lazy.

He put 'imse'f t'rough college by workin' in da computer

lab." *(Normal voice.)* He don' know what work is. I started

workin' when I was five. Fishin' an' trappin' wit' my ol'

man. Up ev'ry mornin' at t'ree.

GAINES: Co'nbread fo' breakfas'.

RUFUS: Ev'ry day. Out o' da houseboat an' on da piroque by

four. Four in da mornin' an' it was awready hot. We barely

able da see t'rough da darkness an' fog. Mosquitoes by da

han'ful. Snakes ev'rywhere. Wadder moccasins,

cottonmouths, diamondbacks. Ya get t'irsty, ya gotta make

'em move so ya can gedda drink o' wadder. Fourteen foot

alligadders. I didn' have my firs' pair o' shoes 'til I was

sev'nteen...Camille t'inks 'e can stop on a dime an' give

change.

GAINES: Wha' da ya 'spec? She be in love wit' da dude.

RUFUS: In love wit' what?

GAINES: How do I know?

RUFUS: I wish he'd go back da Wyomin'.

GAINES: I can get rid o' 'im.

RUFUS: Take dat weed eader witcha an' see if you can fix it.

GAINES: How much is it wort' to ya da get ridda Sponge?

RUFUS: I cain take a chance on losin' Camille.

GAINES: Dis ain' got nuttin' da do wit' Camille.

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RUFUS: Whatcha got?

GAINES: Ya take a piece o' red flannel, twelve by twenny-fo' inches. At each corner, ya sew da foot o' a baby ducklin'.

RUFUS: Voodoo crap. (*Opens a notebook.*)

GAINES: On da right en', ya sew a dried lizard, an' on da lef', ya sew a dried frog.

RUFUS: Ya finished da house on Iberville?

GAINES: Jus' hol' on a secon'. Dis is sure-fired absolutely guaranteed da work. I got it from my great great grandmothuh. She was a reveren' mothuh.

RUFUS: A voodoo docder.

GAINES: Jus' lissen... When Cody goes da sleep at night, ya put da flannel wit' da foot o' da baby ducklin', an' da dried lizard, an' da dried frog in front o' 'is door. Den ya sprinkle sulfuh in da center in da shape of a cross an' say, "Delonge toi de la. Delonge toi de la." Remove yo'se'f from 'ere. When ya wake up in da mornin', he be gone.

RUFUS: When I get ready da get ridda Da Sponge, I ain' gonna need no voodoo crap. How ya stand on da Iberville house?

GAINES: I got a lotta work lef'.

RUFUS: Gaines, I need da get dat house ren'ed. T'ings are gettin' tough. Camille not workin'. A baby on da way. Da Sponge breakin' my tools an' eatin' me oudda house an' home. Whatcha got lef'?

GAINES: I gotta clean da carpet.

RUFUS: Dat shouldn' take long. Ya gotta machine.

GAINES: Machine cain run wit'out power. Can ya get da power turned back on?

RUFUS: All ya gotta do is run an extension cord nex' door.

GAINES: Dey got dat Doberman.

RUFUS: Satan won' bite.

GAINES: Whatcha talkin' 'bout? One day I looked over da fence. He flashed 'is big white teeth an' said, "Jus try it, Mr. Man. I'll bite yo' ass out." Won' bite?

(Rufus looks at his notebook.)

RUFUS: Carpet. *(Makes a check in the notebook.)* Dat should do it. I need da talk to Da Sponge. Is 'e out dere?

(Gaines opens the door and looks out.)

GAINES: Don' see 'im.

RUFUS: Ya know, dat burns me up. He's been sleepin' all mornin' 'cause he wen' out las' night drinkin' an' playin' pool.

GAINES: Playin' pool? Dat what he call it? I watched 'im da othuh night play one of da brothuhs up at da Faux Paux.

RUFUS: Da Faux Paux? What ya doin' up at dat dive?

GAINES: It's convenien' an' dey got pool tables an' slot machines.

RUFUS: Buncha horny ol' women. Ugly as mud trucks.

GAINES: Cody an' da brothuh were playin' pool.

RUFUS: Dat crazy Annie Ruth still come in dere?

GAINES: Sometimes.

RUFUS: She try da sell ya some magic beans?

GAINES: Naw. Ev'rytime da brothuh shot, da ball go straight in da hole, like it have eyes. Cody standin' dere wit' 'is mout' open. Brothuh runs da table three times in a row. Cody unscrews his cue stick, puts it in 'is case, and says, *(Mimics Cody.)* "You shoot a mean game. I bedder be goin'."

RUFUS: Dey playin' for money?

GAINES: Five dollars a game.

RUFUS: Five dollars a game. He's playin' for five dollars a game an' he don' even have a job. I bedder hide da silverware. *(Hands Gaines a twenty.)* Afder ya finish da house, get me a lock for dis desk. *(Gaines stands.)* I'm countin' on ya.

GAINES: I'll do what I can.

RUFUS: I gotta have at leas' four houses ren'ed da break even.

GAINES: I thought ya had fo' ren'ed.

(Rufus takes out an eviction notice.)

RUFUS: Not afder da sheriff delivers dis eviction notice.

(Gaines looks at the eviction notice.)

GAINES: 7713 Cemeteries...Sherman?

RUFUS: He's two mont's late wit' da ren'.

GAINES: Dat don' soun' like Sherman. Ya know I wouldn' recommen' someone ya cain depen' on. Ya talked to 'im?

RUFUS: Ev'rytime I call 'im at work, he's oudda da office. I leave messages an' 'e never calls me back. An' I don' have 'is home number.

GAINES: I'll talk to 'im.

RUFUS: I'm gonna let da sheriff han'le it.

GAINES: Dat'll take fawdi-five days. Den ya gotta clean up da place an' get it ren'ed.

RUFUS: I gotta cut my losses.

GAINES: Dat's a lotta dough. It might take six mont's da ren' it. Dat ain' da safes' neighbuhood. Crack house on da corner. Houses wit' windows shot out from drive-by shootin's. Cars sittin' on blocks, stripped an' tawched.

RUFUS: Ya jus' wan' dat sixdy dollars a mont' finder's fee.

GAINES: Whatcha talkin' 'bout? I ain' studyin' no sixdy dollars a mont'. I jus' feel bad 'cause I recommen' da dude. If I can get da ren' today, will ya give 'im anothuh chance?

RUFUS: Ya wastin' ya time.

GAINES: If I ain' back by fo' o'clock wit' da cash, you can go file da 'viction notice. It's wort' a shot. You could do a lot worse dan Sherman. Remember da redneck dat took da motorcycle apart in da livin' room, an' da dude dat stole da fron' door? An' da Chinese dude dat moved out an' lef' 'is German Shepherd in da back ya'd? Poor thang starved da death. I picked 'im up an' 'is head fell off.

RUFUS: Hokay, hokay...but finish da house on Iberville firs'.
(*He puts the eviction notice away. The phone rings.*) Four o'clock.

GAINES: You wan' it in hunerds?

RUFUS: Get oudda 'ere an' go wake up Da Sponge an' tell 'im dat I need da see 'im.

(*Gaines exits through the rear door SR. Rufus lets the answering machine take the phone call. Recording of Rufus's voice: "You've reached Rufus Theriot. I ain' available da take ya call at da momen'. Please leave ya name, number, an' a message afder da beep, an' I'll get back witcha."* Louise leaves a message: "*Rufus, it's Louise.*" Rufus waves off the phone and begins working. "*I was checking to see how Camille is doing. I missed ya last night. Can we get together tonight? Give me a call.*" Gaines exits through the left rear door. Cody enters.)

CODY: You wanted to see me?

RUFUS: Yeah, sit down. (*Cody sits in one of the chairs facing the desk.*) I, uh...I been under a lot o' s'ress lately. Two ren' houses empdy an' I'm worried 'bout Camille...I shouldn' o' taken it out on you. I'm sorry.

(*They shake hands.*)

CODY: That's okay. I'm sorry I broke your weed eater.

RUFUS: It wasn' ya fault. Dat ol' relic was worn out—

CODY: I'm going to go to Sears this morning and—

RUFUS: Don' worry 'bout it. Ya didn' get a college degree da do yard work. (*Picks up the business card.*) I got somet'in' dat might in'res' ya.

CODY: What's that?

RUFUS: I talked da one o' my ex-tenan's dis mornin'. Ron Silbert. He's a compuder head hun'er in da bidness dis'ric'. (*Hands Cody the business card.*) I t'ink he might be able da help ya out.

CODY: Thanks. *(Starts to leave.)* I'll give him a call.
RUFUS: I tol' 'im I'd send ya down da see 'im.
CODY: When?
RUFUS: Today.
CODY: What time?
RUFUS: Anytime. I jus' gotta le' 'im know what time ya
comin'.
CODY: What kind of jobs does he have?
RUFUS: Computders.
CODY: What kind of jobs with computers?
RUFUS: All kinds.
CODY: Networks?
RUFUS: I didn' go inda da details wit' 'im. *(Picks up the
phone.)* How 'bout dis afdernoon?
CODY: I've got to take Camille to the doctor at one.
RUFUS: I'll take Camille to da docder.
CODY: I want to talk to the doctor about her dizzy spells.
RUFUS: I can tell ya what dat is. Dat's high blood pressure.
She gets dat from 'er mama.
CODY: Why can't I take Camille to the doctor and see...
(Looks at the business card.) ...Mr. Silbert afterwards?
RUFUS: Is it really dat importan' for ya da go to da docder?
CODY: Yes. She's my wife.
RUFUS: Hokay. *(Cody sets the business card down. Rufus looks
at the card, dials a number, pauses and speaks into the phone.)*
Ron, Rufus...I got da computer wizard 'ere wit' me...
(Pause.) Oh, yeah? *(Pause.)* Yeah, daday's fine...one o'clock?

(Cody jumps up.)

CODY: Two o'clock.
RUFUS: Hol' on a secon', Ron. *(To Cody.)* Dere's da
poss'bil'dy dat he can get ya an in'erview daday. *(Gives
Cody the "thumbs up" sign.)* Da sooner ya come in, da
bedder. *(Cody sits down. Rufus speaks into the phone.)* One

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o'clock's fine...t'ank you...hokay...bye. (*Hangs up the phone.*)
An in'erview. Whatcha t'ink 'bout dat?

CODY: That's great. I really appreciate your help. I better get
out my new suit. (*Starts walking out.*)

RUFUS: Oh, Cody.

(*Cody stops. Rufus picks up the business card and offers it to him.
Cody takes the business card.*)

CODY: Thanks.

(*The lights begin to fade as Cody exits. Blackout.*)

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: The living-dining room and Rufus's office, late afternoon. Folded baby clothes are on the coffee table. Camille is ironing. Rufus enters.)

RUFUS: Got dog! *(Takes the iron away from her.)* Didn' ya hear what da docder said?

CAMILLE: I don't want little Cody to look like an orphan...

(Rufus unplugs the iron and sets it on the ironing board.)

RUFUS: Lots o' res', no drivin' da car, an' no work.

CAMILLE: And Cody needs clean shirts.

(Rufus leads her to the sofa.)

RUFUS: Da hell wit' Cody. *(Helps her lie down.)*

CAMILLE: I'm tired of lying down.

RUFUS: Do ya wanna end up wit' toxemia like ya mama?

CAMILLE: Besides, I want Cody to look nice when he starts his new job.

RUFUS: New job? Did he get a job?

CAMILLE: He called and said Ron Silbert got him an interview with Vidacovich Coffee Company.

RUFUS: An'?

CAMILLE: And it's a small mom-and-pop company.

RUFUS: An'?

CAMILLE: He didn't have time to talk, but he sounded upbeat.

RUFUS: So Ron came t'rough. Now dat's a man o' 'is word. He tol' me he was gonna help Cody an'...an in'erview. How 'bout dat?

CAMILLE: Thank you for helping him.

RUFUS: Ya welcome.

CAMILLE: After Cody starts working, we're going to reimburse you for the doctor bills and—

RUFUS: Get oudda 'ere.

CAMILLE: We are going to pay for the doctor and the delivery.

RUFUS: Don' worry 'bout it. I've got it taken care of.

CAMILLE: With both of us working—

RUFUS: Whatcha mean? Bot' o' us workin'?

CAMILLE: I'm going back to work after the baby's born.

RUFUS: Whatcha talkin' 'bout? Ya gotta take care o' dat baby. An' I'm tellin' ya, dat's a twenny-four hour job. Firs' six mont's wit' you, I never got more dan two hours sleep. Ya had da days an' nights mixed up. Six mont's 'fore I got ya straightened out. An' even den, ya wouldn' sleep in your room. You was a mess. An' ya awways waided to da middle o' da night da get sick.

CAMILLE: I didn't know what time it was.

RUFUS: Vomitin', diarrhea, hunerd an' two fever. I'd give ya some medicine an' it'd come right back up. So I bundled ya up an' took ya to da emergency room. I musta took ya to da dat emergency room...

CAMILLE: Ten times.

RUFUS: I didn' wan' ya da get dehydraded or nuttin' like dat.

CAMILLE: Aunt Darcy can help me.

RUFUS: Whatcha talkin' 'bout? One time, we was over at Darcy's an' you was in da playpen an' ya started wailin' 'bout somet'in' or udder. Did I ever tell you dis story?

CAMILLE: About a hundred times.

RUFUS: Darcy said, "I'll get 'er." She picked ya up an' was rockin' ya in 'er arms, talkin' baby talk, an' den she got real quiet. Ya had t'rown up all over 'er. She held ya out away form 'er an' said, "Rufus, help me." I walked up to 'er and she 'practic'ly t'rew ya at me. Dat was da las' time she held ya. She ain' very good, ya know, wit' babies. An' she don' drive. I wouldn' coun'on Darcy...I'll help ya. *(Takes the paperback book out of his pocket.)* Dis book, "Da Fadda's Guide

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da Parendin'," has got ev'ryt'ing ya need da know. (*Gives her the book.*) Le' me show ya wha' I got da liddle guy. (*She looks at the book while he gets a mobile and a scrapbook. He hands her the mobile.*) It's da deluxe model. Got all da bells an' whistles. Da angels fly 'roun' an' watch over da liddle guy.
CAMILLE: How sweet. Little...the little guy will really like this.

(*Camille hands him the mobile.*)

RUFUS: I've gotta attach it to da bed. I awready put ya blanket an' ya teddy bear in dere for 'im. (*Sets the mobile down.*) Look wha' I found.
CAMILLE: My scrapbook.
RUFUS: I'm gonna get da liddle guy one jus' like it.
CAMILLE: Let me see. (*They look at the scrapbook.*)
RUFUS: Baby pictures. Birt'day pardies. Ya fis' Communion. Idn' dat a beaudiful dress?
CAMILLE: You helped me pick it out... Oh, my God... Vernell Fournier and me at the senior prom.
RUFUS: Look at doze eyes. Big as saucers. Looks like 'e crapped in 'is pants.
CAMILLE: You scared him to death. His first date and you searched him. And then you searched his car.
RUFUS: I was jus' checkin' da make sure he don' have no alcohol or nuttin' like dat.
CAMILLE: When we came home and he saw you on the front porch with that hunting knife, he couldn't get away from here fast enough.
RUFUS: I was filetin' catfish.
CAMILLE: At two in the morning?
RUFUS: I couldn' sleep. I have da nightmares when you ain' 'ere.
CAMILLE: You know Cody's not comfortable living here.
RUFUS: Dat was before dis mornin'. We talked t'ings over an' everyt'ing's gonna be a lot bedder.

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CAMILLE: He still wants us to have our own place.

RUFUS: He ain' talkin' 'bout ren'in' is he?

CAMILLE: Until we have a down payment for a house.

RUFUS: Da quickes' way da save is da stay 'ere. Ya can save mos' o' Cody's sal'ry. An' you can stay home wit' da baby.

CAMILLE: If I don't work, it'll take forever.

RUFUS: I tell ya what. Ya stay 'ere an' try da make it on Cody's sal'ry an' we'll work somet'in' out wit' one o' da ren' houses.

CAMILLE: Which one? The first house you and mama lived in? The one on Cemeteries?

(The phone in Rufus's office rings.)

RUFUS: We'll talk about it. *(Kisses her on the cheek.)* You jus' take it easy. *(He stands and puts the paperback in his pocket. She lies on the sofa. He walks toward his office. Rufus' answering machine: "You've reached Rufus Theriot. I ain' available da take ya call at da momen'. Please leave ya name, number, an' a message afder da beep, an' I'll get back witcha." Rufus goes into his office and closes the door but leaves it slightly open.)* "Rufus. Ron Silbert. I sent Cody on an interview with Vidacovich Coffee Company. They just called and said he didn't show up." *(Rufus grabs the phone.)* Ron. Rufus. He didn' show up for da in'erview? *(Pause.)* I cain believe dat. Maybe he got los'?'.. *(Gaines enters the living room, carrying an ice-cream cone and weed eater.)* Vidacovich Coffee Company...dat's where he said he wen'. *(Gaines glances at Rufus's office and sets the weed eater down.)* Dey got more dan one office? *(Gaines puts the ice cream behind his back and sneaks up on Camille.)* Tell me somet'in', Ron. Is dat a small comp'ny? *(Pause.)* Five hunerd employees... *(Gaines tickles Camille.)* ...ain' exac'ly mom-an-pop, is it? *(Pause.)* Yeah, I'll hold. *(He sits down.)*

CAMILLE: Hi, Gaines...you better not have... *(Gaines hands her the ice-cream cone.)* Gaines...Did you get fat free?

GAINES: Dey don' make pralines 'n cream in fat free.

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CAMILLE: Yeah, right. *(Takes a bite.)* Oh, God. *(Offers him a bite.)*

GAINES: I awready had some.

(Camille takes another bite.)

CAMILLE: I really shouldn't be eating this. *(Takes another bite.)*

GAINES: It's good fo' da liddle guy.

CAMILLE: Maybe he'll stop kicking. *(Holds out her hand.)*
Come see.

(He takes her hand and kneels beside her. She puts his hand on her stomach.)

RUFUS: *(Into phone.)* I'm sure it's jus' a misunderstandin'...
He tol' my daughder dat he had an in'erview... Can ya
reschedule? *(Pause.)* Hokay.

(He hangs up the phone, picks up the picture of his wife, looks at it for a moment, and then begins working on the wooden sign.)

GAINES: Aw, man. He's doin' some kickin'. Won' be long
now.

CAMILLE: I hope so.

(Gaines pats her stomach.)

GAINES: Be 'ere fo' ya know it. *(Stands.)*

CAMILLE: Thanks for the ice cream.

GAINES: Ya welcome. *(Starts to leave.)*

CAMILLE: Oh, Gaines...

GAINES: Yeah.

CAMILLE: Cody might have a job.

GAINES: Awright.

(He gives her a "high five.")

CAMILLE: He had an interview with Vidacovich Coffee Company.

GAINES: Dat's great. He get a job, dat'll def'nitely he'p da sit'ation.

CAMILLE: We want to get our own place.

GAINES: Now ya talkin'.

CAMILLE: I think Daddy's going to give us one of the rent houses.

GAINES: Dere ya go.

CAMILLE: I hope it's the house on Cemeteries.

GAINES: Cemeteries?

CAMILLE: Yeah.

GAINES: You don' wan' dat house.

CAMILLE: I love that house. Daddy used to take me over there, and while he was working on the house, I'd ride my bike to Baskin-Robbins and get an ice cream.

GAINES: Dat was ten years ago, 'fore da crack dealers an' gangs took over da neightuhood. Dey's at leas' one murder a week in dere. Las' mont', dis couple was in New Orleans on dere honeymoon. Dey got los' an' ended up in dat neightuhood. Dis gang robbed 'em an' shot 'em in da back o' da head in broad daylight. It's a war zone. Yo' daddy wouldn' let ya get nowhere near dat neightuhood. *(Pauses.)* Da house he got in mind fo' you is da big two story in Lafitte Village. Da one I call da Taj Ma'al. Aw, man. Mastuh be'room alone is as big as my apartmen'. Cathedral ceilin's, fireplace, wet bar, Jacuzzi, walk-in closets.

CAMILLE: You really think he would give us that one?

GAINES: Camille, yo' daddy will do anythang fo' you.

(Pause.)

CAMILLE: He's going to be all alone.

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GAINES: He be awright. Long as he knows ya close by. An' ya let 'im babysit 'is gran'baby. Baby might be talkin' Cajun...he be awright. (*Looks at Rufus's office.*) Le' me see if he's off da phone.

CAMILLE: Bye, Gaines.

GAINES: Ya take it easy. (*She lies down. He gets the weed eater and goes into Rufus's office.*) Where ya at, Rufus?

(*Rufus sets the wooden sign down.*)

RUFUS: Where ya at, Gaines?

(*Gaines sits.*)

GAINES: I finished da house on Iberville an' ...

RUFUS: Awright, my man.

(*Writes in the notebook. Gaines hands him the weed eater.*)

GAINES: I fixed yo' weed eater.

(*Rufus sets the weed eater down.*)

RUFUS: My man. Go ahead, Gaines.

GAINES: (*Gives him a lock.*) Da lock fo' yo' desk. (*Gives him some money.*) An' yo' change.

RUFUS: T'anks. Ya talk to ya boy, Sherman?

GAINES: I'll get da dat, but firs' we gotta discuss somethin'.

RUFUS: Wha's dat?

GAINES: Workin' conditions.

RUFUS: Workin' conditions?

GAINES: Hazardous workin' conditions.

RUFUS: Say what?

GAINES: Ya know dat dog. Dat Doberman ya said wouldn' bite?

RUFUS: Satan?

GAINES: He tried da bite my asshole out. *(Shows him where the dog bit him.)*

RUFUS: He did get ya, didn' he? Ya bedder get dat checked out? *(Gives Gaines a fifty dollar bill.)* Here's a fify.

(Gaines shows Rufus the hole in the back of his pants.)

GAINES: To' my pants.

(Rufus gives Gaines a twenty dollar bill.)

RUFUS: Here's a tweeny for da pants. I'm sorry 'bout dat. Wha' happened?

(Gaines puts the money in his pocket and mimes the following scene with the dog.)

GAINES: I climb da fence, hook up da stension co'd, start walkin' back toward da fence, an' dere 'e is. So I stare at 'im, an' he growls an' says, "I ain' playin'." Den he flashed 'is teeth an' I knew he 'bout da get my ass. So I slowly turn 'roun', get down in my stance, an' start low runnin' toward da fence.

RUFUS: Wha' did Satan do?

GAINES: He be on my ass. I'm pickin' 'em up an' puttin' 'em down, an' he still be on my ass. I get to da fence an' jump, an' dat's when 'e tried da bite my asshole out.

(Rufus helps him sit.)

RUFUS: I'm really sorry 'bout dat.

GAINES: Devil dog.

RUFUS: I never had a problem wit' Satan.

GAINES: Den you can over dere an' unhook da stension co'd.

(Rufus sits.)

RUFUS: So, uh...whatcha boy, Sherman, have da say?

GAINES: Sherman's doin' awright.

RUFUS: How much ya get?

GAINES: Good lookin' secretary. Frien'ly –

RUFUS: Gaines.

GAINES: Nice legs.

RUFUS: Gaines! Did ya get da money?

GAINES: Not yet.

RUFUS: Shoot. *(Gets the eviction notice.)*

GAINES: I cain he'p it if da man was out o' da office.

RUFUS: Does dis guy really exist?

GAINES: Yeah, 'e exists. He's a salesman. *(Takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.)* Secretary gave me 'is schedule. *(Shows Rufus the paper.)* He works oudda da house, 7713 Cemeteries, in da mornin', an' makes sales calls in da afternoon. Monday through Friday. I'll go over dere in da mornin' an' get da money.

RUFUS: I don' trus' dis guy.

GAINES: Aw, come on, Rufus. Sherman's a brothuh.

(Rufus stands.)

RUFUS: I need ya da stay wit' Camille 'til Da Sponge gets back.

(Gaines stands and shows Rufus the bite mark.)

GAINES: I put my life on da line fo' ya. Dis is da leas' ya can do fo' me.

RUFUS: Ya need da go to da docder an' get dat taken care of 'steada spendin' ya time on a wil' goose chase.

(Rufus starts to leave. Gaines blocks him.)

GAINES: Le' me talk to da man.

RUFUS: No, Gaines. Now, move.

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(Gaines moves. Rufus walks by him.)

GAINES: I need dat sixdy dollars a mont'. *(Rufus stops. Pauses.)* I owe my brothuh-in-law some money.

RUFUS: Ya know I awways loan ya money. Whatcha borrowin' money from ya brudder-in-law for?

GAINES: I didn't borrow it...I los' it playin' boure.

RUFUS: How much?

GAINES: I los one fify, which was all I had. Den I los' ano'uh fo' fify, which is what I owe 'im.

RUFUS: Ya boured?

GAINES: Twice in a row...I was havin' a good night up 'til den. Had my mojo han' in my front pocket an' it was workin'. I was up three an' a quarder. Den dere was two hunerd in da pot, an' brothuh-in-law didn' have nuttin'. Not one trump. I had fo'. He shoulda boured but 'e got da las' trick. He had da know wha' I had.

RUFUS: Ya gotta t'ink quick so ya opponent cain figure out whatcha got.

GAINES: I know.

RUFUS: An' at da same time...

RUFUS/GAINES: Ya gotta know what dey got.

RUFUS: Dat's Cajun poker. *(Walks over to his desk.)* Brudder-in-law a preddy good boure player?

GAINES: Six hunerd dollars bedder'n me.

RUFUS: Ya t'ink I could beat 'em?

GAINES: Aw, yeah. You da man when it comes da boure.

RUFUS: I tell ya what. Afder Camille has da baby, we'll come over an' I'll try da win ya money back.

GAINES: I'll get Mama da make a big pot o' shrimp gumbo and cook some blackened redfish.

(Rufus puts the eviction notice in the drawer.)

RUFUS: I guess dis can wait 'til da mornin'.

GAINES: Thanks. *(Starts walking out.)*

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RUFUS: Is Da Sponge out dere?

(Gaines opens the door and looks out.)

GAINES: He's playin' Donkey Kong on da TV.

RUFUS: Dat useless—

GAINES: I'm kiddin'. He ain' out dere.

RUFUS: You lyin' dog... Headhun'er frien' o' mine got da Sponge a job in'erview, an' ya know wha' 'e does? He don' show up. Sponge. *(Clinches his fists.)* I'm tellin' ya. He's crawfish bait.

GAINES: Hey, take it easy. 'Member whatcha awways say 'bout keepin' a clear head?

RUFUS: Yeah.

GAINES: Ya okay?

RUFUS: Yeah. *(Gaines starts walking out.)* Oh, Gaines.

(Gaines stops.)

GAINES: Yeah.

(Rufus offers him a hundred dollar bill.)

RUFUS: Here. Take a hunerd.

GAINES: I'm awready in enough debt.

RUFUS: It ain' a loan...come on.

GAINES: Get oudda 'ere.

(Rufus stuffs the money in Gaines's pocket.)

RUFUS: It's hazardous duty pay.

GAINES: I'm goan pay it back.

(Cody, carrying a case of beer and a briefcase, enters the living room.)

RUFUS: Jus' get da money from ya boy.

GAINES: You'll have it firs' thang in da mornin'.

RUFUS: Call me if ya need me.

GAINES: Thanks, Rufus.

CODY: It's hot as hell in here.

(Cody adjusts the thermostat. Gaines walks out of the office and closes the door.)

RUFUS: *(Clinches his fists.)* Friggin' Sponge. *(He sits down and resumes working on the sign.)*

CODY: Hey, Gaines.

GAINES: *(Puts his finger to his lips.)* Sssh.

(He points at Camille. Gaines exits through the left rear door. Cody sets the case of beer on the dining table. He sneaks up on Camille, who is sleeping. He sets the briefcase down and kisses her. He rubs her stomach.)

CODY: How's little Cody?

CAMILLE: Okay.

(Cody kisses her.)

CODY: How's Mama?

CAMILLE: Tell me about the interview. Did they make you an offer?

(Rufus enters the living room.)

CODY: Let's go to Scramuzza's and get a pizza, and I'll tell you all about it. *(Pulls her up.)* Come on, before the ol' swamp rat... *(Notices Rufus.)* ...Rufus...how's it going?

RUFUS: How'd ya make out wit' da in'erview?

CODY: Not bad. I was just going to tell Camille about it.

RUFUS: Oh, yeah?

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CAMILLE: Did they make you an offer?

RUFUS: Yeah, did dey make ya an offer?

CODY: Uh...yeah.

CAMILLE: Tell us about it.

CODY: It's a mom-and-pop company. They don't pay anything.

RUFUS: How much?

CODY: Not very much.

RUFUS: Maybe ya can negochate more money. Who made ya da offer?

CODY: The head man.

RUFUS: Head o' what? Compuders? Personnel?

CODY: It's a mom-and-pop company.

RUFUS: Who's mom? Who's pop? Who's da man dat made ya da offer?

CAMILLE: Tell him, Cody.

(Cody picks up his briefcase.)

CODY: I got all the information in here.

(Camille sits on the sofa.)

CAMILLE: *(To Cody.)* Sit here.

(Cody sits beside Camille. He starts to open the briefcase but stops.)

CODY: What does it matter? It's a mom-and-pop company.

RUFUS: How big is dis comp'ny?

CODY: It's a small family business.

RUFUS: How small?

CODY: Maybe ten employees.

RUFUS: Wha's da name o' da comp'ny?

CODY: Vidacovich Coffee Company.

CAMILLE: Tell him about the offer.

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CODY: I am not going to work 80 hours a week for slave wages.

(Rufus picks up the phone.)

RUFUS: Maybe Ron Silbert can talk to 'em —

CODY: No, Rufus.

RUFUS: He might be able to negociate more money.

CODY: I've already turned the job down.

CAMILLE: You turned it down before you even talked to me?

RUFUS: Did ya talk da Ron Silbert?

CAMILLE: *(To Rufus.)* Can I talk to Cody alone?

(Rufus hangs up the phone.)

RUFUS: I'm jus' tryin' da help.

CAMILLE: I know but —

RUFUS: I wan' say anyt'ing.

CAMILLE: I need to talk to my husband in private...please.

RUFUS: Hokay.

CAMILLE: Thank you. *(Rufus goes into his office and closes the door but leaves it slightly open. He stands with his ear next to the opening. Cody gets a beer.)* Why didn't you talk to me before you turned down the job?

CODY: Let' go to Scramuzza's —

CAMILLE: Answer me, Cody.

CODY: The job was for a computer operator. I didn't go to college so I could mount magnetic tapes and change paper in printers.

CAMILLE: We've got to start somewhere. *(Stands and hands him the phone.)* Call them back.

(Cody hangs up the phone.)

CODY: Computer operators make minimum wage. After taxes, that's seven hundred dollars a month. I would have

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to work 80 hours a week to be able to support us. I wouldn't have time to be with you and little Cody. I want us to be a family.

CAMILLE: So do I...I just thought that...I mean...you sounded so upbeat over the phone. *(Looks down.)*

CODY: Hey, hey. Come on, now.

CAMILLE: I guess I shouldn't have gotten my hopes up.

CODY: I can do better than that. As a matter of fact, I've already got something lined up. Are you ready for this? Camille?

CAMILLE: I'm listening.

CODY: I called a friend of mine who works at the career planning office at U.S.L. He turned me on to a company that's hiring college grads with no experience. Guess what the starting salary is? Forty thousand dollars. Can you handle that?

CAMILLE: What's the name of this company?

CODY: Haynes Petroleum. Come on, let's go to Scramuzza's, and I'll tell you all about it... *(Puts his hand on her stomach.)* ...and you can tell me what the doctor said. *(He kisses her. Pause. They kiss.)* I'm stoked... Oh, I got something else today. *(Takes a credit card out of his wallet.)* A brand new Citibank Platinum VISA card. Five thousand dollars of instant credit.

(They walk toward the rear door.)

CAMILLE: Where is this company?

CODY: I'll tell you about it at Scramuzza's.

CAMILLE: Is it a local company?

CODY: Houston.

(Camille stops.)

CAMILLE: Houston?

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CODY: You'll love Houston. It's a great city...I've got it all mapped out. *(Kisses her.)* Let's go celebrate.

CAMILLE: Let me change clothes.

(Camille exits through the rear door SR. Rufus clinches his fist for a moment. Cody walks up to the television. Rufus enters the living room.)

RUFUS: Ya got a minute?

CODY: I don't want to talk about the interview.

RUFUS: It ain' dat.

CODY: What is it?

RUFUS: Come in my office.

CODY: Camille and I are going to Scramuzza's.

RUFUS: It won' take long.

(Cody follows Rufus into his office.)

CODY: What is it?

RUFUS: Whatcha got planned, now?

CODY: Can you amplify that?

RUFUS: Job wise?

CODY: I'm going to keep looking.

RUFUS: New Orleans?

CODY: Yeah.

RUFUS: Ya give any more t'ought da Houston?

CODY: No.

RUFUS: I been t'inkin'. Dere's no reason for ya da stay 'ere if dere ain' no real computer jobs. How much ya need da get da Houston?

CODY: I don't know. Maybe a thousand.

(Rufus opens a drawer, takes out a stack of bills and puts it on the desk.)

RUFUS: How long will it take ya da fin' a job?

CODY: A couple of weeks.

(Rufus puts two more stacks on the desk.)

RUFUS: Dat's t'ree t'ousan'... *(Puts another stack on the desk.)*
...plus anudder t'ousan'...

CODY: Okay. Thanks. This will really help us out.

(He reaches for the money. Rufus grabs his hand.)

RUFUS: Not us...Camille stays.

CODY: What?

RUFUS: Ya heard me. Take da money an' get out.

CODY: Are you trying to bribe me?

(Rufus puts another stack on the desk.)

RUFUS: Here's anudder t'ousan'. Dat's five t'ousan'. Take it.

CODY: Do you really think you can bribe me?

(Rufus takes out two more stacks, puts one on the desk.)

RUFUS: Six. *(Puts the other stack on the desk.)* Seven. *(Empties his pockets and puts the money on the desk.)* Seven t'ousan' one hunerd an' t'irdy two dollars. Dat's all I got. Take it an' get out.

CODY: You are sick.

(He starts walking out. Rufus blocks him.)

RUFUS: Take it an' get out, or I'm gonna tell Camille ev'ryt'ing.

CODY: What are you talking about?

RUFUS: Dere ain' no mom an' dere ain' no pop.

CODY: Get out of my way.

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(He tries to push Rufus out of the way.)

RUFUS: I talked da Ron Silbert. Now, take da money while
ya got da chance...come on. I don' wanna upset Camille.

CODY: I'm not going anywhere without Camille.

RUFUS: We'll see 'bout dat.

(Rufus starts to leave. Cody stops him.)

CODY: I'll tell her.

(Rufus pushes him away.)

RUFUS: Got dog! *(Walks out of the office.)*

CODY: I know how your wife died. *(Rufus stops.)* The Faux
Paux? Annie Ruth gets a few beers in her, and she likes to
talk.

(Rufus comes back in the office.)

RUFUS: Annie Rut' is a looney tune.

CODY: Story made perfect sense to me.

RUFUS: It's a lie.

CODY: Monahan and Trixie backed her up.

RUFUS: Camille won' believe it.

CODY: Won't believe what? That you caused her mother's
death.

(Rufus grabs Cody around the neck.)

RUFUS: Get out o' my house! *(Pulls him out of the office.)*

CODY: Let me go. *(They struggle.)* You're choking me.

(Camille enters the living room.)

CAMILLE: Stop it! *(Tries to separate them.)* Break it up!

(She's knocked over the sofa. They stop fighting.)

RUFUS: Camille! *(Cody grabs Rufus. Rufus throws him to the floor. Rufus helps Camille stand up.)* You're hokay. Daddy's gonna take care of ya.

(Camille grabs under her ribs on the right side.)

CAMILLE: Oh!

(She doubles over. Rufus holds her.)

RUFUS: I've got ya.

(Cody looks at Camille.)

CODY: Oh, God.

(He rushes to her. Camille looks at Rufus.)

CAMILLE: *(To Rufus.)* Take me to the hospital.

(Blackout. Intermission.)

[End of Freeview]