

Scene 4  
Street Numbers

FATS, a 56-year-old numbers kingpin, sits on his couch, leaned back, leg crossed, staring straight ahead in deep thought. His suit coat jacket is laying on the arm of his couch. He is having a battle in his mind over the rights and wrongs of his numbers operation. He looks over at a picture on his table. He leans forward and picks up a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH of his late mother and father and stares at the photo. The V.O. of his parents opens the scene.

ALVIN FATHER (V.O.)

For all the right you think you doing son, God ain't pleased with none of it.

ALVIN MOTHER (V.O.)

Numbers gon' send you to hell.

ALVIN

Well, mama, daddy ... God gotta know things ain't right down here. I ain't worried 'bout going to hell ... I'm livin in it.

(His nephew, FILLMORE, enters the living room. ALVIN places the picture back on the table, face down.)

FILLMORE

Uncle Alvin? Look like everybody here for the meeting. Big Jim and Cincinnati Red just pulled up.

(Fats looks at his nephew without saying a word.)

FILLMORE

Is everything alright?

ALVIN

(doesn't reply right away)

You think these numbers doing folk any good, Fillmore?

FILLMORE

Any good? Uncle Alvin, if it wasn't for you, wouldn't be no prosperity in Black Bottom. You reason folk eating, working, living. You Jesus 'round here.

ALVIN

(Looks at his nephew and gives a half smile.)  
I ain't Jesus by a long shot. But if my numbers is the means to  
get my people out of this rut we in, well, so be it.

FILLMORE

I'll tell them you on yo' way down.

ALVIN

You seen Bones?

FILLMORE

No sir. But I know he gone be there. All the big number men  
here. He ain't trying to miss this meeting.

ALVIN

Gone on. I'm on my way down.

(Fillmore goes out the door. Alvin stands and puts on his  
suit coat jacket. Fillmore meets his cousin, BONES in the  
hallway.)

FILLMORE

The meeting 'bout to start.

BONES

I ain't going.

FILLMORE

What you mean you ain't going? Bones man! You messing it up for  
everybody! Come on now, man! I understand you want to run yo' own  
thang. That's cool. But we got a good thing going with Uncle Alvin.  
You getting bread! I'm getting bread! Man, you finnah tear up  
everything we worked so hard to build up. It ain't just about you  
man. It ain't just about you.

BONES

It's always been just about me.

FILLMORE

So, what you want me to do, man? Choose you over Uncle Alvin?

BONES

I'm yo' brain too?

FILLMORE

It ain't even gotta be like this.

BONES

You right, it ain't. I ain't making you do nothing. Uncle Alvin the conductor. His train moving slow. You can stay on board or jump off the train.

FILLMORE

We been with uncle for years man.

BONES

You like how uncle Alvin run bitness, then cool keep running for him. You wanna keep rattlin' chump change in yo'pocket then that's cool with me too. But if you wanna bake loafs of bread, pull 'em out'a the oven and slice 'em and put 'em in both yo' pockets, then come to the pool hall after we turn in these slips.

FILLMORE

Who all gon be there?

BONES

Fillmore! If you there you'll know. Skip his meeting and be at mines.

(End scene)