

Scene 2
1963. Parchman, Mississippi

(DEXTER LEE, late 30's, dressed in prison clothes, a black patch over his right-eye, and both hands secured in handcuffs, sits across from attorney's, Edward, and Theodore explaining, in heartfelt detail, what lead to his arrest. He is a powerful, and proud man, who speaks with confidence, and a slight southern accent. City life has rubbed off well onto him. His anger is well placed. He's not a frail, soft, Yes-Man. He is a boss in chains.)

EDWARD

Dexter Lee, tell us, just like it happened.

THEODORE

Don't hold nothing back.

(Dexter Lee looks down and shakes his head trying to get his thoughts and composure together. It pains him to relive the story. He looks up and with a straight, hardened face, he tells his story.)

DEXTER LEE

My cousin, Nate asked me for a ride over to Charleston. Tallahatchie County. First thing come to my mind, is how they killed Emmett Till. Miss'sippi full of our decayed flesh. From the trees, the waters and rivers . . . Hangin. Burnin. Mutilated. Our flesh run deep through these woods and red dirt roads.

We ridin' on the highway. Next thing I know, two State Troopers, lights flashing, pulls me over. Mississippi Highway Patrol . . . One Red Leg gets out the car ... He say, (Mocks southern drawl voice) **'Whattuh nigger doin drivin uh bran new car in Miss'sippi?'** (A few beats) I tells him I'm from Detroit. Down here at my uncle's funeral. (Mocks officer saying, 'License and registration') **'Lye-since, reg'stray-shen,'**

I give it to 'em. (Mocks) **'This say you live in** (mispronounces Pontiac, Michigan) **Pawn-knack, Mish-gen. You say, you from Detroit. Which is it, boy?'** He signals his partner to get out the other patrol car. He comes over. He got back up. He smellin' hisself, now. Red Leg One say, **'Step outta the car, boy,'** (pause) So I do. **'Who dat other nigger in the car wit you?'** I say, That's my lil cousin, Nate.

(Dexter stops a beat. He is getting very emotional retelling what happened.)

DEXTER LEE (cont.)

Red Leg Two walk over to where Nate at and tap on the window wit his stick. (Mocks cop #2) **'Let the window down, boy.'** Nate let it down. **'Step outta the car.'** Nate do. Red Leg Two look him over. Nate sneeze. Trooper say, **'Nigger did you just spit on me??'**

'No, suh,'Nate say. He pulls back that club and commence to beating on Nate. (Pounds handcuffed hands on the table and grits his teeth as he speaks) Beatin, and beatin, and beatin . . . I'm standing there . . . knowing if I make a move, we both dead— I say, **'SIR! It don't take all that!'**

Red Leg One say, **'Nigger you sassin' a State Trooper??'** He gets to beating on me—I figure I'ma die anyhow . . . (a slow satisfying smile come on his face. He looks at Theodore like he is one of THEM) So, I fights back. (He stands in cuffs and stares Theodore down.) I fight back a Red Neck that looked just like YOU!!!

(Theodore stands and faces Dexter Lee and holds his head up.)

THEODORE

I'm not THEM . . . I'm here to help you.

(Dexter Lee looks Theodore up and down hard, and then slowly sits down without taking his eyes off Theodore. Edward knows the tension is warranted. He remains sitting and looks at Theodore who is still standing.)

EDWARD

Sit down, Theodore. You ain't gotta keep proving yourself to us.

(Theodore looks over at Edward, then back at Dexter Lee, then sits down slowly. Dexter Lee looks down at his shackled hands, and then back to the attorney's.)

DEXTER LEE

Nate dead. Trooper's wife riding round in my new car. And I'm in Sunflower County, Parchman Penitentiary for two years, right eye nearly gone . . . Charged with intent to deliver and distribute Black Tar and liquor I don't know nuthin 'bout.

EDWARD

We'll get you home.

THEODORE

And that's a promise. Is there anything else you want us to do?

(Dexter Lee looks at both men. He is very distrusting at this point.)

DEXTER LEE

Deliver a message.

EDWARD

To who?

DEXTER LEE

Dewberry.

(Edward and Theodore look at each other then back to Dexter Lee.)

DEXTER LEE

Tell him, he ain't hav'ta leave me in here this long.

(Theo and Edward look at each other, then back to Dexter Lee. All men remain silent. They all know it's more to the story.)

END SCENE