

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

### Synopsis

*Two Trains Running* examines the possibilities of securing the American dream in a 1960s northern urban ghetto. Memphis Lee, his neighbors and his restaurant's patrons stand on the precipice of urban renewal. They consider the prospects for surviving this change with their history and cultural identity intact as the existence of their community is in jeopardy. Sterling, a young, politicized ex-con, has just been released from prison and insists on righting an injustice committed years earlier; a man not rewarded with what was promised him after completing a job.

### Characters

**MEMPHIS:** Memphis Lee is a self-made man whose values of hard work, diligence, persistence and honesty have been consistently challenged by the circumstances of his life. His greatest asset is his impeccable logic. He owns a restaurant that the city intends to demolish. He is determined to negotiate a fair price out of the demolition. He is confident in playing the White man's game as long as he knows the rules. With little patience for those who preach the "black is beautiful" mantra—he claims it sounds as if those black people are trying to convince themselves.

**STERLING:** A young man of thirty, he appears at times to be unbalanced, but it is a combination of his unorthodox logic and straightforward manner that makes him appear so. Only recently released from the penitentiary after serving some time for robbing a bank, Sterling is new to the scene of *Two Trains Running*. He is in search of work, and when he finds Memphis Lee's restaurant and the group that hangs there it gives him the chance to seek advice from a colorful group of characters.

**WOLF:** He is a Numbers Runner—someone who carries the money and betting slips between the betting parlors and the headquarters or "Numbers Bank." He enjoys the notoriety and popularity that comes with this work. While he manages to keep money in his pocket and a decent pair of shoes on his feet, his inability to find secure female companionship is the single failure that marks his life.

**HOLLOWAY:** A retired house-painter, who, in his retirement, has become a self-made philosopher of sorts. He is a man who all his life has voiced his outrage at injustice with little effect. His belief in the supernatural has enabled him to accept his inability to effect change and

continue to pursue life with zest and vigor. He is equally enraged by white men who exploit black men, and any black men who try to fight back. If anyone happens to come to him with a problem, he will send them on over to the oldest woman in town—an Aunt Esther—to sort it out.

**WEST:** A widower in his early sixties, he is the owner of the wealthiest business on the block. West runs the funeral parlor across the street from the restaurant. His wife's death has allowed his love of money to overshadow the other possibilities of life. It is his practical view of death that has earned him the title of perhaps the sharpest social observer in the play

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-01

Time: 1:20

Type 1: Serio-Comedic

Type 2: Men's Status/Identity

Type 3: Domestic Order

Act 1; Scene 1

MEMPHIS

I treat that woman like she was a queen. Treat her like she made out of gold. Try to give her everything she want. She say, "Baby, I want a car," she got a Cadillac. She want a TV. . . she got a color TV. It might take me a little while. Her wants might be too big for my pocket but I work it out and come up with something. I was working on the dishwasher when she walked out. I would have got her that but the plumbing got to be right. I'm talking to John D. about him fixing up the plumbing . . . and she got up and walked out the door. You talking about she tired of the way I treated her. I treated that woman like she was the Queen of Sheba.

I ain't done nothing but ask her to get up and make me some bread. And she got up and walked out the door. I know she don't except me to make it myself. Got up and walked out the door! I went down there and saw her. Asked her what the matter was. She told me she was tired. Now, how you gonna get more tired than I am? I'm the one going out there wrestling with the world. She ain't got to do nothing but stay home and take care of the house. She got it nice. Talking about she tired. She wasn't too tired to make them four babies.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-02

Time: 2:10

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Socio-Economic Advancement

Type 3: Commerce

Act 1; Scene 1

MEMPHIS

Man living up over top of the funeral home – you’d think he’d have enough sense to buy him a house somewhere. He own every other building around here. Them that Hartzberger don’t own. I got lucky and got hold to this piece of building and West got mad. I got it right out from under his nose and he ain’t never forget that. All that property he own and had the nerve to get mad when I bought this. What make it so bad is he could have had it. He was talking to L.D. about buying the building from him. L.D. had his stroke and West figured he’d wait until he died and get it cheaper. I went over to the hospital to see him and we made a deal right there in the hospital about a week before he died. I got it for fifty-five hundred dollars. This is when I was walking around with four or five hundred dollars in my pocket every day. Used to carry a pistol and everything. Had me a forty-four. Had me one of them big forty-fours. Used to scare me to look at it. I give L.D. the fifty-five hundred in cash. I didn’t find out till after he died that he owed twelve hundred dollars in back taxes . . . but I didn’t care. I had seen a way for me to take off my pistol. I got my deed and went right home . . . took off my pistol and hung it up in the closet. West got mad when he found out L.D. sold me the building. He been trying to buy it from me ever since. He walked in the next day and offered me eight thousand dollars for it. That was a good price. But see . . . he didn’t know it had come to mean more to me than that. I had found a way to live the rest of my life.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-03

Time: 2:10

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Socio-Economic Decline

Type 3: Commerce

Act 1; Scene 1

MEMPHIS

Ain't nothing to do. Unless I do like West and go into the undertaking business. I can't go out there in Squirrel Hill and open up a restaurant. Ain't nothing gonna be left around here. Supermarket gone. Two drugstores. The five and ten. Doctor done moved out. Dentist done moved out. Shoe store gone. Ain't nothing gonna be left but these niggers killing one another. That don't never go out of style. West gonna get richer and everybody else gonna get poorer. At one time you couldn't get a seat in here. Had the jukebox working and everything. Time somebody get up somebody sit down before they could get out the door. People coming from everywhere. Everybody got to eat and everybody got to sleep. Some people don't have stoves. Some people don't have nobody to cook for them. Men whose wives done died and left them. Cook for them thirty years and lay down and die. Who's gonna cook for them now? Somebody got to do it. I order four cases of chicken on Friday and Sunday it's gone. Fry it up. Make a stew. Boil it. Add some dumplings. You couldn't charge more than a dollar. But then you didn't have to. It didn't cost you but a quarter. People used to come from all over. The man used to come twice a week to collect the jukebox. He making more money than I am. He pay seventy-five cents for the record and he make two hundred dollars off it. If it's a big hit he's liable to make four hundred. The record will take all the quarters you can give it. It don't never wear out. The chicken be gone by Sunday. It ain't nothing like that now. I'm lucky if I go through a case a chicken a week. That's all right. I'll take that. I ain't greedy. But if they wanna tear it down they gonna have to meet my price.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-04

Time: 1:20

Type 1: Serio-Comedic

Type 2: Exploitation

Type 3: Commerce

Act 1; Scene 1

### MEMPHIS

You go over there looking for a pine box and walk out with a five-thousand-dollar silver, satin-lined casket, guaranteed to be leak-proof. That's what get me. For an extra hundred dollar he give you a twenty-year guarantee that the casket ain't gonna leak and let the water seep in. Now how dumb can anybody get? You gonna dig up the casket twenty years later to see if it's leaking and go back and tell West and get your hundred dollars back? The first time it rain the waters liable to drown the corpse. You don't know. Yet you be surprised at the number of people come out of there talking about their twenty-year-guarantee. Then if that ain't enough he charge you another hundred dollars to get a casket that lock. Like somebody gonna go down there and steal the body if it ain't locked up. Yet they come out of there clutching this little key he give them. West the only nigger I know who can cheat and rob the people and they be happy to see him. Calling him "Mr. West." "How you doing, Mr. West?" "Have a nice day, Mr. West." "Good to see you, Mr. West." He done cheated them out of four or five hundred dollars and they talking about, "Have a nice day, Mr. West."

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-05

Time: 1:15

Type 1: Serio-Comedic

Type 2: Transit

Type 3: Revenge

Act 1; Scene 2

MEMPHIS

I been up here since '36. They ran me out of Jackson in '31. I hung around Natchez for three or four years, then I come up here. I was born in Jackson. I used to farm down there. They ran me out in '31. Killed my mule and everything. One of these days I'm going back to get my land. I still got the deed.

When I left out of Jackson I said I was gonna buy me a V-8 Ford and drive by Mr. Henry Ford's house and honk the horn. If anybody come to the window I was gonna wave. Then I was going out and buy me a 30.06, come on back to Jackson and drive up to Mr. Stovall's house and honk the horn. Only this time I wasn't waving. Only thing was, it took me thirteen years to get the Ford. Six years later I traded that in on a Cadillac. But I'm going back one of these days. I ain't even got to know the way. All I got to do is find my way down to the train depot. They got two trains running every day. I used to know the schedule. They might have changed it . . . but if they did, they got it posted up on the board.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-06

Time: 2:20

Type 1: Serio-Comedic

Type 2: Societal Order

Type 3: Men's Status/Identity

Act 1; Scene 2

MEMPHIS

That's what half the problem is . . . these Black Power niggers. They got people confused. They don't know what they doing themselves. These niggers talking about freedom, justice and equality and don't know what it mean. You born free. It's up to you to maintain it. You born with dignity and everything else. These niggers talking about freedom, but what you gonna do with it? Freedom is heavy. You got to put your shoulder to freedom. Put your shoulder to it and hope your back hold up. And if you around here looking for justice, you got a long wait. Aint no justice. That's why they got that statue of her and got her blindfolded. Common sense would tell you if anybody need to see she do. There ain't no justice. Jesus Christ didn't get justice. What makes you think you gonna get it? That's just the nature of the world. These niggers talking about they want freedom, justice and equality. Equal to what? Hell, I might be a better man than you. What I look like going around here talking about I want to be equal to you? I don't know how these niggers think sometimes. Talking about black power with their hands and their pockets empty. You can't do nothing without a gun. Not in this day and time. That's the only kind of power the white man understand. They think they gonna talk their way up on it. In order to talk your way you got to have something under the table. These niggers don't understand that. If I tell you to get out my yard and leave my apples alone, I can't talk you out. You sit up in the tree and laugh at me. But if you know I might come out with a shotgun . . . that be something different. You'd have to think twice about whether you wanted some apples. These niggers

*(continued)*



around here talking about they black and beautiful. Sound like they trying to convince themselves. You got to think you ugly to run around shouting you beautiful. You don't hear me say that. Hell, I know I look nice. Got good manners and everything.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-07

Time: 2:35

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Death

Type 3: Men's Status/Identity

Act 1; Scene 3

### MEMPHIS

See, they don't know. The half ain't never been told. I'm ready to walk through fire. I don't bother nobody. The last person I bothered is dead. My mama died in '54. I said then I wasn't going for no more draws. They don't know I feel just like I did when my mama died. She got old and gray and sat by the window till she died. She must have done that 'cause she ain't had nothing else to do. I was gone. My brother was gone. Sister gone. Everybody gone. My daddy was gone. She sat there till she died. I was staying down on Logan Street. Got the letter one day and telegram the next. They usually fall on top of one another . . . but not that close. I got the letter say, "If you wanna see your mother you better come home." Before I could get out the door the telegram came saying, "It's too late . . . your mother gone." I was trying to borrow some money. Called the train station and found out the schedule and I'm trying to borrow some money. I can't go down there broke. I don't know how long I got to be there. I ain't even got the train fare. I got twelve dollars and sixty-three cents. I got the telegram and sat down and cried like a baby. I could beat any newborn baby in the world crying. I cried till the tears all run down in my ears. Got up and went out the door and everything looked different. Everything had changed. I felt like I had been cut loose. All them years something had a hold of me and I didn't know it. I didn't find out till it cut me loose. I walked out the door and everything had different colors to it. I felt great. I didn't owe nobody nothing. The last person I owed anything to was gone. I borrowed fifty dollars from West and went on down to her funeral. I come back and said,

*(continued)*

“Everybody better get out my way.” You couldn’t hold me down. It look like then I had somewhere to go fast. I didn’t know where, but I damn sure was going there. That’s the way I feel now. They don’t know I got a clause of my own. I’ll get up off the canvas if I have to. They can carry me out feet first . . . but my clause say . . . they got to meet my price!

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-08

Time: 1:50

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Societal Order

Type 3: Judicial Process

Act 2; Scene 1

(There has been a large cut made to this monologue due to length)

### MEMPHIS

I understand it. That's why I'm going downtown to the city and get my twenty-five thousand dollars. Just like I'm going back to Jackson and get my land one of these days. I still got the deed. They ran me out of there but I'm going back. I got me a piece of farm down there. Everybody said I was crazy to buy it 'cause it didn't have no water on it. They didn't know my granddaddy knew how to find water. If there was water anywhere under the ground he'd find it. He told me where to dig and I dug a well. Dug sixty feet down. You ain't got no idea how far that is. Took me six months hauling dirt out this little hole. Found me some water and made me a nice little crop.

Jim Stovall, who I bought the land from, told me my deed say if I found any water the sale was null and void. Went down to the court to straighten it out and come to find out he had a bunch of these fellows get together to pick on me.

Went in there, saw the judge, and he say the deed was null and void. Now I got to walk home. I was looking for them to try something. But I didn't see nobody. Got home and they had set fire to my crop. To get to my house I'd have to walk through fire. I wasn't ready to do that. I turned around and walked up the hill to Natchez. Called it a draw. Said I was going back. Got up there and got tied up with one of them Mississippi gals and one year led to two led to five. Then I come on up here in '36. But I'm going back one of these days.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-09

Time: 2:00

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Farm Animals

Type 3: Societal Order

Act 2; Scene 1

### MEMPHIS

They took and cut my mule's belly out while it standing there. Just took a knife and sliced it open. I stood there and watched them. They was laughing about it. I look and see where they got me covered. There's too many of them to fool around with. I didn't want to die. But I loved that old mule. Me and him had been through a lot together. He was a good old mule. Remind me of myself. He only do so much amount of work and that was it. He didn't mind working. He liked to get out there and exercise. Do anything you asked him. He didn't like you to half-work him. If you gonna work him . . . he want you to work him. Or else let him lay. He didn't like no stop-and-start work. That wasn't to his suiting. Don't tell him you gonna do one thing and then do something else. He'd lay down and tell you, "Goddamn it, make up your mind!" I used to take him down there and let him mate with Jimmy Hollis's mule. I figure I get mine, let him get his. A man like him a woman after a hard day's work. I stood there and watched them cut his belly open. He kinda reared back, took a few steps, and fell over. One of them reached down, grabbed hold of his dick, and cut that off. I stood there looking at them. I say, "Okay. I know the rules now. If you do that to something that ain't never done nothing to you . . . then I know what you would do to me. So I tell you what. You go on and get your laugh now. 'Cause if I get out of this alive I know how to play as good as anyone." Once I know the rules, whatever they are, I can play by them.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-10

Time: 2:20

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Socio-Economic Decline

Type 3: Value of life

Act 2; Scene 5

### MEMPHIS

Holloway . . . I took that twenty dollars and threw it in the river . . . right down there in the Monongahela River . . . I went and stood on the Brady Street Bridge . . . I didn't just let it drop. I took and tied a rock around it and threw it . . . just like Aunt Ester say. She told me if I do that everything be all right. And she was right too. She told me, "If you can't fight the fire, don't mess with it." Only I'm ready to fight it now. Hey West . . . look here . . . I went down there to the courthouse ready to fight for that twenty-five thousand dollars I want for my property. I wasn't taking no fifteen. I wasn't taking no twenty. I want twenty-five thousand. They told me, "Well, Mr. Lee . . . we got a clause, and the city is prepared to put into motion"—that's the part I like, "prepared to put into motion"—"the securing of your property at 1621 Wylie Avenue"—they had the address right and everything — "for the sum of thirty-five-thousand dollars." I liked to fell over. The lawyer standing there, he know I'm mad and he ready to fight it. I told him, "Don't you say a word. Don't you open your mouth." Thirty-five thousand dollars! I started to go up and tell my wife. She up there. She up there at the house. She come back to get her things and ended up staying. I moved out. She moved back in and I moved out. Told her I had something to do and if she be there when I get back — if I get back—then we can sit down and talk. You know what I'm gonna do? Aunt Ester clued me on this one. I went up there and told her my whole life story. She say, "If you drop the ball, you got to go back and pick it up. Ain't no need in keeping running, 'cause if you get to the end zone it ain't gonna be a touchdown." She

*(continued)*

didn't say it in them words but that's what she meant. Told me . . . "You got to go back and pick up the ball." That's what I'm gonna do. I'm going back to Jackson and see Stovall. If he ain't there, then I'm gonna see his son. He enjoying his daddy's benefits he got to carry his daddy's weight. I'm going on back up to Jackson and pick up the ball.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-11

Time: 1:00

Type 1: Serio-Comedic

Type 2: Gift Giving

Type 3:

Act 2; Scene 1

STERLING

Them some flowers. I got them for you. I got them from across the street. I wasn't gonna buy them. I think that's silly to buy flowers. White folks do that. If I want to buy you something I buy you earrings or something. But I got them. And I got them for you. I saw them and I said, "I'm gonna take these to Risa. She a woman. Woman supposed to like nice things. Flowers and lace and all that kind of stuff." You better look at those flowers and see where they got your name on them.

I picked them four or five 'cause I was thinking of you and I looked and seen where they had your name on it. Now you talking about you don't want them. Hell, a flower's a flower. They gonna be dead in a minute if you don't put them in some water. They gonna be dead in two or three days even if you do. Go on and put them in a glass and enjoy them. People throwing all that money away buying flowers.



TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-12

Time: 1:25

Type 1: Comedic

Type 2: Employment/Unemployment

Act 2; Scene 1

STERLING

Say Mr. West, I was thinking, you know, I ain't never driven me no Cadillac. I figure everybody supposed to drive a Cadillac at least once before they die. A man got seven Cadillacs need somebody to drive them, right? You should see me drive. Can't nobody beat me driving. I drove a getaway car once. We got away, too. So, do you need any drivers?

If you ever need anybody just let me know. Okay? I done been in the penitentiary. I'll tell you that up front. I don't want to go back. I figure everybody should work at what they like to do. So I asked myself, "Sterling, what you like to do?" The closest I could come up with was I like to drive a Cadillac. So if you ever need anybody you think of me. Do you have to wash the cars if you drive them? I don't want to wash them without driving them. But if I could wash them seven at a time every day for about five dollars apiece I might do that. How long you reckon it take to do that? I don't reckon it take more than three hours. If you do a good job. I could do that for you.

Every time I see them they be clean. Except for the grille. I could clean the grille better than that. You ought to tell them to get a little brush to scrub in them little spots with. It won't hurt the chrome none.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-13

Time: 2:20

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Metaphorical

Type 3: Inspirational

Act 2; Scene 4

STERLING

I went up there to see Old Man Albert. He sitting up there with four or five bodyguards. They let me in to see him and I told him to give me back my two dollars. Said I was calling off the bet. He gave me the two dollars and asked me for his six hundred back. I told him no. Told him I was gonna keep that. That way I have something that belong to him for a change. He just looked at me funny and told me to leave the same way I had come in. Told one of his bodyguards to show me the door. I left out of there and was walking by Aunt Ester's. I saw the light on and I figure she might be up, so I stopped to see her. They led me into the hallway and then through some curtains into this room . . . and she was just sitting there. I talked to her a long while. Told her my whole life story. She real nice. Ain't nobody ever talk to me like that.

"I cannot swim does not walk by the lakeside." It took me a while to figure out what she meant. Told me, "Make better what you have and you have best." Then she wrote down something on a piece of paper, put it in a little envelope, told me to put it in my shoe and walk around on it for three days. I asked her how much I owed her. She told me to take twenty dollars and throw it in the river. Say she get it. She had this look about her real calm and sweet like. I asked her how old she was. She say she was three-hundred and forty-nine years old. Holloway had it wrong. I figured anybody that old know what she talking about. I took twenty

*(continued)*

dollars and carried it down there. Didn't even think about it. I just took and threw it in the river. I'm gonna wait them three days and see what happen. You ought to go up there and see her. She a real nice old lady. She say yeah, you the one God sent when he told me he couldn't send no angel.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-14

Time: 1:20

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Employment/ Unemployment

Type 3: Value of Life

Act 2; Scene 4

STERLING

When I was living with Mrs. Johnson before she died I used to watch her husband. He get up every morning at six o'clock. Sunday too. Six-thirty he out the door. Now . . . he ain't coming back till ten o'clock at night. He going down to J&L and lift hundred-pound slabs of steel till three o'clock. Then he going over after they close the fish market and clean up over there. Now what he got? He got six kids of his own, not to mention me. He got a raggedy house with some beat-up furniture. Can't buy no house 'cause he can't get a loan. Now that sound like a hardworking man. Good. Clean. Honest. Upright. He work thirty years at the mill and ain't even got a union card. You got to work six months straight. They lay him off for two weeks every five and a half months. He got to call the police after he clean up the fish market so they can let him out of the building. Make sure he don't steal anything. What they got? Two pound of catfish? There got to be something else. I ain't sure I want to do all that.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-15

Time: 1:20

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Judicial Process

Type 3: Freedom

Act 1; Scene 3

WOLF

You right about that. I know. You can walk down there . . . just walk down the street and ask people . . . every nigger you see done been to jail one time or another. The white man don't feel right unless he got a record on these niggers. Walk on down there . . . I'll give you a dollar for every nigger you find that ain't been to jail. Ain't that right, Sterling. I been to jail. Stayed down there three months. Tried to make bond and couldn't do it. They kept me down there in the county jail for three months. Ain't done nothing but walk down the street. I was walking down Centre Avenue . . . police was chasing somebody and wasn't looking where he was going, and I wasn't looking where I was going either . . . he ran into me so hard it knocked us both down. I started to get up and there was two, three policemen with their guns pointed at my head. Told me not to move. They arrested me for obstructing justice. Kept me down there for three months before the judge had a chance to throw it out. But I learned a lot from that. I learned to watch where I was going at all times. 'Cause you always under attack.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-16

Time: 1:30

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Relationships

Type 3: Revenge

Act 2; Scene 5

WOLF

Did you all hear where Petey Brown killed his old lady last night? Caught her in the Ellis Hotel with his best friend. Killed him too. That's why I don't have no one woman. When I die every woman in Pittsburgh gonna cry. They ain't gonna know what to do with themselves. My woman come and told me she had another man. I told her say, "All right, baby, but he can't hear and he can't see. He can't see like I do. You got to be able to pull a whole lot of boxcars to keep up with me." I'm like Prophet Samuel . . . if a man can get him seven women . . . if he can find seven women want to be with him . . . let him have them seven and one or two more. Seven women wanna lay down with him must see something they like. Hell, it's hard to get one, let alone seven. It's hard to get one you can trust that far. See, when you lay down with her, you trusting her with your life. You lay down you got to close your eyes. It wouldn't be nothing for somebody to walk up and slit your throat. That's why you lock the door at night. You lock the door and it be just you and her. That's a whole lot of trust there. If I had that I wouldn't give it up for nothing. Other than that when I die every woman in Pittsburgh gonna cry.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-17

Time: 1:30

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Value of Life

Type 3: Wealth

Act 1; Scene 2

### HOLLOWAY

All right. I'll tell you. Now you take me or you. We ain't gonna do that. We gonna go ahead and forget about it. We might take a chicken. Then we gonna go home and cook that chicken. But how it gonna taste? It can't taste good to us. We gonna be eating just to be eating. How we gonna feel good about ourselves? Every time we even look at a chicken we gonna have a bad taste in our mouth. That chicken's gonna call up that taste. It's gonna make you feel ashamed. Even if it be walking around flapping its wings it's gonna remind us of that bad taste. We ain't gonna tell nobody about it. We don't want nobody to know. But you can't erase it. You got to carry it around with you. This fellow here . . . he say he don't want to carry it around with him. But he ain't willing to forget about it. He trying to put the shame on the other foot. He trying to shame Lutz into giving him his ham. And if Lutz ever break down and give it to him . . . he gonna have a big thing. He gonna have something he be proud to tell everybody. He gonna tell his grandkids if he have any. That's why I say he might have more sense than me and you. 'Cause he ain't willing to accept whatever the white man throw at him. It be easier. But he say he don't mind getting out of bed in the morning to go at what's right. I don't believe you and me got that much sense.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-18

Time: 1:30

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Money

Type 3: Gambling

Act 1; Scene 2

### HOLLOWAY

I ain't talking about that. Hell, his great-granddaddy used to work for nothing, for all that matter. I'm talking about he can make two or three hundred dollars a day gambling . . . if he get lucky. If he don't, somebody else will get it. That's all you got around here is niggers with somebody else's money in their pocket. And they don't do nothing but trade it off on each other. I got it today and you got it tomorrow. Until sooner or later as sure as the sun shine . . . somebody gonna take it and give it to the white man. The money go from you to me to you and then – bingo – it's gone. From him to you to me, then – bingo – it's gone. You give it to the white man. Pay your rent, pay your telephone, buy your groceries, see the doctor – bingo – it's gone. Just circulate it around till it find that hole, then – bingo. Like trying to haul sand in a bucket with a hole in it. Time you get where you going the bucket empty. That's why that ten dollars a day ain't gonna do him no good. A nigger with five hundred dollars in his pocket around here is a big man. But you go out there where they at . . . you go out to Squirrel Hill, they walking around there with five thousand dollars in their pocket trying to figure out how to make it into five hundred thousand.



## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-19

Time: 2:30

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Commerce

Type 3: Slavery

Act 1; Scene 2

### HOLLOWAY

People kill me talking about niggers is lazy. Niggers is the most hardworking people in the world. Worked three hundred years for free. And didn't take no lunch hour. Now all of a sudden niggers is lazy. Don't know how to work. All of a sudden when they got to pay niggers, ain't no work for him to do. If it wasn't for you the white man would be poor. Every little bit he got he got standing on top of you. That's why he could reach so high. He give you three dollars a day for six months and he got him a railroad for the next hundred years. All you got is six months' worth of three dollars a day.

Now you can't even get that. Ain't no money in niggers working. Look out there on the street. If there was some money in it . . . if the white man could figure out a way to make some money by putting niggers to work . . . we'd all be working. He ain't building no more railroads. He got them. He ain't building no more highways. Somebody done already stuck the telephone poles in the ground. That's been done already. The white man ain't stacking no more niggers. You know what I'm talking about, stacking niggers, don't you? Well, here's how that go. If you ain't got nothing . . . you can go out here and get you a nigger. Then you got something, see. You got one nigger. If that one nigger get out there and plant something . . . get something out the ground . . . even if it ain't nothing but a bushel of potatoes... then you got one nigger and one bushel of potatoes. Then you take that bushel of potatoes and go get you another nigger. Then you got two niggers. Put them to

*(continued)*

work and you got two niggers and two bushels of potatoes. See, now you can go buy two more niggers. That's how you stack a nigger on top of a nigger. White folks got to stacking . . . and I'm talking about they stacked up some niggers! Stacked up close to fifty million niggers. If you stacked them on top of one another they make six or seven circles around the moon. It's lucky the boat didn't sink with all them niggers they had stacked up there. It take them two extra months to get here 'cause it ride so low in the water. They couldn't find you enough work back then. Now that they got to pay you they can't find you none. If this was different time wouldn't be nobody out there on the street. They'd all be in the cotton fields.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-20

Time: 2:00

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Family

Act 2; Scene 1

### HOLLOWAY

Had two of them. One on my mother's side and one on my father's side. One of them I never knew. The other one wasn't no good for nobody. That was the worse Negro I ever known. He think if it wasn't for white people there wouldn't be no daylight. If you let him tell it, God was a white man who had a big plantation in the sky and sat around drinking mint juleps and smoking Havana cigars. He couldn't wait to die to get up in heaven to pick cotton. If he overheard you might wanna go down and get you some extra meat out the white man's smokehouse . . . he'd run and tell him. He see you put a rabbit in your sack to weigh up with the cotton, he'd run and tell. The white man would give him a couple pounds of bacon. He'd bring that home and my grandmother would throw it out with the garbage. That's the kind of woman she was. I don't know how she got tied up with him. She used to curse the day she laid down with him. That rubbed off on me. I got a little older to where I could see what kind of a man he was . . . I figure if he want to go to heaven to pick cotton, I'd help him. I got real serious about it. It stayed on me so didn't nobody want to be around me 'cause of the bad energy I was carrying. Couldn't keep me a woman. Seemed like nothing wouldn't work out for me. I went up to see Aunt Ester and got that bad energy off me. And it worked too. Ask West. He died in his sleep. Caught pneumonia and laid down and died. They wouldn't let him in the hospital 'cause he didn't have any insurance. He crawled up in the bed in my grandmother's house and laid there till he died. March 5, 1952. So can't nobody tell me nothing about Aunt Ester. I know what she can do for you.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-21

Time: 1:00

Type 1: Serio - Comic

Type 2: Societal Order

Type 3: Judicial Process

Act 2; Scene 2

## HOLLOWAY

Now he done got him a gun. What he gonna do with it? A nigger with a gun is bad news. You can't even use the word "nigger" and "gun" in the same sentence. You say the word "gun" in the same sentence with the word "nigger" and you in trouble. The white man panic. Unless you say, "The policeman shot the nigger with his gun" . . . then that be all right. Other than that he panic. He ain't had nothing but guns for the last five hundred years . . . got the atomic bomb and everything. But you say the word "nigger" and "gun" in the same sentence and they'll try and arrest you. Accuse you of sabotage, disturbing the peace, inciting a riot, plotting to overthrow the government and anything else they can think of. You think I'm lying? You go down there and stand in front of the number two police station and say, "The niggers is tired of this mistreatment – they gonna get some guns," and see if they don't arrest you.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-22

Time: 1:15

Type 1: Serio-Comedic

Type 2: Death

Type 3: Family

Act 1; Scene 2

WEST

I'll bury anything with anybody. You be surprised what people want in the casket with them. I done buried people with Bibles, canes, crutches, guitars, radios, baby dolls . . . One lady brought some tomatoes from her sister's garden. She didn't just want me to put them in there. She wanted to tell me where to put them. That wouldn't have been so bad, but she kept changing her mind. People's something. They don't understand about dead folks. Dead folks don't know nothing. They don't know them tomatoes is in there with them. But the family know. That's who it's important to. It took me a while to figure that out . . . But I don't mind putting anything in there with anybody as long as the casket close.

Most times the family come and get the money before you close the casket. Take off their rings and everything else. I hate to even lay people out with jewelry . . . 'cause the family come and remind you every day that it ain't supposed to go in the ground.

## TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Code: 60-23

Time: 1:45

Type 1: Dramatic

Type 2: Death

Type 3: Money

Act 2; Scene 1

WEST

I went up there to see if my wife was in heaven. I done buried a whole lot of people, but she the first one I ever wondered about. See, people don't understand about death, but if you ever hear one of them coffin sounds you'd know. There ain't nothing like it. That coffin get to talking and you know that this here . . . this what we call life ain't nothing. You can blow it away with a blink of an eye. But death . . . you can't blow away death. It lasts forever. I didn't understand about it till my wife died. Before that it was just a job. Then when she died I come to understand it. You can live to be a hundred and fifty and you'll never have a greater moment than when you breathe your last breath. Ain't nothing you can do in life compared to it. See, right then you done something. You became a part of everything that come before. And that's a great thing. Ain't nothing you can do in life compared to that. So I heard about Aunt Ester and went to see if my wife was in heaven. I figure if anybody know she would.

She told me to take and throw twenty five dollars in the river and come back and see her. I thought she was crazy, to tell you the truth. I didn't pay her no mind. I knew she was old, but I figured she had gotten too old.

I offered to give her twenty five dollars just for her time . . . but she wouldn't take it. Told me to throw it in the river. I'd rather see her with it than to see it at the bottom of the river. I just wasn't gonna do that with my money.