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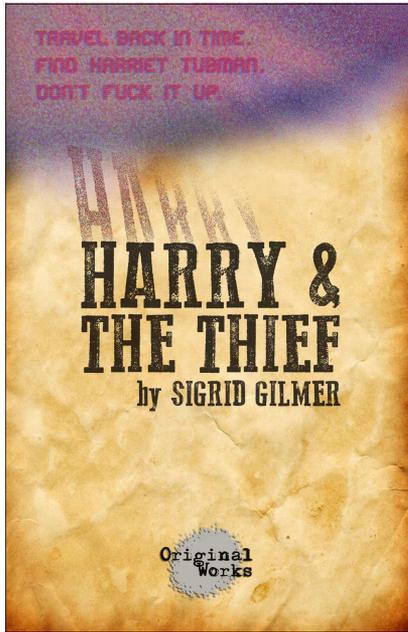
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*The Mighty Scarabs*  
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**Harry and the Thief by Sigrid Gilmer**

**Synopsis:** Mimi's cousin Jeremy has a PhD in physics, a brand new time machine and a plan. He's sending Mimi, a professional thief, back to 1863 to change history by providing Harriet Tubman with modern day guns. Lots and lots of guns.

**Cast Size:** Diverse Cast of 10 Actors

*“Audacious, hysterically funny, irreverent and joyful.”*  
—Suzan-Lori Parks

**THE MIGHTY SCARABS!**  
**(An East Tech Story)**

**A Play in Two Acts**

**by Cornell Hubert Calhoun III**

*for June Bailey*

## Characters

1. **June Bailey**: Resident, Former East Tech basketball star, early thirties, a self-made poet, Gabby's mentor.
2. **Six-Five**: Very tall, handsome, early thirties, ex-East Tech basketball player, now drives the big rigs.
3. **Girlena Chatman**: Resident, early thirties, attractive, a former East Tech cheerleader, defined by her gorgeous legs, works at a local bar, has a history of choosing the wrong men.
4. **Ricks**: Ex-basketball star, early thirties, mailman, played with June Bailey, Six-Five, and Jimmy Love on the team that was the first all-black high school to win the state championship, has always loved Girlena.
5. **Johnny Dollar**: Numbers man, middle 60s, flashy, colorful, and funny. Takes pride in being the community's numbers runner.
6. **Gabby Chatman**: Resident, 11, Girlena's daughter, bright, articulate, glowing, a new poet.
7. **Jimmy Love**: Member of the East Tech basketball team, early thirties, a man long addicted to drugs.
8. **Charles "Killer" Davis**: Ex-con, former boyfriend of Girlena, a real killer, incarcerated for twelve years, and on his way home to East 55th Street.
9. **Jamaica Pearl**: A most gorgeous streetwalker, former student at East Tech, haunted by her mother's demons, "property" of King Willie II.

**Time:** First day of summer, June 1968. 9 p.m.

**Place:** Cleveland, Ohio.

**Setting:** The scene is the rear of an old four-suite brick apartment building located at **2158 East 55th**. The building extends from **Left** to **Right**. The rear entrance to the building is located **Up Center**. A small wooden porch with two steps extends from the entrance. There are four windows, two upstairs and two downstairs at the rear of the building. Next to the entrance **Right** mailboxes are placed on the back wall. A large security light glows from the side on the building near the entrance. **Down Right** is an old rusted metal basketball hoop with a tattered net. An old leather basketball lies near the hoop. A trash can is located **Down Left**. A small card table is placed **Center**. Four white weather-beaten lawn chairs are placed around the table. On the table is a radio playing the Temptations hit, "*The Girl's Alright with Me.*"

***THE MIGHTY SCARABS*** received its World Premiere on March 6, 2015 at the Karamu Theater in Cleveland, Ohio. It was directed by Christopher Johnston; the scene & lighting design was by Richard M. Morris; the costume design was by Harold Crawford and the stage manager was Gerri Harris. The cast was as follows:

JUNE BAILEY - Prophet D. Seay

RICKS - Titus Covington

SIX-FIVE - Michael Head

GABBY - Caris Collins

JAMAICA PEARL - Lauren Nicole Sturdivant

GIRLENA - Katrice Monee Headd

JOHNNY DOLLAR - Rodney Freeman

JIMMY LOVE - Tyrelle Hariston

KILLER - Reginald McAlpine

# THE MIGHTY SCARABS

## Prologue

*(Light comes up on an old basketball hoop in the rear of a red brick apartment building located in the heart of the inner city.)*

**Radio Broadcast:** *Booma-lacka*

*Booma-lacka*

*Rah! Rah! Rah!*

*Chicka-lacka*

*Chicka-lacka*

*Cha! Cha! Cha!*

*Booma-lacka*

*Chicka-lacka*

*Rub a dub dub*

*We've got LaSalle over the tub,*

*We gonna wash 'em out,*

*Ring 'em out,*

*Hang 'em on the line!*

*We'll beat LaSalle any ole time!*

*Any ole time!*

*Any ole time!*

**Announcer:** We're in St John's Arena on the campus of Ohio State University. The Ohio High School Basketball Division II State Basketball Championship. Cleveland East Tech trailing Cincinnati LaSalle 57-56! Eighteen Seconds left on the clock. This is East Tech's last chance. Right here. Right now. June Bailey to inbound. Quick pass to Ricks on the right wing. Ricks dribbles left, inside to Junior Payne, back out to Jimmy Love, across to Fast Eddie Cain at the top of the key. Fast Eddie Cain passes to June Bailey, June

Bailey dribbles left, spins, gets by his defender in the lane, ball in the air. Everyone on their feet...

*(Static as lights fade to black.)*

## ACT I

*“Sometimes you eat the bear.  
Sometimes the bear eats you . . .”*

### SCENE I

**Time:** First day of summer, June 1968  
9 p.m.

**Place:** Cleveland, Ohio.

**At Rise:**

*(Jamaica Pearl enters from Right. She is a very attractive woman in her twenties. Her skirt is very, very short. Her body is wonderfully sculpted. She gazes at the apartment building, places some money in her garter, and exits.)*

*(Girlena Chatman enters from Left. She is a woman in her early thirties. She wears a stunning black dress that shows off her figure and gorgeous pair of curvaceous bow legs that have always been her signature. She crosses to table, sits, and starts to silently look through an obituary. The Temptations' hit fades out, and a lively local DJ can be heard.)*

**Radio:**

Bitty-Bop, Bitty-Bop, Bip Bop Bam,  
You with Uncle Paul on an all day jam,  
Now you can change your radio station, baby  
that ain't no crime,  
but Uncle Paul plays all the hits,  
all the time.

It's the first day of summer, 1968. Jus' a lovely evenin' in the inner city, twilight stretching along from the bricks of the stoic East Tech High School building to the projects at Carver Park. Now all y'all know things go better with Coke. So put the brown bags down and run on over to Troy's Ford Mart at the corner of East 43rd and Cedar, and get yourself a cold one to go. *(Drinking)* Ah. Troy's... where the conversations range from Politics to Lovemaking, from Numbers to Prostitution... from Civil Rights to Human Rights. Troy is the Man, the Mentor, the Arbitrator, the Regulator. Well, there's a full moon in the month of June, and Uncle Paul gonna thrill y'all with this next tune. We got more of the Temptin' Temptations, y'all. They be in town later this summer, appearing live at Leo's Casino. Stayed tuned for details. This is y'all Uncle Paul, radio station, 890 AM, WKMU Cleveland, Ohio. The sooooooooooul of the city, baby.

*(June Bailey enters from 2158. He is a handsome man in his early thirties. He walks with a cane, and wears a once stylish straw hat. He crosses to table and turns radio down. He stares at the basketball hoop with reservation.)*

**JUNE BAILEY:** Damn!

**GIRLENA:** *(Pause)* What's eating at you tonight, June Bailey?

**JUNE BAILEY:** I jus' wish I was somewheres else sometimes; that's all.

**GIRLENA:** Where else any of us gonna be but on East 55th Street?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Yeah, I know. *(Pause)* How was it?

**GIRLENA:** Wills put him away nice. Yellow suit. Yellow straw hat. Yellow casket. Funeral's tomorrow at 10 o'clock.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Old Man Wills didn't figure out a way to stretch him out in that yellow GTO?

**GIRLENA:** The GTO was parked in front of the funeral home. Two women had the nerve to get in it. Wills made 'em get out. Wills pulled it around back after that.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Pontiac GTO. Mellow yellow. Only thing I don't like is those birth control seats. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** Birth control seats?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Bucket seats.

**GIRLENA:** That would cramp your style, wouldn't it, June Bailey?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Ain't nobody got time for no bucket seats. Birth control seats. Bench seats put your gal right next to you. All you have to do is reach out and touch --

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**JUNE BAILEY:** (*Laughing*) Slipping and sliding all night looooooong. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** Bucket seats will do me just fine, June Bailey. I don't like sitting on top of a man. Hear what I say?

**JUNE BAILEY:** I hear you. *(Pause)* Johnny Dollar said they spent close to ten thousand dollars on the funeral.

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Said there were at least one hundred flower arrangements around the casket.

**GIRLENA:** I didn't see that.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Some of the flower arrangements read -  
--- **We Remember '55.**

**GIRLENA:** I saw that!

**JUNE BAILEY:** Johnny Dollar said they buried him with hundred dollar bills in each hand, diamonds on every finger, and ten gold chains around his neck. Said they put diamonds and jewels right in the casket with him. Said Old Man Wills had to hire security guards to stand by the casket. Had the Cleveland Police parked in front of the funeral home.

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Johnny Dollar said chicks were jus' pushin' and shovin' tryin' to get their last look at him. Old Man Wills had to rope the casket off. **ROPE IT OFF!** Said some chicks started slow dancin' around the casket. Said two chicks started fightin', and went to their baby strollers to get their switchblades.

**GIRLENA:** You know Johnny Dollar ain't never told the truth about nothing. Can't tell the truth about nothing. Couldn't tell the truth if his life depended on it.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Johnny Dollar said the Allen twins walked out of the nursing home all the way up 55th to pay their respects.

**GIRLENA:** June Bailey, please.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Said they wore yellow corduroy jumpsuits in his honor.

**GIRLENA:** Corduroy in June?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Johnny Dollar said the Little Twin was busy stuffing her purse with House of Wills stationery and pens while the Big Twin was taking all the toilet paper and ash trays out of the restroom.

**GIRLENA:** The Allen twins were not at the wake, June Bailey. Besides, Johnny Dollar was too busy writing numbers to see what was going on.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Yep. Johnny Dollar be writin' some numbers. Be writing numbers in Giant Tiger, Kresgee's, Western Auto, Sears & Roebuck, Troy's, even in church. He be yellin' during Bible study, "You want that 721 boxed, straight, or split? You want that 825 in the new stock, old stock, bond, or big bond? Man, I told you that 925 is cut today. The Massario Brothers cut that number five ways."

**GIRLENA:** Reverend Haughton put him out of church last Sunday for writing numbers during Sunday school. He supposed to be reciting from the Bible. He reciting from the dream book. Yelling out God was 749 and the Devil was 822. After Reverend asked him to leave he went out and sat on the church steps and kept writing numbers.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Until the ladies auxiliary was ready with the Sunday Worship Meal of fried chicken, baked chicken---

**JUNE BAILEY/GIRLENA:** Stewed chicken, grilled chicken, broiled chicken, barbecued chicken.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Collard greens, potato salad, creamed corn, candied yams, fried okra, chitterlings, and ---

**JUNE BAILEY/GIRLENA:** Butter baked skillet bread!

**GIRLENA:** Johnny Dollar was first in line. Reverend Haughton just shook his head and walked away.

**JUNE BAILEY:** What was the number today? If that 247 fell, June Bailey gonna get him a new straw hat from Mike the Hatter. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** You better walk down to Troy's, get the evening edition of the Cleveland Press and see if you hit. Miss Girlena Chatman will be glad to help spend your money.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Troy's too crowded now. You know everybody and they momma in there telling Troy their tales of woe.

**GIRLENA:** Folks trust Troy. They respect him.

**JUNE BAILEY:** You got a problem go see Troy.

**GIRLENA:** He solve 'em, don't he?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Every time. Whenever there's a situation in the black community, the Mayor call Troy first.

**GIRLENA:** The Mayor ain't no fool.

**JUNE BAILEY:** When I was a little boy my momma used to send me to Troy's Grocery Mart with her grocery list. Always had to get a loaf of Millbrook white bread and a quart of Sealtest sweet milk. June Bailey always sneak himself a hand full of mint juleps when Troy wasn't looking. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** Don't think Troy didn't know that, June Bailey. You can't slip nothing past Troy Lee James.

**JUNE BAILEY:** (*Laughing*) Troy was saying last week he looking to collect for all them mint juleps I snatched before he retire. I gave him a good number to play. 247!

**GIRLENA:** How you miss the number on the five o'clock news?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Overslept. It don't matter. June Bailey will know soon enough. Johnny Dollar be walking up East 55th in those two sizes too small Verde snakeskin shoes. June Bailey have his hand in the Massario Brothers' pockets for a change then.

**GIRLENA:** (*Pause*) Well, like I said, it was a very nice service.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Johnny Dollar said when he die his funeral gonna be even bigger. Way Bigger! Said he gonna have Boyd & Sons stretch him out.

**GIRLENA:** Boyd's can't do funeral like The House of Wills. Wills know how to put on a wake and funeral.

**JUNE BAILEY:** I feel kinda bad I don't do funerals. Can't remember the last time I was inside a funeral home. Maybe after Diddy shot my daddy in the head. I was ten... maybe eleven. I stayed at Rick's place for two weeks.

**GIRLENA:** You do what's best for you. People deal with death in their own way.

**JUNE BAILEY:** They can throw what's left of June Bailey out in Potter's Field when he die. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** Please!

**JUNE BAILEY:** When you're dead you're dead. You ain't coming back. You ever hear tell of some fool coming back after he was dead? They can throw what's left of June Bailey out in Potter's Field when he die.

**GIRLENA:** Well, I don't wanna be thrown out in no Potter's Field. That's where they bury poor folks who don't have any money, family, or friends.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Or Nationwide. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** You gotta have insurance. My mother taught me that. I got me and Gabby covered. Every other week Mr. Everett Hatfield from Atlanta Life Insurance Company come by 2158. I hand him nine dollars and thirty-eight cents. They'll never throw what's left of Girlena Denise Chatman out in Potter's Field.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Highland, Evergreen, Riverside, Lakeview... Potter's Field. High ground or low ground. It's all dirt. You jus' covered up with dirt.

**GIRLENA:** Well I don't wanna be buried in the ground. I don't want to be on the menu for any worms. I want to be cremated like my grandmother, Miss Nellie Freeman, and the rest of my relatives. Besides, I don't want anyone to make a big fuss.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Jus' turn on the furnace.

**GIRLENA:** Yep.

**JUNE BAILEY:** AND FEEL THE FIRE!

**GIRLENA:** Yep. Almost our entire family's been cremated. After my cousins started shooting at my Aunt Nora's funeral years ago, my mother said never again. My mother was in charge of the arrangements. My cousins took out pistols during the wake and started shooting. Trying to kill each other. Up there at Watson's on 105th. Fighting over a little piece of money my Aunt Nora left everyone. Fools fighting over Fifty-Six dollars and thirty-nine cents that had to be split fourteen different ways.

**JUNE BAILEY:** (*Rising*) Well, if you go before me, I'm gonna send you off real nice, Girlena Chatman. We gonna bronze those pretty bow legs of yours. Put a sign on 'em, "Perfection." Donate 'em to the Health and Loveliness Museum. June Bailey gonna stand up in Reverend Haughton's Cleveland Church of Christ and recite some fine poetry.

*Here lies Girlena Chatman,  
Lord, ain't she fine,  
with bow legs divine,  
I know it was good and plenty,  
but she very seldom gave up any .....*

Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** You crazy, June Bailey.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Wait! Wait!

*Now I lay me down to slumber,  
I pray the Lord I hit the number,  
If I die before eleven,  
Put fifty cents on 247*

Number gonna be so hot the Massario Brothers liable to cut it... Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** You dreaming.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Who ain't still dreaming about... Gir-  
lena Denise Chatman?

**GIRLENA:** *(Pause)* Eddie Cain ain't dreaming no more.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Said he still loved you.

**GIRLENA:** Eddie Cain said a lot of crazy things.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Said he was gonna live forever.

**GIRLENA:** He was wrong, wasn't he?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Yep. Guess he was. *(Pause)* Every-  
body turned out, huh?

**GIRLENA:** Black folks and white folks lined up from  
the House of Wills all the way down East 55th street.  
Some had to stand across the street in East Tech's  
parking lot.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Everyone knew Fast Eddie Cain. Eve-  
ryone remembers '55.

**GIRLENA:** (*Crossing to porch and sitting*) Some folks were yelling “55.” Women were everywhere all down on the floor just yelling and screaming.

**JUNE BAILEY:** I’m sorry but you know a skirt was a skirt to Fast Eddie Cain. Even way back in R. B. Hayes Elementary School. Fast Eddie Cain always had some girl in the cloakroom.

**GIRLENA:** You had your share, too, June Bailey.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Never had you.

**GIRLENA:** I was smart. I got to school early.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Every morning June Bailey and Fast Eddie Cain be hidin' inside the cloakroom. Some of the girls be late, late on purpose. All them girls were crazy about some June Bailey and some Fast Eddie Cain. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Y’all come to school wearin' those little plaid skirts with them white bobby socks. Pretty little legs all shined up with that Royal Crown Hair dressing. We'd wait 'til after they put their coats on one of the racks, then we'd grab 'em and press 'em up against the wall... wait ‘til they close they eyes and we press our bodies up against 'em... waiting for that first moan ... Then we'd run out... into the hallway... runnin'... That was what you call Cloakroom Heaven.

**GIRLENA:** That was what you call nasty, June Bailey.

**JUNE BAILEY:** We wasn't nasty! We was jus' being boys. Them gals could never get away from me and Fast Eddie Cain. *(Pause)* June Bailey seen you ridin' in that yellow GTO ---

**GIRLENA:** You been spying on me, June Bailey? Gabby said she saw a man in the shadows watching us when we were walking to the Park Theater on 105th two weeks ago. I turned around and didn't see anyone. Was that you?

**JUNE BAILEY:** June Bailey walk every night, Girlena. But June Bailey ain't walking that damn far. East 55th to 105th? This old leg ain't been right since June Bailey fell in that hole at J& L Steel. Doctor said to exercise this leg unless I wanna lose it, so June Bailey exercise this leg.

**GIRLENA:** If it wasn't you, who was it?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Any man in his right mind.

**GIRLENA:** Then you're right. It couldn't have been you.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Too much history between you and Fast Eddie Cain. It ain't over 'til it's over. Hear what I say?

**GIRLENA:** Well it's over now.

*(Ricks enters. He is a man in his early thirties. He is dressed in his postal uniform and carries a bag of mail. He crosses Center to table.)*

**RICKS:** What's up, June Bailey?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Still kicking but not high.

**RICKS:** Greetings, Girlena.

**GIRLENA:** Hey, Ricks. How's it going?

**RICKS:** Just left Ressie Chambers' house. She all broke up over her son Pretty Boy getting drafted into the army. Scared they gonna send him to Viet Nam. He got to report to that Federal Building downtown on Tuesday.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Viet Nam ain't no joke. Harvey Miller just died over there, you know. You remember Harvey Miller? Used to fall asleep all the time in Mr. Whitman's Mechanical Drawing class – Room 345 Harvey always wake up before the bell ring. He take a sheet of that real thin paper, take your drawing and trace it for his. Said Mr. Whitman wouldn't know the difference. Mr. Whitman let him go the entire year. Mr. Whitman ain't say nothing. For the final exam we had to draw this horizontal box thing. Harvey grab London Burnett's drawing just before the bell ring. He trace it up real nice. Hand it to Mr. Whitman. Harvey just grinning. Mr. Whitman say, "What you got there, Harvey?" Harvey say, "This one of my best drawings, Mr. Whit." Mr. Whitman looked at Harvey's drawing and say, "Harvey, this ain't shit. You got an F coming." (*Laughing*) Harvey Miller. They shipped his body down to Alabama. His momma moved down there last year. They didn't have a service up here. Old Man Wills thought he was gonna gets some business when Harvey got killed over there in Nam. He was wrong. I hope Pretty Boy don't have to go.

**GIRLENA:** I'm just glad the army don't draft females. I don't know what I'd do if I got a letter from Uncle Sam saying Gabby had to report when she turned eighteen.

**RICKS:** They drafted Honey Lewis's oldest boy Leroy last year but he didn't have to go. He didn't pass the written test.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Pretty Boy should have answered the questions wrong on purpose. That's what Leroy Lewis done.

**GIRLENA:** I remember when Pretty Boy was running up and down East 55th delivering the Cleveland Press. Time sure flies; that's for sure. *(Rising)* I'll call Troy, June Bailey. See what the number was. *(Slapping him on the behind)* See if I get a chance to spend some of your money.

*(Girlena exits.)*

**RICKS:** *(Sitting)* Man, she still pulls at a man's heart-strings.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Yep. *(Crossing to table)* You know she and Fast Eddie ---

**RICKS:** Hooked up again? I figured as much.

**JUNE BAILEY:** *(Sitting)* Fast Eddie Cain was hangin' around 2158 all the time before ---

**RICKS:** Somebody shot him five times when he was leaving Frenchy's Bar. Had a white girl on each arm. White girls ran.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Gonna be a hard case to solve. Fast Eddie Cain had lots of enemies. Women he hurt, cats he played, and the Massario Brothers, who thought he was getting too big. Hear what I say?

**RICKS:** Girlena always was crazy about some Eddie Cain.

**JUNE BAILEY:** And you always was crazy about some Girlena Chatman.

**RICKS:** She always was good at teasing my heart. Still does. I admit that.

**JUNE BAILEY:** You should have made your move 'fore Killer made his. When she and Fast Eddie Cain broke up the first time, you should have made your move then.

**RICKS:** What did she ever see in that fool?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Fast Eddie Cain always had a slew of women. She was with Fast Eddie Cain while she was fooling 'round with Killer. When Killer found out she was still messing around with Fast Eddie Cain it drove Killer over the edge. He was already nuts.

**RICKS:** He went nuts after Coach Chavers cut him.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Which time? He got cut every year.

**RICKS:** Couldn't make a lay-up.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Couldn't hold on to the damn ball.

**RICKS:** Couldn't make Junior Varsity in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, even if they would have let 12<sup>th</sup> graders play JV.

**JUNE:** He was terrible. *(Pause)* He getting out of the joint in a couple of weeks.

**RICKS:** Girlena know?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Yeah, but she been real quiet about it though. Killer been gone... what, twelve, thirteen years?

**RICKS:** Killed Neecee's cousin in front of Ellis Bar. Boy had jus' come up here from Alabama. If Neecee's cousin had been white, Killer would have got the chair.

**JUNE BAILEY:** You know he headin' straight for 2158 East 55th... and Girlena.

**RICKS:** He know 'bout Gabby? He know who Gabby's father is? Talk about a storm coming.

**JUNE BAILEY:** If Fast Eddie Cain was still alive... drop you and Six-Five in the mix.

**RICKS:** I ain't never hid my feelings for Girlena, June Bailey.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Charles "Killer" Davis ain't forgot that either. Y'all was some real hoodlums back then.

**RICKS:** You wasn't no saint, June Bailey. I remember when you carried two pistols. You lied, you stole, you cheated, and you shot folks.

**JUNE BAILEY:** I know my past. God knows what I done. I ain't doin' it now, but I could do it again. You better keep your pistol handy, Ricks. Hear what I say?

**RICKS:** I'm gonna always do that. Keep my shotgun handy, too.

**JUNE BAILEY:** You do that. You might need it. Foolin' 'round down here on East 55th ain't no joke.

**RICKS:** I hear ya. I hope you know where your pistol is?

**JUNE BAILEY:** Might be in my pocket.

**RICKS:** Mine is.

**JUNE BAILEY:** I hear ya, Ricks.

**RICKS:** I'm glad you do. (*Rising*) I still can't figure Girlena out.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Man, if a chick ain't with you in your mix, she with someone else in theirs. You gotta let a chick choose. If they don't choose you, smile and walk away. Wait until you get chose. Hear what I say? When a chick choose you, when you chosen, you set then. Been livin' by that theory since elementary school when I first looked at Girlena Chatman and she looked at Eddie Cain. I jus' smiled and walked away. I waited to get chose.

**RICKS:** We all got chose in high school. Yeah, remember the parties at Ms. Brister's house after the games? You come in cold and leave out WARM.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Man, East Tech had some fine chicks, man. Pat Riley, Ressie Chambers, Norma Fluker, Donella Reese, Carmen Sledge, Jessie Larkins. Man, remember Jessie Larkins?

**RICKS:** Too, too fine. We was ball players. We played for East Tech. We kept all the chicks smiling, didn't we? All but Girlena.

**JUNE BAILEY:** Girlena wasn't playin'.

**RICKS:** Well, Eddie Cain played her.

**JUNE BAILEY:** They played each other... over and over... but Fast Eddie Cain ain't playing no more. Fast Eddie Cain played his last game. Hear what I say?

*(Lights fade to black as "Since I lost My Baby" plays.)*

## SCENE II

**Time:** Friday afternoon. The following day.

**At Rise:**

*(“Since I Lost My Baby” by The Temptations blares from radio. Girlena Chapman sits at the table wearing a pretty yellow dress. She sings as she looks through an old high school yearbook.)*

**GIRLENA:** *(Singing)*  
*Since I lost my baby.*  
*Oh, since I lost my baby.*

*(Jimmy Love enters. He is a slender man in his early thirties, but looks much older due to his life style. He is dressed in an old dirty t-shirt, jeans, sneakers, and old baseball cap.)*

**LOVE:** Hey, Girlena. *(Searching)* June Bailey around?

**GIRLENA:** You see him? *(Pause)* Naw, he ain’t.

**LOVE:** I just come by to say... say I’m sorry.

**GIRLENA:** Didn’t see you at the wake or funeral.

**LOVE:** Yeah. Yeah. I was ah... ah sort of tied up. I had some things... some stuff goin’ on.

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**LOVE:** But Fast Eddie Cain was a true teammate ‘til the end.

**GIRLENA:** Helped keep you in your goods, huh?

**LOVE:** What?

**GIRLENA:** You need to clean yourself up once and for all, Jimmy Love. Fast Eddie Cain ain't gonna be around to keep you in your stuff no more.

**LOVE:** Yeah. Yeah. I been thinking about that, been thinking on it long and strong. *(Pause)* Don't know when June Bailey's coming back, huh?

**GIRLENA:** You know I'm right.

**LOVE:** I'm gonna work on taming that bear right away, Girlena. Go on down to the Charity and check myself in, maybe in a week or so. Big Edgar went down last week. Said they got nice soft pillows, clean bed sheets, and good grub. Said they treated him like a basketball star.

**GIRLENA:** If Big Edgar was doin' any rehab he got a twin down there at Charity. Big Edgar was in Ellis Bar last night looking to score. Looking to buy some heroin from Mr. Walter.

**LOVE:** Well, he was there one night last week. Said no one on East 55th expected him to clean himself up so he checked himself out.

**GIRLENA:** Please. Go on, Jimmy Love.

**LOVE:** *(Playing with cap)* I been trying hard to get this bear off my back but the big black sucker won't budge. He a real feisty one.

**GIRLENA:** That bear sure ain't gonna budge if you ain't fighting to get him off you.

**LOVE:** He been riding me for a long time. Right when I think I got the best of him, he sends for that sweet white boy who washes all my sins away...

**GIRLENA:** I don't wanna hear it, Jimmy Love! You do dope because you want to do dope, because you don't want to face reality. You do dope to escape responsibility. When a junkie needs junk he'll do anything to get it. You name it, a junkie will do it. Steal, rob or even put a knife in his own brother's back.

**LOVE:** Yeah. Yeah. I know. Anything and everything that goes wrong in this world gets blamed on dope. Some wild eyed young boy rapes his schoolteacher and he's full of dope. A group of corner boys full of goofballs or stoned on cough syrup do anything, they high on junk. Society don't have a clue. They don't know where it's at. A junkie on dope don't bother nobody. He too busy living the slow-down life, the mellow life, MY life. I ain't blaming nobody for what I am. People need to understand something before they start condemning it, putting it down. It's just another case of ignorance before investigation. It's like they say, you can take the dope from the junkie, but you can't take the junkie from the dope.

**GIRLENA:** You should want a better life for yourself, Jimmy Love. How that gonna happen when you full of junk?

**LOVE:** Jimmy Love ain't bothering nobody. Jimmy Love ain't doing nothing. I ain't drafting no folks to fight in the army over there in Nam. I ain't killing up no folks. I ain't built no bombs or flown no planes dropping none. Why folks wanna mess with me? All I'm looking for is a little peace, a little happiness. All

I'm doing is looking for the High Life. Folks wanna bring me down and call me all out my name, saying my kind is the worst kind in the world while they killing folks in other countries by the thousands. I ain't done nothing to nobody. I ain't shot nobody. All I do is shoot dope. All I do is let that bad boy floats my cares away down a sweet river of "I don't even care no more." It sure beats what all these hypocrites is doing.

**GIRLENA:** So that's your excuse for giving up, for shooting up, for not being able to change the world? *(Pause)* Please. That's pitiful if you ask me, Jimmy Love.

**LOVE:** Well, ain't nobody asked you, Girlena. I'm a dope fiend. I do dope and I love it.

**GIRLENA:** That same dope is gonna kill you one day, Jimmy Love.

**LOVE:** Lotta things on East 55th can kill you, Girlena. You just wait 'til it happen. You just wait your turn.

*(They stare at each other.)*

**GIRLENA:** *(Pause)* June Bailey may be down at Troy's.

**LOVE:** Huh? Naw. He ain't at Troy's. *(Pause)* I just come from Troy's. Some white fellow in there say he a civil rights worker. He trying to get folks to protest against Sealtest. Say Sealtest got all them employees and ain't none of 'em black. But say Sealtest got all they white milk in all black neighborhood stores. Hunchy told the white fellow, name Mr. Henry Roy. Hunchy say, "Ain't nobody on East 55th thinking

about protesting or demonstrating about nothing, 'cept for more wine, more dope, more whores, and maybe a good number." Hunchy told him, say, "it might take another hundred years for folks 'round here to understand what he saying, let alone do something about it. If you ain't got no dollars to give away, you may as well walk away." Fellow didn't get down on himself one bit though. Kept right on preaching 'bout the injustices that Sealtest and other white companies like 'em was doing to black folks. With that he started buying everyone in Troy's rounds of cold sodas. Troy made a killing selling Royal Crown Cola this afternoon.

**GIRLENA:** That white man should know you can't talk about freedom and civil rights to people down here. Black civil rights workers can't reach 'em, let alone white ones. Folks down here don't wanna hear that, because they don't wanna change. Nobody likes change anyhow.

**LOVE:** Yeah. Well Mr. Henry Roy say poor black folks 'round here ain't no different than poor black folks everywhere. All they need is an education. Say all that has to happen is for black folks to get educated, get used to trying new and different things. Say all that has to happen is for someone to show 'em the right way. Black Folks will go through life doing things the wrong way unless there's someone to show 'em the right way. They'll continue to do things the wrong way even if it kills 'em, and they know it's killing 'em, unless they shown something better. That's what Mr. Henry Roy say.

**GIRLENA:** What the people say?

**LOVE:** People ain't said nothing. The people just sat there and drank they cold sodas. Troy ain't said nothing either, Troy just waited for Mr. Henry Roy to pay for all them cold Royal Crown Colas the people was drinking. Mr. Henry Roy paid Troy and left. Said he'd be back though. Said he wasn't near done. Left a paper for folks to sign. Hunchy turned the paper over and started writing out his numbers on it 'bout the same time Johnny Dollar walked in.

**GIRLENA:** I hope this Henry Roy, white civil rights worker stays clear of Ellis Bar. Black folks enjoying they liquor after a hard day of hustlin'don't take kindly to no civil rights workers, black or white. And the hustlers -- they thrive on the downtrodden. They work hard at keeping their people down so they can't always have the advantage.

**LOVE:** All folks 'round here looking for is some good dope, a good woman, or a good number. After Mr. Henry Roy walked out, all the attention turned to across the street where Jamaica Pearl was standing. All the fellows crowded against the window to get a good long look. Twitchy Mitchell say he ain't seen a woman built up like Jamaica Pearl since her momma, Red Delilah. Say Jamaica Pearl belong on the cover of Ebony Magazine. Maybe even Life or Time. Twitchy Mitchell say Jamaica Pearl made her pimp King Willie II so much money last year he bought himself a new pink Fleetwood with silver skirts. Everybody got a real treat when she walked into Troy's to buy herself some Mint Juleps and a pack of Pall Malls. Two or three cats offered to pay for her purchases but she say, "No, thanks fellows. Jamaica Pearl always got her own," in that sweet voice of hers. Jamaica Pearl sure know where it's at, I tell you. She turned 'round and

strolled out of Troy's on that fine pair of walking legs... 'course, they not nearly as fine and sturdy as the bow legged pair you walking on, Girlena,

**GIRLENA:** Um Um Um ...

**LOVE:** (*Pause*) I hear Killer getting out soon.

**GIRLENA:** That's what I hear. Guess you better start running, Jimmy Love.

*(Six-Five enters. He is a very tall brown skinned man in his early thirties.)*

**SIX-FIVE:** Hey, Girlena.

**GIRLENA:** Hey, Six-Five.

**LOVE:** The rebounding machine, Junior Payne, better known as Six-Five. Starting Center! East Tech Scarabs! Number thirty-two home white, thirty-three away in gold!

**SIX-FIVE:** What you doing around 2158, Jimmy Love?

**LOVE:** Huh? Ah... I stopped by to offer Girlena my condolences. And now I'm gone. See you, Girlena. Tell June Bailey I stopped by on the real.

*(Love exits.)*

**SIX-FIVE:** How long he been here?

**GIRLENA:** Not long.

**SIX-FIVE:** Only one of us who went to class and made good grades. Could have been anything. Never put any of that education to any good use at all. Number Twenty white, twenty one gold. *(Pause)* I'm sorry. You alright? I was on that two-week west coast run when I heard.

**GIRLENA:** They buried him today.

**SIX-FIVE:** I know. I tried to reach you. Gabby said you were gone. Called June Bailey, but his damn phone just rang. Don't know why he has one. He never answers it. Hell, he never uses it unless he calling in his numbers. *(Pause)* You look lovely as usual. Very pretty dress. Yellow, huh?

**GIRLENA:** Eddie bought it a few weeks ago. You know how Eddie loved him some yellow, loved seeing me in some yellow all the time, even had me wear yellow slippers, said some yellow showed off my legs.

**SIX-FIVE:** Any color dress do that.

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**SIX-FIVE:** My rig broke down near Toledo. You know they give a black man the worst truck to drive. Had to wait 'til they repaired it. Tried to reach you. Figured there was nothing I could do. Jus' pulled in about an hour ago.

**GIRLENA:** Gabby told me you called. Thank you. *(Taking a deep breath)* I'm Okay.

**SIX-FIVE:** Where is Ms. Gabby?

**GIRLENA:** Up there at Fairfax, shooting baskets with June Bailey.

**SIX-FIVE:** Gabby can shoot the lights out already. I watched her in Central Playground the other day. I tell Ricks all the time she shoots better than him when we was playing.

**GIRLENA:** Y'all had her shooting baskets since she could hold a ball.

**SIX-FIVE:** She loves it, too. The way we did when we were coming up. Used to clear the snow off the court at Central Playground. We used to play by the street-light and moonlight after dark. Too bad they don't let girls play. Maybe one day folks will come out and cheer the girls when they play other schools. *(Pause)* Any leads on who killed Fast Eddie Cain?

**GIRLENA:** The Police have questioned almost everyone. Talking to some folks twice. If they got any leads they ain't saying.

**SIX-FIVE:** Ricks been around?

**GIRLENA:** Seen him at the funeral.

**SIX-FIVE:** Why you and Ricks never hooked up? He always been crazy about you?

**GIRLENA:** *(Pause)* Maybe cause he never came to me. A woman don't wanna think, she wanna know.

**SIX-FIVE:** Ricks and June Bailey always thought me and you were---

**GIRLENA:** Lotta nosey folks on 55th did. If a girl stay with a guy it gotta be about lying down. It can't just be about she and her daughter needing a place to stay. I'll always be grateful for that, Six-Five. You was a real friend to me. You was on the road most of the time and made your place available to me and Gabby. Folks gonna believe what they wanna believe.

**SIX-FIVE:** I guess June Bailey figured you and Gabby should have moved in with him.

**GIRLENA:** Well, June Bailey figured wrong. You know it's a lot more drama than meets the eye when it comes to me and June Bailey. Many folks just don't know. I wasn't gonna be sliding down that hill no time soon. Ricks and June Bailey can figure what they wanna.

**SIX-FIVE:** How's Gabby holding up?

**GIRLENA:** She didn't say much when I told her about Eddie. Just took her ball and went out and start shooting baskets. She didn't wanna go to the funeral, and I didn't make her. She's like June Bailey. Not afraid of death, but determined to deal with it on her own terms. She and Eddie shared some emotions... some feelings... They had their moments, good and bad. He wasn't a bad father, just didn't really know how to be a good one. With the life style he led, she didn't see him much. When they did see each other, it was here in this yard, at Central playground, or he'd ride her up to Fairfax. Never talking much ... just shooting baskets... she trying her best to out shoot him... focused... driven... like y'all were... in '55.

**SIX-FIVE:** You think the mob killed Fast Eddie Cain?

**GIRLENA:** The Massario Brothers? *(Pause)* Rumors are they're behind the killings of Scatter and Slim Jim. They ain't never had no love for black folks. I know they were feuding over the boundaries of black and white territories. Everybody wants a piece of the number's game.

**SIX-FIVE:** Number's game is big money. Almost as big as the dope game. The Massario Brothers got they hands in both, just like Fast Eddie Cain. *(Pause)* You gonna ever tell Gabby?

**GIRLENA:** No.

**SIX-FIVE:** You Okay with that, Girlena?

**GIRLENA:** Yep.

**SIX-FIVE:** Even now that ...

**GIRLENA:** I said I would never tell her, Six-Five.

**SIX-FIVE:** What you gonna do about Killer? You know he heading straight to 2158 East 55th when he get out.

**GIRLENA:** Been thinking about going to Chicago... again.

**SIX-FIVE:** Chicago?

**GIRLENA:** Gabby was born there. Remember? I left Cleveland two summers after we graduated... confused... crying... pregnant. Stayed with my Aunt Lilly. I still got family up there. *(Pause)* Me and Gabby gonna be on one of those double-decker Greyhounds to Chicago. Always wanted to ride a double-decker... First time I went to Chicago I was on a small bus.

*(Johnny Dollar enters. He is a tall well-dressed black man in his early sixties. He wears an expensive leisure suit and carries a small notepad. He walks gingerly.)*

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Good night, Irene.

**SIX-FIVE:** John Dollar.

**GIRLENA:** Hey, Johnny Dollar?

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** These snakeskin shoes is talking to my toe jams.

**SIX-FIVE:** Can't wear a eleven if you got size thirteen feet.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Verde snakeskin don't come in thirteen. Eleven the largest size they come. Johnny Dollar had to make do. *(Sitting and taking off shoes)* Whew. Where June Bailey? His 247 is hot. Red Hot. You can get it or not. You can play if you're going my way, or you can miss out, and hit the highway. Be there or be square. If you a lame, Johnny Dollar ain't to blame. I'm on my way to see the Massario Brothers.

**GIRLENA:** June Bailey at Fairfax.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** He told me to stop by 2158. He called in some numbers but left 247 off. I don't wanna hear him crying at 5 o'clock if that number come out.

**GIRLENA:** How he forget 247? He been playing that number for a year. Says he keeps dreaming about our old junior high homeroom teacher, Ms. Hamilton. That was her room number, 247.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Maybe he's off his medication. I jus' left Troy's. Hunchy over there crying 'cause he'd been playing 486 all week. Yesterday it came 684. I told that fool to box his numbers. He was crying last week after he hit 529. I told him to put a dollar on the number instead of a dime. Fool could've been back in the race.

**GIRLENA:** I don't know why people waste their money playing numbers. By the time you hit, you just getting back the money you put in.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Numbers give poor black folks a chance. Same as if you take your money down there at Society for Savings. The bank give you a chance... a chance at interest. You may get more money back than you put in.

**SIX-FIVE:** If you can afford to leave it in there long enough.

**GIRLENA:** June Bailey up at 4 a.m. every morning figuring out what numbers he gonna play. Won't take a bath or brush his teeth 'til he get his numbers in. Won't eat 'til he get his numbers in. When he ever hit, Johnny Dollar?

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Ya gotta take a chance to win.

**SIX-FIVE:** June Bailey spend his whole disability check on numbers. I only play if I have a good dream.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Good night, Irene.

**GIRLENA:** It's all right if you the lucky kind. If you got a feel for numbers. Play a little bit. Whatever June

Bailey dream about, he play. He look the number up in the dream book, play it, and the number don't fall. He play a number he see on a TV show and the number don't fall. He play the number he see on a cop car or on the side of the CTS.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** He taking a chance.

**GIRLENA:** I grew up around numbers. My whole family plays the numbers. I ain't never played a number in my life. Never. My Uncle William plays numbers so tough he keeps records of past numbers that fell on the backs of these old notebook pads. He's been recording numbers that fell for almost ten years. He studied trends and say he can predict when numbers will fall. Say playing numbers is a science, playing numbers is an art. A gift. Say he can read number patterns and predict when numbers will fall. My Uncle William plays numbers every day. Been playing numbers every day for twenty-five years. He ain't never hit for over twenty-five dollars in his life.

**SIX-FIVE:** My momma still collects the numbers for the entire block on 49<sup>th</sup>. Don't mess with momma while she's watching her soap operas or working on her numbers. She gets a nice piece of every number that falls. She used to write numbers from Red John. Now she writes for Johnny Dollar.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** And she doing a real fine job... still. I learned numbers game from Red John. I used to cut school and run numbers for him. He drove a red Fleetwood with a coon tail on the back. He wore dark glasses, even in the winter. Said his eyes hurt him from writing so many numbers. Said his legs pained him from so much walking to pick up numbers. Used

to walk with a gold plated cane. Red John died at the Massario Brother's numbers house. Red John screamed 736 at the top of his lungs and dropped dead. Folks said the red Fleetwood started up and went home without him the night he died. Said that Caddie was so used to leaving the number's house at 7 o'clock it left without him.

**GIRLENA:** Why don't you stop, Johnny Dollar.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** I ain't lying.

**SIX-FIVE:** I heard that same story from Leroy King.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Good night, Irene.

**GIRLENA:** Don't encourage him, Six-Five.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Red John was a legend around here.

**GIRLENA:** A legend in his own mind.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** I ain't lyin'.

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Where can poor black folks get some extra cash? Yeah, you could shoot craps or get in a hot card game. You could sell some reefer, smack, or glue. Make your mark selling heroin or cocaine. A black man could put his bow legged woman out on the corner, or go out and rob the Sohio Gas Station on East 40<sup>th</sup>, but why should he? He can play a number. If the number fall, he a winner. He back in the race.

**GIRLENA:** And if it don't fall?

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** It might fall tomorrow.

**GIRLENA:** Or next week, or next month, *OR NEXT YEAR...* while he playing another number that don't fall. He better take that little piece of money and pay his rent or his light bill.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Numbers give poor black folks an opportunity. I didn't start eating catfish at Art's Seafood 'til 336 fell in the old stock. Didn't own a Fleetwood 'til 829 fell in the big bond. 432 and triple fours got me twenty new suits and ten pair of snake skin shoes. Numbers put Johnny Dollar back in the race.

**SIX-FIVE:** Sometimes I play if I feel it. I've hit the number big. I've hit it small. I've busted the bank and there's been times I didn't get a dime.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Sometimes you eat the bear; sometimes the bear eat you.

**GIRLENA:** Well, I'm gonna hold on to my paycheck and my tips. The Massario Brothers can get rich off some other poor black folks. It won't be Girlena Chatman.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** How you think the Allen twins bought the mansion on Liberty Boulevard?

**GIRLENA:** The Allen twins live in the Edna Hopper Nursing Home on 55th.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** The Allen twins used to own the Rockefeller Mansion on Liberty Boulevard.

**GIRLENA:** Johnny Dollar!

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** I ain't lying. When they were cashiers at Giant Tiger on 83rd and Euclid the Big Twin hit that 036 for five thousand dollars on Monday and the next day the Lil' Twin hit that 541 in the Big Bond for seven thousand dollars. They bought the property from ole man Rockefeller for twelve thousand dollars the next week.

**GIRLENA:** What happened, Johnny Dollar? Why they living in a nursing home now?

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Twins said it was bad paper work.

**GIRLENA:** Bad paper work?

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Ole Man Rockefeller tricked 'em. Yeah, they said he was hooked up somehow some way with the Massario Family. Said Rockefeller really sold 'em some run down store front property on 49th for they twelve thousand dollars. They couldn't read and was too cheap to hire a lawyer so the white man fooled 'em. They was back at Giant Tiger the next week. Top it off, the city claimed the store front property through eminent domain. Paid 'em five thousand for the property but said they owed ten thousand in back taxes. They spent six months in jail for tax evasion. Twins said you can't trust rich white folks and they schemes. Good night, Irene.

**GIRLENA:** Can't you ever tell the truth?

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** I ain't lying.

**GIRLENA:** Please.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Numbers put Two Chins Charley back in the race just last week. Tell her, Six-Five.

**SIX-FIVE:** You know Two Chins Charley. Live up on Lexington, 1725. He'd loaned Peter Hill two hundred dollars. Peter Hill paid Two Chins back half the money. He still owed him one hundred dollars. Soon after Peter Hill got killed on Green Court. Stabbed by the Tyler sisters for running his mouth during a crap game. Two Chins was plenty upset. Said Peter Hill's big mouth got him killed with his money still in his pocket. Made him wanna dig him up and kill him again. Anyways three days after his funeral at the House of Wills, Peter Hill came to him in a dream. Said he was sorry he didn't get a chance to pay him the rest of that two hundred dollars. Peter Hill wrote 923 in the sky with a long finger. When Two Chins got up the next morning he put five dollars on 923 in the big bond. When he pulled in around 6:30 p.m. He saw Johnny Dollar's Fleetwood parked in front of his house. He knew 923 had fell.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** I got out of the Fleetwood and handed Two Chins an envelope with twenty eight hundred dollars minus my cut.

**SIX-FIVE:** Two Chins said that was one sweet scene.

**JOHNNY DOLLAR:** Good night, Irene.

*("Girl (Why You Wanna Make Blue)" by Temptations plays as lights fade out.)*