

DON'T FORGET TO WRITE HOME

by

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Based on the novel written by Wallace Durham

Partial screenplay(pages 1-49)

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE HARLEM STREETS(FALL OF 1969) - AFTERNOON

Cars pass by as people walk through the streets going about their business.

There are homeless people who hang on the corners and in front of the stores.

They share the streets with the drug addicts, bums, prostitutes, pimps and thugs.

Young women walk right by them with their young children and babies. The weather is cool so they are bundled up.

INT. JAMES COOKE'S APARTMENT(HARLEM) - LATE AFTERNOON

JAMES COOKE is sitting on the couch reading the newspaper. His daughter KEENA,(10) son MANNY(7) and son JUNIOR(5) were watching the small black and white television, which sat on a chair in the corner of the living room.

His wife MARY LEE was preparing the evening meal in the kitchen.

She limped out to the dining room area and collapsed in to the dining room chair. She looked rather tired and ill.

JAMES COOKE

Are you okay baby?

MARY LEE

Yeah, I guess I will make it. I am just tired.

JAMES COOKE

Do you want to lay down for a while?

MARY LEE

No, I just want to get you and the kids fed and then I will get some rest.

Manny jumped up, walked over to the television and changed the channel.

He walked back over to sit on the floor. Keena got up and changed the channel back to where it was.

Manny got up and changed the channel again and then sat back on the floor.

Keena

Momma, Manny keeps on changing the channel. I don't want to watch Space Ghosts!

MARY LEE

Okay now! I can't take that noise right now. Momma is not feeling to good.

Keena decides to take things into her own hands as she grabs Manny and starts slapping him in the head.

James just slams down the newspaper and gives the two of them a mean look.

They stop what they're doing immediately and sit back on the floor. James never had to say a word.

JAMES COOKE

Now I need to go to Pedro's store, so I will be right up the street. If your mother tells me she heard a peep out of you, you all will get it when I get back. Keena you're the oldest and you know better!

James puts on his jacket and heads to the front door. He goes down the door unlocking and unchaining several locks.

JAMES COOKE (CONT'D)

Now Keena you help your momma around here... Now come lock this door.

MARY LEE

Honey make sure you get some milk. We are out of milk again.

JAMES COOKE

(surprised)

Again? I just bought a whole gallon two days ago. What are they doing with the milk?

James leaves, shaking his head. As he walks down the stairs from his fourth floor apartment, he has to step over a bum who is sleeping on the stairs.

The smell in the hallways and in the stairways is terrible as James holds his nose. He opens the door and exits the building.

EXT. THE HARLEM STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

As James walks down the street, bums hold out their hand for some quick cash.

Prostitutes look at James with a seductive smile as they flaunt what they have.

Drug deals can be seen going down in broad daylight on the corner. James goes in the corner store called PEDRO'S GROCERY STORE.

INT. PEDRO'S GROCERY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

PEDRO, the store owner, is arguing with a BLACK MALE CUSTOMER about some items he allowed him to have from the store until he got paid.

Pedro is a Puerto Rican, who speaks English well, but with a notable accent.

PEDRO

I let you go two times last week
and you told me you would pay me
this week. I can't run my store
like this man! I need you to pay me
this time!

BLACK MALE CUSTOMER

Look man... I told you I got you.
Be cool man! You act like I am
robbing you or something. What you
going to do, call the cops on me?
You is a mean cat man!

PEDRO

Look man! When you pay me from last
week you can come back to my store.
I am not going to help you no more.
I want cash from you always now...
From Your brother too!

Pedro points in the direction of the exit.

PEDRO

Have a good day my friend!

The Black Male Customer puts his items on the check-out counter and heads to the door.

James' brother, GENE, walks in the store. He actually staggers into the store because he is high.

James sort of ducks behind an aisle to see what his brother was going to do.

GENE

What's up Pedro?

PEDRO

Now what do you want?

GENE

Man I just need to make me a sandwich. That's all I need. I am hungry as hell. You know I will take care of you. My check comes in two days and then I can square you up.

PEDRO

Well you better! You don't want to piss me off! I am tired of you people taking advantage of me.

Pedro turns on the meat slicing machine and starts making Gene a sandwich. James walks up to Gene.

James does not look too pleased as he stands there with his arms crossed, shaking his head.

Gene sees James standing there but tries to look away and ignore him.

GENE

What are you doing here man?

JAMES COOKE

I just came down to get a few things... Man why are you doing this?

GENE

Doing what?

Pedro hands Gene the sandwich after wrapping it in the wax paper. Gene tears the paper off and takes a huge bite.

JAMES COOKE

You be using Pedro man! You don't need to do that shit.

(MORE)

JAMES COOKE (cont'd)

I would have bought you a sandwich or if you would come by sometime, I would make you a damn sandwich.

GENE

Man I need this. I am broke until I get my check. Now why don't you just leave me alone big brother! I don't need nothing from you.

JAMES COOKE

You know mom and dad would not go for this if they were alive. This ain't the way they raised you. You out there getting high and spending all your money on them drugs. Now you're in here begging for food.

GENE

Well they ain't here! So just accept it and stop trying to take their place. You ain't my pops! I am a grown ass man. So if you are finished I need to go.

Gene turns around and staggers out of the store as he continues to eat the sandwich.

James just stands there shaking his head in disgust and Pedro just shrugs his shoulders and throws his hands up with a confused look.

INT. A NEW YORK CITY BUS - MORNING

James is riding the bus to work. The bus is rather crowded as he stands holding the strap.

A black man crosses his legs and opens up a newspaper. The newspaper headline reads: PRESIDENT NIXON ORDERS RESUMED BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM.

The BUS DRIVER can be heard yelling out: ONE HUNDRED TENTH STREET! (O.S.) The bus stops and James exits the bus.

EXT. THE NEW YORK STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

James walks down the busy street and checks out the other restaurants and small businesses in the area.

He actually pauses briefly to check out some of the establishments. He walks into GORDON'S RESTAURANT.

INT. GORDON'S RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Several people are eating breakfast at Gordon's Restaurant. James quickly rushes back to the kitchen area, takes his jacket off, washes his hands in the sink and dons an apron and hat.

ERNESTO, a Puerto Rican cook, is scrambling eggs and cooking sausages on the large metal grill.

ERNESTO

Hey James, How are you doing man?
You don't look too good.

James looks at the table orders which are hanging on the wall in front of him.

JAMES COOKE

Oh I am cool I guess.

ERNESTO

It's good to see you here early. It is starting to get busy.

JAMES COOKE

Well, I could not sleep.

ERNESTO

What's up?

JAMES COOKE

My wife seems to be getting worse and I am just worried about her.

ERNESTO

I hope she gets better. I know how you feel man. My mother has been real sick for a while.

JAMES COOKE

I have been praying for Mary but she still seems to be getting worse. She can't even do her seamstress job anymore.

James wipes tears away from his eyes with his shirt sleeve.

ERNESTO

(Pats James on the back)
It is going to be okay man... Are you sure you can work today?

JAMES COOKE

Yeah I will be okay. I can't keep taking days off.

ERNESTO

We can cover for you. The boss knows about your problem man.

James breaks some eggs onto the grill and starts scrambling them. He then pours some pancake batter on the grill.

JAMES COOKE

Yeah I appreciate you guys for that but I am the only one working at my house now and I have to take care of my wife and kids.

ERNESTO

I see man. You have to do your thing.

JAMES COOKE

Once again, I want to thank you and the guys for covering for me. It meant a lot to me.

ERNESTO

No problem man. We have to take care of each other.

INT. A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM WAITING AREA - EVENING

James is pacing back and forth in a hospital waiting area. He watches Mary Lee as she is rolled down the hallway in a wheelchair, by two nurses, to an examining room.

The two African-American NURSES are accompanied by a middle-aged Caucasian doctor whose name is DOCTOR LINCOLN.

James runs out of the waiting room and catches up to Doctor Lincoln and the Nurses.

JAMES COOKE

(still breathing hard)

Can I come in with her? I mean, I think she needs me right now.

The two nurses continue taking Mary Lee into the examining room as Doctor Lincoln turns to talk to James.

DOCTOR LINCOLN

Mister Cooke, I think it will be better if you wait for her in the waiting area. I can assure you we will do a complete and thorough evaluation of your wife.

JAMES COOKE

Are you sure? Because I am...

DOCTOR LINCOLN

(Cuts off James)

Yes I am sure Mister Cooke. I will come out and talk to you as soon as our evaluation is finished.

JAMES COOKE

She is going to be okay right?

DOCTOR LINCOLN

Mr. Cooke, please let me do my job. I promise you I will let you know something after we examine her.

James reluctantly turns and heads back to the waiting room. He finally breaks down as tears begin to stream down his face.

He sits in a chair and leans his head back against the wall. He takes out a handkerchief and dries his eyes.

The six o' clock evening news is starting on the waiting room television.

The REPORTER (O.S.) can be heard giving some news headlines. Moments later Doctor Lincoln comes to the waiting room and signals James to come with him.

James goes out in the hall with Doctor Lincoln. Doctor Lincoln does not look to good. He appears to be worried.

JAMES COOKE

What's the matter? Is she okay?

DOCTOR LINCOLN

(scratches his head)
Well, she is doing fine right now.

JAMES COOKE

So, have you found out anything else about her condition? I mean she has been getting steadily worse since the last time she was here.

DOCTOR LINCOLN

I understand Mister Cooke... Let's go into my office. We can discuss this with a little more privacy.

Doctor Lincoln leads James to his office. Once inside, James begins to pace back and forth. Doctor Lincoln sits at his desk.

DOCTOR LINCOLN

Please close the door.

James closes the door and immediately begins to pace the floor again.

DOCTOR LINCOLN

Please have a seat Mister Cooke.

James slowly sits down and crosses his arms.

JAMES COOKE

Okay Doctor Lincoln, I am sitting. Now please tell me something about my wife's condition. Just give it to me straight!

DOCTOR LINCOLN

Well, we need to get the results from this evaluation and then we need...

JAMES COOKE

(cuts off Doctor Lincoln)

Look Doc! I said I want you to give it to me straight. Now, I am sure you know something at this point.

DOCTOR LINCOLN

Okay Mr. Cooke, I am going to tell you exactly what we have. Based on her overall symptoms, weight loss and comparative blood work, we could be looking at cancer. I am just giving it to you straight.

JAMES COOKE

Oh no! God no!

DOCTOR LINCOLN

I am sorry Mister Cooke. I wish I had better news.

James starts to break down and cry uncontrollably once again. He then suddenly tries to pull it together.

JAMES COOKE
Have you told her yet?

DOCTOR LINCOLN
No, we have not told her anything.

JAMES COOKE
Please don't tell her anything
about this. I don't want her to
stress out too much.

DOCTOR LINCOLN
Okay, we will leave that up to you
and your family. I think that might
be best anyway. However, once all
the test are confirmed, we will see
if she can benefit from cancer
treatments. They may make her feel
worse and they are not guaranteed
to help or cure the cancer.

JAMES COOKE
Can I see her now?

DOCTOR LINCOLN
She is resting right now. I gave
her a sedative to help her with the
pain. We will keep her here for the
night. You can wait until morning
but I think you should get some
rest.

JAMES COOKE
(wiping tears away)
I will be right in the waiting room
area. I want to be here when she
wakes up.

James leaves the room and heads back to the waiting room.
Doctor Lincoln lets out an audible sigh as he appears to be
exhausted.

INT. JAMES COOKE'S APARTMENT(HARLEM) - EVENING

James arrives home from work. Manny, Keena and Junior are all
sitting at the dinner table.

Mary Lee walks slowly back and forth from the kitchen to the
dining room table with the food.

James comes in and sets several large plastic bags on the
kitchen counter.

He takes off his jacket and hangs it in the closet. He then rushes back into the kitchen to help Mary Lee with he food.

JAMES COOKE

(Kisses Mary Lee)

Baby, please have a seat. I can take it from here.

MARY LEE

Oh honey I am okay. I can take a break after the kids are fed.

James assists Mary Lee with the rest of the food. He pulls out her chair and assist her to sit down. He then sits down at the table.

JAMES COOKE

Baby, I brought some food from Gordon's restaurant. You did not have to cook tonight.

Mary Lee just looks at James with disappointment in her eyes.

JAMES COOKE

But we are all certainly glad you did cook dinner for us tonight... Right kids?

KEENA

Yes daddy!

MANNY

Yes daddy!

JUNIOR

Yes daddy!

JAMES COOKE

By the way baby, did they behave?

MARY LEE

Yeah, they were pretty good. Junior was starting to fuss because he is hungry. Other than that everything went smoothly. I made sure Keena and Manny got all their schoolwork done and did their chores. I decided to clean up this place and get the laundry done.

JAMES COOKE

Baby, you need to be taking it easy.

MARY LEE

Honey, I told you I will be okay. I can't just sit around here all day. It doesn't do anything but make me feel worse.

JAMES COOKE

But baby the doctor said...

MARY LEE

(cuts James off)

Honey, this is not the time to talk about this. The food is getting cold and the kids are about to starve. Please just bless the food.

They all hold hands and bow their heads.

JAMES COOKE

(closing his eyes)

Father, thank you for the food which we are about to receive, for the nourishment of our bodies. Oh Lord, we ask that you remove the pain and illness from Mary's body and strengthen her. Father, please watch out for and bless our family. In Jesus' name... Amen.

They all say AMEN together. James fixes the kids' plates first, then Mary's and then his own.

MARY LEE

Just give me a little bit. I am really not too hungry.

They all begin to eat the dinner. Mary Lee's hand visibly trembles as she attempts to lift a fork full of food to her mouth.

Mary Lee suddenly starts to nod off at the table.

JAMES COOKE

Baby, are you okay?

MARY LEE

(puts the fork down)

Honey, I am just so tired. Put my food away and I will eat later. I think I just need a little nap. I think it might be all them damn treatments and drugs they are giving me.

JAMES COOKE

Are you sure you are going to be okay?

MARY LEE

Yeah, I think I will be fine once I get some rest.

Manny and Keena stop eating and stare at Mary Lee with sad expressions. Junior just continues to eat.

Mary Lee tries to get to her feet but falls back into her seat. James rushes over to assist her.

MARY LEE

Honey, just help get me to my bed. I think I will be fine if you can just get me there.

James helps Mary Lee to her feet and then to the bedroom. He gently lays her in the bed, covers her up and kisses her softly on her forehead.

JAMES COOKE

Baby, just get some rest. I can take care of everything from here.

Mary Lee closes her eyes. James starts to leave but stops, turns back around and takes another look at Mary Lee.

He turns off the light and closes the room door. He then returns to the dinner table, sits down and continues eating.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, you all need to hurry up. We don't have all night. We need to get the food put up. Wash the dishes and clean up the kitchen. Keena, I need you to help me out. Actually, I need all of you to help me out. Your mother can't do too much around here anymore.

KEENA

Daddy, is momma going to be okay?

JAMES COOKE

Sweetie, I think so. We are just going to have to keep praying for her. We need to stay strong for her too.

MANNY

Daddy, is Uncle Gene taking me to football practice Saturday?

JAMES COOKE

Not this Saturday. I think I better take you myself.

KEENA

But daddy, I have choir practice Saturday.

JAMES COOKE

Oh that's right! I almost forgot about that. Okay, I will see if your Uncle Gene can drop Manny off and pick him up from the park. Junior can stay upstairs with the Robinsons. I will have them keep an eye on your mother too. I gave them a key and they have our number. I can come back home after I drop the two of you off. I will be back to pick you up first and then Manny.

EXT. THE HARLEM STREETS - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Gene and four other black men are standing on a corner drinking and passing a bottle of wine around.

James walks up to Gene as he holds Manny and Keena's hand. Gene just shakes his head and rolls his eyes in disgust.

JAMES COOKE

Man, what's wrong with you?

GENE

Why are you always sweating me man?

JAMES COOKE

Why didn't you pick up Manny from the park like you said you would? I just happened to go by there hoping to catch some of the practice. Man, you know you were supposed to be there with him. He is only seven!

GENE

(drinks some wine)

Yo man, I been covering for your ass long enough big bro. I have to make time for me.

JAMES COOKE

Come on Gene! Just look at you man. You trying to drink away the pain of losing mom and dad but it will never go away. It will always be there. Now, this is your niece and nephew. They love you and need you to be in their lives.

GENE

Hey man, I ain't bothering nobody! I am just...

JAMES COOKE

(cuts off Gene)

You need to start acting like you care for your family man! These guys you with ain't your family. You are twenty-seven years old now. How long can you do this? You need to straighten up and get your life right.

James turns around, gives Gene's boys a mean look and walks away disgusted with Keena, Manny and Junior.

Gene just fans off James and continues to sip from the wine bottle.

EXT. JAMES COOKE'S APARTMENT(HARLEM) - LATER

James approaches his apartment with Keena and Manny. He sees the Robinson family (ROBERT, GRACE and their twenty year old son CHARLIE) and Junior waiting on the apartment entry steps.

Charlie rushes up to James to let him know what has happened.

JAMES COOKE

Oh my God! What happened?

CHARLIE

Mr. Cooke, an ambulance came and rushed your wife to the hospital. The pain in her head got worse and she had a seizure.

Manny and Keena start to cry.

JAMES COOKE

Pain in her head? Seizure? She is going to be okay right?

ROBERT

We don't know. They left with her a while ago. We were waiting on you.

JAMES COOKE

Where did they take her?

GRACE

They rushed her down to Saint Vincent's Hospital.

ROBERT

Come on and we will drive you down there.

Robert and Grace rush over to their Cadillac, which is parked out in front of the apartments and jump in.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, Charlie can you watch the kids for me?

CHARLIE

Sure Mr. Cooke. I will take care of them for you.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, you two go with Charlie. And don't give him no problems.

James hands over Manny and Keena to Charlie. Charlie heads up the steps to the apartment with Manny and Keena.

He takes Junior also as he goes inside the apartment. James jumps into the Cadillac and the Cadillac peels off.

INT. SAINT VINCENT'S HOSPITAL - EVENING

James, Robert and Grace burst through the emergency room doors and rush up to the RECEPTIONIST. The receptionist is a young black woman.

JAMES COOKE

We are here to see a Mary Lee. I am her husband James Cooke and these folks are my family.

The receptionist picks up her list and starts flipping through the pages.

RECEPTIONIST

Let me see... Mary Lee is in room five-zero-nine.

(MORE)

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
Give me a second to call up there
to let them know you're here.

The Receptionist picks up the phone and dials it.

RECEPTIONIST
(on the phone)
Yes, I have Mary Lee's husband
James Cooke and his family here to
see her... So, send them up? Okay,
no problem.

The Receptionist hangs up the phone.

JAMES COOKE
Can we see her?

RECEPTIONIST
Sure, right down the hallway there.
Take the elevator on the left.

James and the Robinsons go to Mary's room. She lies there
with tubes, an I.V. and oxygen hooked up to her.

Several machines display numbers and monitor her vital signs.
Mary Lee opens her eyes, smiles and stretches her hand out.

James holds her hand and leans over to kiss her forehead.

JAMES COOKE
I am right here for you now baby.
You are going to be fine. These
folks are going to take good care
of you.

Mary Lee just nods her head to James, smiles once again and
closes her eyes.

James quickly turns his head to hide his tears from the
Robinsons. He wipes the tears away with his shirt sleeve.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN, a middle-aged Caucasian doctor, comes into
the room. He checks Mary Lee and then turns to James and the
Robinsons.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Hello folks. I am doctor Rothstein
and I will be in charge of Mrs.
Lee's care.

JAMES COOKE
(Shakes the doctor's hand)
Doctor Rothstone, I am James Cooke.
Mary Lee is my wife.

(MORE)

JAMES COOKE (cont'd)
These folks are like my family.
Robert and Grace Robinson.

ROBERT
Hello doctor... Is she going to be
okay?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
We are going to do everything
possible to help her.

JAMES COOKE
Doctor Rothstone can you...

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
(cuts James off)
Sir, the name is Doctor Rothstein.
Now, can I have a word with you
outside?

JAMES COOKE
Okay, I am coming. Would you two
just watch her for me please?

GRACE
We will be right here.

ROBERT
Yeah, we will stay with her.

James and Doctor Rothstein step out into the hallway.

JAMES COOKE
Doc, she looks a little
uncomfortable. Can you give her
something to make her more
comfortable?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Mr. Cooke, as I said, we are doing
everything we can to help your
wife. Right now she needs to be
stabilized.

JAMES COOKE
Now doc I need you to be up front
with me. Is she going to make it
through all this? I mean, I just
want to know.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Well, Mr. Cooke, we can never be
sure.

(MORE)

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN (cont'd)
We still have more tests to run
that might help us pinpoint how far
along the cancer has progressed.
She seems to be strong and a good
fighter.

JAMES COOKE
Can I stay by her side tonight?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Okay, I tell you what... I will
make arrangements for you to be by
her side through the morning.

JAMES COOKE
Thanks doc. Just bring me a blanket
and a pillow and I can sleep in the
chair.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
No problem. I will have one of the
nurses bring that to you.

James goes back into the room.

ROBERT
So, what's going on? Did he tell
you anything?

JAMES COOKE
I am going to be staying here with
Mary Lee. Can you and Grace go back
to the apartment and check on my
kids?

ROBERT
Sure! We can head that way right
now. We can let them stay upstairs
with us.

JAMES COOKE
Thank you so much. I can't tell you
two how much I appreciate this.

GRACE
Hey, that's what friends and
neighbors are for.

JAMES COOKE
You all are our family, not just
our friends or neighbors.

ROBERT

Just call us if there are any changes with your wife or if you need to check up on the kids.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, I will. Once again, thank you for everything.

James hugs Robert briefly and then Grace. Robert and Grace Approach Mary Lee.

GRACE

Hang in there Mary Lee. We are all pulling for you.

ROBERT

Yeah Mary Lee. You are in our thoughts and prayers.

Robert and Grace leave. James flops down in the comfortable chair next to Mary Lee's bed. He holds her hand and looks up.

JAMES COOKE

Lord, you know I have been with Mary Lee eleven years. Since we were teens. You also know how much I love her. God, if you have any mercy, please let no harm come to her.

A female Caucasian nurse comes into the room and hands James a blanket and pillow.

The nurse leaves and once again James looks towards the ceiling as he takes Mary Lee's hand.

JAMES COOKE

Oh Lord, I ask you to give me the courage to endure this but release the pain from her head and body. Cast out this cancer and comfort her. She is your child, so Lord give her peace. Please give her strength to go on. Lord, please just give her back to me. In Jesus' name... Amen.

The clock on the wall now reads four-thirty in the morning. James is resting in the chair by Mary Lee's bed, still holding her hand.

Suddenly the monitors start going crazy and making weird noises. James jumps up.

JAMES COOKE
Oh God! Somebody help!

James runs up the hall to the nurses' station. NURSE #1, a Caucasian female nurse and NURSE #2 an African-American female nurse are at the station.

Doctor Rothstein is there also.

JAMES COOKE
(out of breath)
Please come quickly! The Machines
are going crazy in there!

The two nurses, Doctor Rothstein and James rush to Mary Lee's room. Doctor Rothstein checks Mary Lee's vital signs.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
We need to get her down to the
emergency treatment room stat! Get
DOCTOR PERRY down here.

JAMES COOKE
What's happening to her? What's
going on?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
We need to get her emergency
treatment right now to stabilize
her.

JAMES COOKE
Who is Doctor Perry?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
He is a Specialist.

JAMES COOKE
A specialist? We are already in the
Intensive Care Unit. Why the hell
isn't the specialist already here?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Mr. Cooke, we need you to calm
down. Please go to the waiting room
and let us help your wife. Right
now we need to get her to another
room. We will come update you on
her condition as soon as we can.

JAMES COOKE
I will be right out in the waiting
room. Just take care of her...
Please!

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Sir, we are giving your wife the
best care possible.

NURSE #2
Doctor we need to move her now!

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Okay, let's go.

The doctor and nurses quickly wheel Mary Lee down the long hallway. James stands there in the hall watching.

He goes back to the waiting room and begins to pace the floor. The clock on the wall read four forty-five in the morning.

An hour later, James was sleeping in a chair. Doctor Rothstein walked in and tapped James on the shoulder.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Mr. Cooke! Wake up.

JAMES COOKE
(jumps up)
What's up? What's going on?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
(jumps back, startled)
Whoa Mr. Cooke! I was just coming
to update you on you wife's
condition.

JAMES COOKE
(rubs his eyes)
Is she okay?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
We have her stabilized but we need
you to help us make a tough
decision. She has a ruptured vessel
in her brain, caused by the cancer.
We need to operate on her right
away to release the pressure in her
head. However, we will need your
consent to operate.

JAMES COOKE
Can I see her?

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN
Sure, but only for a short time. We
need you to give us an answer right
away.

JAMES COOKE

I will only be a second. I just need to see her. She will help me make my decision.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN

You won't be able to communicate with her right now. We have her heavily sedated.

JAMES COOKE

Thanks doc. She may not be able to talk to me but I know she hears me. I know she will find a way to let me know.

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN

Okay Mr. Cooke. Your wife is down in room five-one-eight, down this hall on the left.

James goes down the hall and enters Mary Lee's room. Doctor Perry stands near Mary Lee, monitoring her condition.

There appears to be even more tubes going into Mary Lee. James slowly approaches Mary Lee, looks down at her and gives her a hug.

DOCTOR PERRY

Sir, you need to be real gentle with her.

JAMES COOKE

You Doctor Perry?

DOCTOR PERRY

Yes I am and you must be her husband... Do you have any questions or did Doctor Rothstein answer all your questions?

JAMES COOKE

Is this the only choice for her? I mean is there anything else you can do for her?

DOCTOR PERRY

I am afraid not. This is our only option. And given her current condition, we simply can't give you any guarantees or promises on her outcome from the surgery...

(MORE)

DOCTOR PERRY (cont'd)
Mr. Cooke, do you have any other
friends or family members you can
call to be here?

JAMES COOKE
Well, I am going to call my Aunt
KATE and my kids in a minute. I
want to be with my wife alone for a
second and I...

DOCTOR PERRY
(cuts James off)
Okay, but you need to remember that
time is not on our side. We need to
move on this.

JAMES COOKE
(frustrated)
Just give me a second with her!
Please!

Doctor Perry does one more quick evaluation of Mary Lee. He
just shakes his head and sighs.

DOCTOR PERRY
Okay, I will be right outside.

JAMES COOKE
Thanks. I appreciate this.

Doctor Perry leaves the room and as he closes the door behind
himself, James walks up to Mary Lee and takes her hand.

JAMES COOKE
Baby, is this what you want? I know
you can hear me so I need you to
let me know. Just squeeze my hand
if you want to go through with
this.

Mary Lee squeezes James' hand ever so slightly.

JAMES COOKE
Okay baby. I am going to get Kate,
Robert and Grace down here. I am
going to talk to the kids too. They
seem to be hanging in there... I
love you so much baby. Now, you
hang in there.

James leans over and gives Mary Lee a gentle kiss on her
cheek and then leaves.

The clock on the wall read eleven forty-five in the morning. Kate, Robert and Grace are in the waiting room sitting down as James paces the floor.

KATE

James, she is going to be okay.
Everything is in God's hands now.
All we can do is pray for her.

JAMES COOKE

I have ran out of prayers. The good
Lord knows how I feel!

Doctor Perry and Doctor Rothstein both come to the waiting room.

Their facial expressions tell it all as they look very upset. They signal for James to come forth but the whole group comes forward.

JAMES COOKE

How is she doing? Oh please give me
some good news!

The doctors look at each other waiting for the other to speak first.

DOCTOR PERRY

Well, the surgery was touch and go
but we have her stabilized. She is
in a comatose state at this time
and basically, all we can do is
monitor her.

JAMES COOKE

Can we go see her? Please...

DOCTOR ROTHSTEIN

Sure, but this time we need to stay
in the room with her. The nurses
will be there too.

JAMES COOKE

That's fine! Let's go!

They all surrounded Mary Lee's bed. Mary Lee's head was bandaged and she was unconscious.

This time she had an oxygen ventilation apparatus to breath for her.

JAMES COOKE
 (holds Mary's hand)
 Baby, if you can hear me please
 give me a sign.

There is no response for a while. Then suddenly her arms and her body began to quiver.

JAMES COOKE
 What's happening to her?

DOCTOR PERRY
 Those are involuntary movements,
 sort of like spasms or small
 seizures.

Doctor Perry checks out Mary Lee. Suddenly the heart monitor makes a tone and shows a flat line.

JAMES COOKE
 No! Mary Lee!

DOCTOR PERRY
 Okay we have a code blue here!
 Folks we need you to wait outside.
 Quickly!

They all start to move outside. Kate, Robert and Grace practically have to drag James out of the room.

Doctor Perry, Doctor Rothstein and the two nurses start CPR on Mary Lee. They attempt to revive her for several minutes.

The clock on the wall read twelve-seventeen in the afternoon. Doctor Perry checks Mary Lee's vital signs again. He looks at the clock on the wall.

DOCTOR PERRY
 Okay folks, I am going to call it.
 Time of death is twelve-seventeen
 PM. I will notify her husband.

Doctor Rothstein and the nurses start disconnecting the equipment, tubes and machines from Mary Lee.

Doctor Perry goes outside to the hallway where Kate, Robert and Grace are still trying to calm and comfort James. Doctor Perry slowly approaches James.

JAMES COOKE
 Is she okay? Did she make it?

DOCTOR PERRY
 (shakes his head no)
 I am sorry folks. We did everything
 we could for her.

James collapses to the floor and begins to cry. Robert, Kate and Grace help him up. They all do sort of a group hug and start crying together.

INT. JAMES COOKE'S APARTMENT(HARLEM) - LATER THAT DAY

James is sitting on the couch huddled with Manny, Keena and Junior.

He tries his best to be strong and choke back his tears. Kate, who was preparing the food in the kitchen, comes out and sits on the couch also.

JAMES COOKE
 (pulls the kids closer)
 I have something I need to tell you
 all. I need you all to listen good.
 Now, this is going to be very
 difficult for us all and I know it.
 But I have to tell you that your
 mother is not coming home.

KEENA
 (starts to cry)
 Why daddy? Where is she?

JAMES COOKE
 Well... Well... Your mother went to
 heaven. She has gone to be with the
 angels.

MANNY
 (Starts to cry)
 Daddy I don't want mommy to go!

KEENA
 Me neither.

Junior starts to cry after watching his brother and sister cry.

JAMES COOKE
 Look, we have to be strong. Your
 mother would want that. I mean it
 is okay to cry and feel angry or
 upset about this. But we have to
 pull together and move forward.

KATE

So, I need you all to help your dad out. We have to prepare your mother for her journey to heaven. Your father and I will be going to what is called a funeral.

KEENA

I want to go with my mom.

KATE

Honey you can't go with her. You are too young and you have a lot of living to do down here on earth. It's not your time.

JAMES COOKE

Now, Kate will be here for a while to help out, but then she needs to go back to South Carolina. The Robinsons will be helping us out too. I need you all to be on your best behavior. Keena and Manny, I really need your help now.

James tries to choke back his tears and hide his emotions.

JAMES COOKE

Aunt Kate, I need to go outside and get some fresh air. Will you take care of the kids for me?

KATE

Are you sure? It's raining outside.

JAMES COOKE

Yeah, I am sure. I will be okay.

KATE

Okay, I will watch them. I guess we can eat supper when you get back. Don't forget the Robinsons will be joining us tonight.

JAMES COOKE

I should be back in less than an hour.

James grabs his hooded jacket and heads out the apartment. As he walks down the hallway stairs, the normal ARGUING can be heard coming from the other apartments.

As he continues down the hallway towards the exit, the sounds of the Temptations' song, "I WISH IT WOULD RAIN" can be heard coming from one of the apartments.

James puts on his hood as he exits the apartment.

EXT. THE HARLEM STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

James crosses the street with his head down. He nearly gets hit twice as the tires of the cars can be heard SCREECHING to a halt.

As he passes an alley he hears a voice. The voice is from NAT, an African-American man in his forties.

NAT (O.S.)

Hey brother James, come here for a minute.

James slowly walks further into the alley.

JAMES COOKE

Who is that?

Nat steps into the light which is coming from the street light. He zips his pants and fixes his clothes up.

He has a lit joint in his mouth. He opens his umbrella back up and holds it over his head.

NAT

It's me...

JAMES COOKE

(cuts Nat off)

Nat!

NAT

Yeah Nat.

JAMES COOKE

What are you doing in the alley man?

NAT

Man I needed to take a leak.

Nat takes the joint out of his mouth and extends it out to James.

NAT

You want a hit of this joint man?

JAMES COOKE

No man, I am cool.

NAT

I heard the news about your wife
and I am so sorry man.

JAMES COOKE

Thanks man. It was so unexpected. I
mean she was so young.

NAT

Listen brother, if there is
anything I can do to help you out,
just let me know. You know I take
care of my folks down here in
Harlem.

JAMES COOKE

I appreciate the offer but I think
we will be cool.

NAT

Serious business brother, come see
me after you take care of your
family business. I am sure there is
something I can do for you.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, I will see you soon man.

James continued walking for a while. He passed the Apollo
Theater. There was a long line waiting to get in.

The marquee read, "JAMES BROWN APPEARING TONIGHT." The rain
began to pick up so James starts a light jog.

He starts doing in all-out sprint for a while. He sits on
some apartment stairs to catch his breath.

He bends forward and begins to cry uncontrollably.

JAMES COOKE

Lord I prayed to you! Why did you
have to take her so soon.

A BLACK TEENAGE BOY, who is walking his dog, stops and
watches James for a second.

BLACK TEENAGE BOY

Are you okay sir?

James quickly stands up and tries to compose himself.

JAMES COOKE

Yeah, I am okay young brother. I just need to head back to my family.

James starts running again.

INT. JAMES COOKE'S APARTMENT(HARLEM) - LATER

James rushed into the apartment, still soaked and wet. He sits on the couch and huddles up with his kids.

JAMES COOKE

It's going to be alright... We are going to make it through this.

They begin to cry together. Kate looked over to Robert and Grace and did a sort of nod. Robert and Grace left.

Kate went over and sat with them. She joined the huddle but managed to choke back her tears.

INT. THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

The church is pretty full at Mary Lee's funeral. James, his kids, Kate, Robert and Grace are all in the front row.

Mary Lee lies peacefully in her coffin. Mary Lee's Muslim brother, GURU SHABAZZ, finishes up his speech. James keeps checking his watch and looking around.

GURU SHABAZZ

In closing, I would like to say, my sister would not want for us to feel sadness or pain for her passing. She would want us to celebrate and remember her wonderful life. She was a wife, a mother, a seamstress and last but not least an outstanding sister. She is gone but will never be forgotten.

As we PAN around the church, there is not a dry eye in the audience.

INT. GENE'S APARTMENT(SPANISH HARLEM)- EVENING

James BANGS on Gene's apartment door. The door opens to a crack only and the door chain remains set.

Gene's Puerto Rican girlfriend, LUCY, peaks through the opening.

LUCY

How are you James? I heard about your mother.

JAMES COOKE

I am fine Lucy, now where is he?

LUCY

Who Gene?

JAMES COOKE

Yeah Gene.

LUCY

Well, he is getting dressed right now.

JAMES COOKE

Lucy, can I come in or are you going to let me stand out here until I get mugged?

Lucy unleashes the chain and allows James to walk in. James looks around the house as he enters and his mouth drops.

There are dirty dishes stacked in the sink. Roaches are crawling all over the place.

Dirty clothes, old newspapers and garbage litter the house. Lucy's two-year old son sits in a high chair at the dining room table. Her son looks filthy and like he has not been taken care of.

LUCY

Would you like some water? I mean that's all we have to drink, unless you want a beer.

JAMES COOKE

No thanks.

LUCY

You can have a seat if you want.

JAMES COOKE

(looks around again)
Sit where Lucy? Just let me go talk to my damn brother. I don't have time for this shit!

James walks up to Gene's room door and starts BANGING real hard.

GENE (O.S.)
Give me a minute Lucy!

James pushed open the door. Gene was standing there in his underwear and t-shirt. His room is very messy and disorganized.

A partially burned joint sits in an ashtray on top of a night stand table.

JAMES COOKE
It ain't Lucy, it's me man!

GENE
What the hell do you want?

James walks up to Gene with his fists balled up. Lucy steps between James and Gene with her baby in her arms.

LUCY
(starts to cry)
Please don't hurt him James...
Please!

JAMES COOKE
Man you could not even pay your respects to Mary Lee. I am through with you man!

James rushes past Lucy, nearly knocking her and the baby down.

INT. JAMES COOKE'S APARTMENT(DEC. 17) - AFTERNOON

It is one week before Christmas Eve. Kate is in the kitchen cleaning up and James is sitting at the dining room table sorting through letters and greeting cards.

KATE
Well, it's certainly good to see people are still sending you letters and cards.

JAMES COOKE
Yeah I guess. Problem is the envelopes are all empty. I mean I appreciate the letters and cards but some money would have helped a lot.

KATE

What are you talking about?

JAMES COOKE

Christmas is coming up and I just wanted it to be special for the kids. They cut my hours way back at Gordon's so things have been rough around here. Hell, we haven't even finished paying for my wife's funeral yet.

KATE

James you have to remember that times are rough. People just don't have any extra money. The rest of the family is struggling too.

JAMES COOKE

I know Aunt Kate, but that does not help me and the kids. I am so pissed off and stressed out right now!

KATE

(puts some plates away)
James, you have got to stay strong for the kids. You have to keep things together. You have to move on... We all have to move on. And I know that's easier said than done but Mary Lee would have wanted that.

JAMES COOKE

(slams his hand down)
Aunt Kate! I know what she would want. Remember, I was with her for eleven years!

KATE

Look James... I am just here trying to help you and the kids out. I am just as upset about her passing as you are.

JAMES COOKE

But Mary Lee should still be here. Why did she have to die?

James SWIPES the pile of letters and greeting cards from the table and they all fall to the floor.

He gets up, goes into the hallway closet and puts on a hat and coat. He leaves SLAMMING the door.

EXT. THE HARLEM STREETS - LATER THAT DAY

James walks through the harlem streets with his head down. The usual bums, pimps, prostitutes and drug pushers line the street corners, even in the cold.

James stops and looks across the street where the FIVE-STAR FOOD STORE sits on the corner.

INT. THE FIVE-STAR FOOD STORE - MOMENTS LATER

James walks up to the store checkout counter. A middle-aged black store clerk, BLUE, stands behind the counter.

JAMES COOKE

Hey, how are you doing Blue?

BLUE

Oh, I'm doing okay I guess. What can I do for you today James?

JAMES COOKE

I want to play some numbers.

BLUE

Let me guess... Five-one-five, right?

JAMES COOKE

That's right man, five-one-five. You got it.

BLUE

You been playing that number for a long time. Man, you are due to hit soon.

JAMES COOKE

Yeah, it's the only one I have ever played.

BLUE

That is your apartment number right?

JAMES COOKE

Yep.

Blue hands James the small ticket. James fills it out and returns it to Blue.

James then reaches in his pocket, pulls out some money and gives it to Blue.

JAMES COOKE

Wish me luck man. Lord knows I need it right now.

BLUE

Good luck young man. By the way, how are things at home?

JAMES COOKE

Things are still sort of rough right now but I am hoping things get better soon.

BLUE

Okay Brother, I will keep you in my prayers.

JAMES COOKE

Thanks Blue, I appreciate that man.

EXT. THE HARLEM STREETS - LATER

James is walking down the Harlem streets. He passes by JOE'S BARBER SHOP. Nat comes running out and catches up to James.

He is well dressed and in a two-piece suit. He starts walking alongside James.

NAT

What's up man?

JAMES COOKE

Nothing much. I just needed to stop by Blue's store to play me some numbers.

NAT

Some numbers man?

JAMES COOKE

Yeah some numbers! I need to hit this time because I need the bread for the holiday.

NAT

Man, I used to run with Blue back in the day. You ain't going to make no money playing them numbers.

JAMES COOKE

Look man, I told you I need some bread for the holiday. I have to come through for my kids.

NAT

Why don't you take a ride with me downtown. We can take in some of the holiday sights.

JAMES COOKE

How we going to do that man? How many times do I have to tell you I don't got no bread?

NAT

I can dig it brother but listen... I know things have been rough for you and your family. So, I will tell you what I am going to do for you. I will get some gifts for your kids. I will take you to Macy's and you can get them whatever you want. I just want to help you out man.

JAMES COOKE

You serious? You would do that for me? What do I have to do for you? If you're going to ask me to give you twice the bread back or something, I can't do it.

NAT

Listen man! I told you I would take care of you so don't sweat it. This one is on me. I will tell you what I want you to do for me when the time comes. And trust me, I don't need your bread.

JAMES COOKE

(shakes Nat's hand)

Thanks man! I appreciate this and I am sure my kids will too. You is one cool cat man.

NAT

No problem. I told you I take care of my Harlem family.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, I need to stop by my apartment for a while so I can see my kids. I can meet you at the subway station in about two hours.

NAT

That sounds cool brother. I'll be there.

INT. A NEW YORK CITY TRAIN - EVENING

Nat and James are sitting on a pretty crowded subway train. Nat is still well-dressed but James is dressed very casually with old dingy jeans, a coat and old worn boots.

Many people on the subway train stare at Nat and James.

NAT

(whispers to James)

Don't sweat them folks man. They don't know us.

JAMES COOKE

But, look at the way they are checking us out. I just don't feel comfortable man.

NAT

Just forget about it! You don't want to sweat these folks up here man. They will have the Fuzz on your ass. Stop freakin' out man. It's probably going to get worse as we get downtown.

JAMES COOKE

Okay man, I'm cool.

INT. A DOWNTOWN MALL - LATER THAT EVENING

The mall is decorated for Christmas. It is full of people who are walking through and doing their last minute Christmas shopping.

Nat and James ride the long escalator down to the first floor level of the mall. James looks around with a big smile on his face.

JAMES COOKE

Man, I sure appreciate this. Now I don't want you to spend all your bread on my kids.

NAT

It's cool brother... Listen man, why don't we get the toys last. I need to stop off at the jewelry store first. I just need to pick something up from there. After that you will be able to have a nice Christmas for your kids.

JAMES COOKE

Okay, but after we do this I have to book. I need to get back to my kids.

NAT

Hey, that's cool brother. I am going to book after we do this too.

INT. A MACY'S JEWELRY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Nat and James walk into a jewelry store. There is a Caucasian male clerk, JASON PARKMAN and a Caucasian female clerk, TRESSA MCINTYRE behind the counter.

As Nat and James walk in, James and Tressa look at each other and then stare at Nat and James.

TRESSA MCINTYRE

May I help you two gentlemen?

Nat looks around for a second and then looks down inside the glass jewelry display case.

NAT

(pointing)

How much for this gold ring?

TRESSA MCINTYRE

(with an attitude)

That will be three hundred fifty dollars.

NAT

(surprised)

Are you sure? Three hundred fifty dollars?

JASON PARKMAN

Yes! The price of the ring is three
fifty!

Jason and Tressa look at each other and shake their heads
with disgust.

Nat looks around the store, then outside the store where the
escalators are.

Nat unbuttons his suit jacket and pulls a .38 Caliber handgun
from his waistband with his left hand and points it at
Jason's head.

NAT

I think it will be free for us
today, along with the bread in your
drawer!

JAMES COOKE

(surprised)
What the hell are you doing man?

NAT

Watch the escalator man!

Nat takes out a second handgun with his right hand and shoves
the butt of the gun into James' chest.

NAT

Take this man and watch my ass!

James grabs the gun and looks down at it in shock.

TRESSA MCINTYRE

(with her hands raised)
Oh my God!

NAT

Shut up bitch or I will blow his
head off! Now, I want him to load
that bag over there with the
jewelry from here and the bread
from your cash register!

James was still just standing there in shock, looking at the
gun in his hand.

Jason starts loading the money from the cash register into a
bag and loading jewelry in the bag also.

NAT

Don't freeze up now brother! Your
Kids need shit, right?

JASON PARKMAN

I have kids too... Please don't
shoot me.

IN SLOW MOTION: Suddenly, two large armed Caucasian male security guards (SECURITY OFFICERS #1 and #2) come through the jewelry store entrance with guns drawn.

Security Officer #1 fires a shot hitting Nat in the left shoulder.

This causes Nat to inadvertently fire his gun, shooting Jason in the head. Jason drops to the floor.

Tressa screams and faints, falling to the floor.

JAMES COOKE

No!

James finally realizes he is still holding a gun. He throws the gun down and dives to the floor.

Nat raises his arm to return fire at the security guards. This time they both fire at Nat striking him several times.

Nat's lifeless body slumps over the glass jewelry display case as his gun drops from his hand to the floor.

BACK TO NORMAL SPEED: Security Officer #2 rushes over to Nat, with gun still drawn, to kick the gun away.

Security Officer #1 rushes over to James with his gun still drawn. James still lies on the floor, completely motionless.

Security Officer #2 joins Security Officer #1 and stands over James with his gun still drawn.

SECURITY OFFICER #1

Put your hands on your head nigger!

JAMES COOKE

(puts his hands on his
head)

Please don't shoot! I didn't do
nothing man!

SECURITY OFFICER #1

Just shut up and don't move!

Security Officer #2 holsters his gun, puts his knee on James' back and handcuffs him.

SECURITY OFFICER #1
 (on his two-way radio)
 Dispatch, we have shots fired here
 at the Macy's Jewelry department.
 We have one suspect down, one in
 custody and two store clerks down.
 Requesting an ambulance and the
 police to this location.

Security Officer #2 stands up, reaches down, grabs James by
 the back of his neck and stands him up.

SECURITY OFFICER #1
 (Holsters his gun)
 You're going down for this nigger.
 You picked the wrong store to rob!

JAMES COOKE
 Man, I told you I didn't do
 nothing!

Security Officer #1 checks Nat and shakes his head no to
 Security Officer #2.

He then checks Jason and once again shakes his head no.

As he kneels to check Tressa, she starts to come to. She was
 not struck in the gun fight.

A crowd begins to gather outside the jewelry store. Suddenly,
 several police officers storm the jewelry store along with
 two Paramedics.

James is lead out of the store by two Caucasian police
 officers as he shakes his head in disbelief of what has taken
 place.

INT. A JAIL ("THE TOMBS") - MORNING

James is sitting at a table in a meeting room inside a jail
 known as "The Tombs."

There is a large guard, JAIL GUARD #1 standing next to James.
 Seated across from James is a Caucasian man who is a PUBLIC
 DEFENDER.

JAMES COOKE
 I am telling the truth man! I had
 nothing to do with that damn
 robbery. I mean, I was there but I
 had no idea he was going to rob the
 jewelry store.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

(looking at James' file)

Look Mr. Cooke. I am going to be honest with you and cut through the chase. The evidence against you in this case is overwhelming. I really can't see any jury acquitting you of this crime. They have witness statements putting you there with a gun. There were two guns recovered from the scene.

JAMES COOKE

He brought two guns with him. He shoved the butt of one of the guns in my chest and I grabbed it out of his hand. Once I realized I had the gun in my hand, it was too late and them security guards started firing their guns. I threw the gun to the floor and dived to the floor. Everything happened real quick.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

(scratching his head)

So, are you expecting a jury to believe you just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time?

JAMES COOKE

Yeah man, because it's the truth! Now can you help get me out of this dump or what? I can't take this place no more man.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Well, Mr. Cooke, I am afraid not. You will have to be here until your trial.

JAMES COOKE

Until my trial? How long will that be?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

I am sorry but I have no idea. There are people who have been stuck in here as much as a year before they get a trial.

JAMES COOKE

Man, are you going to help me prove I am innocent or not?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Well, to be perfectly honest, I think your best option would be to do a plea deal.

JAMES COOKE

What do you mean a plea deal?

PUBLIC DEFENDER

You would simply plead guilty to all charges and you would receive less time.

JAMES COOKE

But I keep telling you I am not guilty!

PUBLIC DEFENDER

That is what a jury of twelve will have to decide. And if they decide you are guilty, you will be going down for a long time. Unfortunately, you would probably die in prison if you are convicted.

JAMES COOKE

Man I can't go down for something I did not do!

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Look, I am just trying to help you. You need to ask yourself if you can handle the consequences of a guilty verdict. Now, it is up to you but I am hoping you don't gamble with your life.

JAMES COOKE

I am going to call my Aunt Kate. She will find a lawyer who will fight for me.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Suit yourself, but any good lawyer will tell you the same thing.

JAIL GUARD #1

(taps James on the
shoulder)

That's it young man! Your time is up.

James gets up and is escorted back through the prison gates.

INT. A JAIL CELL - AFTERNOON

James is in his cell with his cell mate, SAMPSON. Sampson is an African-American male who is huge at about 6'5 and 260 pounds. He is doing push-ups.

SAMPSON

One hundred ninety-eight, one
hundred ninety-nine, two hundred!

Sampson collapses to the floor on his stomach. James stands over Sampson.

JAMES COOKE

Are you okay man?

SAMPSON

(still breathing hard)
Yeah brother, I'm cool.

James sits on the lower bunk bed.

JAMES COOKE

Why do you do two hundred push-ups
every day?

SAMPSON

They keep me in shape. I don't work
out in the yard. There is this cat
named Pablo from the Young Lords
gang who wants to fight me. Him and
his gang work out in the yard and I
just try to avoid them.

JAMES COOKE

I have already met Pablo. He is one
crazy cat.

SAMPSON

(gets in sitting position)
He thinks he runs things around
here. I am afraid if we fight I
might seriously hurt him. He is a
boxer so he is supposedly good with
his hands.

JAMES COOKE

What? That cat is a boxer?

SAMPSON

Yeah and he looks at me as a
threat. I am the biggest cat up in
here.

(MORE)

SAMPSON (cont'd)
He feels if he can take me down it
will make him more powerful in
here.

JAMES COOKE
That ain't even cool bro.

SAMPSON
Trust me man, I am not worried. He
should be worried. Word is he is
going to kick my black ass when we
go to lunch.

JAMES COOKE
What are you going to do?

SAMPSON
(whispering)
Can you keep a secret?

JAMES COOKE
Sure!

SAMPSON
He doesn't know I am a Judo expert
and a Shotokan Karate expert, so I
have the element of surprise.

JAMES COOKE
(with a surprised look)
Judo? Shotokan?

SAMPSON
They are Japanese fighting forms.
You know, martial arts.

JAMES COOKE
Can you teach me?

SAMPSON
No problem man. I can teach you
some techniques... But remember,
You need lots of discipline. It's
not only about kicking a cat's ass.

JAMES COOKE
Okay, I can dig it man.

INT. THE JAIL CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Pablo sits at a table with about ten Young Lords members.
There are four large white Jail Guards, including Jail Guard
#1, standing near the back entrance.

As Sampson passes with his tray of food, PABLO, a Puerto Rican stands up in front of him. Pablo is about 5'10 and pretty well built.

The other members of the Young Lords stand up too.

PABLO
Hey man, I told you I was going to
kick your ass!

Sampson calmly puts his tray of food down on the table.

SAMPSON
Dig this man! I don't want no shit
from you. Now, back off before you
get hurt!

Pablo looks at his boys, laughs and falls back into a boxing stance.

PABLO
You are a funny man!

Three of the Jail guards, excluding Jail Guard #1, start to move towards the action.

Jail Guard #1 raises his hand and the other three guards stop.

JAIL GUARD #1
Hold up a second... Let them settle
the score. I am betting Sampson
will take his ass down.

Pablo throws a few punches at Sampson. He misses as Sampson ducks and side-steps the punches.

Suddenly, Sampson grabs Pablo and does a Judo hip throw, slamming Pablo hard to the ground.

Pablo just lies on the floor unconscious. Sampson turns around to face the other Young Lords gang members.

SAMPSON
Who else wants some?

The Young Lords all quickly sit down and start eating their food as if nothing happened.

The four guards surround Sampson with their clubs ready as the alarm sounds.

JAIL GUARD #1

Okay Sampson. It's all over. Now,
we need you to come with us.

SAMPSON

I'll come with y'all. I am not
going to resist. Shit, that cat
been messing with me. I never said
nothing to him. He started it and I
finished it man!

One of the other Jail Guards kneels down and checks on Pablo.
Pablo comes to and is escorted out of the cafeteria with
Sampson.

INT. A COURTROOM -(JUNE 1970)- MORNING

James is seated next to his Lawyer, HAROLD SCHWARTZ, who is
Jewish.

James is dressed in his jail outfit and he is in handcuffs
and leg restraints.

The courtroom is filled with people. Kate and Robert are in
the front row.

JUDGE ADAM WOLOSCHIK, A Caucasian male, was on the bench. The
Jury was made up of eight Caucasian males and four Caucasian
Females.

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY, a Caucasian female, was the Prosecutor.
She stood up and cleared her throat.

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY

The evidence in this case will show
this was a carefully planned attack
and robbery by this defendant and
his now deceased friend Nat. The
two of them walked in that jewelry
store with guns drawn and held it
up.

The camera PANS around the courtroom. As it ZOOMS in on Kate,
she appears to be sobbing already.

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY

One of the store clerks, whose name
was Jason Parkman, was fatally shot
in the head. This man had a family
and did not deserve this.

(MORE)

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY (cont'd)

We will have sworn witness testimony which will place this defendant in the jewelry store, during the robbery, with a gun.

INT. THE COURTROOM - THE NEXT DAY - MORNING

Tressa McIntyre is on the stand. There is a box of tissues next to her on the stand. She is clearly upset and starts crying right away.

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY

For the record Ms. McIntyre, is one of the people who participated in the robbery of your jewelry store in this courtroom?

TRESSA MCINTYRE

Yes he is...

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY

Please point to that person at this time.

TRESSA MCINTYRE

(pointing to James)

That's him right there!

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY

Let the record show she pointed to the defendant, James Cooke.

JUDGE ADAM WOLOSCHIK

So ordered.

LAURIE HAZEWORTHY

To the best of your recollection, what can you tell us about the events of that day?