

KING HEDLEY II

Synopsis

King Hedley II takes place in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1985. In the backyard of a neighborhood now completely blasted by decay and urban blight, King Hedley II, with a warrior spirit but no education or prospects, daydreams with his friend Mister about opening a Kung Fu video rental store using the money they make selling stolen refrigerators. Aunt Ester has died, the Hill District is without commercial or spiritual resources, and King's dreams are doomed to a violent end in Wilson's darkest and most symbolic play.

Characters

KING HEDLEY II: thirty-six years old, he is the spiritual son of King Hedley from *Seven Guitars*. He is engaged in life and death struggles with a scar to prove it. The slash down the left side of his face has left him with a glass eye. He looks like a bogeyman at the crossroads. He spent seven years in prison and strives to live by his own moral code.

RUBY: King's mother and blues singer, sixty-one.

TONYA: King's girlfriend who is pregnant and wants to have an abortion because she does not want to bring a baby into this corrupt, crazy world, thirty-five.

ELMORE: Sixty-six years old and an old hustler who has been carrying a torch for Ruby for more than 30 years. He exudes an air of elegance and confidence born of his many years wrestling with life. He knows the secret of King's true patrimony.

STOOL PIGEON: A sixty-five year old harmonica player also seen in *Seven Guitars*. He is now a newspaper-collecting history carrier.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-01
Time: 1:30
Type 1: Comedic
Type 2: Commerce
Type 3: Money

Act 1; Scene 3

KING HEDLEY II

Tonya's pictures. They ain't got the pictures. Told me they can't find them and they ain't got no record of them. I showed him the receipt and he told me that didn't count. I started to grab him by his throat. How in the hell the receipt not gonna count? That's like money. I told his dumb ass to get the manager. The manager come talking about their system. Say it's based on phone numbers. I told him I didn't care about his system. A receipt is a receipt all over the world. You can't have no system where a receipt don't count. You can't just go making up the rules. I don't care if you Sears and Roebuck, Kmart or anybody else. You can't make up no rule where a receipt don't count. I tried to tell him this politely like Mama Louise taught me. He wasn't listening. He trying to talk while I'm talking. I told him, "Motherfucker, shut up and listen to me!" He threatened to call the police. I told him he better call the United States Marines too. The police come and threatened to arrest me. They tried to take my receipt. I told them they have to kill me first. Without that receipt I'm going to jail. They gonna charge me with fraud, forgery, extortion, grand theft, larceny, second degree robbery and anything else they can think of. They took the number off the receipt and said they would track the pictures down.

They so busy talking about their system they got to prove to me the receipt don't count. See, they don't know but they gonna give me my goddamn pictures, I don't bother nobody. But I can turn that around real quick.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-02
Time: 2:10
Type 1: Serio-Comedic
Type 2: Employment/Unemployment
Type 3: Wealth

Act 1; Scene 3

KING HEDLEY II

My fifth grade teacher told me I was gonna make a good janitor. Say she can tell that by how good I erased the blackboards. Had me believing it. I come home and told mama Louise I wanted to be a janitor. She told me I could be anything I wanted. I say, "Okay, I'll be a janitor." I thought that was what I was supposed to be. I didn't know no better. That was the first job I got. Cleaning up that bar used to be down on Wylie. Got one job the man told me he was gonna shoot me if he caught me stealing anything. I ain't worked for him ten minutes. I quit right there. He calling me a thief before I start. Neesi told me I shouldn't have quit. But I'm a man. I don't bother nobody. And I know right from wrong. I know what's right for me. That's where me and the rest of the people part ways. Tonya ask me say, "When we gonna move?" She want a decent house. One the plaster ain't falling off the walls. I say, "Okay but I got to wait." What I'm waiting on? I don't know. I'm just waiting. I told myself I'm waiting for things to change. That mean I'm gonna be living here forever. Tonya deserve better than that. I go for a job and they say, "What can you do." I say, "I can do anything. If you give me the tanks and the airplanes I can go out there and win any war that's out there."

I can dance all night if the music's right. Ain't nothing I can't do. I could build a railroad if I had the steel and a gang of men to drive the spikes. I ain't limited to nothing. I can go down there and do Mellon's job. I know how to count money. I don't loan money to everybody who ask me. I know how to do business. I'm talking about mayor ... governor, I can do it all. I ain't got no limits. I know right from wrong. I know which way the wind blow too. It don't blow my way.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-03
Time: 1:45
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Judicial Process
Type 3: Societal Order

Act 1; Scene 3

KING HEDLEY II

I ain't sorry for nothing I done. And ain't gonna be sorry. I'm gonna see to that. 'Cause I'm gonna do the right thing. Always. It ain't in me to do nothing else. We might disagree about what that is. But I know what is right for me. As long as I draw a breath in my body I'm gonna do the right thing for me. What I got to be sorry for? People say, "Ain't you sorry you killed Pernell?" I ain't sorry I killed Pernell. The nigger deserve to die. He cut my face. I told the judge, "Not Guilty." They thought I was joking. I say, "The motherfucker cut me! How can I be wrong for killing him?" That's common sense. I don't care what the law say. The law don't understand this. It must not. They wanna take and lock me up. Where's the understanding? If a burglar break in a white man's house to steal his TV and the white man shoot him they don't say he wrong. The law understand that. They pat him on the back and tell him to go on home.

You see what I'm saying? The jury come back and say, "Guilty." They asked them one by one. They all said, "Guilty." Had nine white men and three white women. They all said, "Guilty." They wouldn't look at me. I told them to look at me. Look at that scar.

I got closer to where they could see my scar. The judge like to had a fit. They had six deputies come at me from all sides. They said I tried to attack the jury. I was just trying to get closer so they could see my face. They tried to run out the door. They took and put me in solitary confinement. Said I was unruly.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-04
Time: 2:35
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Murder
Type 3: Revenge

Act 2; Scene 2

KING HEDLEY II

. . . Pernell made me kill him. Pernell called me “champ”. I told him my name's King. He say, “Yeah, champ.” I go on. I don't say nothing. I told myself, “He don't know.” He don't know my daddy killed a man for calling him out of his name. He don't know he fucking with King Hedley II. I got the atomic bomb as far as he's concerned. And I got to use it. They say God looks after fools and drunks. I used to think that was true. But seeing as how he was both . . . I don't know anymore. He called me “champ” and I didn't say nothing. I put him on probation.

Saturday. I don't know why it's always on a Saturday. Saturday I went up to buy me some potatoes. I say, “I want to have some mashed potatoes.” I told Neesi, say, “You get the milk and butter and I'll get the potatoes.” I went right up there to Hester's on Wylie. I got halfway down there and I seen Pernell. First thing I tell myself is, “I ain't gonna be nobody's champ today.” I fix that hard in my head and I try to walk past him. I didn't want to ignore him so I say, “How you doing, Pernell?” No sooner than the words got out my mouth then I felt something hot on my face. A hot flash and then something warm and wet. This nigger done cut me! He hit me with that razor and I froze. I didn't know what happened. It was like somebody turned on a light and it seem like everything stood still and I could see him smiling. Then he ran. I didn't know which way he ran. I was still blinded by that light. It took the doctor four hours and a hundred and twelve stitches to sew me up. I say, “That's alright, the King is still here.” But I figure that scar got to mean something. I can't take it off. It's part of me now. As long as Pernell was still walking around it wasn't nothing but a scar. I had to give it some meaning.

I told myself, "It's me or him." even though I knew that was a lie. I saw his funeral. I heard the preacher. I saw the undertaker. I saw the gravediggers. I saw the flowers. And then I see his woman. That's the hardest part. It was hard but I told myself she got to suffer. She got to play the widow. She got to cry the tears.

About two weeks later I saw Pernell going into Irv's bar. He went straight back to the phone booth. I don't know who he was calling but that was the last call he made. I saw my scar in the window of the phone booth. I tapped on the glass. He turned and looked and froze right there. The first bullet hit him in the mouth. I don't know where the other fourteen went. The only regret is I didn't get away. I didn't get away with murder that time. But I done got smarter. The next one's gonna be self-defense. The next one ain't gonna cost me nothing.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-05
Time: 2:35
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Value of Life
Type 3: Progeny

Act 2; Scene 3

KING HEDLEY II

Tonya. Look here a minute. I seen Pernell's grave. I took me by surprise. He got a marker. It say, "Pernell Sims, 1949-1974. Father. Son. Brother." I didn't even know Pernell had no kids.

His daddy laying out in the cemetery. That's like me and my daddy. I wasn't but three years old when he died. I told myself Pernell fucked up. If he hadn't called me "champ," he'd still be alive. But then I had something to do with that too. I didn't expect to see his grave. I never thought about where Pernell was buried. I looked at it a long time. I tried to walk away but I couldn't. I found myself wondering what color his casket was. They say your hair keep growing. I wonder if that's true.

I tried to see Pernell laying up there with his old simple self.

Tonya. Look at that. I ain't never looked at no flower before. I ain't never tried to grow none. I was coming out the drugstore and they had them seeds on the counter. I say, "I'm gonna try this. Grow Tonya some flowers. I ain't got nothing to lose but a dollar. I'll pay a dollar to see how it turn out." Ruby told me they wasn't gonna grow. Made me feel like I should have left them there at the drugstore. But then they grew. Elmore stepped on them and they still growing. That's what made me think of Pernell. Pernell stepped on me and I pulled his life out by the root. What does that make me? It don't make me a big man. Most people see me coming and they go the other way. They wave from across the street. People look at their hands funny after they shake my hand. They try to pretend they don't see my scar when that's all they looking at. I used to think

Pernell did that to me. But I did it to myself. Pernell put that scar on my face, but I put the bigger mark on myself. That's why I need this baby, not 'cause I took something out the world but because I wanna put something in it. Let everybody know I was here. You got King Hedley II and then you got King Hedley III. Got rocky dirt. Got glass and bottles. But it still deserve to live. Even if you do have to call the undertaker. Even if somebody come along and pull it out by the root. It still deserve to live. It still deserve that chance. I'm here and I ain't going nowhere. I need to have that baby. Do you understand?

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-06
Time: 2:30
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Progeny
Type 3: Love

Act 1; Scene 2

RUBY

I done tried everything I know. King don't believe I love him. It's a mother's love. It don't never go away. I love me but I love King more. Sometimes I might not love me but there don't never come a time I don't love him. He don't understand that.

King don't know he lucky to be here. I didn't want to have no baby. Seem to me like I got off to a bad start. I wanted to have an abortion. Somebody sent me up there to see Aunt Ester. I thought she did abortions. It didn't take me long to find out I was in the wrong place. She was sitting in a room with a red curtain. A little old woman wearing a stocking cap. I can't say if she had any teeth or not. She was just sitting there. Told me to come closer where she could put her hands on my head. I got real peaceful. Seem like all my problems went away. She told me man can plant the seed but only God can make it grow. Told me God was a good judge. I told her that's what scared me. She just laughed and told me, "God has three hands. Two for that baby and one for the rest of us." That's just the way she said it. "God got three hands. Two for that baby and one for the rest of us. You got your time coming." I never will forget that. I used to look at King and try and figure it out. But I ain't seen nothing to make her say that. I thought maybe she was just telling me that but she ain't supposed to lie about nothing like that. I just ain't never seen nothing that would make him that special. That's what I'm telling you about that baby you carrying. You never know what God have planned. You can't all the time see it. That's what Louise used to tell me. You can't all the time see it but God can see it good.

Life's got its own rhythm. It don't always go along with your rhythm. It don't always be what you think its gonna be.

(Starts to exit into the house.) That's all life is ...trying to match up them two rhythms. You ever match them up and you won't have to worry about nothing.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-07
Time: 3:00
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Women's Status
Type 3: Love Sexuality

Act 2; Scene 3

RUBY

Walter Kelly was a big man with jet black hair. Brown-skinned man played a trumpet and I sang in his band for awhile. He tried to make love to me but I didn't want no part of him 'cause he was too good-looking and he already had a gang of women. Everybody expected 'cause I sang in his band that he could have do with me like he wanted. He thought that at one time himself but I got him straight on that. We was sitting in his car. He had a car with a top you could put down. We was having a drink and just laughing and singing and fooling around when he put his hand under my dress. I had men put their hand under my dress before. They want to see what you got. They like to see how it fit in their hand. They say they can tell what kind of woman you is. Walter Kelly got his hand all the way up under my dress and he touched me there. I told him to stop. He just laughed. We was drinking from a pint bottle. I took the bottle and broke it on the car handle. I cut my hand pretty bad but I put the glass up to his throat. Blood was running all down my hand and everywhere. I told him to lick it. I told him I wanted him to taste my blood 'cause if he didn't move his hand from under my dress I was gonna taste his. I rubbed my hand all over his face. There was blood everywhere. My hand looked like it wasn't gonna stop bleeding. He moved his hand and I got out of the car. I found out later I was on my period and I got mad. I told myself I wished I had cut him 'cause there wasn't nobody's blood in the car but mine.

He never did mess with me no more. We became good friends. I stopped singing about two years after that night in the car. I just stopped for no reason. I did it to myself. Said I don't want to sing no more. It had done lost something. The melody or something I couldn't tell. I just know it stopped having any meaning for me. After I quit singing my hair turned gray. My hair turned gray and I didn't even

know it. I went upstairs to the bathroom and seen I had gray hair. Seem like I didn't have nothing to show for it. I said, "I'm gonna die and ain't nobody gonna miss me." I got dressed and said, "I'm going go find me a man...if nothing else he might miss me in the morning when I'm gone." We went to the Ellis hotel. He had a mustache and a big hat. It was that hat that made him look nice. He was a rough man. He turned me over his knee and spanked me. That was the first time anybody ever did that. He asked me did I like it. I told him I didn't know, he'd have to do it again. It had been a long time since anybody had touched me. It kinda felt good. Just to know I had been touched. We had a good time. Then it was time to go. I asked him if he was gonna miss me. He said he was, but I don't know if he was telling the truth. I went back and looked in the mirror and my hair was still gray. I told myself, "I'm still a woman. Gray hair and all."

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-08
Time: 2:05
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Death
Type 3: Separation/ Loss

Act 2; Scene 4

RUBY

They showed me the body. They come up and got me. His sister had gone to Mobile and they asked me to come down and see if it was him. I didn't want to look. I grabbed hold my arm and just squeezed. He had his mouth open. That's what I always will remember. Wasn't much more there. He was shot five times in the head. I looked away and something told me to look back. One shot had hit him in the nose and it just wasn't there no more. I don't know where it was. It wasn't on his face. They asked me did I know him. I told them, naw, I didn't know him, I ain't had a chance to find out too much about him. I told them I knew who it was. "That's Leroy Slater. I was living with him at 131 Warren Street." They asked me to sign some papers. One man told me he was sorry. I left out of there and walked on back home. That was the saddest day.

I couldn't look at Elmore after I found out what he had done. Even though I loved him, it was a long time before I could look at him. I felt so sad. I said I was gonna quit living. I stole away and cried. I didn't want nobody to see me. I felt like I was about to lose my mind. I cried and then I dried my eyes. Then I'd cry again. Seem like the world had gone crazy. Then everything stopped. They carried him on out there and put him in the ground. Leroy Slater. A good man. I never will forget him. They say life have its own rhythm. I wish it didn't have none like that. That was the saddest I ever been.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-09
Time: 2:00
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2:
Type 3:

Act 1; Scene 2

TONYA

Why? Look at Natasha? I couldn't give her what she needed. Why I wanna go back and do it again? I ain't got nothing else to give. I can't give myself. How I'm gonna give her? I don't understand what to do...how to be a mother. You either love too much or don't love enough. Don't seem like there's no middle ground. I look up, she ten years old and I'm still trying to figure out life. Figure out what happened. Next thing I know she grown. Talking about she a woman. Just 'cause you can lay down and open your legs to a man don't make you a woman. I tried to tell her that. She's a baby! She don't know nothing about life. What she know? Who taught her? I'm trying to figure it out myself. Time I catch up, its moved on to something else. I got to watch her being thrown down a hole its gonna take her a lifetime to crawl out and I can't do nothing to help her. I got to stand by and watch her. Why I wanna go back through all that? I don't want to have a baby that younger than my grandchild. Who turned the world around like that? What sense that make? I'm thirty-five years old. Don't seem like there's nothing left. I'm through with babies. I ain't raising no more. Ain't raising no grandkids. I'm looking out for Tonya. I ain't raising no kid to have somebody shoot him. To have his friends shoot him. To have the police shoot him. Why I want to bring another life into this world that don't respect life? I don't want to raise no more babies when you got to fight to keep them alive.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-10
Time: 2:40
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Despair
Type 3: Motherhood

Act 1; Scene 2

TONYA

You take Little Buddy Will's mother up on Bryn Mawr Road. What she got? A heartache that don't never go away. She up there now sitting down in her living room. She got to sit down 'cause she can't stand up. She sitting down trying to figure it out. Trying to figure out what happened. One minute her house is full of life. The next minute it's full of death. She was waiting for him to come home and they bring her a corpse. Say, "Come down and make the identification. Is this your son?" Got a tag on his toe say "John Doe." They got to put a number on it. John Doe number four. She got the dinner on the table. Say, "Junior like fried chicken." She got some of that. Say, "Junior like string beans." She got some of that. She don't know Junior ain't eating no more. He got a pile of clothes she washing up. She don't know Junior don't need no more clothes. She look in the closet. Junior ain't got no suit. She got to go buy him a suit. He can't try it on. She got to guess the size. Somebody come up and tell her, "Miss So-and-So, your boy got shot." She know before they say it. Her knees start to get weak. She shaking her head. She don't want to hear it. Somebody call the police. They come and pick him up off the sidewalk. Dead nigger on Bryn Mawr Road. They got to quit playing cards and come and pick him up. They used to take pictures. They don't even take pictures no more. They pull him out of the freezer and she look at him. She don't want to look. They make her look. What to do now? The only thing to do is call the undertaker. The line is busy. She got to call back five times. The undertaker got so much business he don't know what to do. He losing sleep. He got to hire two more helpers to go with the two he already got. He don't even look at the bodies no more. He couldn't tell you what they look like. He only remember the problems he have with them. This one so big and fat if he fall off the table it take six men to pick him up. That one ain't got no cheek. That one

eyes won't stay closed. The other one been dead so long he got maggots coming out his nose. The family can't pay for that one. The coroner wants to see the other one again. That one's mother won't go home. The other one...

(TONYA stops to catch her breath.)

I ain't going through that. I ain't having this baby...and I ain't got to explain it to nobody.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-11
Time: 2:00
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Money
Type 3: Theft

Act 1; Scene 2

ELMORE

Money ain't nothing. I ain't had but a dollar sixty-seven cents when I met your mama. I had a hundred dollar Stetson hat, a pint of gin and a razor. That and a dollar sixty-seven cents. I'm walking around with a hundred-dollar hat and a dollar and sixty-seven cents in my pocket. I told myself, "Something wrong. This ain't working out right." The razor was my daddy's razor. He had cut him eleven niggers with that razor. Had good weight to it. Felt nice in your hands. Make you wanna cut somebody. The pint of gin I had just borrowed from the after hour joint. I stepped outside and saw her standing there. I asked her name and she told me. Told me say, "My name's Ruby." And somehow that fit her like she was a jewel or something precious. That's what I told her say, "You must be precious to somebody." She told me she ain't had nobody. We got to talking and one thing led to another. I took and spent a dollar sixty cents on her. Bought me a nickel cigar. Now I got a razor, a pint of gin, a hundred-dollar Stetson, a cigar, two cents and a woman. I was ready for whatever was out there. I woke up in the morning and felt lucky. Pawned my Stetson. Got seven dollars and went down the gambling joint. Playing dollar tonk. Left out of there broke. She back at my place waiting on me. I got to at least bring dinner. I looked up and seen a white fellow standing on the corner. He wasn't doing anything. Just standing there. Had on a gray hat. I told myself, "He got some money." I walked right on by. I didn't look at him. When I got even with him, I threw him up against the wall. I told myself I wasn't gonna use my razor unless I had to. He gave me his money and I started to run. I can't walk away. I'm running but I ain't running fast. I heard the bullet when it passed me. That's a sound I don't never want to hear again. You can hear the air move. When that bullet split the air it make a sound. If you don't know I will tell you. You can fly. I was running so fast my feet wasn't touching the

ground. Yet I moving through the air. What I'm doing? I'm flying. Ain't nothing else you can call it. I got away and told myself I was lucky. Then I knew why I had woke up feeling like that. When I got to where I could look in my hand to see what I had. I looked down and I had seven dollars. I told myself, hell, if I could get fifty cents I can go back and get my hat out of the pawn shop. Call it even. Start over again tomorrow.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-12
Time: 2:10
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Murder
Type 3: Redemption

Act 2; Scene 2

ELMORE

I'm sixty-six years old. I ain't never had to use my pistol but once. It was enough for most people just knowing I had it. It was enough for me. I had to cut me a couple of people but I ain't never had to use my pistol but once. I was playing a heavy game back then too. I was leaning so far I had to try to hold on. My game was like a knife jabbing at you. Sometime I thought I might go over the edge and hurt myself. I never did fall until that thing with Leroy. Until then I was one of the most righteous motherfuckers you could find. I had my game together and was playing it. I don't know how I ended up in that barbershop with a gun in my hand.

They give me them five years and I was laying in that jail with my face turned to the wall. I ain't never slept like that. But that Leroy thing just grabbed hold of me. I took away too much. I took away all his women. He ain't gonna have no more of them. I took away all his pleasure. I took away all his pain. And you need that, otherwise you living half of life.

I took that away. Everything he was gonna learn. I took away too much.

I laid with my face to the wall for two years before I could turn over. Ruby used to write me letters. Her and my mama. That's the only way I got to where I could turn my back to the wall. I was alright after that. I had made my peace with God but I found out later you got to make peace with yourself. See, when you pulled that trigger you done something. You done something more than most other people. You know more about life 'cause you done been to that part of it. Most people don't never get over on that side...that part of life. They live on the safe side. But see...you done been God. Death is something he do. God decide when somebody

ready. Not you. He decide when he want somebody. God don't like that, you thinking you him. He cut you loose.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-13
Time: 2:35
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Gambling
Type 3: Money

Act 2; Scene 4

ELMORE

It is about me! Who else it gonna be about? I got to live my life. I can't live it for nobody else. It is about me! How it gonna be otherwise? I look out from standing over here. You over there. We see different things. If we can't agree on what we see I got to find somebody who do. Leroy was looking to find anybody he can get. He hooked up with Ruby and that disposition got worse. He frown up every time he see me.

I ain't got no hard feeling about nothing. Ruby was grown and I didn't have no woman cause I didn't want one. All right now, there was a big crap game. The Mullin brothers...there was three of them but only two had showed up. They come on through with about ten thousand dollars. They figure they'd use that to clean everybody out and then move on to the next city. If you wasn't careful every nigger in Montgomery would be broke and it be hard times for the next three months.

The crap game had been going on for about four days and the Mullin brothers was losing. After three days they called Mobile and sent for the other brother. I had a little bit of money and a fellow named Ward Henry come and got me...asked me to come and go down to the crap game with him. He said, "Let's stop and get Leroy Slater." He say Leroy knew how to handle a gun and in case the Mullin brothers wanted to get nasty we could back one another up. I say all right, and we went on up there where he was staying with Ruby. Leroy say he ain't had no money. I told him I'd loan him fifty dollars but he'd have to split half his winnings with me. That's usually the way that work.

If you win you don't mind 'cause without that loan you wouldn't have nothing. This way you got something.

Leroy say okay and we go on down there. The Mullins brothers had a run of bad luck. It ain't had nothing to do with their skill as a gambler. It was just bad luck. We left out of there all three winners. Leroy had two hundred and fifty dollars. He took and give me a hundred. I didn't say nothing, I just kept my hand out. I asked him for my fifty dollars. He said it was in the hundred. I told him no. Win, lose or draw, he still owed me fifty dollars. I told him say if he didn't pay me the fifty dollars I was gonna tell everybody I know. We argued about it and he turned and walked off calling me a bunch of names.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-14
Time: 2:15
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Value of Life
Type 3: Money

Act 2; Scene 4

ELMORE

. . . You don't know. You need to shut up if you talking what you don't know. That ain't had nothing to do with my fifty dollars. I went around telling everybody Leroy owed me fifty dollars. I figured I'd shame him in to paying me. I told everybody I saw. All right. I was in this bar...Big Jake's Rendezvous Lounge. Leroy come and saw me. I thought he was gonna pay me my fifty dollars. I spoke to him and the next thing I knew he had pulled a gun on me telling me he was gonna kill me if I kept putting the bad mouth on him. Now I didn't see the pistol when he pulled it on me. It caught me by surprise. I wasn't looking for that. He shoved it in my face. Held it right between my eyes. I'm supposed to be a dead man 'cause he was supposed to pull the trigger. That's the first thing you learn about carrying a pistol. When you pull it, you better use it.

Now everybody looking at me trying to figure out what I'm gonna do. I went home and laid across the bed. I couldn't see where my life was going. I said I was gonna make a change. My life seem like it was empty. I got up and went and looked in the closet. I had seventeen suits and fourteen pair of shoes. Had eight or nine hats. I went and looked in the kitchen. I had a box of grits, a box of Morton's salt and two cans of pork and beans. I looked in my pocket. I had three hundred and forty-six dollars. I told my self that will get me anywhere Greyhound go. I took and pawned my hats. It was like putting them in storage. I was gonna come back for them. I went down to Greyhound and looked up on the board. I wanted to go to Cleveland but they had too many rough-house niggers down there. I didn't want all that, so I bought me a ticket to Cincinnati. That was on Tuesday. My rent was paid up till Friday and I figured I'd stay till then. I went around there and I ran into Ruby. I

almost didn't recognize her. She walking around with a new dress. New hairdo. New shoes. I asked her where Leroy was. She said he was at the barber shop. I went up there to tell him I was leaving and to forget about the fifty dollars. I figured I'd clean that up before I left. So there wouldn't be no hard feelings.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-15
Time: 2:30
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Murder
Type 3: Value of Life

Act 2; Scene 4

ELMORE

When Leroy pulled that gun on me it gave me a headache. It wouldn't go away. Sometime it was all you could do to stand up. Gator was cutting his hair and Leroy was sitting in the chair laughing. I told myself something wrong. I'm walking around with a headache and he sitting up in the chair laughing. I started to walk away and Gator seen me and waved at me. That's when I walked in. I walked into the barbershop. Gator looked at me. He said, "Hey Elmore, what you got going?" Leroy was surprised to see me. My hand come out of my pocket. Gator told me later he thought I was gonna pay him some money I owed him. My hand come out with the gun. Gator took a step back. Leroy started to get out the chair. He was coming straight at me when I fired the gun. Gator said, "Damn, Elmore. Damn." The bullet hit him right smack in the middle of the forehead. That was the first bullet. I couldn't stop firing. Blood went everywhere. A piece of his skull bounced off the mirror and landed about ten feet away. I found myself wondering what that was. I didn't find out till later.

I didn't say anything, I just walked out. Got outside and said, "Now what? That's over. Now what?" The bottom had fallen out of everything. Everything I had ever done in my life seemed small. I stood there looking up and down the street trying to figure out which way to go. I started shaking. My whole body started shaking. I tried to stop it from shaking but I couldn't. I started crying. My whole body shaking and tears just running down my face. Somebody come up and asked me what had happened and if I was alright. I started walking home. I don't know what happened to the gun. They never did find it. I believe I must have dropped it when I was shaking. I got home and sat down. All of a sudden I got sleepy. I couldn't keep my eyes open. I fell asleep in the chair and the next thing I knew it was

morning of a brand-new day. I got up and started to cook my breakfast and it came up on me that something was wrong. The sun was coming through the kitchen window and it bounced off the handle of the frying pan, and that's what made me think something was wrong. I had seen that flash in the barbershop. When Leroy stood up he pulled out a gun as he was coming toward me. I stepped back and saw that flash and pulled the trigger. That's the first I remembered what had happened. I started crying again. I didn't know if it was a dream or not.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-16
Time: 1:45
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Murder
Type 3: Value of Life

Prologue

STOOL PIGEON

You stay out of the way of them dogs now. They gonna come for these bones. (The cat meows.) I'm gonna get you some fish heads tomorrow. I got to go down to the Strip District. Used to have the live fish market right down there on Center. Times ain't nothing like they used to be. Everything done got broke up. Pieces flying everywhere. Look like it's gonna be broke up some more before it get whole again. If it ever do. Ain't no telling. The half ain't never been told. The people don't know but God's gonna tell it. He gonna tell it in a loud voice. You ain't gonna be able to say you didn't hear it.

The people wandering all over the place. They got lost. They don't even know the story of how they got from tit to tat. Aunt Ester know. But the path to her house is all grown over with weeds, you can't hardly find the door no more. The people need to know that. The people need to know the story. See how they fit into it. See what part they play.

It's all been written down. We all have our hands in the soup and make the music play just so. But we can only make it play just so much. You can't play in the chord God ain't wrote. He wrote the beginning and the end. He let you play around in the middle but he got it all written down. It's his creation and he got more right in it than anybody else. He say, "Let him who have wisdom understand." Aunt Ester got the wisdom. She three hundred and sixty-six years old. She got the Book of Life. The story's been written. All that's left now is the playing out.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-17
Time: 2:10
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Inspirational
Type 3: Metaphorical

Act 1; Scene 2

STOOL PIGEON

“And the people went out and made idols and graven images of gold and silver in blasphemy against the Lord, and the key was given unto the righteous that they might enter the kingdom for the scourge was upon the land and the wrath of the Lord God Jehovah was visited upon every house.” You see, the key belongs to the righteous. Aunt Ester gave you the key ring, that means you got to find the key.

Died with her hand stuck to her head. She ain't seen nothing but grief. After three hundred and sixty-six years it ganged up on her. These niggers think it's a joke. But they don't know. The Spirit of God went out upon the waters and it commenced to rain. For forty days and forty nights. God already done that. He don't have to do that no more. He say next time he gonna come with the fire. Say he will bring it down upon the earth with a vengeance. I had a preacher say that once. “God will bring down fire on the earth with a vengeance.” He say, “You know what that mean?” Everybody say, “Amen.” He kept asking so I figured he wanted to know. He say, “You know what that mean?” So I stood up and said, “Yeah, that mean He gonna fuck it up” They threw me out the church. For telling the truth!

God got a plan. That medicine can't go against God. God do what He want to do. He don't have to ask nobody nothing. Say, “I will call the righteous out of the land and raise up in thy midst a Messiah from amongst my people to redeem thy iniquities and He shall by the remission of blood make whole that which is torn asunder even though it be scattered to the four winds, for Great is My Name and ye shall know by these signs the coming of a new day.” See. He talking about the Messiah. He had to get Aunt Ester out of the way. God got a plan.

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-18
Time: 2:00
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Inspirational
Type 3: Metaphorical

Act 2; Scene 1

STOOL PIGEON

Hedley ain't had no money. He was waiting for the ghost of Buddy Bolden to bring him some. Say his father was gonna send it to him. After Floyd was killed Hedley showed me the money. Told me Buddy Bolden gave it to him. That's when I knew. I say, "I got to tell." What else could I do? Ruby called me "Stool Pigeon" and somehow or another it stuck. I'll tell anybody I'm a Truth Sayer. I think about Floyd sometimes but I know he in heaven. I saw him go up into heaven carried by angels dressed in black with black hats. Hedley saw them too. Him and Vera both. Time Foster laid his body in the ground, they opened the casket and snatched him straight up into the sky. I give that machete to you, and me and Hedley come full circle. That's yours. You can do with it what you want. If you find a way to wash that blood off you can go sit on top of the mountain. You be on top of the world. The Bible say, "Let him who knoweth duty redeem the house of his fathers from its iniquities against the Lord. And if he raise a cry and say he knoweth not the sins of his fathers then he knoweth not duty for even if the iniquities are great and his father's house be scattered to the numberless winds, if he shall gather it and raise it up then shall it stand even unto the end of time." Floyd was my friend. I give that to you and we can close the book on that chapter. I forgive. That's the Key to the mountain. God taught me how to do that. God can teach you a lot of things. He don't give you nothing you can't handle. God's a bad motherfucker!

KING HEDLEY II

Code: 80-19
Time: 1:45
Type 1: Dramatic
Type 2: Inspirational
Type 3: Conjuring

Act 2; Scene 2

Stool Pigeon

One of them kicked me in the head. Had to get six stitches. Right down there at Mercy Hospital. I had to wait while they sewed somebody else up. If it wasn't for the white man, what would I do? Nigger bust you up and the white man fix you up. If he wasn't there, what would I do? They kicked me in the side. It feel like it but the doctor say my ribs ain't broke. I'm gonna see if they put that in the paper. "Man Robbed of Sixty Three Dollars. Busted Head But Ribs Okay" I'm gonna see if they put that in there.

This my papers. What's left of them. What them kids gonna do now? They burned up their history. They ain't gonna know what happened. They ain't gonna know how they got from tit to tat. You got to know that. They ain't gonna know nothing. I ask myself, "Why they do that?" I have to tell myself the truth. I don't know. If somebody know and they tell me then I'll know. But the truth is I don't know. I can't figure it out. *(He takes some ashes out of the bag and sprinkles them on the cat's grave.)* "For whosoever believeth, then shall I cause him to be raised into Eternal Life and magnify the Glory of My Father, the Lord God who made the firmament. Then shall Death flee and hide his face in darkness. For My Father ruleth over all things in his creation." If she coming back that'll help her. All you need now is some blood. Blood is life. You sprinkle some blood on there and if she ain't used up her nine lives Aunt Ester's coming back.