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*Dramatic Publishing*

# KINGDOM

By  
DAVID EMERSON TONEY

**This document contains strong language.**



**Dramatic Publishing**  
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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The world premier production of *Kingdom* was given by the African Continuum Theatre Company at Atlas Performing Arts Center, Washington, D.C., in November 2005 with the following cast:

Ricky-Trey York . . . . . J.J. Johnson Jr.  
Eddie-Ray York . . . . . Keith N. Johnson  
Clarence York . . . . . Addison Switzer  
Lena Santos . . . . . Mildred Marie Langford

The production was directed by Jennifer L. Nelson. Fight choreography was by Karen Abromaitis, set design by Tracie Duncan, costume design by William Pucilowski, lighting design by Dan Covey, sound design by David Lamont Wilson, and the stage manager was Jess W. Speaker.

# KINGDOM

## CHARACTERS

**RICKY-TREY YORK:** Late 20s. The youngest of the York brothers. He has a less pronounced form of cerebral palsy and is in no way mentally impaired.

**EDDIE-RAY YORK:** Late 30s/African-American. The eldest brother. Consumed by his hatred of Henry Caster, he stands in as the patriarch of the family.

**CLARENCE YORK:** Early 30s/African-American. The middle brother. He is riddled with guilt for a past deed done by himself and Eddie.

**LENA SANTOS:** Mid-20s/African-American. On the run from the FBI for the last three years for blowing up an ROTC building by accident. She is a sixties flower child.

**SCENE 2**

SCENE: *It is summer, 1968. Cleveland, Ohio.*

WHILE STILL IN DARKNESS: *We hear the noise of a busy fast-food restaurant. We hear the hubbub of several customers and small children fighting, plus orders being given over a P.A. system. All the voices are clearly urban African-American:*

VOICE #1. You better give me that...Mama, he took my thing.

VOICE #2. If you all don't behave I'm gonna knock the mess out of you.

VOICE #3. I need some change up front.

CLARENCE. That's a fifteen-piece spicy. Extra cole slaw.

SET: *A living room on the second floor over a barbecue chicken shack. There are entrances for two bedrooms: one onstage L and one onstage R. A staircase leads up from the first floor/chicken shack. There is a bathroom onstage R. The angle of the bathroom door should prevent audience members from seeing inside. UC there are three windows. The center window leads out onto a practical fire escape. The lighting outside the window indicates a blistering summer day. The sun shines so brightly through the windows, that the shades must be pulled down to escape the intensity of the heat. UR is a kitchen area with an island counter. DC is a couch and a recliner. There is a 20-inch black and white TV on casters with its back to the audience and it faces the couch. The TV is on and playing a very violent cartoon à la Tom and Jerry. EDDIE-RAY YORK is at the bottom of the stairs. He can't be seen by the audience.*

EDDIE-RAY (O.S.). You better check those ribs 'fore they burn. I ain't playin' with you. *(The door slams and EDDIE talks as he comes up the stairs. To himself.)* I'll fire your behind in a New York minute. *(He's dressed for a funeral.)* Damn. *(EDDIE runs back down the stairs and opens the door at the bottom. The hubbub from the restaurant gets loud again.)*

CLARENCE (O.S.). I need some change at the register.

EDDIE-RAY (O.S.). Clarence, why is it so damn hot up here?

CLARENCE (O.S.). How am I supposed to know?

*(EDDIE slams the door and comes back up the stairs.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Ricky. Ricky. (*EDDIE looks through the apartment. Periodically calling RICKY's name. He turns off the TV and walks to an intercom mounted on the wall and pushes the call button.*) Clarence. Clarence.

CLARENCE (*O.S.*). What?

EDDIE-RAY. Don't "what" me. You seen Ricky-Trey?

CLARENCE (*O.S.*). I ain't been up there. (*To the customer downstairs.*) That'll be \$8.35.

EDDIE-RAY. You ain't let him go on down the street?

CLARENCE (*O.S. To the customer downstairs*). You ain't got nothin' smaller? (*To EDDIE.*) You know I got better sense than that. Hey, Eddie...I got to talk to you about something big...

*(EDDIE turns off the intercom and cuts CLARENCE off in midsentence. He sees the open window. EDDIE crosses to the window on the fire escape and yells out.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Hey, Ricky...Ricky-Trey? You up there? (*Silence.*) Ricky-Trey York, if you up there you better answer me.

*(Silence. Finally RICKY's voice comes from the next level up on the fire escape.)*

RICKY-TREY (*O.S.*). What you want?

EDDIE-RAY (*strips off his shirt and tie*). I want you to stop tryin' to air condition everybody in Cleveland. Two hundred million degrees outside and you got the window bus' wide open. You must be out your black mind.

RICKY-TREY. I turned the air off.

EDDIE-RAY. Regardless...get in here, 'fore you fall.

RICKY-TREY (*O.S.*). I ain't gonna fall.

EDDIE-RAY. You will if I come up there and throw your  
behind off. (*Silence.*)

RICKY-TREY (*O.S.*). I'm comin'.

*(EDDIE enters the bathroom. He closes the door and quickly opens it.)*

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). Damn it, Ricky. It's hot as hell in this  
bathroom.

*(RICKY climbs down the fire escape and back in the window. He has a pair of binoculars. He crosses into his bedroom and puts them away. He reenters, talking the entire time.)*

RICKY-TREY. You should see Lake Erie today, Eddie.  
It's beautiful. The clouds look like angels flyin' over the  
water. And the lake is blue like the sky.

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). Come here, Ricky.

*(RICKY walks over to the bathroom doorway and looks in on EDDIE.)*

RICKY-TREY. You want some SpaghettiOs?

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). Suppose that heat got to you and you  
had a seizure while you was up there. It ain't like we  
can call the police to help you.

RICKY-TREY. I put ice in my Kool-Aid. I used my stop-  
watch. I took a sip every sixteen seconds. Ooooo... You  
told me I couldn't pee with the bathroom door open.

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). It's suffocating in here. Ain't gonna get heat stroke 'cause your retarded behind can't stay off the damn roof.

RICKY-TREY. I ain't...

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). Now close that window. Pull down them shades. Turn on that conditioning.

*(RICKY closes the window and pulls down the shades to block the blistering sun and walks over to the thermostat.)*

RICKY-TREY. To what?

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). What...what?

*(RICKY marches back over to the bathroom door.)*

RICKY-TREY. Degrees? A unit of measure?

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). Make it 65.

*(RICKY goes back and adjusts the thermostat.)*

RICKY-TREY. And don't say it no more...cerebral palsy ain't retarded. It's a medical condition like a cold.

*(The toilet flushes and EDDIE enters.)*

EDDIE. Ain't nobody said you retarded.

RICKY-TREY. You did...and I quote...“your retarded behind”...unquote. *(RICKY opens a cabinet and takes out a can of SpaghettiOs and a manual can opener. During the rest of the scene he tries to open the can with no success.)*

EDDIE-RAY. You can be retarded...or you can act retarded. (*EDDIE exits to his bedroom where he continues from O.S.*) And goin' up on that roof in this kind of heat is actin' retarded. Not to mention you left the dang TV on. Gonna run me to the poorhouse.

RICKY-TREY. I didn't leave it on.

EDDIE-RAY (*O.S.*). Then who did? You got a ghost up here or somethin'?

*(Wearing a Cleveland Browns T-shirt, EDDIE enters and talks to the air.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Mr. Ghost, would you please stop leavin' on the TV and blamin' it on my brother. (*To RICKY.*) You think he heard me?

RICKY-TREY. You crackin' jokes. You happy.

EDDIE-RAY. I can be happy if I want to.

RICKY-TREY. Yeah. But you usually ain't.

EDDIE-RAY. Well, lots of things gonna be different from now on. Just came back from a funeral.

RICKY-TREY. Who died?

EDDIE-RAY. Henry Caster.

RICKY-TREY. Who's that?

EDDIE-RAY. Somebody who got what he had comin'.

RICKY-TREY. Funerals ain't supposed to be fun.

EDDIE. Never mind about that. Anybody call?

RICKY-TREY. On the table.

*(EDDIE crosses to the phone next to the couch and picks up a scrap of paper.)*

EDDIE-RAY. What am I supposed to do with this? It just says, “Got to talk asap.”

RICKY-TREY. That’s what the man said. As soon as possible.

EDDIE-RAY. Did he say somethin’ else? Like what his name was?

RICKY-TREY. He might’ve said his name. Whoever it was, it’s his fault. He’s the one called in the middle of my rehearsing. Magic takes a lot of concentration. He might call back.

EDDIE-RAY. Forget it. Gonna get that service I was thinkin’ about. (*EDDIE throws the message away. Then he begins to search through the cabinets.*)

RICKY-TREY. Service for what?

EDDIE-RAY. They take the messages. They rig it up somehow. Just don’t answer the phone from now on.

RICKY-TREY. How she gonna know I’m here if I don’t answer the phone?

EDDIE-RAY. Where is it?

RICKY-TREY. What?

EDDIE-RAY. I bought a new bottle last Wednesday.

RICKY-TREY. Doctor said you shouldn’t drink. Bad for your pressure.

EDDIE-RAY. Where’s my Mad Dog?

RICKY-TREY. That’s what the doctor said.

EDDIE. You tearin’ your pants with me, Ricky.

RICKY-TREY. Under the sink. (*EDDIE reaches under the sink and begins to make a concoction of MD 20/20 and Pepsi.*) You said, you wasn’t gonna drink them things no more.

EDDIE-RAY. Let me have my drink in peace. (*RICKY pantomimes locking his lips and throwing away the key.*)

*They sit in the quiet for a few seconds. Then:)* That funeral got me goin' though. *(Points to his head.)* Up here. A dead body makes you think.

RICKY-TREY. About what?

EDDIE-RAY. What is. What ain't. Choices. You know?

RICKY-TREY. What kind of choice you talkin' about?

*(EDDIE does a slight bowling gesture.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Could have been famous. I had the touch. No doubt about it. I had a two-sixty-five average. Gave it all up. I'm gonna tell you one of life's truest facts, R.T.

RICKY-TREY. Should I write it down?

EDDIE-RAY. No. Life ain't gonna let you forget it. Doin' the right thing, the necessary thing, ain't always the easy thing to do. Most times it's the hardest.

RICKY-TREY. Like when you didn't go on the bowlin' tour and took care of me and Clarence.

EDDIE. That was part of it. But, yeah. That's it.

RICKY-TREY. Thank you for doin' that, Eddie.

EDDIE-RAY. What you got on?

RICKY-TREY. They lounging pajamas...like Dean Martin wore in a Matt Helm movie came on TV. When he was in his penthouse. I was gonna make you some. But not if you gonna get a service for the phone.

*(EDDIE takes his drink and stands over the vent in the floor that blows up the air conditioning. He pulls out his shirt and lets it blow up inside.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Put something on. A growed man don't walk around the house in his sleepin' clothes all day. Buddy...buddy...buddy. That air feel good. Where the paper?

RICKY-TREY. TV.

*(EDDIE crosses to the TV and picks up the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper from the top of the TV and sits in the La-Z-Boy. He looks through the paper as he continues to talk to RICKY.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Good thing you didn't go to regular school, R.T. If them other boys woulda found out that you like to sew. You'd have got your behind kicked every other day. *(Referring to the paper, to himself.)* Damn Cleveland Indians lost again. Ain't been no good since '54. And had the nerve to trade Rocky Colavito. *(To RICKY.)* So how's the magic goin'? Got any new tricks you want to show me? Excuse me. I mean illusions.

RICKY-TREY. Matter of fact, I'm thinkin' about gettin' into an escape artist genre if you please.

EDDIE-RAY. Definition.

RICKY-TREY. Genre...a class or category of artistic endeavor...Random House Dictionary...page 203. Anyway...I'm thinkin' about creatin' various scenarios of my own diabolical creation. Gonna be the first black Houdini.

EDDIE-RAY. Sounds serious.

RICKY-TREY. I can handle it. But I need supplies. Otherwise I won't be able to get started. Will you get stuff for me?

EDDIE-RAY. What we talkin' about?

RICKY-TREY. A big, giant bag. Big enough for me to get inside.

EDDIE-RAY. What else?

RICKY-TREY. I already got the stopwatch. But I need some heavy locks. The kind that have keys. No combination locks. Some heavy chains to go with the locks. Handcuffs. Real ones. Like the police use. Oh...and later on, I'll need a huge watertight trunk and a five-hundred-gallon water tank.

EDDIE-RAY. Forget the tank.

RICKY-TREY. We can put it on the roof. I know it can't fit in here.

EDDIE-RAY. What I say?

RICKY-TREY. Guess I could use the bathtub.

EDDIE-RAY. That it?

RICKY-TREY. Yeah.

EDDIE. All right then. But don't mess with that stuff unless somebody is watchin' you.

RICKY-TREY. Okay.

EDDIE-RAY. I mean it.

RICKY-TREY. I know.

EDDIE-RAY. You could suffocate in a trunk. So that's out too.

RICKY-TREY. No trunk? I can't do it without...

EDDIE-RAY. Then forget it.

RICKY-TREY. The trunk wouldn't fit in the tub anyway. I'll just lock myself in the bathroom. I'll have to figure out later how to chain the door closed. Oh...and one more thing.

EDDIE-RAY. Must be Christmas.

RICKY-TREY. My birthday is next month. For my birthday...you think I could go outside?

EDDIE-RAY. You outside every day.

RICKY-TREY. Not on the roof. Ain't nobody up there to talk to. I just want to go to the corner and back.

EDDIE-RAY. How many times we got to run over this?

RICKY-TREY. I want to say hello to Mr. Evans at the Hough Bakery.

EDDIE-RAY. What I always say?

RICKY-TREY. I might get caught. Won't be nothin' you can do if the police grab me. But I'll wear a rubber mask like on *Mission Impossible*. Nobody will know it's me. And I'll run there and back as fast as I can.

EDDIE-RAY. A brotha' runnin' down the street with a rubber mask on. Why don't you just shoot yourself and save the police the trouble? Besides...ain't nothin' to run to. That place closed when Evans died. It's empty.

RICKY-TREY. When he die?

EDDIE-RAY. Ten years ago?

RICKY-TREY. You didn't tell me?

EDDIE-RAY. Now don't make somethin' out of nothin', Trey. You ain't seen the man since you was a child.

RICKY-TREY. Just because you don't see somebody don't mean you don't miss them.

EDDIE-RAY. Yeah...well...I can see where the hell this is going. (*EDDIE looks back to his paper.*)

RICKY-TREY. He used to give me a free donut every time Mama and me came in there. He was a really nice man.

EDDIE-RAY. Probably felt sorry for you.

RICKY-TREY. Why would he? (*EDDIE opens a new section of the newspaper. RICKY continues.*) Remember when Mama used to take us to the lake?

EDDIE-RAY. No. And you don't either.

RICKY-TREY. She would read out loud from that book of Shakespeare. She must of been a great teacher before she married Daddy.

EDDIE-RAY. Oh...I wasn't good enough. Your own brother.

RICKY-TREY. I ain't sayin' that. It just would've been different. She said, I could be anything I wanted to be. Didn't make no difference if I had C.P. Said, I could be a king in this world.

EDDIE-RAY. Mendacious bullshit. Mendacious...spell it.

RICKY-TREY. M-e-n-d-a-c-i-o-u-s...it means lying. Random House page 482.

EDDIE-RAY. And that's what the king stuff is. Nothin' but lies.

RICKY-TREY. No, it ain't.

EDDIE-RAY. Anybody with any sense knows ain't no kings in the U.S. of A. We outlawed that in 1776 when we kicked the English out. I know I taught you better than that. (*EDDIE puts the paper away and stands.*) Here we go. Ding...ding...ding. School bell. The school of hard knocks is now in session.

RICKY-TREY. It's summer. It's against the law.

EDDIE-RAY. Ding...ding...ding...ding...ding. Don't be late for class. You'll get homework for punishment.

RICKY-TREY. No.

EDDIE-RAY. Ding...ding...ding...ding.

RICKY-TREY. Okay. (*RICKY reluctantly sits in the recliner.*)

EDDIE-RAY. In your assigned seat. (*RICKY moves to the couch.*) Good afternoon, class.

RICKY-TREY. Good afternoon, Mr. York.

EDDIE-RAY. Now today's lesson says...if you had some kings over here. Which, like I said, ain't none. To be a king...as in specifically you...you would have to be first in line. First born. That's how your what 'cha call your basic hierarchy works.

RICKY-TREY. I don't care.

EDDIE-RAY. You know the rules. (*RICKY raises his hand.*) Yes, Ricky.

RICKY-TREY. Mama, said that...

EDDIE-RAY. Put your hand down. (*RICKY reluctantly pulls his hand down.*) So goin' off basic hierarchy... since you are the youngest...you are last in line to be king...in a country that don't even have kings in the first place. You understand so far? (*RICKY raises his hand.*) Yeah?

RICKY-TREY. Well, maybe I just can't be king around here. Maybe...I'll just go be king somewhere else. Somewhere I can be first.

EDDIE-RAY. Well, maybe some day you will. If the cops stop lookin' for you. But even then you still got a problem. A king got to have a kingdom. Property. Real estate. Somethin' with his name on it. You got any property? You own anything?

RICKY-TREY. This house.

EDDIE-RAY. Cold.

RICKY-TREY. The shop downstairs.

EDDIE-RAY. Still cold. Not even warm.

RICKY-TREY. We got that used car lot now.

EDDIE-RAY. I said, do "you" have any property. All that stuff you talkin' 'bout. All that, belongs to me. I'm the only king around here if there is one. And me, ain't you. And if I die. Which ain't gonna happen no time too

soon. My son. My legacy. Goin' off what's right...  
would be the next king.

RICKY-TREY. You ain't got no legacy...no son.

EDDIE-RAY. And after that it go to Clarence. Or his kids.

RICKY-TREY. He ain't got none either.

EDDIE-RAY. After that I don't know what will happen.

RICKY-TREY. It goes to me. Everything goes to me. Then  
I'll be the king.

EDDIE-RAY. That ain't never gonna happen.

RICKY-TREY. I'm the only one left.

EDDIE. Clarence gonna probably leave everything to that  
church of his.

RICKY-TREY. I ain't gonna listen no more.

EDDIE-RAY. I didn't say school was out.

RICKY-TREY. You can't have school in July.

EDDIE-RAY. It's called summer school.

RICKY-TREY. That's for stupid people. I'm not stupid. A  
person who's almost a genius doesn't have to go to sum-  
mer school.

EDDIE-RAY. Be mad if you want to. That don't change  
the truth. And I can't believe you gonna heat up some  
damn SpaghettiOs as hot as it is.

RICKY-TREY. Makes me feel cool on the outside. Mama  
taught me that. Calls here every day now. That's why  
you can't get no service for the phone. I won't be able  
to talk to her.

EDDIE-RAY. Who calls?

RICKY-TREY. Mama.

EDDIE-RAY. You talkin' crazy, R.T.

RICKY-TREY. We don't say nothin' at first. I listen to her  
breathe. Then she listens to me breathe. Then I tell her  
I'm okay and then she hangs up.

EDDIE-RAY. Wrong number, Ricky.

RICKY-TREY. Wrong number don't call the same time every day. That would be redundant.

EDDIE-RAY. This ain't no different then the time you thought you saw her on TV in the crowd during the World Series.

RICKY-TREY (*singing*). Land of the free and the home of the brave...play ball.

EDDIE-RAY. That wasn't her.

RICKY-TREY. I know what I know.

EDDIE-RAY. What time you gettin' these phone calls?

RICKY-TREY. Five...four Central. The first time she called I was about to have the worst seizure in the history of the known world. Like nobody ever had before. Like it would kill me this time. Then all of a sudden the phone rang. I picked it up. It was Mama. We didn't say a word. She listened to me breathe and I listened to her breathe. And that stupid seizure left me alone. Now she calls here every day. That's probably why I ain't had a seizure in a long time.

EDDIE-RAY. It's somebody callin' for downstairs. Ain't but a one-digit difference in the two numbers. Five is dinnertime. Somebody callin' up for take-out barbecue and you pickin' up the phone, that's all.

RICKY-TREY. Then why don't they order barbecue?

EDDIE-RAY. What did I say?

RICKY-TREY. You said it was a wrong number. I heard you.

EDDIE-RAY. I was in a good mood when I come in. Don't you say another word to me till I have me three more drinks. Take that much to deal with your retarded behind.

RICKY-TREY. I ain't...

EDDIE-RAY. Don't start. You know I didn't mean it like that. (*EDDIE exits to his bedroom on stage R as RICKY tries to open the can with a manual can opener. He's not having much luck.*)

RICKY-TREY (*under his breath*). Then why you keep sayin' it like that.

*(Sixties Motown music comes from EDDIE's room. As the music wafts out of EDDIE's room, CLARENCE enters from the first floor. The audience cannot see him. But we hear the noise from the shack rise and fall as he opens and closes the shop door.)*

CLARENCE (*shouting*). Hey, Eddie? You find him yet? (*To himself.*) Where he go? (*To EDDIE.*) Is anybody up there? Eddie, what the deal is? Hey, Eddie.

*(EDDIE enters from the bedroom. His music plays gently in the background.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Man, what are you yellin' about? You messin' up my buzz.

*(RICKY continues trying to open the can.)*

CLARENCE. How come you didn't answer me?

EDDIE-RAY. I ain't your boy.

CLARENCE. I just wanted to know if you found R.T.

EDDIE-RAY. He's right here. Been here the whole time.

*(EDDIE exits to the bedroom as CLARENCE finally comes to the head of the stairs.)*

CLARENCE. How come you didn't answer me, R.T.?

RICKY-TREY. I ain't your boy either. And you kept callin' Eddie's name. I didn't know you was talkin' to me. *(To himself.)* Stupid can.

*(The music goes off in EDDIE's room and he enters. CLARENCE cools himself by the air vent.)*

EDDIE-RAY. So you see he's here, Clarence. So...?

CLARENCE. So?

EDDIE-RAY. So get back to work. It's dinner rush.

CLARENCE. I ain't in no hurry to get back in that heat. When you gonna get that conditioning fixed down in the shop?

EDDIE-RAY. Waste of money. Got open flames and smoke. It ain't gone cool off but so much.

CLARENCE. It's like bein' in hell.

EDDIE-RAY. It's a barbecue shack. They hot. Fact of life. Now get back down there 'fore that register get messed up. *(CLARENCE is staring at EDDIE. EDDIE stares back for a few seconds.)* Clarence?

CLARENCE. Yeah.

EDDIE-RAY. You doin' that thing where you just stare. Talk if you gone talk.

CLARENCE. I have to tell you something very important.

EDDIE-RAY. I done told you I ain't puttin' no money in that conditioning.

CLARENCE. It ain't about that.

EDDIE-RAY. Then what is it?

CLARENCE. It's big.

RICKY-TREY. I like riddles. Is it bigger than a bread box.

EDDIE-RAY. Ricky-Trey, stop messin' with that can and go change your clothes like I told you.

RICKY-TREY (*mocking*). Stop messin' with that can... Like I told you.

EDDIE-RAY. You writin' a check your butt can't cash, little brother.

RICKY-TREY. I like when you call me little brother. That's what Hoss calls Little Joe on *Bonanza*. (*À la Western.*) I'm goin' in my room now, Paw. (*RICKY makes mouth noises like he's riding a horse out of the room.*)

EDDIE-RAY. And close the door and turn on the radio loud. Clarence and me might talk business.

RICKY-TREY (*O.S.*). You betcha, Paw. (*Music blasts out of RICKY's room.*)

EDDIE-RAY. So?

CLARENCE. So, you know who I spoke to last night?

EDDIE-RAY. I ain't gonna guess. (*To RICKY O.S.*) I said close the door. (*RICKY closes the door and the music cue ends.*) So who you talk to?

CLARENCE. The Lord himself.

EDDIE-RAY. I see. Well, glad you had a good prayer. You want to get back to work now?

CLARENCE. I ain't talkin' about prayin'. I'm talkin' about he spoke to me. Directly. I'm talkin' about a life-alterin' situation.

EDDIE-RAY. Oh...a life-alterin' situation.

CLARENCE. Like never before.

EDDIE-RAY. Then this must be different then when you started messin' with them Hari Krishna. Had you wearin' sheets and shavin' your head like Stymie.

CLARENCE. That was a different situation.

EDDIE-RAY. Then I shouldn't compare it to them Original Jews. Them no-good ex-convicts was gonna save the world from the white devil. I could show you the six-inch switchblade scar I got, gettin' you out of that life-alterin' situation. Now, I ain't said nothin' about this new minister thing, but... (*CLARENCE starts to exit.*)  
Clarence. I'm sorry. Come on back. Come on now.

CLARENCE. I ain't comin' back up here ever again unless you give me a blood oath that you won't rub my face in what's been long past and forgotten. And you got to respect my ministry. Those times from the past ain't got nothin' to do with who I am now.

EDDIE-RAY. I said, I was sorry. We don't need no blood oath on it.

CLARENCE. Then I got things to do. It's the dinner rush.

EDDIE-RAY. All right. Be cool. I'll do it.

*(CLARENCE and EDDIE face each other and glare into each other's eyes.)*

CLARENCE.  
Brothers are brothers  
'cause blood is blood.

EDDIE-RAY.  
Brothers are brothers  
'cause blood is blood.

*(They embrace and give each other four synchronized pats on the back. They step back and stare into each other's eyes.)*

EDDIE-RAY. We cool?

CLARENCE. Yeah.

EDDIE-RAY. So what did the Lord have to say for himself last night?

CLARENCE. Okay...it was in this dream now. And everybody knows that some of the great heroes in the Bible got talked to in a dream. So what I'm sayin' is, this a real, real thing happenin'...only it's a dream.

EDDIE-RAY. I got you.

CLARENCE. I'm standing in the middle of Euclid Avenue and a hundred and sixth street. Ain't no traffic. Ain't nobody around. Then I hear this big boomin' voice. It says...George Clarence York.

EDDIE-RAY. Called you by name?

CLARENCE. Got to mean somethin' when the Lord calls you by name.

EDDIE-RAY. So what did he say?

CLARENCE. I hear my name...I turn around slow and sure and there he is.

EDDIE-RAY. What did you say to him?

CLARENCE. Nothin'. I figure you talkin' to God. Let him do the talkin'.

EDDIE. Good move.

CLARENCE. He must've been fifty feet tall. He say...  
"Your time for redemption is at hand, Clarence York. Heed the word of the Lord. The time is at hand."

EDDIE-RAY. You tryin' to tell me you actually saw God?

CLARENCE. Jesus was standing right there in front of me plain as day. Now I know it was a dream but I'm tellin' you this was real as real can be. I wanted to reach out to touch him but I was too scared to try.

EDDIE-RAY. So what did he look like?

CLARENCE. You took a blood oath.

EDDIE-RAY. A sacred oath.

CLARENCE. Popeye.

EDDIE-RAY. What?

CLARENCE. You heard me.

EDDIE-RAY. Jesus looked like a fifty-foot Popeye. Popeye the sailor man?

CLARENCE. He came to me in the form I could understand. That's what he always does. If you saw God the way he is...you'd go out your mind.

EDDIE-RAY. Makes sense if you think about it. Popeye and Jesus was both persecuted. They both strong to the finish.

CLARENCE. And he talked to me.

EDDIE-RAY. We got to have ourselves a toast.

CLARENCE. For what?

EDDIE-RAY. You saw the Lord thy God. And did you forget that the mortal enemy of our family was stuffed in the ground today? Somebody better have a drink around here.

CLARENCE. I ain't gonna drink to God. That's blasphemous.

EDDIE-RAY. We got to drink to somethin'. Too many good things is happening. That got to be a sin.

CLARENCE. Let's drink to Daddy.

EDDIE-RAY. I'll make you one of my midnight specials.

CLARENCE. I'll pass.

EDDIE-RAY. You got to celebrate with somethin'. How 'bout some water?

CLARENCE. Yeah...nice and cold. It's burnin' up behind that counter. Them warmin' lights is so hot make you feel like you in hell.

*(EDDIE gets a glass of water for CLARENCE.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Clarence York...drinkin' water. I never used to see you without somethin' strong in your hand, twenty-four hours a day...six days a week.

CLARENCE. That was yesterday...and yesterday will never come again, my brother. 'Sides, you know I can't have none of the members of my church comin' in downstairs and smellin' liquor on my breath. I'm their leader...their shepherd. My congregation looks to me for guidance.

*(EDDIE gives CLARENCE the water.)*

EDDIE-RAY. You got five people, Clarence. Best you can call that is a bunch.

CLARENCE. And Jesus ain't had but twelve disciples.  
*(They hold up their glasses.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Here's to you, Daddy. I know you're lookin' down on us. We ask you to bless us, now that we can finally move on, now that our mortal enemy Henry Caster is dead. We gonna try...do the best we can...to live up to your legacy. The war is over. To Daddy.

CLARENCE. To Daddy. *(They drink.)*

EDDIE-RAY. You want to hear about Caster's funeral?

CLARENCE. We just said it was over. Ain't no need in talkin' about it. It's done.

EDDIE-RAY. What's a war without war stories? Besides I listened to you.

CLARENCE. Go on. You gonna tell me whether I want you to or not.

EDDIE. This at the dinner after the service. First thing I see when I come in is the preacher from Caster's church, parading around. Talkin' about what a good man Henry Caster was. The whole time I wanted to yell... "That no-good lyin' cheatin' dog deserved to die." I wish I woulda been there to see him drop over from that heart attack. I'd pay good money to see that. Clarence, I was standin' in that room by the buffet table and thinkin' about Daddy and all the things that Caster...a man who was supposed to be Daddy's best friend...did to this family...

CLARENCE. Jesus woulda said forgive Caster.

EDDIE-RAY. How you fix your mouth for that? Adultery is one of the Ten Commandments.

CLARENCE. If I kept my mouth shut, Daddy'd be here with us right now.

EDDIE-RAY. Daddy wouldn't have wanted to live like some fool his whole life. So-called friends laughin' at him behind his back. You heard them women at the church talkin' about it. Everybody knew but Daddy. He was gonna find out sooner or later.

CLARENCE. And I never could keep a secret.

EDDIE-RAY. Never could. See that make it double not your fault. You are what you are. A man can't change that.

CLARENCE. How did she look?

EDDIE-RAY. Who?

CLARENCE. Lena. That young girl he was livin' with. I think they was married. That's what Caster said.

EDDIE-RAY. You beggin' to feel bad. Ain't you?

CLARENCE. I was just wonderin'.

EDDIE-RAY. Well, stop wonderin'. She a gold digger.

Why a pretty young girl like that wanna lay up under that nasty old man? Money. Well, she made a mistake.

The IRS got his money. I got his house and his car lot.

CLARENCE. We put her out on the street.

EDDIE-RAY. Know what, Clarence? You ain't fun no more. The war is over. Caster is dead. Long live the king.

CLARENCE. What?

EDDIE-RAY. Me. I'm the king around here. I was talkin' with R.T. 'bout some craziness. Well, some of it ain't so crazy. A man is king of his own castle. I got all the money and property.

CLARENCE. What you king of?

EDDIE-RAY. My empire. I got an empire built up here. And the people who work for me are my subjects.

CLARENCE. I'm your subject?

EDDIE-RAY. Not you. If I'm the king that makes you some kind of prince or something like that. I'll have to look it up. All you owe me is your undying allegiance. I'm King Eddie-Ray York the first and you are my Earl or Duke of Earl, or somethin' like that.

*(CLARENCE starts to leave but stops at the top of the stairs.)*

CLARENCE *(points skyward)*. There's only one king to me. He's the original king. He's pure, Eddie. Untouched.

EDDIE-RAY. I ain't done buildin' up my empire either. I got my eye on a laundromat over on Quimby.

CLARENCE. I'm goin' back to work. It's dinner rush.

*(CLARENCE exits as RICKY opens the door and music blasts into the room.)*

RICKY-TREY (O.S.). Can I come out now?

EDDIE-RAY. Yeah. Come on.

*(The music ends and RICKY enters. He has changed his clothes. He is wearing pants with his pajama top and is wearing a tie. RICKY crosses to the kitchen and starts the torture of trying to open the SpaghettiOs can again.)*

EDDIE-RAY. Give me that. *(EDDIE takes the can from RICKY and puts it away and makes RICKY a sandwich.)*

RICKY-TREY. I was thinkin' in the bedroom. Not just any old thinkin'. I'm talkin' serious "change the world as we know it" thinkin'.

EDDIE-RAY. And?

RICKY-TREY. You had a two-sixty-five average.

EDDIE-RAY. And wasn't nothin' but fourteen.

RICKY-TREY. You had a gift. Maybe you should think about goin' back to it. You don't have to stay and take care of me anymore. You should go out on the tour.

EDDIE-RAY. You couldn't even open up this can.

RICKY-TREY. Clarence could come by and open cans for me.

EDDIE-RAY. I could go back to it. All I need is a couple of months of practice.

RICKY-TREY. I wish I could've seen you bowl back then.

EDDIE-RAY. Mr. Collridge down at the Rollabowl said he'd never seen anybody with my style. My grace. And that's the exact word he used.

RICKY-TREY. Grace.

EDDIE-RAY. He was gonna back me professional...soon as I was eighteen. Said I was like one of them graceful Spanish bullfighters...and them pins was the bull. I had me a plan. A dream. First, I was gonna start with a special nickname to work in the Spanish motif. El Cid. That's Spanish for "The Champion."

RICKY-TREY. El Cid.

EDDIE-RAY. And for style, I'd have a golden bowling ball with my name carved in it in black letters.

RICKY-TREY. How much them professional bowlers make? When they go on the professional bowlers tour.

EDDIE-RAY. If they're a winner like me?

RICKY-TREY. A winner like you.

EDDIE-RAY. Ten, fifteen thousand at each tournament. Ask me about the women.

RICKY-TREY. What about the women?

EDDIE-RAY. More groupies than rock and roll. Best hotels. Limos. Respect. Up to my neck in fame...money...and trim. But all that stuff. All that doesn't matter. Because when it comes down to it, it's all about one moment of truth.

RICKY-TREY. Show me, Eddie.

EDDIE (*demonstrates his deadly bowling style*) I can still remember doin' my signature too-cool stroll down to the ball return during league finals. (*He demonstrates his walk.*) This situation...ain't for the faint of heart, R.T. Because you see...just a few feet away...are ten pins. But make no mistake...them pins are a big black bull that got razor-sharp horns.

RICKY-TREY. Stupid pins. They don't know who you are. Do they, Eddie?

EDDIE-RAY. Yes, they do, R.T. I am El Cid. That's why they want to destroy me. That's why they want to sink their horns in me and tear my guts out. Force me to throw a gutter ball. Not pick up a spare 'cause of their unrelenting intimidation. They'll try anything to rip out my young man's heart and send it flippin' and flyin' across the lanes of this arena known as "Rollabowl." Did you know them pins talk to you, R.T.? I can still hear 'em. Clear as a bell.

RICKY-TREY. What they say, Eddie? What they say?

EDDIE-RAY. Them pins sayin'... "Come on. You ain't nothin'. Never been nothin'. Never gonna be nothin'. But come on. Try your luck."

RICKY-TREY. Tryin' to kill your joy. Kill your hope.

EDDIE-RAY. Everything I ever wanted to be.

RICKY-TREY. Don't let them do it, Eddie. Shut 'em up. Go on and shut them pins up. (*EDDIE goes into a trance-like state as he is about to roll an imaginary bowling ball down an invisible lane.*) And a hush falls over the crowd.

EDDIE (*takes three steps forward and rolls the ball down the lane*). El Tor-roooooo.

EDDIE-RAY.

Strike.

RICKY-TREY.

Strike.

RICKY-TREY. I like when you tell that story, Eddie. Tell it again. (*The phone rings.*) It's five o'clock. It's her. (*RICKY heads for the phone but EDDIE stops him.*)

EDDIE-RAY. You made me fix that sandwich. Now eat it.

RICKY-TREY. But it's her. It's Mama.

EDDIE-RAY. Eat. I'll get it. *(The phone rings again. RICKY makes another move toward the phone but EDDIE picks up the receiver.)* Eat.

RICKY-TREY. Say something. I don't want her to think we moved or something.

EDDIE-RAY. Hello? *(No answer.)* Hello? *(No answer.)* Whoever this is, you callin' the wrong number. The barbecue place is downstairs. This is 7821. You want 7822. Now don't call here again or I'll put the police on your butt.

*(EDDIE hangs up the phone with a bang and exits to his bedroom. RICKY stares at the phone, then exits to his bedroom.)*