

SIDES – AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES (AGE 11-15)

READ FOR “WILL”

SCENE 1

BACKGROUND: Will and Marcus have been sent by bountyhunters to retrieve Nate. Will feels he must do this in order to eventually see his father again. Will has to lie to Nate in order to convince him to come with them, but Nate is suspicious.

EXT. UNION CAMP, GRAVEYARD - DUSK

Will and Marcus stand watching NATE, a solemn African-American man with graying hair and a penetrating stare. Nate climbs out of the grave he has just dug, then drags a body wrapped in white canvas until it slides into the pit.

Marcus slowly pushes Will forward. Will approaches Nate as Marcus lurks in the background.

WILL

Your name Nate, sir?

No reply.

WILL

I'm Will, from... that's my
uncle Marcus. We from 'round
Leesville.

Will extends his hand to shake, but Nate just dusts himself off and wipes the sweat from his chin without shaking the boy's hand. Nate keeps shoveling.

WILL

We come on account of your
brother Samuel. He got
consumption.

(Will waits, but no
response)

He ain't well, and they say he
won't last long.

Nate pauses for a second before continuing shoveling.

NATE
(dryly)
Can't go back down there.

Will looks back to Marcus, who gives an almost imperceptible stern nod.

WILL
He said... your brother said he
want to see you before he goes.
He ask us to tell you that.

NATE
How'd you find me?

Nate's gives a piercing glance, but Will is unfazed and conjures the response without turning to Marcus.

WILL
Your brother heard you was here.
I don't know how.

NATE
And you just took it upon
yourself to deliver the word?

WILL
His master tasked us with it,
and we'll be paid.
They said he ain't got long, and
he just wants to see you.

Nate drives his shovel into the ground so it stands upright on its own. He actually considers the trip.

NATE
Y'all from Leesville.
(to Marcus)
He's in a bad way?

Marcus nods.

NATE
I'll see to it when I can.

Nate resumes shoveling.

WILL
Can we head back down with you?

NATE
The two of you make it up here
on your own?

WILL
Yes, sir.

NATE
Then I figure you can make it
back down on your own, too.

WILL
We won't be a bother. We come
all this way for ya.

SCENE 2

BACKGROUND: Will and Nate have been traveling together for a day. Although Will is supposed to eventually betray Nate, Will is fascinated by Nate because he's different from anyone he's known before.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Will, Nate, and Marcus lie in the cold, trying to sleep. Just as Nate closes his eyes...

WILL
(to Nate)
You ever seen a canon shoot off?

No answer.

WILL
I heard'em lots, just never
seen'em.

No comment from Nate, though the boy's conversation obviously grates on him. Just when it seems Will's given up...

WILL
Why you think--

NATE

Didn't your mama ever teach you
to shut up and listen sometime?

WILL

(without self-pity)
I never knew my mama.

Nate's anger relents. After a bit, Will resumes:

WILL

How long it been since you run
off North?

NATE

I ain't a runaway.

This confuses Will. He stops walking for a moment, and
he becomes quiet as he considers the information.

WILL

(to Nate)
What's it like diggin' for the
federals?

No answer.

WILL

It don't seem no different from
diggin' for a master down South.

NATE

You seen me ask any man's
permission to leave?

Will takes this in with great interest.

NATE

You work hard, you your own man.
I don't need no one, and don't
look out for no one.

WILL

Marcus and I look out for each
other ever since the army burned
the farm... doin' what it takes
to get by.

Will looks to Marcus, but receives no glimmer of confirmation.

WILL
We's family, you know?

NATE
I knew my ma for about two hours, and my father was a son of a bitch.

WILL
My father went north two years ago, but he's comin' back for me.

MARCUS
(exasperated)
Boy that's bullshit and you know it. Comin' back south for you is the last thing on that man's mind.

Will tries not to show emotion.

Marcus rolls over and pulls the thin blanket tighter.

WILL
(to Nate)
That ain't right, what he said.

SCENE 3

BACKGROUND: Will and Nate have been traveling together for a few days and yesterday Will's uncle Marcus was killed. At the beginning of this scene, Will is upset and doesn't understand why Nate would be nice to the enemy. Later in the scene, Will understands Nate's compassion and feels remorse. Will is supposed to betray Nate or else something terrible will happen to Will, but Will has come to respect Nate and Will decides he'd rather convince Nate to leave him before he can betray Nate.

EXT. HARDWOOD FOREST - DAY

The two slow as Nate listens. A periodic, slow RUSTLING comes from nearby.

A Confederate CAVALRYMAN, similar to the one that shot Marcus, lies gutshot with dark blood soaking his uniform. Feverish, he's dying from thirst even as he dies from blood loss.

Nate leans over the wounded man and tries to listen to his parched murmurs.

CAVALRYMAN 3
(practically
indecipherable)
Don't leave me--... Bury me.

NATE
We can't stay here now. I'll
send word next chance we can.
Someone'll come for you.

Nate tries to pour water from his canteen into the man's mouth, but Nate's canteen is empty. He turns to Will.

NATE
Gimme yours.

WILL
Nah, I don't think so.

NATE
Son, gimme your water.

WILL
I ain't your son.

Will turns and keeps walking in the direction they were headed.

NATE
(sternly)
Boy, I ain't ask you again.

WILL
(over his shoulder)
Leave him to die like they done
Marcus.

Nate starts after Will.

NATE

We ain't them. You'll treat
this man the same as he was
Marcus, or my brother, or your
pa.

Will stops and crouches to the ground, shamed by the
basic humanity and truth in Nate's words.

Nate catches up with the boy and looks him in the eye.
Will can't reciprocate the look. He pushes past Nate.

WILL
(under his breath)
You don't deserve this.

NATE
What?
Come back. Come on now.

WILL
We'll make our own way from here
on.

Will keeps walking. Nate is confused.

NATE
Hold up. What they done to your
uncle ain't right, but I can't
deny this man water.

WILL
I don't care about Marcus. Just
leave me.

Nate gets in front of him. Will brushes past.

WILL
Just go back and leave me.

NATE
Hey--

Will spins and pushes Nate violently several times.

WILL
Just leave me!
Go!