

Jamil Jude
BUILDING FENCES
Script Sample

BUILDING FENCES is a story of a young Black man's journey to create a secure sense of self. When Jeshua was hired to play Cory in August Wilson's FENCES, he expected to be challenged, but not like this. When his estranged father is cast to play Troy, Jeshua is forced to confront issues he's worked so hard to repress. Will he address his issues and find a new normal or will he shut down and shut out those who love him the most?

I began writing BUILDING FENCES during my 2013-2014 Many Voices Mentorship year. I plan on completing it and having a reading of it before the end of the fellowship year. Below are several scenes from the play.

Building Fences

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When the sins of our fathers visit us
We do not have to play host.
We can banish them with forgiveness
As God, in His Largeness and Laws.

-August Wilson

CHARACTERS

JESHUSA, Late 20's- Early 30's, a young actor

JAMES, Mid 50's, an older actor. Jeshua's father

OLIVIA, Mid 20's, Half-Black, Half-Vietnamese, a marketing manager, Jeshua's fiancée

DERRICK, Mid 30's, a director

Space between a character's previous sentence and the next suggests them taking the moment to assess the situation and possibly try a new approach at achieving what they need.

Scene 1

Lights rise on a theater rehearsal room. A long table with several chairs set around it. Off to the side is a food service table set with an impressive spread of breakfast and lunch foods. JESHUA walks over to the food service table. He is joined by another actor JAMES.

JAMES

Hey man. Good to see you.

JESHUA

Yeah. Good to see you, too.

JAMES

This theater really pulls out all the stops for these first rehearsals don't they?

JESHUA

Yeah. I guess so.

JAMES

I mean they go beyond just your regular bagels and coffee.

JESHUA

I was surprised at the spread.

JAMES

Wasn't always like this you know...

JESHUA

Like what?

JAMES

This. This theater. Hell no. Especially for the "Negro" play

JESHUA

What?

JAMES

No. Before they knew they could rack in the money for these shows, they would barely stop by the rehearsal room and say hello to you. Now, they bring in the Board president to say hello and he invites you to his house so he can show you how many things he's bought and the trips he and his wife and their beautiful kids have been on and how he's "always loved the work of black playwrights and actors."

Yeah. Things have changed.

So how you been? Been a while, huh? Your show out in Chicago. What was that, last year? Year and a half?

JESHUA

Four. We did that show four years ago.

JAMES

That long huh? Good show. A little long if I can remember correctly but I can barely remember yesterday. (*Chuckles*)

You held your own though; that material didn't give you much to work with.

New playwright?

JESHUA

Yea. MFA kid from my school.

STAGE MANAGER (off)

Ladies and gentlemen, we are back

JAMES

Hey, before we go back, I just wanted to say.

I didn't know you'd be in the show. When my agent called me asking me if I'd be interested in the play, I jumped at the chance. I've been in FENCES before, played Cory, but never Troy. I couldn't pass it up.

Thought to call you when I saw your name on the press release.

I've always hoped that we'd get a chance to share the stage together. You know I've been tracking your career and, like I said, you made that show worth watching even if it was long.

All that to say, I'm looking forward to working with you, son. I mean, how often can...

JESHUA

We gotta go back.

JESHUA heads back to the table and takes his seat. JAMES does the same. Lights shift

Scene 2

Lights up on JESHUA and OLIVIA, his fiancée, in the grocery store.

OLIVIA

Hey Stink...

JESHUA

(laughing) You are just hell bent on getting that nickname to stick.

OLIVIA

Just trying something new.

Hey Stink.

JESHUA

...

OLIVIA

Why fight it, Stink? You know you're just going to give in to me. It's what you always do. You're good at it. It's one of your best traits.

JESHUA

Fine. But I'm choosing the movie.

OLIVIA

Putting your foot down huh?

(saluting) Sir. Yes, sir!

JESHUA

Whatever.

So we can use the leftover ham for tonight but we need to get stuff for the rest of the week. I plan on making some salmon tonight to take for lunch but what else do you want to pick up?

OLIVIA

Is there rice in the pantry?

JESHUA

I think so.

OLIVIA

Ok, so no need for the staples. I guess we can pick up some chicken? Oh I know, I can make that chicken pesto. You know the one with the almonds and the garlic and the nutmeg. You remember that recipe?

JESHUA

Sure...

OLIVIA

What does that mean?

JESHUA

I mean, I remember the recipe, sure. But...do I think it was your best? No.

OLIVIA

Watch yourself Stink. You'll be cooking meals for yourself this week.

JESHUA

(laughing) Aww don't take it the wrong way, Love.

OLIVIA

Too late.

JESHUA

Fine. I should probably just buy some sandwich meat and bread. I may have to live off sandwiches for a while. We opted for the 20 minute-lunch break.

OLIVIA

That's right. You started rehearsals today didn't you? How did it go?

JESHUA

Fine.

OLIVIA

Ok.

How's the director? Derrick's his name right? You like him?

JESHUA

Yea.

OLIVIA

Alright.

(Walking away) You want me to pick up some popcorn for the movie?

JESHUA

Sure. Make sure it's that kettle corn style.

OLIVIA

Got it. You want to pick up some snack nuts for you?

JESHUA

No. I can't. Allergies.

OLIVIA

Since when are you allergic to nuts?

JESHUA

I'm not.

My dad is.

OLIVIA

What does that have to do with anything?

JESHUA

He's in the show with me.

OLIVIA

You want to talk about it?

JESHUA

No.

OLIVIA

Stink, I know that's a tough...

JESHUA

Don't call me that.

Sorry.

I'll go get the popcorn. You can pick out the movie.

JESHUA walks off. OLIVIA watches him walk away. Lights shift