

Joe Taylor, a WWII Vet with service in the Red Ball Express, has just asked his life-long mentor and teacher, a white woman who prides herself on her liberalism, if he could buy her house. Surprising both herself and Joe, that request crosses a line that neither one of them had been aware of. He wants to buy her house

ROSE

I'm just not ready!

JOE

For what?

ROSE

For you, Joe. For the man who came back from Europe. Walking differently. And talking differently. And you're not the only one. Young Negro girls walking down the sidewalk bumping right into me, as if I weren't there or didn't count. Sometimes I think they snicker at me behind their backs. And no one wears gloves anymore. I never went to town without my gloves.

JOE

From where I sit, Miss Beauchamp, some changes were needed.

ROSE

There are houses for sale all over Berkley! Nicer houses.

JOE

Closer to the color line. You worried about what you're gonna tell your neighbors?

ROSE

All right! Yes! You might be up to facing down people in the street, but Nettie isn't.

JOE

You look at me and tell me the only reason you don't want me in this house is because of Nettie. (*pause*) Can you tell me you don't shudder at the idea of my big feet moving into your sitting room? My dark babies crying in the night? That bothers you, don't it? You don't have to answer that! Guess someone like me's jes too slow to unnderstan' any which ways.

ROSE

Stop it! Stop twisting things. . .

JOE

I'm not the one doing the twisting. You've done it for years and you had me fooled every damn way. I always counted on you for the truth. You were like a compass. A moral magnetic north. And now I have no idea which direction you're pointing. I guess I have to follow my own compass.