

**30 Seconds, 3 Trumpets: Centering Black Women and Girls in Native Son
Transcription**

“He went out and walked south to Forty-sixth Street, then eastward. While walking through this quiet and spacious white neighborhood, the houses he passed were huge; lights glowed softly in windows. This was a cold and distant world; a world of white secrets carefully guarded. He could feel a pride, a certainty, and a confidence in these streets and houses. He came to Drexel Boulevard and began to look for 4605. When he came to it, he stopped and stood before a high, black, iron picket fence, feeling constricted inside.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“These were the rhythms of his life: indifference and violence; periods of abstract brooding and periods of intense desire; moments of silence and moments of anger—like water ebbing and flowing from the tug of a far-away, invisible force. Being this way was a need of his as deep as eating.”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“He was like a strange plant blooming in the day and wilting at night; but the sun that made it bloom and the cold darkness that made it wilt were never seen. It was his own sun and darkness, a private and personal sun and darkness.”

- Read by **Naomi Baty**

“Lord, I want to be a Christian / in my heart, in my heart. / Lord, I want to be a Christian / in my heart, in my heart. / In my heart, oh, in my heart. / Lord, I want to be a Christian / in my heart.”

- Sang by **Degame Young**

“It sounded suddenly directly above his head and when he looked it was not there but went on tolling and with each passing moment he felt an urgent need to run and hide as though the bell were sounding a warning and he stood on a street corner in a red glare of light like that which came from the furnace and he had a big package in his arms so wet and slippery and heavy he could scarcely hold onto it and he wanted to know what was in the package and he stopped near an alley corner and unwrapped it and the paper fell away and he saw—it was his own head—his own head lying with black face and half-closed eyes and lips parted with white teeth showing and hair wet with blood and the red glaring sense of fatigue drugged him with sleep. He stretched out more fully on the bed, sighed, turned on his back, swallowed, and closed his eyes.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“She responded to him as if he were human, as if he lived in the same world as she. And he had never felt that before in a white person. But why? Was this some kind of game? The guarded feeling of freedom he had while listening to her was tangled with the hard fact that she was white and rich, a part of the world of people who told him what he could and could not do.”

- Read by **Sadie Woods**

“His stomach did a slow flip-flop and he heard it growl. He felt in his hunger a deep sense of duty, as powerful as the urge to breathe, as intimate as the beat of his heart.”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“Now and then he passed an empty building, white and silent in the night [...] He reached Langley Avenue and walked westward to Wabash Avenue. There were many empty buildings with black windows, like blind eyes, buildings like skeletons standing with snow on their bones in the winter winds. But none of them were on corners. Finally, at Michigan and East Thirty-sixth Place, he saw the one he wanted. It was tall, white, silent, standing on a well-lighted corner. By looking from any of the front windows Bessie would be able to see in all four directions.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“Lord, I want to be more loving / in my heart, in my heart.”

- Sang by **Degame Young**

“Now that the ice was broken, could he not do other things? What was there to stop him? While sitting there at the table waiting for his breakfast, he felt that he was arriving at something which had long eluded him. Things were becoming clear; he would know how to act from now on. The thing to do was to act just like others acted, live like they lived, and while they were not looking, do what you wanted. They would never know.”

- Read by **Sadie Woods**

“And from the dusty earth a man rose up and loomed against the day and the sun and after him a woman rose up and loomed against the night and the moon and they lived as one flesh and there was no Pain no Longing no Time no Death and Life was like the flowers that bloomed round them in the garden of earth.”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“The echo of steel crashing against steel resounded throughout the long quiet corridor, wave upon wave, dying somewhere far away.”

- Read by **Naomi Baty**

“He looked round the street and saw a sign on a building: THIS PROPERTY IS MANAGED BY THE SOUTH SIDE REAL ESTATE COMPANY. He had heard that Mr. Dalton owned the South Side Real Estate Company, and the South Side Real Estate Company owned the house in which he lived. He paid eight dollars a week for one rat-infested room. He had never seen Mr. Dalton until he had come to work for him; his mother always took the rent to the real estate office. Mr. Dalton was somewhere far away, high up, distant, like a god. He owned property all over the Black Belt, and he owned property where white folks lived, too. But Bigger could not live in a building across the ‘line.’”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“He felt two soft palms holding his face tenderly and the thought and image of the whole blind world which had made him ashamed and afraid fell away as he felt her as a fallow field beneath him stretching out under a cloudy sky waiting for rain...”

- Read by **Sadie Woods**

“In my heart, oh, in my heart / Lord, I want to be more loving / in my heart, oh, in my heart.”

- Sang by **Degame Young**

“Don’t hope for too much. There’s an ocean of hot hate out there against you and I’m going to try to sweep some of it back. They want your life; they want revenge. They felt they had you fenced off so that you could not do what you did. Now they’re mad because deep down in them they believe that they made you do it.”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“Ultimately, though, his hate and hope turned outward from himself and Gus: his hope toward a vague benevolent something that would help and lead him, and his hate toward the whites; for he felt that they ruled him, even when they were far away and not thinking of him, ruled him by conditioning him in his relations to his own people.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“His mother came into the room with more plates of food and he saw how soft and shapeless she was. Her eyes were tired and sunken and darkly ringed from a long lack of rest. She moved about slowly, touching objects with her fingers as she passed them, using them for support. Her feet dragged over the wooden floor and her face held an expression of tense effort. Whenever she wanted to look at anything, even though it was near her, she turned her entire head and body to see it and did not shift her eyes. There was in her heart, it seemed, a heavy and delicately balanced burden whose weight she did not want to assume by disturbing it one whit.”

- Read by **Sadie Woods**

“Lord, I want to be more holy / in my heart, in my heart. / Lord, I want to be more holy / in my heart, in my heart. / Oh, in my heart, in my heart. / Lord, I want to be more holy / in my heart, oh, in my heart.”

- Sang by **Degame Young**

“With this new sense of the value of himself gained from Max’s talk, a sense fleeting and obscure, he tried to feel that if Max had been able to see the man in him beneath those wild and cruel acts of his, acts of fear and hate and murder and flight and despair, then he too would hate, if he were they, just as now he was hating them and they were hating him. For the first time in his life he felt ground beneath his feet, and he wanted it to stay there.”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“He felt in the quiet presence of his mother, brother and sister as a force, inarticulate and unconscious, making for living without thinking, making for a hope that blinded. He felt that he wanted and yearned to see life in a different way.”

- Read by **Naomi Baty**

“He lowered the paper; he could read no more. The one fact to remember was that eight thousand men, white men, with guns and gas, were out there in the night looking for him.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“Lord, I want to be like Jesus / in my heart, in my heart. / Lord, I want to be like Jesus / in my heart, oh, in my heart.”

- Sang by **Degame Young**

“He felt that he was living upon a high pinnacle where bracing winds whipped about him. There came to his ears a muffled sound of sobs. Then suddenly there was silence.”

- Read by **Sadie Woods**

“There were rare moments when a feeling and longing for solidarity with other Black people would take hold of him.”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“A medley of crashing sounds came, louder than he had thought that sound could be: horns, sirens, screams. There was hunger in those sounds as they crashed over the roof-tops and chimneys; but under it, low and distinct, he heard voices of fear: curses of men and cries of children.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“Some hand had reached inside of him and had laid a quiet finger of peace upon the restless tossing of his spirit and had made him feel that he did not need to long for home now.”

- Read by **Naomi Baty**

“*Lord, I want to be a Christian / in my heart, in my heart. / Lord, I want to be a Christian / in my heart, in my heart.*”

- Sang by **Degame Young**

“Have we had to struggle so hard for our right to happiness that we have all but destroyed the conditions under which we and others can still be happy?”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“The doorways were wider than those of any house in which he had ever lived. Some rich folks lived here once, he thought. Rich white folks. That was the way most houses on the South Side were, ornate, old, stinking; homes once of rich white people...”

- Read by **Wisdom Baty**

“Toward no one in the world did he feel any fear now, for he knew that fear was useless; and toward no one in the world did he feel any hate now, for he knew that hate would not help him.”

- Read by **Sadie Woods**

“There was silence. The car sped through the Black Belt, past tall buildings holding black life. Bigger knew that they were thinking of his life and the life of his people.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“He remembered the time when the police had come and driven him and his mother and his brother and sister out of a flat in a building which collapsed two days after they had moved. And he had heard that it said that black people, even though they could not get good jobs, paid twice as much rent as whites for the same kind of flats. He walked five more blocks and saw no ‘For Rent’ sign.”

- Read by **Naomi Baty**

“As the car lurched over the snow he lifted his eyes and saw black people upon the snow-covered sidewalks. Those people had feelings of fear and shame like his. Many a time he had stood on street corners with them and talked of white people as long sleek cars zoomed past. To Bigger and his kind white people were not really people; they were a sort of great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead, or like a deep swirling river stretching suddenly at one’s feet in the dark. As long as he and his black folks did not go beyond certain limits, there was no need to fear that white force. But whether they feared it or not, each and every day of their lives they lived with it; even when words did not sound its name, they acknowledged its reality. As long as they lived here in this prescribed corner of the city, they paid mute tribute to it.”

- Read by **Zenobia Black**

“In my heart, oh, in my heart / Lord, I want to be like Jesus / in my heart, oh, in my heart.”

- Sang by **Degame Young**