

**TOO
HEAVY
FOR YOUR
POCKET**

BY **JIRÉH BREON
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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*for my mother,
Cassandra Holder Christiansen,
a well of love, patience, & gratitude*

*with my deepest gratitude to each of the Freedom Riders
for their sacrifice.*

The world premiere of TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET was produced by the Alliance Theatre (Susan V. Booth, Artistic Director) in Atlanta, Georgia, in February 2017. It was directed by Margot Bordelon, the scenic design was by Reid Thompson, the lighting design was by Liz Lee, the costume design was by Sydney Roberts, and the sound design was by Elisheba Ittoop. The cast was as follows:

BOWZIE Stephen Ruffin
SALLY Markita Prescott
TONY Rob Demery
EVELYN Eboni Flowers

The New York City premiere of TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET was produced by Roundabout Theatre Company as part of Roundabout Underground at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre on October 5, 2017. It was directed by Margot Bordelon, the scenic design was by Reid Thompson, the costume design was by Valérie Thérèse Bart, the lighting design was by Jiyoun Chang, the sound design was by Ian Scot, the hair and wig design was by Dave Bova and J. Jared Janas, the production stage manager was Katherine Wallace, and the assistant stage manager was Sara Sahin. The cast was as follows:

BOWZIE Brandon Gill
SALLY Nneka Okafor
TONY Hampton Fluker
EVELYN Eboni Flowers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If a play is lucky it can have a long life which has been touched by the actors who inhabited its characters throughout its development. I offer my boundless gratitude to:

Britny Horton (my sister), Freddie Fulton (my brother), Shaunette Renee, Chalia Ayers LaTour (my tribe), Jonathan Majors, Condola Rashad, Jeremy Pope, Joshua Boone, Maechi Aharanwa, Danielle Brooks, Jeremie Harris, John Stewart III, Shannon Dorsey, Justin Weak, Kashayna Johnson, Sheria Irving,

the formidable cast of the Alliance Theatre production: Stephen Ruffin, Nicolette Robinson, Markita Prescott, Rob Demery,

as well as the astounding cast of the Roundabout Theatre Company production: Brandon Gill, Eboni Flowers, Nneka Okafor, and Hampton Fluker.

CHARACTERS

BOWZIE BRANDON, a trip

SALLY-MAE CARTER, fine even though she's expecting

TONY CARTER, a hard man with a soft smile

EVELYN BRANDON, a singer

*These characters are of African-American descent
& each production of this play should reflect that*

PLACE

Nashville, Tennessee

TIME

Summer of 1961

SPACE

Grass everywhere, even indoors

NOTE ON MUSIC

Permission to perform the song sung by Evelyn on page 62, written by Ian Scot and Jiréh Breon Holder, is included with a performance license for the play. No performance rights to any other song is included in such license.

For information regarding all other music mentioned in the play, including but not limited to songs noted by an asterisk (*), please see Note on Songs/Recordings on page 88.

TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET

ACT ONE

1

Lights up slowly on Bowzie Brandon, a twenty-year-old, scrawny kind of man. He is in the middle of an open field looking to the sky.

His toes sink into the earth.

He takes the time to feel the breeze.

He lets his feet sink into the soft, damp earth. The grass slides between his toes.

He is a tree.

He breathes hard; a half-prayer, half-declaration: Huh!

And again. Huh!

And again. Huh!

He smiles.

Then laughs heartily.

A room is revealed that might be a dining room, living room, or kitchen depending on the arrangement of the furniture. It almost reminds you of the house your grandparents might have lived in except there is no floor. Just beautiful green grass in the place of creaky wooden boards.

There is a handmade table with four handmade chairs. The kitchen supplies are all third- or fourth-hand. The quarters are cozy enough for the audience to feel like guests.

Sally enters. She is so slight one might not realize she is pregnant. She reminds you of your daughter or your younger sister, or possibly a photo of your mother when she was a teenager.

She sings a bit, pulling out a commencement cap and gown.

She grins a little as she hangs it up. The gorgeous regalia is beckoning her, so she tries on the cap. She thinks about trying on the gown. She almost decides, "To heck with it—Why not!" When Bowzie enters the home.

BOWZIE. Hey now Sally, Looking mighty sharp.
Don't hurt 'em!

SALLY. (*Embarrassed.*) Don't be sneaking up on me like that!
What's wrong with you?

BOWZIE. I ain't seen you smile like that since the day Tony proposed.
You about to be a educated Negro, for sure!

SALLY. Bowzie¹, what are you doing here?

BOWZIE. I woke up at the crack of dawn to make it *all* the way to Haynes.

SALLY. The school needs tutors on a Saturday?

BOWZIE. So they said.

When I got there, there wasn't a single soul there.

You try to help niggahs out, and this is what you get.

1 Pronounced "Boe-zee"

SALLY. You know I don't take no ugly words, Bowzie Brandon.

BOWZIE. You know I'm right.

SALLY. Don't mean you got to be nasty about it.

Though, you think they'd be wiser than that.

BOWZIE. How you figure?

SALLY. Wasting the time of a future Fisk University student!

BOWZIE. Here you go.

SALLY. I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

BOWZIE. I ain't a student yet.

I'm just another raggedy brother begging for a handout.

SALLY. Hush.

BOWZIE. Until I have a degree in my hand, you the biggest somebody around these parts.

Miss Sally-Mae Carter!

Beautician Extraordinaire!

Certified by Joyce Howard School of Glamour—

SALLY. (*Cutting to the chase.*) You haven't heard *any* word yet?

They said you should have gotten a letter by now.

BOWZIE. You as bad as Evelyn².

Every evening she come home just running for the mailbox.

I say, "Baby, is you married to the mailbox or to me?"

SALLY. And what she say?

BOWZIE. She tell me she's mine for sure,

but the mailbox is putting up a good fight for her attention.

SALLY. (*Laughing.*) She ain't got no sense!

Tony, Sally's husband, enters rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He is Bowzie's bosom buddy since childhood, twice his size and all muscle. It's not hard to tell that Bowzie is the brains and Tony is the brawn.

TONY. Bowzie, you here already?

Why you ain't wake me up?

BOWZIE. What you think I'm here for?

2 Pronounced "Ev'lyn"

SALLY. What are you two up to?

TONY. Man business, woman.

What you doing up?

You supposed to be resting for your big day.

SALLY. Why? So both of us can be sleeping in?

I'm going to the outhouse.

Y'all try to stay out of trouble.

Sally exits out of the house.

The men wait until she's gone to snap into action:

Tony rushes to a corner of his things and pulls out a hidden bundle of dollar bills.

TONY. I thought you wasn't gonna be able to come 'til right before graduation.

BOWZIE. I made it all the way to Haynes and wasn't nobody there

TONY. Niggahs don't appreciate nothing.

Go'n ahead and pick it up.

Just honk when you get back.

BOWZIE. Sally gon' hop clear out her skin.

TONY. Here's the rest of the money I owe them.

Tony holds out a few dollar bills from the stash.

BOWZIE. Naw, it's Sally's big day.

This one's on me.

Bowzie shows Tony money from his own pocket.

TONY. You sure y'all can afford it?—

BOWZIE. Don't mention it.

TONY. Thank you, brother.

BOWZIE. Be back in a shake!

Bowzie exits.

Tony quickly replaces his hidden stash of dollar bills.

Sally enters.

SALLY. Where Bowzie go?

TONY. That ain't none of my business.

SALLY. What you talking?

TONY. I ain't doing no talking.

Not when there's so much to *look* at.

SALLY. I don't know what you looking at.

TONY. This foxy young thang right before my eyes.

SALLY. Charm the stripes off a tiger.

TONY. *Mm mm mm.*

Finer than frog's hair.

How you gets to be that fine, girl?

SALLY. Let me be, man.

I need to get dressed.

TONY. Naw naw naw.

I ain't letting you get dressed yet.

Tony advances, and a giggling Sally runs into the back room.

Tony follows her, hands poised for her backside.

A brief beat passes before Sally reenters with her dress and heels.

SALLY. Let me get dressed.

Tony reenters, still playfully chasing her.

TONY. You ain't listening.

I'm trying to get you *undressed*.

Sally puts her hands on her hips.

SALLY. Tony Carter.

Tony knows what this means. He acquiesces.

TONY. At least let me lend you a hand, baby.

Tony helps Sally with her dress, spending special time with her belly. Sally nervously accepts the gentle gesture. It's almost romantic, but something lurks underneath. Both spouses stop themselves just short of surrendering to the intimacy.

Interrupting the beat, Evelyn, Bowzie's wife, enters singing as she often does. A gospel song, such as something by Rev. Robert Ballinger. She is a beautiful chocolate woman with a full figure.*

EVELYN. Morning, y'all.

TONY and SALLY. Morning, Evelyn.

TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET

by Jiréh Breon Holder

2 men, 2 women

In the summer of 1961, the Freedom Riders are embarking on a courageous journey into the Deep South. When twenty-year-old Bowzie Brandon gives up a life-changing college scholarship to join the movement, he'll have to convince his loved ones—and himself—that shaping his country's future might be worth jeopardizing his own.

"...illuminating and moving... TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET dramatizes questions of class difference within the black community that rarely get broached onstage."

—The New York Times

"Holder is putting his finger on something powerful, something that Fight for Freedom narratives—even exquisite ones like Ava DuVernay's film Selma—don't necessarily get at: Protesting is a privilege."

—New York Magazine

"A lyrical drama with a quartet of fully realized, deeply felt characters."

—The New Yorker

"...[Holder is] a gifted writer who will be amazing to watch as his work grows."

—Deadline.com

"Better than any play I've seen on the subject, TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET examines the role of class in our nation's civil rights struggle; it dares to ask, is agitating for justice an activity most easily pursued by the otherwise privileged?"

—TheaterMania.com

"TOO HEAVY FOR YOUR POCKET is remarkable for the depth of its exploration of a tumultuous time in our history. ...Holder has managed to captivate the audience by examining issues of race, gender, power, faith, and politics without ever losing sight of his characters. And in doing so, has shown himself to be a powerful voice to be reckoned with."

—TalkinBroadway.com

"Holder...has created intricate, recognizable characters and dialogue that bristles with verisimilitude."

—OffOffOnline.com

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