

Can't Go Back

By

Nigel Rodgers

EXT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY- MORNING

Heat haze shimmers above asphalt as we come to ISAIAH "IZZY" GIBSON, Black, late 20s, standing beside a stock, but expensive BMW.

The PRISON GATES open. Out walks TRAE SIMPSON, Black, early 30s, scruffy and rough. He's placid, but assertive.

IZZY  
Welcome home, T-Man!

TRAE  
Sup, Cuz?

They embrace. Izzy squeezes Trae's muscles.

IZZY  
You got buff in there.

TRAE  
Ain't shit else to do.

Trae notices the nice car.

TRAE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
This you?

IZZY  
You already know!

They both get into the car.

CUT TO:

INT. IZZY'S CAR (MOVING)- DAY

Trae stares out the window.

IZZY  
So what you wanna do now that  
you're a free man? You want food? I  
know you're hungry.

TRAE  
I could eat.

IZZY  
I know exactly where to go.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSCOE'S CHICKEN & WAFFLES- DAY

A shot of the ROSCOE'S SIGN.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSCOE'S CHICKEN & WAFFLES

Izzy watches as Trae sucks on a CHICKEN BONE like a savage. He moans and grunts while he eats.

IZZY

Dude... we are in public.

Trae goes in on the RED BEANS AND RICE.

IZZY (CONT'D)

What'd they feed you?

Trae' mouth is full.

TRAE

Shit that White people wouldn't feed their dogs.

Izzy watches Trae eat.

IZZY

So is it like they say? Are there really... Booty Goons in there... to... you know...

TRAE

Yeah. If you a bitch. But they never touched me. No sir. And I ain't have to convert to Islam for protection either.

Trae pokes at his food.

TRAE (CONT'D)

So what's been up with you? You still in school?

IZZY

Nah. I left.

TRAE

Don't tell me that. You were the one that was supposed to make it.

IZZY  
I did make it. I just didn't  
require an education to do it.

TRAE  
What you do?

Izzy hesitates.

IZZY  
Investing.

TRAE  
Investing? In what?

IZZY  
Pharmaceuticals...

Trae looks at Izzy, knowingly. Izzy's eyes shift.

TRAE  
I'm already knowin'.

Trae chuckles to himself and digs at his food.

TRAE (CONT'D)  
Lil golden boy Isaiah. Turned to  
the streets.  
(beat)  
Remember when we were in middle  
school, and that kid snitched on me  
for bringing a strap.

IZZY  
Yeah, cause we got jumped the day  
before.

TRAE  
And the teachers busted into class  
with twelve and searched me. But  
tucked the gun before they found it  
on me.

IZZY  
Yeah. Which was stupid.

TRAE  
It's funny because you were so  
soft, but you were always looking  
out for me.

IZZY  
You were the closest thing I had to  
a brother.

TRAE

Then your parents made enough money  
and moved across the state away  
from the family.

IZZY

Maybe it was for the best.

Traw says nothing.

TRAE

How my uncle and auntie doin'?

IZZY

They're good, I guess.

Trae bashfully plays with his food.

TRAE

You think they'd let me crash with  
them? At least til I get me a lil'  
spot.

IZZY

I don't know... we don't really  
speak on non-Holidays.

TRAE

You don't stay with them?

IZZY

I moved out a while ago.

TRAE

Well can I stay with you?

IZZY

It's more of a one-person spot.

TRAE

Then let's ask your parents. What  
you got with them has nothin' to do  
with me.

IZZY

We have a lot of other family you  
could stay with.

TRAE

None of them mothafuckas checked on  
me when I was in. You think they  
gonna help me now?

Izzy sighs and looks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GIBSON HOME- DAY

Izzy pulls up to a MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR LOS ANGELES HOME.

CUT TO:

INT. IZZY'S CAR- CONTINUOUS

The gate opens and Izzy pulls in.

TRAE

Is this the same house?

IZZY

No. They wanted a smaller one after I moved out.

TRAE

This is smaller?

CUT TO:

INT. THE GIBSON HOME- MOMENTS LATER

The interior is professionally designed with an AFROCENTRIC THEME.

The large door opens. Izzy and Trae enter.

IZZY

How'd you know it was unlocked?

TRAE

It's the burbs. People don't lock their doors in safe hoods. At least not until someone runs a 211 on the neighbors.

LAUGHING can be heard in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GIBSON HOME- BACKYARD

MELODY GIBSON, Black, 50s, sips a margarita as she reclines by the pool in an expensive bathing suit. She's fit, youthful, and living her best life.

ANDRE GIBSON, Black, 50s, is at the grill seasoning STEAKS in his boxers and an apron. He's on the same energy as his wife.

Izzy and Trae walk out. His mother sees them.

MELODY

Baby...

ANDRE

Yeah, Sugar Cheeks?

MELODY

How strong did you make my margarita... because I think our only child is standing in our backyard. Am I hallucinating? Isaiah? Is that you?

Izzy is not amused.

IZZY

So dramatic.

Andre turns around. He's not excited.

ANDRE

Yeah... that's that nigga.

MELODY

My son!

Melody stands and gives Izzy a big hug.

IZZY

Is Dad grilling in his boxers?

ANDRE

Mind ya business, Boy.

MELODY

I've missed you. How long has it been?

IZZY

A couple months. Are you drinking already? It's like 1PM.

She takes a taunting sip from her margarita. She notices Trae.

MELODY

Is that Trae? Oh my god!

She gives him a hug. Andre walks over. He's friendlier with Trae.

ANDRE

What's up Nephew. When'd you get back from vacation?

TRAE

This morning. Izzy picked me up.

MELODY

Well that was very kind of him. Did you get the care packages we sent?

TRAE

Yeah. I really appreciate it y'all.

ANDRE

I promised my sister we'd take care of you. God rest her soul. You've always been a good kid. Maybe if you were around you would have kept this knuckle head out of trouble.

Izzy scoffs.

IZZY

He went to jail.

Melody pinches Izzy's arm. He flinches.

MELODY

Don't be rude, Isaiah.

ANDRE

So what do you fellas have planned?

TRAE

Well, actually...

Izzy walks away. He wants no parts of this.

TRAE (CONT'D)

I was wondering if I could crash with y'all for a while. At least 'til I find a job and a spot.

Silence. Melody chugs her drink.

MELODY

I'ma go refill this.

She walks away.

ANDRE

You're all cowards. I guess I gotta wear the pants.

(beat)

Nephew. I would love to...

He places a hand on Trae's shoulder.

TRAE

C'mon Unc. Don't put sugar on it. Just keep it a hundred.

ANDRE

Look. Your Aunt and I, we like to walk around in our... natural state. It's the freedom you have when the kids are out of the house.

TRAE

Uncle Dre... do it for my momma.

ANDRE

Wow. The dead sister card, huh?

(beat)

Nephew. We did our part. It's time to take care of yourself. Plus, I already got one criminal out of my house; don't want to move another one.

IZZY

Not a criminal. Never went to prison.

TRAE

How can I build anything if I don't even have an address?

ANDRE

Your cousin hasn't offered you a room? That nigga has space.

TRAE

What?

Trae looks at Izzy. Izzy is pretending to not pay attention.

IZZY

What?

TRAE

You have space at your crib?

IZZY

I mean. I have **one** extra room.

TRAE

Nigga... We've been drivin' around, stressin', and you had a spot the whole time?

IZZY

I wasn't stressed...

ANDRE

(to Trae)

Watch out for this cat. He's a cold one. Shoulda gave his ass some siblings. Maybe he wouldn't be so selfish.

(To Izzy)

Boy give your cousin a place to stay!

Melody walks out with a full glass.

MELODY

Yeah. I didn't raise you like that.

Izzy relents.

IZZY

Fine. He can stay with me.

ANDRE

Good.

Andre walks back to the grill.

MELODY

Is everything else okay with you?

IZZY

I'm good, Mom.

MELODY

Of course you are.

(beat)

You know, if you ever need anything you can come to us. Let's try to make it less than two months until I see you again, okay?

IZZY  
Seems like I'm not welcome.

MELODY  
You know how your dad gets when  
he's horny.

Izzy and Trae are disgusted.

IZZY  
No. I don't. Good. Bye.

Izzy and Trae leave the backyard.

CUT TO:

INT. IZZY'S CAR (MOVING)- DAY

Izzy and Trae sit in silence for a moment.

TRAE  
Why you tell me you ain't have  
space?

Izzy hesitates.

IZZY  
I don't know... I just... I thought  
my parents would for sure let you  
stay with them.

TRAE  
Wait. When I first mentioned your  
parents, you were unsure. What's up  
Izzy?

IZZY  
I just...  
(beat)  
I didn't know if you'd be like,  
institutionalized or something.  
Okay? I've never been around people  
who've been in prison.

TRAE  
Ninety percent of our family has  
been in prison.

IZZY  
Which is why my dad kept me from  
around y'all.

TRAE

Y'all? Nigga. I should bust you in the mouth--

IZZY

See... And you want to live with me?

Silent beat.

TRAE

Look. I'm a Black felon. Everywhere I go, people are gonna be suspicious of me. They gon' look at me like I'm a monster. The one person I would hope to ride with me is my best cousin.

Guilt covers Izzy's face.

IZZY

Best cousin?

TRAE

You said I was the brother you never had. I agree.

IZZY

You have a brother.

TRAE

He never acted like it.

Izzy melts.

IZZY

I'm... I'm sorry T-Man. I shouldn't have played you like that.

TRAE

You shouldn't have.

IZZY

I promise I'll make it up to you.

CUT TO:

INT. IZZY'S CONDO- EVENING

Izzy and Trae enter a PENTHOUSE condo overlooking DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES. Trae is taken aback.

TRAE

Nigga. This place is *nice*. This all you?

IZZY

Yep. Let's take your bags to the room and settle you in.

CUT TO:

INT. IZZY'S CONDO

Izzy and Trae eat PIZZA as they watch a rerun of SUPER BOWL XXXVI on a 100" TV.

TRAE

I can't believe LA has a team again. And they went to the Super Bowl!

IZZY

Too bad they had to play the greatest quarterback of all time.

TRAE

What other big events happened in the last decade?

IZZY

Bro... a lot.

Izzy grabs the remote and presses buttons until YouTube pops up on the screen.

TRAE

What's this?

IZZY

You ready to get lost in the zeitgeist?

TRAE

What?

Izzy's presses a button.

CLOSE UP:

TRAE'S EYES widen and his PUPILS dilate as IMAGES reflect in them.

CLOSE UP (SPED UP):

VARIOUS IMAGES and VIDEO CLIPS from the 2010s flash across the screen

ON TRAE

LIGHT from the screen dances on Trae as he watches in a trance.

BACK TO (SPED UP):

More culturally important images flash on the screen.

CLOSE UP:

IMAGES reflect in Trae's wide eyes.

CUT TO:

BLACK

FADE TO:

INT. IZZY'S CONDO- 4 HOURS LATER

SUPER: "4 HOURS LATER"

Izzy and Trae are slumped on the couch; still in a trance.

TRAE

Nigga... that... was a lot. I am exhausted.

IZZY

So is the rest of America.

TRAE

Really? Mr. Huxtable, though?

IZZY

We were all surprised.

Izzy stands.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Well, I'm going to bed. Get some rest. We have some errands to run tomorrow. Gotta get you prepped for society.

TRAE

A'ight. Bet.

Izzy leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. IZZY'S CONDO/ GUEST ROOM- MORNING

Trae rests like a baby on a plush king-sized bed. Izzy enters the room and taps Trae's shoulder.

IZZY

Yo. T--

Trae instantly awakens, grabs Izzy's collar, and holds a SHIV to his neck.

IZZY (CONT'D)

What the fuck dude!

He lets Izzy go.

TRAE

My bad nigga. Can't be sneaking up on me like that.

IZZY

Why do you have a shiv? You aren't in county anymore.

TRAE

Just, yell and bang on the wall or something when you want me to wake up.

IZZY

How about I buy you an alarm clock when we go shopping today?

TRAE

Bet.

IZZY

Throw that shiv away.

Izzy leaves the room. Trae looks at the shiv, and then places it back under his pillow.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIM & SON CAR DEALERSHIP- DAY

Izzy pulls his car into the small dealership and mechanic shop.

EXT. KIM & SON CAR DEALERSHIP- CONTINUOUS

Izzy parks in the back of the dealership by the MECHANIC SHOP with a closed garage door.

INT. IZZY'S CAR- CONTINUOUS

Izzy shuts the car off.

IZZY  
I'll be quick.

CUT TO:

INT. KIM & SON CAR DEALERSHIP - MOMENTS LATER

Izzy walks through the shop. WORKERS hide BRICKS OF DRUGS into the panels of a stripped SUV. They stop when they see Izzy.

IZZY  
Hey fellas.

They nod and get back to work.

CUT TO:

INT. KIM & SON CAR DEALERSHIP OFFICE- MOMENTS LATER

Izzy walks into an office to see...

RICKY KIM, Korean, 20s, recording a SELFIE video of his expensive clothes and JEWELRY.

POV: SELFIE CAMERA

Ricky holds his WATCH up to the screen.

RICKY  
You see that shit. Worth more than  
you parent's mortgage.

Ricky scans the rest of his outfit.

RICKY (CONT'D)  
You see this shit? I don't even  
gotta tell you what it is. You see  
the logo.

He holds to camera to the LOGO.