

# A Raisin in The Sun

*by* David Russo

I was about sixteen or seventeen when James Miller had a stroke and died. He was a friend of my father's and a preacher-guy. The last time our church had been that full was at the barbecue the weekend after the church was built. Somehow, the structure went up in eight days, could have been sooner but half of the volunteer corps were too hungover from the Super Bowl to show up one Monday.

Dad leaned over and said something about the crowd being a reward of the work James had done for the lord and that I should pray for their mourning souls. Religion was always lost on me; I only went to placate dad-a widower himself-and in two years I stopped going altogether.

The deceased was survived by three kids: two boys-one possibly a homo-and a beautiful daughter. She had an ice-cold stare that would penetrate and impale your soul if you ever exchanged eye-contact with her. Because we're in the house of a deity, I won't make any jokes about her being penetrated in the back of my dad's hearse. From the back corner of the sanctuary I could see the widow, like her husband a small and rotund woman. She had a quiet, demure nature but was quite direct whenever you could actually get her to speak.

For a while, I studied her face which seemed agitated, nervous and volatile for a woman who had lost her husband of twenty-nine years.

I sort of chuckled, postulating that she was upset about life insurance policies and dad thumped me on the back of the head. I saw her pull a box of burnt raisins out of her purse and methodically began eating them. Soon the box was gone and she continued fidgeting madly as a pastor took the stage and asked for a volunteer to lead in a prayer.

Miss Miller had enough with the praying game, there was a fat man in a casket to show you the power of prayer. James Miller was comatose for forty days while his wife prayed at his side for forty

days and thirty-nine nights. The word 'prayer' triggered something; Miss Miller stood up slowly, turned to the audience and showed us a nicely polished Smith and Wessen revolver and concluded the sermon before it even got started. Panic erupted, and I noticed a few raisins fall from her purse as her face kissed a pew before meeting the floor.

I decided to wait outside, climbed into the hearse and picked up a book from the lobby on the way back. The book had been folded back to a brief poem; I started reading it.

"'A Raisin in The Sun' by Langston Hughes"

