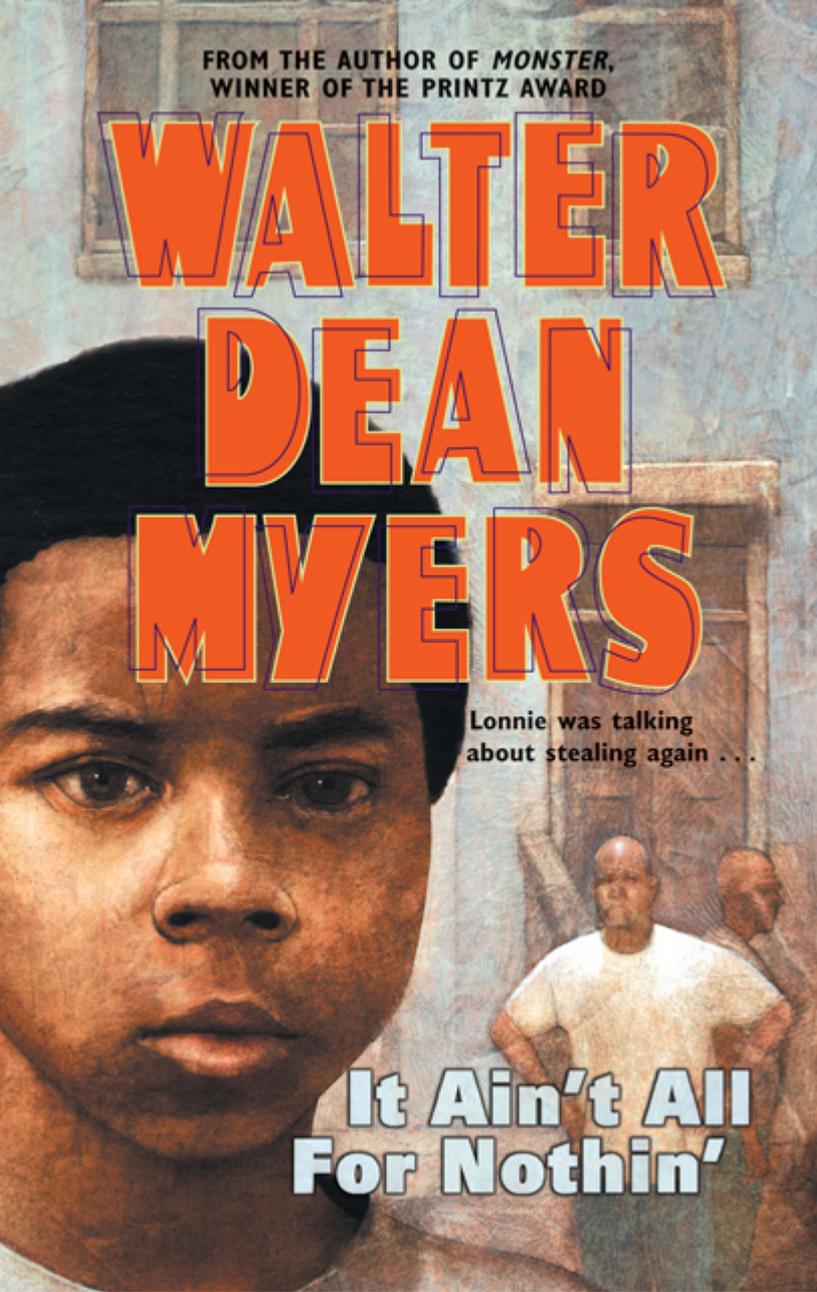


FROM THE AUTHOR OF *MONSTER*,  
WINNER OF THE PRINTZ AWARD

# WALTER DEAN MYERS

Lonnie was talking  
about stealing again . . .

**It Ain't All  
For Nothin'**



---

**WALTER  
DEAN  
MYERS**

**It Ain't All  
For Nothin'**

 HarperCollins e-books

---

**In memory of my brother  
George Douglas Myers**

---

# Contents

1	Grandma Carrie used to get money from Social Security, and...	1
2	Grandma Carrie stayed in the hospital for three more days...	25
3	Lonnie had an apartment on St. Nicholas Avenue. It was...	31
4	They had put Grandma Carrie back in the hospital, and...	38
5	After that me and Lonnie didn't have a whole lot...	57
6	"Hey, Tippy, I brought you something!" Lonnie threw this big...	67
7	I was sitting on the stoop again, mainly because I...	74
8	I had been looking around, trying to figure out what...	90

---

<a href="#">9</a>	When I woke up it was still dark but I...	104
<a href="#">10</a>	I didn't have nothing to do so I went over...	125
<a href="#">11</a>	"Yeah, so I was just going along with my man,...	136
<a href="#">12</a>	They had the Catholic relays on the block the next...	145
<a href="#">13</a>	"We all in this together," Bubba said. "We got to..."	161
<a href="#">14</a>	"Well, we got it all planned out," Lonnie said. I...	189
<a href="#">15</a>	I walked slow over to Mr. Roland's house. The wind...	219

[About the Author](#)

[Other Books by Walter Dean Myers](#)

[Credits](#)

[Cover](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Publisher](#)



**Grandma Carrie used** to get money from Social Security, and sometimes she did day's work. Things had been going pretty much all right with us. Most of the day's work wasn't really working because she used to go up to the house of a lady she knew real well and they would drink coffee and talk about different things. The lady's name was Mrs. Lilly. I saw her sometimes on Sundays after we got out of church and me and Grandma Carrie would take the subway over to where she lived. She was old like Grandma Carrie, and she was a lot smaller, too. Grandma Carrie was almost as big as a man. She always said when she was young she didn't have time to be studying on being little and things like that—she had to get out and work. She was strong-looking, too. She said when you can't reach around and grab nothing to help you, and you didn't have a man to hold on to, you had to reach inside yourself and find something strong. I guess she must have done

---

that because, like I said, we wasn't doing too bad.

Mrs. Lilly was Jewish and lived clear out in Brooklyn, away from where the black people lived. Me and Grandma Carrie lived on Manhattan Avenue near 125th Street. It used to take us a hour or more to get to Mrs. Lilly's place. She lived in a old building that smelled like it was a museum or something. She had a son somewhere who worked down on Wall Street, and he used to send her money once a week, and he would come to see her about twice a month. Mrs. Lilly told Grandma Carrie that she would like to see him more, but she knew he had a family of his own and everything. She said sometimes she spent all day thinking about if she should call him or not, then when she did call him she wouldn't even know what to say. She said he was a good son and he wanted her to come and live with him, but she wouldn't do it because she didn't want to be a burden.

Then one day Mrs. Lilly told Grandma Carrie that her son was sending her to Florida.

"You got people in Florida?" Grandma Carrie asked.

Mrs. Lilly said that she didn't but that her son thought it was a good idea. They both talked about her going to Florida like it was a good thing, but when the time come for her to go she was crying

---

and so was Grandma Carrie. When Mrs. Lilly was getting into the car, she told Grandma Carrie that she didn't think she was going to live a long time. Her son was saying things to try to make her stop crying, but she didn't. Then they was gone off in the car, and me and Grandma Carrie was standing there with a suitcase and two shopping bags full of stuff that Mrs. Lilly had give to us. We took the stuff on home, and I could see that Grandma Carrie had something on her mind. She was real quiet and sat on the edge of the bed and rocked a little. I asked her what it was that was wrong, but she didn't say nothing. I wanted to go out and see what was going on outside, but when Grandma Carrie got into one of her rocking moods it wasn't much good to ask her to go out. I looked at the paper for a while in the kitchen, and then I heard her speak out. I didn't hear what she said, so I went into the bedroom and she said it again.

“You know she gave us a nice piece of money every week,” Grandma said. “I don't know what we gonna do now, boy. Guess the Lord will provide.”

She didn't say much more about it then, and I didn't ask her nothing, either. We watched television for a while, and then she called me in for Sunday evening prayer.

---

“Lord, this is Your servant Carrie. Thank You, Jesus, for looking out after me and this boy today. Thank You, Jesus, for providing us with the meals to nourish our earthly bodies. Thank You, Jesus, for providing us with Your love to nourish our heavenly spirits.

“Lord, take care of Mrs. Lilly so that she can seek Thy grace and the peace of Thy love. Go ahead, boy.”

“Thank You, Jesus, for our daily bread. Thank You, Jesus, for the love You have shown us and for Your mercy. Amen.”

“You thanking Jesus from your heart or you thanking Him from memory, boy?”

“I’m thanking Him from my heart, Grandma Carrie.”

“Go on to bed.”

I went on to bed, and things went on about like they used to except for Grandma Carrie not going to see Mrs. Lilly. Grandma Carrie said we had to cut back on spending, and I said okay. It was summertime and school was out, so I didn’t have much to spend on, anyway. Grandma Carrie said we was poor in the ways of the world but rich in the spirit of Jesus. That was okay with me, because we always had enough to eat and everything, anyway. Sometimes I would go down to the market and

---

either carry bags for people or help them clean out the vegetable department. The man who was the manager of the produce department was named Sal, and he didn't work you too hard, and he always gave you fifty cents or a dollar extra if you didn't fool around.

Grandma said that she had to go out and get a job because I was looking raggedy. I did need new sneakers, but I really wasn't looking raggedy. That was just the way Grandma Carrie talked all the time. If you was a little dirty she would say that you must be getting ready to plant potatoes because you got so much dirt stored away. That's the kind of thing she would say. She went downtown and got a job from the State, and she went out to work the next day. When she come home I had made supper. I had cooked some collards with a streak of lean in them and made some rice. I cut up the pork butt she had made on Sunday and put it in with the collards when they was almost done. Grandma Carrie said that she wasn't hungry. I looked at her and I knew she wasn't feeling too good. She wasn't ailing or anything like that—she just looked like she was drooping over. When she was praying that night I could hear her asking for strength to make another day.

“Let me make another day, Jesus, just one more.

---

I know You tired of carrying my burden, but there ain't but a few steps more. . . .”

I never really liked it when she got to praying too hard because I knew she was sad. I listened real hard to hear if she called my mother's name and she did. Sometimes she would pray things about my mother, about things they used to do together before my mother got married, and I would listen to her.

“Jesus, You remember that time when Esther won that prize in school for being the prettiest child? And how we walked all around the school-yard afterwards and she was just beaming, Jesus? You know she was just beaming, Jesus.”

I liked to hear Grandma Carrie talk about my mother. I didn't like it when she was sad, which was the only time she mostly prayed about my mother, but I liked hearing about her. She would never talk about her when she wasn't sad or wasn't praying. Sometimes she would pray about how I was born, which was when my mother died. She died having me, so I never got to know her. When I would ask Grandma Carrie to talk about her when she wasn't praying, she would say there wasn't no use in studying on the dead.

“Hard as life is, what you want to go and study on dyin' for?” she would say. But she would hug

---

me, and sometimes she would get to rocking and crying a little, not out loud, but you could see her eyes filling up, and I know she was thinking about my mother. She always talked about her as “that girl,” and sometimes I used to imagine her as being a little girl that I could play with.

Jesus gave Grandma Carrie strength for another day, but it got harder and harder for her. When she had been doing day’s work for Mrs. Lilly, they would do the dusting and things together and it wasn’t too hard. Now soon’s she came home she was ready to go to bed. And sometimes if she prayed too long she would have to call me in and get me to help her off her knees. Then one day I was in the park playing stickball with Earl and Little Mike and some other guys when Shirley Glover came up and said that Grandma Carrie had fallen down in the hallway.

“She still there?” I asked.

“No, stupid, a man helped her up,” Shirley said, “but I think she hurt her hip or her back or something.”

I went on home and found Grandma Carrie making supper. She looked okay and I asked her how she felt.

“Feel like I’m sixty-nine years old, which I am,” she said, sprinkling some flour from the sifter over

---

the onions in the pan. “And I also feel like I don’t have to be reporting to no tadpole how I feel all the time.”

“Shirley said you fell down in the hallway.”

“Shirley Glover?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Anybody can fall down,” she said. “Won’t be the last time, Lord knows. You wash your hands and get ready for supper. You change that shirt from yesterday?”

“I think so,” I called back as I went into the bathroom.

“The stink don’t think so!”

I had meant to change the shirt, but I forgot because I had been in a hurry. I took it off and smelled under the arms and it didn’t really smell that bad, even though it didn’t smell so good, either. I looked in the hamper and there was another shirt in there that wasn’t wrinkled too bad and didn’t smell too bad, so I put that one on and put the smelly one in the hamper. When I finished washing I went into the kitchen and Grandma Carrie was leaning against the refrigerator holding her side. I asked her what was wrong and she just shook her head the way she did when she was hurting too bad to be talking about it. She had already put my plate out and I sat down and said

---

grace and started eating.

“Get up and help me into the room, boy.”

I moved the chair out of the way first and then I put my arm around her and stood so she could lean on me. Every time she took a step, even a little step with her left leg, which was on the same side that she was holding, her face twisted up. I had just about caught up with her in size, but she was bent over now and I could feel her breathing on my face. Every time she took a step she would let out two or three little breaths. She wanted to sit down for a while, but I told her she might as well lay down on the bed, and she said okay.

We got to the bed and she couldn't even lay down without me giving her a hand.

“You want me to fix you a plate and bring it in?” I asked.

“Just make me some peppermint tea,” she said. When she lay back on the pillows a little sharp sound come out of her, and I know she was hurting pretty bad.

I put the water on and got a cup down to make the tea. There was a roach in the cup and I nearly dropped it. I was glad that I didn't because it was one of the big cups that she liked so much. It had blue decorations on it and birds and some other things that looked Japanesy. I rinsed out the cup

---

and sat down and waited for the water to boil. I saw the roach again—I had just shook him out of the cup and now he was crawling around on the shelf under the cupboard. I took a piece of cardboard and brushed it on the floor so I could step on him, but then I saw that he was bigger than I thought he was. I don't like to step on roaches if they're too big because they make a noise. Grandma Carrie said that they don't, but I think they do.

I made the tea and took it in to her, and she was so quiet I thought she was asleep.

“Grandma Carrie?”

“Put the tea down.”

I put it down and went and got my plate and finished eating in the bedroom. She told me to get her some aspirins, and I did that, and she took two of them. From her bedroom you could only see the television at a angle, and so I turned it around and we watched some programs until she fell asleep, and then I went in the living room and turned on the baseball game. She would never watch the baseball games because she said there was colored on all the teams now, and so it didn't matter who won. Not since Jackie stopped playing, anyway.

Later I woke her up so she could take her clothes off and go to bed, and she had me to help her into

---

the bathroom. I asked her if she wanted me to call for a doctor or anything, and she said no, she didn't want that. So I helped her to the bathroom and then back to the bed.

In the morning when I got up she was awake and sitting up on the bed, but she had the same clothes on from the night before. She told me to go and call Miss Hattie, a friend of hers, and I did that. Miss Hattie came over right away when I told her that Grandma Carrie wasn't feeling good. Grandma Carrie asked Miss Hattie to wait for the mailman and get her Social Security check and bring it to her so she could sign it, and then she was going to call for the doctor. Miss Hattie made some tea for Grandma Carrie and sent me to her house to get the pot of coffee that was still warm on the stove. They sat down and had their tea and coffee and talked. I waited downstairs for the mailman, and when I saw him coming I came up and told Miss Hattie, and she took the key and went, and sure enough, the check did come on time. Grandma Carrie signed it and Miss Hattie took it to the liquor store and cashed it with her cousin, who worked there. She brought the money back, and Grandma Carrie put it in her bosom, and then Miss Hattie called from her house to get a ambulance.

---

The ambulance didn't even come until that afternoon, and Miss Hattie asked the driver what took him so long.

"It's simple, lady," he said. "We got more people calling for ambulances than we got ambulances."

"Only thing that's simple is you, you simple fool!" When Miss Hattie got mad her eyes popped out and she would start blinking a lot.

They carried Grandma Carrie down the stairs on a stretcher, with me and Miss Hattie going down behind her and Miss Hattie saying things to Grandma Carrie to make her feel good. She said that she shouldn't be worried none or anything like that because she'd be up on her feet in no time. Downstairs a lot of the guys was standing around to see who it was they was taking to the hospital. The guys who rode in the back of the ambulance with Grandma Carrie said that I couldn't go in the ambulance, but I could go to the hospital on my own if I wanted to.

I ran down the block as fast as I could so I would get to the hospital about the same time as the ambulance, but it passed me up in the next block. I still ran for a little bit, but then I had to slow down because I got a stitch in my side. I got to the hospital after a while and asked a nurse if

---

she had seen Grandma Carrie and she asked what her last name was and I said Brown. Her name was Carrie Brown, and the nurse said that she wasn't in that hospital as far as she knew. I thought I had went to the wrong hospital and was just about ready to run over to Metropolitan, which was down from Mount Morris Park, when I saw one of the guys who had picked up Grandma Carrie in the ambulance. I went over to him and asked him where she was, and he told me to go down the hall and make a left and she was on one of the rollers.

I didn't know what a roller was, but I did like he told me to and went down the hall and made a left, and there was Grandma Carrie on one of those things they push around the hospital.

"Grandma Carrie."

"Tippy?" She opened her eyes, and when she saw me she smiled some, and I smiled because I was glad to see her smiling. "How you get here so soon—you fly or something?"

"How come they got you out here in the hallway?" I asked.

"They waitin' until a doctor is free," she said. "How you doing?"

"Okay."

"You ain't worried about me, are you?" she asked.

---

“I don’t know.” She seemed littler than she did most of the time, and she was kind of gray instead of being brown. Mostly, when she was okay and everything, she was brown like giblet gravy.

“Well, ain’t no use in you being worried none.” She reached out and put her hand on my shoulder and then down my arm, and I took her hand and held it in mine. “Ain’t nothing wrong with me except old age, you know. The parts is just wearing down.”

I didn’t say nothing and she didn’t say nothing, and so we just stayed there for a while waiting. A guy was mopping down the hall with ammonia and I thought it was going to upset her ’cause she really can’t stand the smell of ammonia, but it didn’t. I watched the guy pull the big mop over the floor. Every time he swung the mop there would be a little path of bubbles behind it, but they wouldn’t last. He mopped right around us like we wasn’t even there. He didn’t look at us either, and I thought that maybe he went around all the time not seeing people or hearing things. Maybe he just didn’t like mopping.

After a while a doctor came and looked at Grandma Carrie. He asked her some questions about how she felt and all and did she ever have trouble with her heart. Then he listen to her heart

---

and told her to take some deep breaths. She did them all okay, and then he looked at her ankles and asked her if she ever had diabetes, and she said no. He kind of nodded like he knew something and wrote on a board he carried around. Then the doctor left and a nurse came and started pushing Grandma Carrie into a room with some other people.

“She got to stay in the hospital?” I asked. The nurse was sliding Grandma Carrie into a regular bed.

“Yeah.” The nurse looked over at me and then leaned back to get a good look. “How old are you?”

“Twelve.”

“Twelve? You ain’t even supposed to be in here. Now why don’t you go on out to the waiting area where you belong ’fore you gets me in trouble.”

“I got to tell him what to do ’cause he don’t know.” Grandma Carrie rose up on one elbow and reached out for me, and I couldn’t even hardly see her ’cause I was fixing to cry so bad. “We live alone, so I got to tell him what to do.”

“You just lay yourself on down, woman,” the nurse said. “He ain’t supposed to be here, and when I get back in fifteen minutes he’d better be gone, too.”

---

Then the nurse left, and I went up to Grandma Carrie, and she wiped my face with her hands, but I couldn't stop crying, no matter how hard I was wanting to.

"What you crying for?" she said. "Every strick of fat don't have a strick of lean. You old enough to know that, ain't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you got Jesus in your heart, ain't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then you ain't got not a thing to worry about, so just suck up them titty tears and hold your head up. You hear me?"

I nodded that I did and tried to hold back the crying best I could.

"Now you go on home and get the money from under my pillow. You take that money on down to Key Food and buy some groceries. Don't be buying no foolishness, either. I don't want to come home and see none of that crispy sugar mess. You buy some real food. Spend half the money on food and the other half you put in some place safe. Don't tell nobody you got it, either. Then tomorrow you go over to where your daddy stays and tell him to come up here. You get them groceries first, you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

---

“Now go on out of here, and if anybody asks you anything just tell them I’m going to be staying here for a day or two. And don’t you forget to thank Jesus tonight.”

I went out to the front of the hospital, where they had chairs for people to wait on, and into the bathroom. When I came out of the bathroom I saw everybody just sitting around and I sat with them. I knew Grandma Carrie had said for me to go straight out and buy the food, but I didn’t want to leave the hospital. I looked at some magazines they had laying around and sometimes I looked at the other people. I had my keys around my neck on a chain I had got about a year ago, so I knew I could get into the house, but it didn’t seem like a place to go without Grandma Carrie being there or me waiting for her to come. I didn’t want to feel sad or anything, but I did, and after a while, when I had looked at the magazine over and over and the clock didn’t even hardly move, I just got up and left.

It was a nice day, the kind of day you think everything is going to be all right on. But when I got down to 127th Street I saw a dead pigeon laying in the street. One of the things I can’t stand to see is a dead pigeon, and the other is a dead dog or cat. Pigeons are the worse, though. Sometimes when you see pigeons laying in the street, the

---

feathers on their chests looks purple. I don't want to look at it but I almost have to. When I saw this pigeon, dead and scrunched up against the curb, I crossed the street.

"What's the matter with your grandma?" Mrs. Glover was sitting out in front on the stoop with Shirley and Mrs. Bellinger.

"She's sick," I said.

"I know that!" Mrs. Glover said. "I asked what was wrong with her."

"I don't know." I was already going past them as I answered.

"Don't get fresh with me!" Mrs. Glover had the loudest voice of anyone I knew. Grandma Carrie said that Mrs. Glover never liked her because she wouldn't let her get into her business. I kept on going in the hallway, and I could hear Mrs. Glover still yelling at me, and then I heard somebody running behind me. I turned and it was Shirley.

"She was just asking to be polite!" Shirley said, getting real close to me and looking like she was real mad. I looked back at her the same way and even worse. "Just because you're so smart your grandmother's gonna die. You just wait and see."

Then she made another face and went back out on the stoop with her mother. I went on upstairs wondering if she was right. If God would get

---

Grandma Carrie because of something I said. It bothered me some, but then I just pushed it right out of my mind. I ate some leftover chicken stew and waited until it got to be nighttime, and then I watched television until it was time to go to bed.

I couldn't sleep because I kept thinking I heard noises in Grandma Carrie's room. I put the television on, which was good. I couldn't hear any noises and if Grandma Carrie did come home she would turn it off. Then I went to sleep.

I woke up early. I can usually tell what time it is by how the sun comes along the floor in the morning. Once I even marked off the different times on the linoleum. There was a flower—it was blue with red around the edges—and when the sun reached that flower, when it just barely touched it, it was seven o'clock. When I woke up, the first thing I did was to look on the floor, and the sun was about half a sneaker away from the flower, so I knew it was early. The next thing I did was go to Grandma Carrie's room just in case the whole thing was a bad dream. The bed was empty. It wasn't no dream. I felt bad and then I told myself to go on and do like she told me. I got dressed, took the money from under the pillow, and went out and bought some food, mostly soup and some boxes of frozen vegetables. I also bought some hamburger

- [Genesis book](#)
- [Little Boy Blue: A Puppy's Rescue from Death Row and His Owner's Journey for Truth.pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub](#)
- [download Above the Waterfall](#)
- [Microsoft Project 2010 \(Microsoft Official Academic Course\) for free](#)
- [read online Professional Embedded ARM Development](#)
- [download Database Solutions \(2nd Edition\) book](#)
  
- <http://kamallubana.com/?library/Selected-Dialogues-of-Plato.pdf>
- <http://www.freightunlocked.co.uk/lib/Drink-the-Harvest--Making-and-Preserving-Juices--Wines--Meads--Teas--and-Ciders.pdf>
- <http://interactmg.com/ebooks/ART-WORK--Everything-You-Need-to-Know--and-Do--As-You-Pursue-Your-Art-Career.pdf>
- <http://www.mmastyles.com/books/The-Big-Lebowski-and-Philosophy--Keeping-Your-Mind-Limber-with-Abiding-Wisdom--The-Blackwell-Philosophy-and-Pop-C>
- <http://nautickim.es/books/Professional-Embedded-ARM-Development.pdf>
- <http://www.mmastyles.com/books/C---Recipes--A-Problem-Solution-Approach.pdf>