

PROLOGUE (Carville, Louisiana 1950)

NIGHT (*A SINGLE SPOTLIGHT COMES UP ON A ROCKING CHAIR DSC.*)

Buster a sixty year old imposing African American man well over six feet tall, sits in a rocking chair, rocking slowly. He is dressed in jeans, work boots, an unbuttoned flannel shirt with a t-shirt beneath it, and a trench coat. An army duffel bag sits on the floor next to him.

FONTENOT (O.S.)

Plannin' on takin a trip, Buster?

BUSTER

Thinkin' 'bout doin' just that.

FONTENOT (O.S.)

'Fore you go anywhere, I'm go'n need to have a conversation with you and Mable.

BUSTER

I ain't much in the mood for talkin' tonight, Fontenot; that is you hidin' behind that sheet ain't it?

FONTENOT (O.S.)

You brought this here mess on yourself; Mabel was caught stealin' red handed.

BUSTER

She had a five dollar credit with you; got a receipt you sign sayin' just that.

FONTENOT (O.S.)

Look here, I ain't go'n debate the situation with you, Buster. Now you and Mabel come on along with us, or else we go'n have to settle things right here. That happen, your grandson and daughter-in-law might end up suffering right along with ya'll; sure would hate to see that.

BUSTER

Mabel long gone from your reach; Alice and Melvin gone right along with her.

FONTENOT (O.S.)

Then I guess we go'n have to settle for just you. Alright boys, go up there and get him.

In one fluid motion, Buster stands from the chair and pulls out a sawed off shot-gun from beneath his coat.

BUSTER

That ain't a good idea.

FONTENOT (O.S.)

God damn nigger! You might get off a round or two, but you go'n be dead 'fore I leave, I can promise you that!

BUSTER

Death ain't nothin' but a misunderstood friend; one I done made peace with a long time ago. The question is, how's your relationship with him? 'Cause I can promise you, along with mine, some white blood go'n spill here tonight, and it go'n start with yours.

A shot is fired.

BLACKOUT. END PROLOGUE.

ACT I (New Orleans, Louisiana 2010)

SCENE 1 FRIDAY EVENING

(Lights up on the porch and living room. Only the screen door is closed.)

The same rocking chair from the Prologue sits SL on the porch. We hear rain pounding down on the house, and intermittent rumbles of thunder. Marcus, a sixteen year old African American boy, and Hubcap, a fourteen year old African American boy, stand on the front porch rapping. Marcus is dressed in a dark suit, and Hubcap is dressed in hip hop gear. They are both short with slight builds. Marcus wears two large diamond earrings. A backpack lies on the floor next to them.

MARCUS

It don't matter if they black or white
A nigger like me keep 'em lock down tight
Freaks trickn' suckers in the hood each day
But with a pimp like Marcus they don't dare play
I keep 'em in my...

MARCUS & HUBCAP

Backpocket, my, my backpocket
Backpocket, my, my backpocket

MARCUS

I treat 'em real special in between the sheets
But don't never let a 'ho interrupt my flo!

Marcus and Hubcap shake hands, pleased with their rhyme.

HUBCAP

Wardy, that is zip locked, you heard me!

MARCUS

Real talk.

HUBCAP

We go'n drop that tonight at the party, or what?

MARCUS

I ain't got time for no ryhmin' tonight. Check it.

Marcus picks up the backpack, and opens it for Hubcap to look inside.

HUBCAP

Oh damn! Tank put you on?

MARCUS

Damn straight! Now I gotta put in work, prove to him he ain't made no mistake. He see that, I'll be able to make some real cash; be able to get this rap thing off the ground correct, Son.

HUBCAP

What about me, Man? You talk to him about me, or what?

MARCUS

He kind of think you a lil' too young for this type of responsibility.

HUBCAP

I ain't but a year and half younger than you.

MARCUS

Chill, Man; I let him know you somebody he can trust, so he go'n give you a shot. And you can start tonight; this here, it's for you.

Marcus hands the backpack to Hub, who stares at the bag, amazed by the faith Marcus has in him.

HUBCAP

Damn man, you for real?

MARCUS

You my boy, ain't you?

HUBCAP

You the man, Marcus!

MARCUS

Yeah, just remember, my rep on the line.

HUBCAP

Come on now, Bro, you know I'm a UPS this for you, you heard me?

MARCUS

Alright then.

Marcus gives Hubcap a pound.

HUBCAP

So you ain't go'n roll with me tonight.

MARCUS

My daddy might be trippin'; want me to stay 'round here tonight. But he got to go to work at ten, so I'll pass through after he leave.

HUBCAP

Ain't no thang; I can handle it.

MARCUS

Oh, I know you got it locked.

HUBCAP

For sure, for sure. Hey, you go'n be able to make it to the courts at all tomorrow? You know Slim and Jason was talkin' mad smack last week when you ain't show up.

MARCUS

Them fools know I work on Saturdays.

HUBCAP

They was kind'a clownin' you 'bout your job too.

MARCUS

What they said?

HUBCAP

Some nonsense 'bout since you ain' show up, they was go'n have to make a run and have they burger bitch feed 'em.

MARCUS

Burger bitch, huh? Damn, Man, much as I done kick they ass out there, they still got nerve to trash talk. They know I own them courts.

HUBCAP

You know how they is.

MARCUS

Yeah, well, I'll be out there tomorrow; show 'em what's up.

HUBCAP

What about your job?

MARCUS

To hell with that job, Man; me and you go'n run them fools like we own 'em.

HUBCAP

Real talk. I can't wait to see they faces when I walk on the court with you.

Hubcap and Marcus shake hands. A cell phone goes off;
it plays a ring tone for Juvenile's *My Money Don't Fold*.

HUBCAP

Damn! You got that new Juve ringtone.

MARCUS

My nigger finally back; you know I had to represent.

Marcus pulls a phone from his pocket, looks at the caller
ID, and answers it.

MARCUS

What up, B?...No doubt, no doubt...Alight, holla.

Marcus hangs up the phone and puts it away.

MARCUS

Tank go'n hit us up when he get to the crib tonight; we go'n pass over there and settle up with him after the party.

HUBCAP

We go'n see him tonight?

MARCUS

Hell yeah; come end of business, Tank want his money.

HUBCAP

I feel you.

MARCUS

By the way, don't be lettin' no females talk you into givin' 'em a taste for free tonight.

HUBCAP

Marcus, you know how I do. I keep 'em in my...

MARCUS & HUBCAP

Backpocket, my, my backpocket
Backpocket, my, my backpocket

PAPA MELVIN

Cut out all that racket!

Papa Melvin, a blind African American man in his mid-sixties dressed in a dark suit enters from the hallway. He is a big man, standing well over six feet tall. He walks through the screen door onto the porch, and without the assistance of a cane, makes his way over to the rocking chair with ease, taking a seat.

PAPA MELVIN

That you I hear, Hubcap?

HUBCAP

Yeah, it's me, Mr. Melvin. Sorry to hear 'bout your daddy dying.

PAPA MELVIN

Wasn't sorry enough to come to the funeral though, was you?

HUBCAP

Had school today; can't afford to miss no extra days.

PAPA MELVIN

Yeah, I'm sure you in contention for the attendance award.

MARCUS

You better get going Hubcap.

PAPA MELVIN

Boy yo' mama must really not like you; what kind of name is Hubcap, anyway?

HUBCAP

Mr. Melvin, you know that ain't my real name.

PAPA MELVIN

How I know what your real name is? I just met you.

HUBCAP

I been livin' down Buzzard Route all my life.

PAPA MELVIN

Ain't never say as much as good morning to me 'fore Marcus start staying over here. Don't be actin' like you know me. Marcus, I put a pot of tea on when I came in, should be ready; go in there and fix me a cup.

MARCUS

Alright.

PAPA MELVIN

Put some honey in there, and three spoonfuls of sugar.

Ira, an African American man in his early thirties dressed in a dark suit with his tie undone, enters from the hallway, and walks out onto the porch. He possesses a similar stature to that of Papa Melvin.

IRA

Hey, Hub. How you doin' Man?

HUBCAP

I'm good Mr. Ira. Sorry to hear 'bout your grandpa.

IRA

Thanks.

HUBCAP

I gotta go. I'll see ya'll later.

IRA

Alright then.

MARCUS

Daddy I'm goin' to get Papa Melvin some tea; you want somethin'?

IRA

Bring me a beer.

Marcus and Hubcap walk into the house, and exit down the hallway.

IRA

Right weather for a day like today.

PAPA MELVIN

No, no, don't talk like that. Daddy always said Homegoing day was a time for celebration, not sadness. It might be a dark day weather wise, but my spirits are mighty high today; mighty high I tell you.

IRA

Yeah, Grandpa Ray did have a pretty good life.

PAPA MELVIN

A blessed life is what he had.

IRA

I guess so.

PAPA MELVIN

No sir, ain't no time for sadness today; not when it come to Daddy anyway.

Ira looks over at his father; taking a few moments to fully grasp his meaning. He shakes his head in frustration.

IRA

Don't start.

PAPA MELVIN

What? I ain't say nothin'.

IRA

Good.

PAPA MELVIN

Bible say "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," but, ain't none of my business.

IRA

I ain't give up on tryin' to work things out, but in the meantime we got to move on with our lives.

PAPA MELVIN

Ain't just 'bout ya'll lives.

IRA

It's the best thing for Marcus too. Man, I'm tired; I don't know how I'm go'n make it at work tonight.

Marcus returns with a beer, which he hands to his father, and a cup of tea, which he brings to Papa Melvin.

MARCUS

Here you go Papa Melvin.

PAPA MELVIN

You put honey in here?

MARCUS

Yeah.

PAPA MELVIN

Got sugar too, right.

MARCUS

Three spoonfuls just like you told me.

PAPA MELVIN

Good, good.

MARCUS

I'm about to go change; then I'm go'n break out.

IRA

Where you going in this type of weather?

MARCUS

Ain't nothin' but rain; I ain't go'n melt.

PAPA MELVIN

Somethin' wrong with your ears, boy?

MARCUS

What you talkin' 'bout?

PAPA MELVIN

See there, now I know somethin' must be wrong with 'em. Me and your daddy both done ask you questions, and you ain't answer either one us.

IRA

Daddy, let me handle this.

PAPA MELVIN

I ain't go'n say another word.

IRA

Marcus, I asked you where you was goin'?

MARCUS

Me and Hub was go'n go check out this party uptown.

IRA

Don't you have to work tomorrow morning? Besides, we just laid your great grandpa to rest not more than three hours ago.

MARCUS

What that got to do with me goin' to a party?

PAPA MELVIN

Time to drop the hammer.

IRA

Daddy.

PAPA MELVIN

Tic-a-lock.

IRA

(to Marcus) I don't think the best way for you honor your great grandfather's memory is by going out partyin' all night.

MARCUS

You was out partyin' all last night.

IRA

Boy...you know what, I ain't got the energy to deal with you; just get out of my sight.

Marcus starts to exit, but something catches Ira's attention, and he grabs him by the arm stopping him.

IRA

Wait a minute; where you get them earrings from?

Marcus pulls free, and takes a few steps back.

MARCUS

Why?

Ira walks over to Marcus; he towers over the boy when standing next to him.

IRA

I asked you a question.

Marcus backs away from his father.

MARCUS

Mama.

IRA

Let me see 'em.

Ira reaches out for Marcus' ear; Marcus initially refuses, but then turns his head for Ira to get a better look.

IRA

These things look real.

MARCUS

That's 'cause they are.

IRA

Why in the world would your mama give you diamond earrings?

PAPA MELVIN

A better question would be why she give him earrings at all?