

TRAINS IN THE DARK

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1 EXT. OLD HOUSE -- NIGHT 1

ROLAND "ROLO" WILLIAMS, (17) makes his way up to the porch. He's carrying a bag of food and a soda.

2 INT. OLD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT 2

The living room is gloomy and in disarray. The TV is playing Jerry Springer reruns.

Push deeper into the living room. JUJU STAN (40's) is passed out on the sofa. His foot up on the end table where a framed photo of a family - husband, wife and two boys. One's a teenager the other boy is nine.

The eyes of NATHAN WILLIAMS (9) looking at the sleeping face of his mother, MELINDA WILLIAMS (35-40), as she also rests on the sofa.

Juju Stan grumbles a profanity as he fights with his dream's demons. Nathan looks at him with hate in his eyes. Then his gaze rests again on his mother's sleeping eyes.

3 INT. OLD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 3

Rolo enters the house to see Nathan crouched down in front of their mother.

ROLO
What are you doing up?

NATHAN
I couldn't sleep. I'm hungry.

Rolo throws the bag of food to Nathan.

ROLO
Leave her alone. Let her sleep.

Nathan leans back but doesn't stop looking at her.

ROLO (CONT'D)
Nathan. Take your food to the room.

Nathan gets up and walks to the back, down the hall and into the room.

Rolo takes the cover that's partially covering his mother and pulls it over her shoulders.

4 INT. OLD HOUSE - BOY'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS 4

Nathan is eating his burger and fries as Rolo enters the bedroom. Rolo notices a letter beginning with, "Dear Daddy" on Nathan's bed.

He hands Nathan his soda, picks up the letter and quickly reads it with concern in his eye. He tosses the letter back on the bed and begins to take off his work clothes.

ROLO

What you do in school today?

NATHAN

We had astronomy today.

ROLO

Oh yeah?

NATHAN

Yeah. When he said, Milky Way, I thought he was talking about the candy bar.

They both laugh.

ROLO

You gotta stay focused in class, dude. That's how you're gonna be able to get out of here, man.

NATHAN

I know.

ROLO

You could learn to be a pilot. Or an astronaut!

NATHAN

Come on, Rolo. I can't be a pilot.

ROLO

Why not?

NATHAN

You ever seen a black pilot?

ROLO

You ever heard of the Tuskegee Airmen?

NATHAN

No.

ROLO

They were black pilots in World War II.

NATHAN

Nah-uh.

ROLO

Uh-huh. They were good too. Even the white boys wanted to fly with them. There are even black astronauts!

NATHAN

Really?

ROLO

When you go to school tomorrow, ask your teacher about Guion Bluford, or Ronald McNair, or Frederick Gregory. They all were black and they all went into space! Ask your teacher.

NATHAN

I want to go to Pluto!

ROLO

You better bring a coat.

Nathan laughs.

NATHAN

You coming too?

ROLO

You think I'm gonna let you leave me here?!!

Rolo tickles his brother and they laugh. Just then...

JUJU STAN (O.S.)

Y'all shut the fuck up!

The pleasant moment has been extinguished. Like the joy was sucked right out of them.

ROLO

Come on, now. Go back to bed. Tomorrow's a school day.

Rolo sits on the floor against the wall and more thoroughly reads the letter.

NATHAN

Ro?

ROLO

What up?

NATHAN

How long is he gonna be here?

JUJU STAN (CONT'D)
 Say something, mutha fucka! Stupid
 little...!

Juju Stan walks to the kitchen, bumping into Rolo on the way. Melinda's hand picks up the crack-pipe. Rolo pushes Nathan towards the door.

MELINDA (O.S.)
 What is that in your hand?

The boys stop but don't speak.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
 (To Nathan)
 I'm tired of you mailin' ya Daddy
 letters. Earl don't give a shit
 about us.

The crackle of the burning narcotic and the sucking of smoke as she's hitting the pipe.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
 If he did, you'd a seen the nigga by
 now.

JUJU STAN (O.S.)
 I can't find a fucking thang in this
 dirty ass kitchen!

MELINDA
 It's time you started understanding
 that.

Rolo leaves.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
 He don't love you no more.

7 EXT. OLD HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

7

Rolo and Nathan walk out of the house. Next door on the porch is MA ROSA (60's)

NATHAN
 Hey Ma Rosa!

MA ROSA
 Hey Nathan.
 (to Rolo)
 You tell that hoodlum friend of yours
 that I almost shot his ass this
 morning.

She taps her side indicating the weapon she's carrying.

MA ROSA (CONT'D)

Lucky I recognized that ugly ass jacket he be wearing. You know it's been getting crazy around here.

ROLO

Yes Ma'am.

MA ROSA

Aight. Y'all be good now.

ROLO

We will.

They continue down the street.

8 EXT. SCHOOL FRONT -- MORNING

8

Rolo and Nathan are running. Nathan reaches the stop sign 1st!!

ROLO

Damn! You gettin' fast Bro!

NATHAN

Damn right!

ROLO

Hey! I told you about that. You gotta get your weight up before you can talk like that. Aight?

NATHAN

Yeah.

ROLO

Look, I know everything's crazy right now but you've gotta stay focused, ok? You keep your grades up and your dreams big and you won't have to worry about nothin'. You know what I mean?

NATHAN

Yeah.

ROLO

Aight. Go on. I'll be here when you get out.

NATHAN

Ok.