

The Masterpiece

Written by

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CLOUTIERVILLE, LOUISIANA. 1998

1 INT. BIG HOUSE/ BACK PORCH - DAY

1

ROBERT DUPRE' (seven year old African American boy) is looking inside the guts of a desktop computer in deep concentration when WILSON DUPRE', his thirty year old father, enters on the porch with a box in his hand.

WILSON

This is gonna do it!

Robbie looks up to see what his father is speaking of.

ROBBIE

That's a distributor, Dad.

WILSON

Yes! We've changed all of the spark plugs...this is the logical next level.

ROBBIE

The problem is much...much deeper than a distributor.

WILSON

You kids these days give up so easy.

ROBBIE

And I'm not giving up. Well, ok. I'm giving up but I'm not giving up easy!

WILSON

Um hum. What you doin'?

ROBBIE

(a little frustrated)

Trying to fix this computer for Nana. I switched out the mother-board, but the processor had the wrong socket. So I went out and found one with the right socket but something else seems to be wrong with it.

Robbie stands up!

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I've checked everything! I mean...It should work.

WILSON

Boy, how long you been out here?

Robbie looks around as if he's just realizing the time.

ROBBIE

Is it morning?

WILSON

Boy, come on and help your old man with this.

ROBBIE

But I'm so close, I know it.

WILSON

That's why you should set it down for a bit. Let your mind wrap itself around the problem in it's own time.

ROBBIE

Ok.

They leave the porch and walk towards the gate.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Dad, I don't think it's the distributor.

WILSON

It has to be.

ROBBIE

It's bigger than a distributor.

WILSON

You just don't want to work on it anymore.

ROBBIE

Nah, I've made a determination based on numerous hours of observation.

Wilson smiles at the obvious intelligence of his son.

WILSON

Look, let's just go out here and see if it works, alright?

ROBBIE

Then will you admit that I was right?

WILSON

We have to see if you're right first.

ROBBIE

I think I'm right.

WILSON

Um-hum.

Beat.

ROBBIE

Maybe, and I'm not saying it is, but maybe it's time to think of doing something else. Maybe we've outgrown the Farm scene.

WILSON

Outgrown the farm scene, huh?

ROBBIE

Uh huh.

WILSON

And what do you think we should do, son? Fix computers?

ROBBIE

I don't know. Maybe.

WILSON

I don't know the first thing about fixing computers.

ROBBIE

I can teach you.

WILSON

I don't know if this old brain can learn anything else.

ROBBIE

You old folk these days give up so easy!

WILSON

What you call me, boy?!

Wilson reaches after Robbie in a playful gesture as they continue through the gate out towards the barn.

2 INT. BIG HOUSE/ KITCHEN - DAY

2

NADINE DUPRE' (45) is pouring a glass of ice tea as her daughter, PAULA JOHNSON (22) is making a plate of fried chicken and home made jambalaya.

PAULA

...Women could rule the world if we understood our power.

NADINE

Well, why don't you use that new fangled power you have to clean up the house every now and then, huh?

Nadine leaves the kitchen towards the front porch.
Paula follows close behind with the plate of food.

PAULA

Because I'm not preparing myself to be no
housewife, Mama! I want to own things.
I want to have employees and a driver. I
want people cooking for me and bringing
me proposals. I want to have power.
Can't you understand that?

3 INT. BIG HOUSE/ FRONT PORCH - DAY

3

MA BEE, FIFTY YEAR OLD, BIG BONED AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN,
is in her rocking chair with her eyes closed as Nadine
sits on the sofa.

NADINE

Not really! Power is rooted in my
commitment to my family and my Lord Jesus
Christ.

PAULA

What about commitment to yourself?

NADINE

Once you have a baby...once you have a
family, there is no self. Once you get
married, there is no self. It's family.
That's it. Your commitment goes to that.
That's a woman's work.

PAULA

...and for all that work, Daddy left you
for that hussy in the Sonya Quarters,
Mama!

MA BEE

Watch your mouth, child.

NADINE

And he gonna have to answer to Peter and
Abraham for that! But my conscious is
clean! Amen.

MA BEE

Amen.

NADINE

The road to My father's house is paved
with gold, Child!

PAULA

Ooohh! I can't talk to you!

Paula walks away frustrated.

MA BEE

You brought that child her food yet?

PAULA (O.S.)

I'm goin.

NADINE

My walk is righteous!

PAULA (O.S.)

Yes Mama!

NADINE

My walk is true.

MA BEE

Well you need to walk your righteous self over to the post office and tell them to change your mailing address.

NADINE

Why Bee?

MA BEE

Cause I have a box of your mail over there! I don't have room for all that!

Ma Bee points to the box. Nadine gets her mail and returns to the sofa.

NADINE

Oh, I've been waiting on a coupon from Winn Dixie.

MA BEE

Change the address and you can wait at your house.

NADINE

What's the difference if my mail come here or to my house? Huh?

MA BEE

Because it's your junk, Nadine! Not mine! I don't need your junk cluttering up my house! Wilson and Celyse bout to have a baby, which means there's about to be baby stuff all over the place. And Robbi, I swear if he bring another piece of computer junk up in this house!

NADINE

Leave that boy alone! He is so smart.
You gotta nurture that.

MA BEE

I know, but...wait...

NADINE

What?

MA BEE

Is this you?

NADINE

Is what me, Bee?

MA BEE

Have you been so called, "nurturing" this
computer thing he's on now?

NADINE

Look, I had that old computer Cefus left
at the house, Robbi saw it and asked if
he could try to fix it. That's all. I
figured, if he fixed it, I can do my taxes
on it and if he don't, I ain't lost
nothing.

MA BEE

I knew you was mixed up in this some kind
of way.

NADINE

The boy's special, Bee. It's a shame his
Mama couldn't see that. Besides, it makes
me feel good that he comes to me.

Nadine looks over her shoulder.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Sometimes I think I raised Paula wrong.

MA BEE

She just trying to find herself.

Ma Bee pauses and closes her eyes.

NADINE

What's wrong, Bee? You feelin' somethin'?

MA BEE

Um-humm. Somethin' here.

Screams come from inside the house! The women look at each other.

PAULA (O.S.)

Ma Bee! Mama!!

NADINE

Lord have mercy.

4 INT. BIG HOUSE/ MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

4

Paula is standing by the door with a tray of food staring in fear at CELYSE DUPRE' (27) who looks out of the window speaking as if someone is there holding the green circled stone necklace that's around her neck. Ma Bee enters with a small dish of smoking sage. Nadine has a small dish of water.

CELYSE (O.S.)

(defiantly)

I can see you. I see you. I've always seen you and I said no! And I mean that. Get on from around here, nah!

The women circle the room. Nadine's nervously flicking water all around the room as Ma Bee waves the the sage smoke.

CELYSE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Get away from here! You can't have her!
You can't have her!

Celyse turns to Ma Bee and grabs her.

CELYSE (CONT'D)

I feel her. Looking for her. Dreaming about her.

MA BEE

Looking for who, baby?

CELYSE

I feel her in the night time. That's when she peaks through the fire. In the night.

(in pain)

Ohhh.

Her water breaks forming a puddle at her feet.

PAULA

Oh God. She bout to have the baby.

MA BEE

(to Paula)

Go call an ambulance!

Paula is frozen.

MA BEE (CONT'D)

Go on, child!

(to Nadine)

Get her in the bed.

NADINE

Celyse baby? Calm down. Nothing's gonna get to you!

Celyse looks wild. Sweaty. Shaking. Nadine gets her in the bed without being too forceful. Ma Bee places the burning sage by the bed, examining her. She has no idea what she's looking for.

NADINE (CONT'D)

What is it?

MA BEE

I don't know. This is different.

(to Nadine)

Go get me a bucket of ice water and some towels.

NADINE

Ok.

Nadine quickly exits and closes the door behind her.

MA BEE

Celyse?

CELYSE

Huh?

MA BEE

Baby it looks like you're about to have this little love muffin, ok? So I need to get you ready?

Celyse starts to cry as she shakes her head yes.

5 INT. BIG HOUSE/ KITCHEN - DAY

5

Nadine pours a scoop of ice into a bucket of water drawn from the tap.

MA BEE (O.S.)

Hurry up with that water, Nay!

NADINE

I'm comin'!

Nadine puts the scoop back in the ice box.

NADINE (CONT'D)

These bones moving as fast as they can,
Bee!

MA BEE (O.S.)

The baby's trying to come out the wrong
way!

PAULA

The wrong way? What that mean?

NADINE

That mean she see feet.

PAULA

Feet??

(to phone)

Yes, I need an ambulance. She's in labor
and we see feet! We not supposed to see
feet, is we? We need an ambulance right
now! 55 Old River Road.

Nadine makes her way back to the...

6 INT. BIG HOUSE/ MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

6

...with the bucket and towels.

MA BEE

(to Celyse)

It's ok baby girl. You're gonna be fine.

CELYSE

Ooohhhh! It hurts!

Nadine puts the bucket down between her and Ma Bee.
She pulls a couple towels out, wringing them slightly,
and handing them to Ma Bee who places one on Celyse's
chest and one on her forehead.

MA BEE

I know. Your little princes is trying to
hit the ground running.

CELYSE

Don't you let anything happen to her!

MA BEE

I wont.

CELYSE

Promise me! Please! Promise me.

MA BEE

Sweetie...

CELYSE

It's my purpose! My only purpose in this world is to have this baby! You understand? Promise me you will make sure she's ok.

MA BEE

I promise. You have my word. Ok?

This calms her down.

MA BEE (CONT'D)

Ok. Now bite down on this.

She takes another towel and puts it in Celyse's mouth. She clamps down hard as she screams in pain.

NADINE

What we gonna do, Bee? I don't know how to deal with dis!

Paula comes in the room.

PAULA

The ambulance is on the way.

MA BEE

Women have been having babies way before hospitals were invented. This child ain't waiting so neither can we.

Paula is terrified.

PAULA

The ambulance need to hurry up!

NADINE

Baby, you just called them. They'll be here soon.

Ma Bee and Nadine exchange a look. They're not as sure as she sounds.

MA BEE

Well... This gonna be done by time they get here. One way or the other.

(MORE)

MA BEE (CONT'D)

(To Paula)

Paula, baby. Bring that coconut oil over here, would you please?

She does.

PAULA

This ain't good! This ain't good!

NADINE

Paula! Run and go get Wilson.

Paula is staring at Celyse.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Paula! Go!

PAULA

Fine! Cause I don't know nothin 'bout birthin' no babies, no how!

Paula's out. It's so ridiculous they can't help but chuckle.

All of a sudden, a pulse or vibration is felt.

The women stop everything.

NADINE

What in the world?

Ma Bee doesn't have a clue.

Celyse starts to push involuntarily.

MA BEE

(to Celyse)

Oh no, no Sweetie, you can't push yet.

CELYSE

I have to!

MA BEE

You can't! Not yet.

CELYSE

Oohhhhhhhh!

MA BEE

I know you want to but you can't yet. We have to turn her around first. Ok?

NADINE

We?

Ma Bee forcefully grabs Nadine's arm to get her undivided attention. Ma Bee pierce her gaze into Nadine's eyes until Nadine understands how serious she is.

MA BEE

We all this child got right now.

Nadine gives a simple nod of acknowledgement.

The two women apply the melting oil to Celyse's belly in a clockwise rotation. Working in concert with each other so as to cover the entire stomach area.

MA BEE (CONT'D)

Ok. Let's see if we can't turn this child around.

NADINE

Cause Lord knows she ain't starting out in the right direction.

They both try hard but fail to keep from giggling. But they quickly get back to what they're doing.

7 EXT. BIG HOUSE/ BACK YARD - DAY 7

Paula is running towards the barn.

8 INT. BARN - DAY 8

Robbie is looking out on the farm, dirty with tractor grease, sitting on a barrel. Wilson comes out from under the hood of the tractor defeated. Robbie looks at him.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Don't give me that look.

ROBBIE

I'm not giving you a look, Dad. That's not what I'm doing. Nope. I'm not giving you...

WILSON

...alright.

Robbie notices Paula running towards them.

ROBBIE

Dad?