

The Bottom

By

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EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Cars on highway, airplanes landing, taxi's pickup passengers.

INT - CAR - DAY

**VONNIE (Adult)**, female late forties early Fifties in business attire arrives at airport and is in a limo on the way to a funeral with portfolio or day planner in hand. She picks up her diary and out falls a picture of herself at age 10. She looks out the window and sees the old neighborhood, and begins to reminisce.

EXT - NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Car enters Jackson Court. Vonnie looks out the window and sees **CHILDREN** playing in the yard of the old neighborhood.

VONNIE(V.O.)

When Derrick Cargil was laid to rest, I found myself back in the bottom where it all started at First Beulah Baptist Church in the Bibb.

EXT - CHURCH - DAY

People entering church as they greet one another.

INT - CHURCH - DAY

People are gathered for the funeral of **DERRICK CARGIL**, there are mixed emotions on the faces of those attending. People greeting one another. Vonnie enters and briefly looks around before sitting in the back of the church.

VONNIE(V.O.) CONTINUED

I saw several dignitaries from the University, where he worked, gathered mostly near the front of the church with his family and the casket.

VONNIE (V.O.)

I sat at the back of the church which was best for me after years of being away from the neighborhood and not recognizing some of the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 faces worn and beaten down by many  
 of life's vices, when suddenly I  
 heard this voice.

**Greeter** to her surprise notices Vonnie sitting near the rear  
 of the church as she happily approaches her.

VONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 One faint face from the past yelled  
 at me. I though this was suppose to  
 be a funeral, I said under my  
 breath. I couldn't remember the  
 name, but acknowledged the greeter  
 anyway, who had several missing  
 teeth and obviously knew me.

GREETER  
 "Girl, you 'sho look good. "Yo mama  
 and Big Mama worked so hard...bless  
 they soles, and look at 'cha",  
 (cried with a great big smile)  
 "Hi 'yo sisters doing?"

Whispered in my ear loud enough for the next six rows to  
 hear.

GREETER (cont'd)  
 I always knew you girls was 'gonna  
 make it. "Chile,

Her countenance turning as quickly away from me as it did on  
 me.

GREETER (CONTINUES)  
 Don't do-do look good?... "look like  
 he sleeping . . ."

She walks away to greet others.

VONNIE (V.O.)  
 Derrick Cargill had the opportunity  
 to set the record straight many  
 years ago, but chose not to -- for  
 after that infamous night when many  
 of us witnessed something  
 supernatural and divine happen to  
 him, he could have insisted that  
 folk call him by his real name. He  
 chose the high road - - to focus on  
 a higher path of thinking, not the  
 mentality of many in the ghetto.

**PASTOR JOHNSON** in the pulpit prepares to deliver the eulogy.

(CONTINUED)

PASTOR JOHNSON

"Nah 'y'all know this is a fune,  
and we gonna act like we at a fune.  
So, 'y'all watch 'yo mouth and what  
'chall say. We all know what  
evva-body called 'dis man . . . but  
he had a name like evva-body  
else! Ain't I right about it?"

You right, Reb . . . "came echoes from all over the church,  
"Amen, you right", heads bowed and bobbing,

VONNIE (V.O.)

Although those from the University  
didn't have the slightest idea what  
he was talking about. They only  
wanted to pay their respect for  
dear o'l Derrick Cargill, the man  
who never had a bad word to say  
about anybody.

PASTOR JOHNSON

"Dis main was a good main . . .

VONNIE(V.O.)

Derrick had rose to become facility  
manager at the University. He had  
earned a dog gone good reputation  
for telling people about Jesus, and  
what the Lord had done for him.  
Derick was that annoying odd ball  
kid we all grew up with. But my  
mind wasn't centered on that. Being  
back at 513 North Unity Street  
brought back all the memories and  
ghost. The struggle some people  
call it. I call it, "One families  
journey out of madness".

THE BOTTOM

EXT - CITY - DAY

Images of MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA with music under. The first  
images show a lighter side of Montgomery and transitions to  
the darker side.

VONNIE (V.O.)

Montgomery, Alabama was a different  
place in 1966. It was even weird  
being twelve. We live in Jackson

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Court. That's a housing development  
or as you may call it the projects.  
It ain't nothing but a bunch of ole  
rickety shotgun houses and duplexes  
that are about to fall down.

INT - HOUSE - DAY

**MAE-MAE** mid 40's, domestic worker and **BETTY JEAN** college  
Education major, sassy mouth are in the dining room folding  
clothes.

EXT - STREET - DAY

**VONNIE** **VONNIE** 12 year old dark skin African American female  
with long hair and medium stature and **JUNE BUG** older teenage  
brother coming down the block from school. **JUNE BUG** tags  
Vonnie and runs on ahead towards home followed by Vonnie.

VONNIE (V.O.)  
My mama, Betty Jean, **JUNE BUG** and  
me, moved over here a few years ago  
with Big Mama when highway 65 took  
our home in Oak field. Uncle John  
and Bruh moved from Chicago a  
little later.

EXT - NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - EVENING

Blues playing in the background of one house and laughter  
out really loud from the whiskey house where Miss Babe  
served Jack Daniels and other "corn liqueurs", **BIG MAMA** and  
**SISTER ELVIRA** are on the the front porch

VONNIE (V.O.)  
I hated Fridays! All of the winos  
and first cousins of Jack Daniels  
got paid on Fridays in Jackson  
Court. Well, what did this have to  
do with me?

Gang members were walking the street intimidating the  
neighborhood.

VONNIE (V.O. CONTINUES)  
The hoods, the hoodlums and  
hustlers were out.

EXT - PORCH - EVENING

**BIG MAMA**, an elderly light skin black woman of large stature seated along side her friend **SISTER ELVIRA**, an elderly black woman of small to medium stature with bible in hand. They both are on the porch fanning mosquitoes and the heat.

VONNIE (V.O.)

Every housing project has a bible toting' scripture quoting'old church lady. In Jackson Court, we had eighty-six year old Sister Elvira Douglas, the only person in the City of Montgomery who knew when the world was coming to an end. Even Reverend McDaniel didn't know,

Sister Elvira is nodding off in her chair. She is abruptly awaken by Big Mama.

BIG MAMA

Sister Elvira...

SISTER ELVIRA

"Ain't He Good, Essie . . ."

Big Mama smiling in total agreement, fanning off mosquitoes, quipped.

BIG MAMA

He sho' is. He sho' is.

In a distance, Dawg Denton and gang are ruffing up someone.

SISTER ELVIRA

What's all that commotion!

BIG MAMA

Vonnie what's going on at the end of the street.

EXT - STREET CORNER - EVENING

**TANK**, former High School football star, **DAWG DENTON**, gang leader and gang members are ruffing up **UNCLE JOHN**, a former gangster unknowing to them.

Vonnie and Betty Jean come outside onto the porch.

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE

Tank and Dawg Denton's his boys  
messin wit somebody.

BIG MAMA

Lawd, when will those boys grow up?

VONNIE

Wait! that's Uncle John.

SISTER ELVIRA

Lord they don't know who they  
messin wit. Don't let him shoot em.

BIG MAMA

Vonnie, run and get Bruh.

Vonnie drops her book and runs to Ms, Bae's house where Bruh is.

EXT - MS BAE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Music is playing people entering and exiting. Vonnie runs up and out walks Bruh with a big on his face.

VONNIE (V.O.)

Now all the kid in the neighborhood knew what went on at Ms Baes house. Somebody's momma was always sending johnny so and so to find their daddy and fetch em home. But Ms Bae didn't play. There was a unspoken etiquette. You dare not open her door unless you were of age and a member of the elite club. Which meant you were one of her friends and had plenty money honey.

VONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

By the time I got to the house,  
Bruh was coming out to meet me.

**BRUH** - a neatly dressed ladies man, exits the house. A lady walks up, pulling her closely and he talks into her ear with a hand on her shoulder. His hand moves slowly down to her waist when he notices Vonnie standing there out of breath.

BRUH

What is it Vonnie?

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE  
(out of breath)  
Tank head and Dawg Denton jumpin  
Uncle John at the corner.

Bruh dashes off in that direction. Vonnie stands a moment to catch her breath.

VONNIE (V.O.)  
Now one thing you got to know about  
the Gilmore brothers is, "if you  
mess with one of them you messin  
with the both of them.

EXT - PORCH - EVENING

Vonnie runs back to the porch of her house where Betty Jean, Big Mama and Sister Elvira are now out of their seats.

BIG MAMA  
James....

BRUH  
Y'all go in the house. I got him.

VONNIE (V.O.)  
We all knew what that meant. Y'all  
go in so you don't have to see us  
get "ugly" or take care of  
business.

INT - APARTMENT - EVENING

The ladies go into the house. Big Mama sits in a chair humming her song and ringing here hands. Minutes later Bruh comes in the door helping Uncle John.

**UNCLE JOHN**, 30's military veteran, has a cut on his head and a black eye, he is pissed. Big Mama takes control of the situation and puts Uncle John and Bruh in their place and lays down the law.

BRUH  
He alright mama.

JOHN  
Them negros thought I was juiced.  
They saw Bruh comming and took off.  
Young boys got a little fire water  
in em thanking they men.

(CONTINUED)



BRUH

You know that punk Dawg Denton just trying to get back at you, breaking up his game last week.

Uncle John mumbles and shoots Bruh a look as to say shut up.

BIG MAMA

(with anger and frustration)

John I told you to leave all that evil back in Chicago. I told you if you gone live in this house. We ain't gone have that madness. This is my house and Lawd knows y'all gone do as I say. You ain't too old for me to bust yo heads.

Bruh and John look at Big mama with a understanding look.

BIG MAMA (CONTIUES)

Grown man acting foolish.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Outside the police approach the house and knocks on the door. They question Uncle John what happen when he caused conflict with Denton's dirty dealings. They also had questions about the fight.

POLICE 1

VONNIE (V.O.)

Uncle John had a problem, but what it was - I never knew. Big Mama said that he was shell-shot from being in the war, and that his wife left him for his first cousin and moved up North while he was away. This drove him to drinking and staying out all night. I heard that she was stomp-down, drop-dead, gorgeous. So, I believed that this was why he looked forward to drinking alcohol every weekend - to drown out his sorrows. But this night he wasn't drinking. I could see it in his eyes that this wasn't over yet. I knew Uncle John wasn't gonna let this be. Did I tell you I hated Fridays!

FADE

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Uncle John enters the house talking loudly to himself in a drunken state of mind.

VONNIE (V.O.)

It meant that the family would be awakened before day Saturday morning when Uncle John, especially, would come in talking to himself and threatening all of us about what we "had better not do". We never figured out what it was that we should never do, but from where he stood in his drunken stupor, it was pretty serious. His old weekend cliché' "don't 'chew ever" became a by-word to all who wanted to ridicule me at school about my uncle.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Saturday - In Kitchen were Vonnie, Big Mama and Betty Jean. Betty Jean is sitting at the table reading. Big Mama is doing Vonnie's hair.

VONNIE

Today is gonna to be a good day. Mae-Mae promised to cook my favorite meal for dinner, chicken n' dumpling, when she got off work.

Close up of Vonnie.

The Camera pulls out to reveal BIG MAMA doing her hair.

BIG MAMA

Girl be still, you may be in the ghetto but I be damned If I let you run around here looking like it.

(Loudly) JUNE BUG you better turn dat music down.

Vonnie turns her head toward the clock.

BIG MAMA

Girl that clock ain't gone move no faster.

**JUNE BUG** enters kitchen to make a bologna sandwich.

(CONTINUED)

BIG MAMA (cont'd)  
Boy didn't you just eat already?

JUNE BUG  
I'm a growin boy.

VONNIE  
Negro you just greedy.

BETTY JEAN  
I betcha he got a tapeworm.

VONNIE  
Boy I 'on see how you keep'on eatin  
dem bologna sandwiches... I'm so  
sick and tired of eatin dat. I  
can't wait till momma get home.

JUNE BUG shoves Betty Jean and goes outside.

BETTY JEAN  
Boy I'll knock the mess out of you.

BIG MAMA  
(loudly)  
Alright that's anuff. Betty Jean  
that bathroom better be clean.

Betty Jean goes upstairs to check the bathroom and rolls her eyes.

BIG MAMA (CONTINUES)  
Betty Jean, you got dat bedroom  
cleaned up?

**MAE-MAE** opened the screen door, paper sacks from H. L. Green's rattling. Vonnie looked at her with a smile because it was almost dinner time. Vonnie threw the old Better Homes and Gardens magazine to help her with the groceries. Mae-Mae hugs Vonnie for helping her. Vonnie while in her mother's arms sniffs the maid uniform.

MAE-MAE  
Hey baby, where your Brother?

VONNIE  
You smell like chicken. (laughs)

BIG MAMA  
Yo ma home, I'm off the clock.

Big Mama exits the kitchen to sit in the living room.

(CONTINUED)

MAE-MAE

Give me a few more minutes to rest  
and 'um gonna fix those dumplings I  
promised 'y ah . . ." I just saw  
Bruh com'n out Miss Bae's and he's  
headed this way.

BETTY JEAN

(shouts from upstairs)  
Oh lord, is he doing the walk?

ALL

Two steps forward, one step to the  
side, and one step back.

Bruh staring through the door

BRUH

You almost got it right pretty.

Bruh opens the door and enters.

Vonnie gives Bruh' a hug.

VONNIE

You got something for me?  
(Smiling)

BRUH'

You know it pretty.

Bruh' gives Vonnie a dollar

BIG MAMA

Boy where you been? Have you heard  
from you brother?

BRUH'

Um, he'll be alright. He'll be gone  
a couple days.

Bruh Kisses Big mama and goes up stairs

BIG MAMA

Y'all gone be the death of me.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Mae-Mae is cooking in the kitchen while Vonnie sits  
anxiously awaits. Bruh enters the room.

(CONTINUED)

BRUH'  
Shug? What you cookin'?

MAE-MAE  
I ain't cookin you notin.

VONNIE  
She making me Chicken and dumplins

BRUH'  
Girl you know you love you some  
chicken n dumplins

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Mae-Mae sees Miss Johnson running toward the house shouting.  
Miss Johnson comes through the door.

MAE-MAE  
Girl where you going?

MISS JOHNSON  
You ain't heard? Dr. King up the  
street!

MAE-MAE  
Girl get out here!

BIG MAMA  
(enters the kitchen)  
What's goin on?

JUNE BUG  
(enters room excited)  
Momma, Dr. King at Reverend  
Mitchel's house.

BIG MAMA  
What?

Murlene and the noise of many neighbors by now running and screaming up Union Street. With grunts of jubilation and grabbing her shoes and comb, Big Mama was out the door, pulling her curly hair back as if she would meet the doctor, who was also a king, personally. Mae-Mae dropped her rolling pin and ran out the back door, flour on her face and hands. She didn't care how she looked. Betty Jean, came downstairs and jumped on the living room sofa to look out the window at the commotion. Everybody left the house leaving Vonnie alone and hungry.

VONNIE SITTING AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, CLOSE OF HER FACE

FLASHBACK INT: DAY TIME H & L GREEN OUTSIDE THE WOMEN  
RESTROOM WHITE OMEN COMING OUT.

MAE-MAE

"Naw, baby, don't go in 'dare"  
(with nervous overtones)

VONNIE (V.O.)

although having to go downstairs to  
the restroom at H. L. Green's  
bothered me. My mother jerked me  
as I veered towards the women's  
restroom on the 1st floor of H. L.  
Green's. To a twelve year old who  
focused more on winning spelling  
bees and playing a musical  
instrument one day, the idea of Dr.  
Martin Luther King didn't phase  
me.

VONNIE SITTING AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, CLOSE UP OF HER FACE

Time Lapsed Hours passed, shadows changes illustrates time  
passing, Vonnie becomes restless and begins to put the food  
in the refrigerator. She sees the bologna.

VONNIE (V.O.)

I, was, Pissed beyond pissificity!

VONNIE

I guess it's bologna again.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MAE-MAE and Betty Jean at Vonnie's bedroom door. Vonnie is  
asleep.

MAE-MAE

Shh shh, she's sleep

VONNIE

Momma, I mad at you

BETTY JEAN

Oh Lord, you in trouble now.

MAE-MAE

I know baby, I'll make it up to you  
in the morning, I promise (kisses  
her good night.

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE (V.O.)

The neighborhood was restless. What did this mean? Dr. Martin Luther King in our neighborhood? It was just happenstance, was all. After speaking at First Baptist Church on Tapley Street he and his wife were invited to dinner at one of the NAACP member's apartment in The Court.

Miss Johnson only extended the invitation for dinner just to see if he would accept. After all, he was a distinguished man. Would he be caught dead in a place like Jackson? Callie Mae Johnson was a pillar in our community. She was just a woman who believed in doing right by everybody - black or white. She didn't care. But, right now, she wanted what was best for black folk. She wanted us to stop fighting with each other, most of all, and she wanted the white folk to stop fighting us like we were less than mangie dogs.

She wasn't really interested in having Dr. King come over to her house. She was just trying to "get in his head" - and see where he was coming from. Dr. King and Coretta surprised Callie Mae when they showed up at her door for dinner and conversation.

Vonnie turns over and goes back to sleep

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pop, Pop, Pop, sounds out, could gun shots after Midnight.

VONNIE

Somebody always shooting (turns over and stares at the ceiling).

BIG MAMA (O.S.)

Shouts on the verge of tears Lawd Jesus, my nerves so bad.

(CONTINUED)

Vonnie goes downstairs and joins Big Mama on the porch.

VONNIE  
What's 'dat?"

Big Mama starts to hum an old hymn, Guide Me Oh Thou Great Jehovah.

BIG MAMA  
(Shouts)  
Mae get Vonnie, she don't need to  
see this. That baby ain't do, not  
one damn thang, to no body, to  
deserved that.

Mae-Mae take Vonnie inside. Big Mama continues to sing. Vonnie runs back upstairs, gets in the bed, pulls covers over her head and goes back to sleep. Police cover the body of Gloria

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Sun beaming through windows

Vonnie is awoken by the smell of fresh cooked bacon. She gets out of bed, stretches and goes downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Big Mama is cooking, MAE-MAE and JUNE BUG are sitting at the table reading a comic book. Vonnie overhears MAE-MAE and Big Mama talking.

BIG MAMA  
That PO child was trying ta make  
it. Jesus!

MAE-MAE looking out the window

MAE-MAE  
Gloria Jean should na got herself  
tangle up wit that Tankhead. Big  
greasy negro. All he was good for  
was beatin up women.

BIG MAMA  
But that boy sure could play  
football.

(CONTINUED)



MAE-MAE

She worked over in Capitol Heights  
wit me I used to see her the bus  
every morning. Pretty little thang.

JUNE BUG

She was fine. Reminded me of Diana  
Ross and her legs and...

Big Mama and MAE-MAE Look at JUNE BUG slant eyes

BIG MAMA

Boy hush yo mouth.

JUNE BUG

Um just sayin'

Vonnie lingers on steps just out of sight.

VONNIE (V.O.)

All the girls my age dreamed of  
growing up and being as pretty as  
she. The beautiful clothes she  
wore were mostly hand-me-downs from  
her employer - name brands, When  
she strutted down Union Street  
after getting off the bus, we just  
sighed and wished. Why did that  
happen to her?

MAE-MAE

What was wrong with that girl,  
letting that ugly Negro beat her  
like he was crazy? Um huh, now  
ya'll no that baby was too light to  
be Tankhead's. High yellow with  
curly hair? Ain't no way.

JUNE BUG

That's why Tankhead did it, It took  
him long enough to figure it out.  
Everybody else new it.

Big mama notices Vonnie in the next room listening to their  
conversation.

BIG MAMA

Vonnie, you com'on in here and stop  
being nosy.

Vonnie enters the kitchen

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE

Mama, what happen last night? When Gloria Jean took the last beating from Tankhead. I thought she moved in with her mother? I didn't know she was back over there.

MAE-MAE

Baby, sometimes when two people love each other. They get really mad when they find out something about the other. Well, bad things tend to happen.

VONNIE

But why did he have to do that?  
What about the baby?  
(confused)  
Is that how you love somebody?

VONNIE (cont'd)

You mean he finally realized the baby wasn't his?

MAE-MAE

He shot her, Po' child. She had just told me that she was going to have another baby.

VONNIE

(remorseful)  
Tankhead Banks should rot in hell.

BIG MAMA

Vonnie! We don't talk like that about peoples. Eat your breakfast girls.

MAE-MAE

(Yells Out)  
Betty Jean, you bout ready? You have usher board meeting. Hurry up and get down here and eat.

BETTY JEAN

(Yells Out)  
Here I come.

MAE-MAE

Vonnie, hurry up and eat so you can get dressed. I'm gonna head over to the church. Vonnie, you and June bug come on when you get dressed.

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE

Bye momma!

Betty jean comes down stairs dressed in her white usher board uniform.

BIG MAMA

Grab you a plate

BETTY JEAN

I'm not hungry last night still got me kinda sick. Tankhead shouldn't na killed Gloria like that. Shot her in the face. Ms Murlene was saying that she saw Mr Daugherty last night in the crowd.

Vonnie gasps and covers her mouth

JUNE BUG

That man know all the police.

BETTY JEAN

I'm gone. Vonnie don't be late I don't wanna hear yo mama's mouth after service.

VONNIE

Yeah, I don't know how she can see everything and everybody from behind that organ.

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. STREET - MORNING

SUNNY, BIRDS CHIRPING, VONNIE, **DENISE WILLIAMS, DORIS WRIGHT** WALKING FROM THE PICTURE SHOW HAVING A CONVERSATION.

VONNIE(V.O.)

Denise Williams, Doris Wright and I had been friends since kindergarten. The strange thing about the three of us friends, Denise, Joyce and me, was that we were all being raised by our mothers and or grandmothers. Denise never talked about her daddy, and Joyce's father was a lover. Everybody knew him. Mr. Wright was really Mr. Wrong, because he flirted with any

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE(V.O.) (cont'd)  
"thang" that had on a skirt. We were all B-plus students — Doris being the smarter of the three. Both Denise and Joyce lived in Bibb, a residential area just South of Jackson Court. Bibb was also part of the Bottom for it existed at a much lower elevation than Jackson Court. People complained for years that the gun-shot homes (also known as row houses) were built too close to the railroad tracks.

DENISE  
"Girl, I thought 'dat train was coming straight through the house last night", (quipped Denise)

DORIS  
Girl, that was Godzilla trying to eat your house. (Laughter)

VONNIE  
At least you didn't have the whole neighborhood and Police outside your bedroom window...

DENISE  
What did you see?

VONNIE  
I didn't see nothin, Big Mama made me go back in.

DORIS  
They say she was butt naked!

DENISE  
I heard he blew her face off!

VONNIE  
Big Mama say he was trying to beat the baby out of her...then he shot her.  
(spoken somberly)

DORIS  
Tankhead, just went crazy. I wonder if Karen heard about it?

The Girls approached house and Denise rings the door bells.

(CONTINUED)

DENISE

That sounds like heaven. Girl, I ain't use to these new houses.

DORIS

That sounds like the Beverly Hillbillies door bell.

(laughter)

VONNIE

You gotta be a doctor or lawyer just to live over here.

DORIS

More like, how we gone be.  
(girls giggle)

VONNIE

Girl I know they got the money cause they sent her sister up north to some big college in Ohio.

Denise looked around and was about to ring it again, the door opened and out walked Karen looking really shocked to see us. The girls all walked pass Karen, transfixed on the decor of the house. Karen lags behind in shock.

off-white with multi-colored pillows carefully resting on the back of each chair and the large fancy sofa, all covered with clear plastic.

DORIS

I don't think we in Kansas no mo.  
(looking in aw)

DENISE

(reaches out and touches a vase)

VONNIE

Girl don't touch that

Mrs. Stokes passed by the living room with a snooty look. Vonnie, Doris, Denise all looked with puzzled expressions.

MRS. STOKES

Karen, may I see you for a minute".

Karen leaves the room leaving the girls in awe as they over hear their conversation.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. STOKES  
Karen, who are those girls?

KAREN  
My friends from school.  
(answers meekly)

MRS. STOKES  
Where are they from?

KAREN  
Bibb and Jackson Court

MRS. STOKES  
What? Oh no! They have to go. How  
dare you bring that trash into my  
house

KAREN  
(Kareen tears up)  
But Mother...

MRS. STOKES  
Escort them out or I'll do it!

EXT. STOKES HOUSE - DAY

Vonnie, Doris and Denise exits the door and the door slams  
behind them.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

VONNIE (V.O.)  
The walk down past Craig Stadium  
was long. Denise nor Joyce and me  
talked to each other. We felt like  
a freight train had driven right  
through our stomachs.

FADE TO BLACK

INT.DAY.GILMORE HOUSE.LIVING ROOM

VONNIE (V.O.)  
When I told Mae-Mae what she had  
done to Denise, Joyce and me she  
flipped. A devoted African  
Methodist Episcopal Zion Church  
member, my mother had picked up  
some bad habits from Murlene.

(CONTINUED)

MAE-MAE  
 "What?! Dam heifer. I wish  
 you had told me 'fo I made  
 her 8%#<#^&\*+! a damn cake"

VONNIE (V.O.)  
 Cussing!! (giggle)

FADE TO BLACK

EXT.DAY.MORNING.NEIGHBORHOOD,BEFORE SCHOOL

Doris, Denise, Vonnie, Joyce, and **DERECK(aka Derek)** all walking to school. The girls are talking while being followed by Doo Doo.

VONNIE (V.O.)  
 Derrick "Derek" Cargill, the infamous puny, knocked-kneed and nearly cross-eyed dude had problems getting a girlfriend, but no problems getting passing grades from teachers who just didn't want to deal with him another school year. Derek was a timid little boy - an only child, traumatized by years of being bullied by neighborhood hood-rats.

DORIS  
 What is he doing back there, and why is he following us anyway?

DENISE  
 Girl lease he's down wind.

VONNIE  
 You think, I still smell him or I stepped in somethin.

The Girls and Derek all walked passed a group of boys on the corner. The bully's begin to approach and surround them making gestures as they begin to taunt Derek.

BULLY 1  
 Boy don't you know how to take a bath?

BULLY 2  
 Yeah, you smell like a big ole stinky butt.

(CONTINUED)

BULLY 3

You smell like Doo Doo.(laughter)

The boys begin to push him, books fall to the ground. Doo Doo is pushed down as he tries to pick up the books.

DEREK

Leave me alone. (trembling voice)

Derek Passes gas as he picks up a book. The girls look on with a sense of sympathy and disgust as they cover their nose.

JOYCE

Good Lord! What is his problem?  
(with disgust)

BULLY 1

Ooh you nasty, boy what's wrong wit chu?

DEREK

Leave me alone. (teary eyed)

VONNIE

You've better leave him alone, I'm gone tell my uncle.

Derek picks up his books and runs back home.

BULLY 2

Look at Derek go...(chuckle)

BULLY 1

Run Derek run.

BULLY 3

In a cloud of stank he's  
goooooone.(laughter)

VONNIE (V.O.)

But Derek's issues were deeper. It seemed like he messed on himself whenever it stormed or whenever the bell rang at school. People just don't understand stuff like child abuse and how it affects kids. Derek's abuse by his mother's ex-boyfriend started as early as two years old. I even think he let one loose when he saw his shadow.

FADE TO BLACK



EXT.DAY - AFTERNOON

Children playing in the field. **Uncle John** is walking between two houses headed toward Big Mama's house and hears a whimper from the side of the house. Derek is there afraid.

VONNIE (V.O.)

Uncle John had served in World War II and the Korean War. Mae-Mae say he had really changed, and that his wife left him for his first cousin. All I know is that he came back to Alabama from Chicago, running from somebody.

UNCLE JOHN

"Little Dee" "come hee-ah man and tell Mr. John why you crying? Somebody botherin' you?"

DEREK

It's the same ole thing, (with clinched teeth) I on be doin nothin to dem.

UNCLE JOHN

"Alright Blood, I believe 'ya man"

Uncle John gives him a handkerchief from his suit pocket.

UNCLE JOHN (cont'd)

Clean yo self up lil blood. I got sumptin for ya.

Uncle John reaches into his other suit pocket and pulls out a pocket knife.

VONNIE (V.O.))

If there was one thing that my uncle couldn't stand, was a grown man beating up on children. I really felt sorry for Derrick. Uncle John had taken up with him, trying to teach him how to handle bullies the wrong way. Uncle John had even slipped Derek a pocket knife. But, when Derek whipped it out on Uncle John to show him how he was going to use it - yep, you guessed it, the smell from his hands rattled the neighborhood godfather.

(CONTINUED)

Later that evening Sitting on the front porch of Big Mama's house. Uncle John looking over at Vonnie and winking his eye. Shows Vonnie how Derrick could handle his situation.

VONNIE (V.O.)

Uncle John confessed that all Derek needed to do was wave his hands at those guys who messed wit him. We died laughing. Uncle John was funny when he wasn't drinking and stirring up trouble. Uncle John never called Derrick Cargill by his nickname. He believed that a gangster ought a be respected.

UNCLE JOHN

All lil blood needs to do is wave his hands at those guys who mess wit him.

CROSS FADE

EXT.FRIDAY EVENING

Crowd of People under a tent, music playing, singing and praising the Lord. The crowd is all in the spirit shouting, **SISTER JANIE** shouting out religious phrases, musicians playing, tambourines shaking,etc.

VONNIE (V.O.)

Sister Janie ran a bootlegger's house for many years until she said The Lord got tired and struck her down on her back with polio. She cranks them Pentecostal tent meetings from a wheelchair, and laid hands on folks who come for healing. When Derek Derrick went forth for healing - he and his mother. The neighborhood went crazy!

SISTER CHRISTMAS

Dis Chil been messing on he-self for years! Devil(Debba), been trying to take him - folk been laughing, running from him and calling him names . . . But, I dares 'y'all 'ta laugh at 'dis"

As Sister Janie laid her hands on the neighborhood joke and he began to dance. People shouted and some even ran seeing Derek Derrick's legs straighten and eyes un-cross.

(CONTINUED)

VONNIE (V.O.)

IT SCARED ME!

FADE

INT - CLASSROOM - DAY

The teacher is not present, Vonnie walks into classroom and feels tension from the class bully. The bully begins to chatter to others causing Vonnie's tension to grow.

VONNIE (V.O.)

The next week at school opened the door to be kidded about Uncle John. It seemed that he was on one of his drunken sprees over the weekend, he had taken a gun out of his girlfriend's hand and shot it up in the air. I didn't hear any gunshots myself - must have been sleep. But, almost everyone at my school had heard about it.

Bully bumps into Vonnie on the way to her seat causing her to drop her books.

SCHOOL MATE

Hey, Vonnie, Did Mr. John drop his gun on 'yo head?

VONNIE

(muttered to myself)

"How about Mr. John dropping his gun on 'yo mouth", .

VONNIE (V.O.)

Uncle John made me sick sometimes. Why couldn't he just be like everybody else's uncle - nice and friendly. He was always getting drunk and hanging out at the bootleggers houses. It was embarrassing, but he seemed to have had a following of some sort as a result of hanging out with the neighborhood drunks.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's Friday and school is out. Everybody's nerves are on edge.

VONNIE (V.O.)

It's Friday. All the local fish fries made extra money for folk who loved Mullet fish sandwiches with mustard and hot sauce. Some women fried that fish up to make extra money - many of them had no husbands but had children or had husbands who left them with the children for some no-good woman who had children by other men who were nothing but over grown children themselves.. Funny it seemed to me that a man would live with a woman and take care of her children, and not go back home and help his wife take care of his own childrens. I decided not to pop any brain cells about this, but it was always strange to me.

Bruh reclining in his room that he shared with Uncle John,

INT - LIVING ROOM - LATE EVEINING

Betty Jean was bossing everyone around - Vonnie and June Bug. Betty Jean was reading her True Confession magazines avoiding work since she's the oldest of them.

VONNIE (V.O. CONTINUES)

I could hear Brauh snoring after a long hard day working with the City of Montgomery as a janitor. My mother and a few ladies in Jackson Court had a social club. Club meeting also meant that we ate good when my mother returned home, usually around 9 or 10:00 on Friday nights.

On this particular Friday night, there was a mood in the air that troubled Betty Jean. Mae-Mae and Big Mama had always said that she was born with a "veil over her face" meaning that she could see into the future.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN  
(snapped with authority)  
"Vonnie, you are too old to play  
'wit dolls. Pick them dolls up off  
the floor and put them in the  
closet."

Uncle John storm in the house with a bit of rage, and his fair-complexed skin was fire red and begins to pace the floor. He then decides to get his gun.

BETTY JEAN  
Something wrong.

UNCLE JOHN  
Mama, where's my piece?

BIG MAMA  
Boy where you going? What's wrong  
wit cha'?

Uncle John headed straight for the living room closet where finds his shotgun and goes upstairs.

BIG MAMA  
(speaking to the girls with  
desperation)  
Where is Bruh? Somebody go git em.

Betty Jeans go to the back bedroom to get Bruh. Big Mama is scurrying around in the living room looking for her shoes.

BETTY JEAN  
(screamed)  
June-Bug, Vonnie!

Big Mama from the bottom of the stairs. Arthritis kept her from flying up those stairs behind her oldest son.

BIG MAMA  
John!

JOHN  
"Stay down there, Mama"

Betty Jean returns, grabs June-Bug's hand to go look for Mae-Mae.

BETTY JEAN  
(screamed)  
Come on Vonnie

Betty Jean, Vonnie and June Bug went out the front door en route up Unity Street to Bainebridge to get Mae-Mae.

(CONTINUED)

Woom! goes the first shot from the bathroom window.

BETTY JEAN (cont'd)  
Lord, have mercy!

VONNIE (V.O.)  
Betty Jean leading us through the crowd of people hanging out on a Friday night. Betty Jean praying in front of folk? This was serious!

Woom! goes the second shot from the bathroom window.

BETTY JEAN  
Jesus!

INT - APARTMENT - LATE EVENING

The ladies in the club meeting were swaying back and forth to the sound of Ella Fitzgerald, some holding a glass of "spiked" sweet tea in their hand.

Woom! goes the third shot from the bathroom window.

Betty Jean, Vonnie and June Bug banged and screamed on the apartment door

ALL  
(all screamed in unison )  
Mae-Mae!

VONNIE (V.O.)  
Uncle John was finished. He had made his statement. All that he would do now was push the screen completely out of the window, head back downstairs to console his weeping mother, and wait for the police. He would not run, he would not tremble. He would walk to the back door of apartment 513 North Unity Street , push open the screened door and point down at North Montgomery' most notorious gang leader, "Dawg" Denton, sprawled in blood on the grass of our back yard.

BACK AT THE HOUSE UPSTAIRS

John Standing over Denton.

JOHN  
Don't - You - EVER!