

[From *Shaming the Devil*]

CONFINING ROOMS

I on't go to school no more. I been looking for a job for a little while, but ain't nothing out there. It's like on't nobody wanna hire you if you black. 'Specially if you ain't got no high school diploma. I ain't got one. And I on't have no bike to be delivering people's shit neither. I on't wanna work in no Burger King for no minimum wage. That shit's embarrassing. I'm a black man. Fuck that.

Yeah, I on't have no job, but I got a little bit uh money from when my moms died. I miss my moms. But at least I still got my girl. Even though she be talking stupid suhtimes. Like now.

"Malik, how come you don't try to finish school?"

"What for, baby? I done tried to finish eleventh grade two years." She young. She on't understand what it's like for a black man. "You know I only like trying shit twice. After that..."

"But still. What if we get married, what you gonna do? You should at least get your whatchamacallit. Your GED."

"First uh all, I ain't thinking 'bout getting married." I stick my tongue down her throat. "Yet."

When I finish kissing her she get this look in her eyes like I took suh-en she want back a few more times. I kiss her again to make her smile.

"And I'm tired uh books, girl. I can't learn that shit."

I cut on the cable with the remote.

"Don't start sounding like my aunt! Can't stand living wit her ass. It's like I'm in juvie or suh-en." I get a picture uh her in my mind. It's like she always dressed up in her nurse's uniform. Like she always going to work. When she headed out, she be telling me how I gotta make suh-en uh myself. Like she done gave me clay and want me to finish suh kind uh shit by the time she get back. Like I'm a box uh LEGOs or suh-en. "She on't believe me when I tell her I'm stupid."

I flip the channel a couple uh times, remembering how my pops got to calling me a 'dumb motherfucker' when I was young. And he ain't never once had to look at my report card to know that shit.

"My moms knew," I tell Michelle, "and she loved me anyway. She said erybody ain't supposed to be smart. Just because my aunt got a big house in Brooklyn Heights, and her kids in college, on't make them no better."

I think about my moms hard. She was my heart.

"If she was here, I wouldn't even have to be looking for no job."

I grab my baby by her hair. "Don't tell nobody I said I'm stupid neither, Michelle."

Some man on the tv talking bout a niggah wit no gun just got shot by the cops. Now why the fuck is that shit news?

"You ain't stupid, Malik," Michelle say. She slap my chest. We still laying in the bed in her little ass room. Just finished working it out. She cut school for me. We up in her moms house. She at work.

“If you was stupid you couldn’t a wrote those songs you be singing. And, I know my mama woulda never liked you if you wasn’t smart.”

On the real, her moms treat me good cause I be giving her trees. Michelle on’t even know her moms get high. She be feeling nice-nice half uh Saturday and all day Sunday. Her moms told me before Michelle met me she didn’t have no weed for a long time cause she ain’t wanna spend the money. So I get it from my homeboy and give it to her for free. Now, she say me and Carl like her sons.

“Them songs on’t got nothing to do wit no books, Michelle.” I sing a little bit for her: “*I can’t stay here...*” and she start squeezing my dick. “I just think like that suhtimes,” I say. “Like when my moms passed. I dreamed uh her singing all dressed up for church, then erything in the house just stopped. The dust in the air. The water in the sink. Erything. She sat on the couch and hummed some song I ain’t never heard. Then she disappeared. Like she wanted me to make up the words.” I touch my face where my moms did right before she died. “Man, ain’t nobody love me like her.”

For real, I on’t wanna start crying in front uh my girl. So I flip the channel a coupla more times. To the good cartoons. Scooby and Shaggy getting chased by some ghost looking like it’s up under a sheet.

“You be talking poetry sometimes, Malik. It’s real pretty.”

“Yo, I ain’t no punk, Michelle!” I push her a little bit to let her know.

I hate when her and Carl be saying that shit. He be talking that shit when we drunk. And be smoking trees. I go over there to chill and play video games. Next morning I be waking up on his couch with my pants open and shit. Erytime I say “What’s up with dat? Fuck my pants open, man?” he say “Niggah, act like you know.” I keep telling him I’ma fuck his ass up one day. He always say, “Right... But you keep comin’ over here, niggah!”

Michelle start getting that tough-girl look after I push her, but she let it go cause she know I’ll jump up on my knees and slap the shit out her ass. “And what the fuck you know about some fucking poetry? You only fourteen. Barely got hair on your pussy.”

“That poetry shit’s for them faggots,” I tell her. “I just be singing.”

“But it’s your pussy, Malik.” She start crying. That’s what she do when she know I’m the man. She ain’t hurt. She like it. She know she my heart.

“I know, bitch.” I say sweet. “Come here.” I reach down and stick two fingers up her pussy. She start twitching and pushing herself up on ‘em. Tears falling out her eyes.

“I love you,” she say.

I know she do. She still crying. I’m starting to get on hard again. I put the tv on this phat ass car commercial.

“I just--”

“Yo, Michelle,” I hold her by her face like them white guys do on them soap operas Carl be watching. “I’ma be ah’ight. Me and my homeboy thinking ‘bout signing up for Job Corps. I’ma learn carpentering.”

Michelle look up in my eyes real soft. She make me feel like I’m carrying her. Like if I put her down she gonna die.

“But ain’t they gonna send you to Queens or something?” She scared. She pull my fingers out and hold my hand. “What you gonna build here in Brooklyn?”

“I on’t know.” I tell her. “My homeboy just said we should do it.” For real I ain’t thought about it, but that carpenter shit sound easy. It ain’t about no books.

“Your homeboy?” she say, like *Who the fuck is he...* Like *Why the fuck he always coming out your mouth...* But I cut her off ‘fore she start that shit again. ‘Fore she fuck up my flow.

“At least I ain’t thinking ‘bout jacking nobody,” I say. “Damn! You oughta be happy.”

She starting to talk too much. Her face starting to look like my aunt.

I roll over on my back. “Why on’t you come sit on my shit a little bit, Michelle?” I turn my head so I’m looking in her eyes. I flip my dick. “So you can shut the fuck up.” She hear my shit slap heavy on my stomach. She know.

I catch the end uh Divorce Court out the corner uh my eye. I smell my two fingers. Michelle all over ‘em. She smell good. That’s the only ring I need. I know her hand gotta smell like my balls. I on’t never want her to leave.

“You got another condom?” she ask. Like she gonna turn me down. That girl be watching too much tv. I’m thinking like *What?*

“No,” I tell her while I’m putting her leg on the other side uh me. “I just wanna put it in a little bit.” I act like I’m pleading. I put my hands on her hips and start lowering her down. My shit straight up. I on’t even have to look.

“Malik, I don’t want you to go nowhere,” she say. “Don’t go to Job Corps.” My dick already pushing up in her. Her eyes squinting. She start crying in my neck. I know my girl love me. She love me hard. Like my moms. She make me feel like she mine. Like I got suh-en. “I love you, Malik,” she say.

I hear Jerry Springer coming on the tv. I kinda wanna watch, but my girl all over me. My shit make her pussy sound like she hungry.

“I know, Michelle, baby. I know you love me.” I kiss her tears. “Who the man?” I push my shit all up inside her pussy. There ain’t hardly enough room, but my girl on’t never give up. She on’t got nothing else to say about no GED or my boy neither.

“Just ride my shit like that two times,” I say. I wonder for a second if I could marry this little bitch. We could probably live right up here in her moms house. I could still chill wit Carl at his crib. She start doing her body like a wave. “Yeah.”

I on’t hear the tv no more after that. Just the bed, my breath between my baby’s titties, and her screaming. She fuck me like there ain’t no tomorrow. Like I on’t got to go nowhere to make her happy. Fuck Job Corps. Like I on’t gotta be nobody but me.

My cell start ringing. She hear the “*I take you to the candy shop*” ringtone. She stop for like a second. She know that’s Carl’s ring. Then she start pumping on my dick like she tryna prove suh-en. She fucking me like she scared she gonna lose me.

My girl mad jealous uh Carl. I told him that yesterday and he laughed. He stepped all close. Weed breath all in my face. He was like “You know why, right?” And I said, “Niggah, back the fuck up.” He ain’t move. Just kept looking at me. Looking like motherfucking Tyson and shit. Dark niggah. Chinese looking eyes. I on’t know why, but I started getting on hard. My heart start beating. I felt like his bitch or suh-en. That shit was crazy. His apartment start feeling mad small. I had to bounce. I shoulda hit his ass, but I ain’t really wanna. I ain’t wanna fight him. So I just left. That’s when I came to my girl house. Suhtimes my girl be saving me from some crazy shit that be up in my head.

The phone stop ringing. Then start ringing again. “*Yeah...Uh-huh...So seductive...I take you the candy shop...*” My girl too tired to fuck me no harder. Like she a track star that run the two hundred, but they made a mistake and put her in the four. She stop. I reach over for the phone. She mad, but she on’t say nothing. She used to me texting while she sucking my dick.

Carl know I’m with my girl. I answer it. I say “Yo!” like I’m mad. But as soon as Carl say something...fuck, man...it’s like I wanna be mad, but can’t. I wanna cuss his ass out, but he make me tight in my chest. I wish I was drunk, but Carl been saying he wanna “*talk.*” He been tryna catch me when I ain’t high. Now he got me, and the niggah on’t wanna let go. I start talking to him. For real, he start talking to me cause I on’t say shit. I tell Michelle, “Stay right there.” I close my eyes. Just listening to him talk. My dick hard as hell. Beating all up inside that little hole. Like a heart.