

The Night Andre's Man Came Home

by
Darren Canady

CHARACTER NAME

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

AGE

GENDER

ANDRE

Black

40s+

M

LOCATION

Andre's apartment

TIME

Now

A kitchen. Andre is mid meal prep.

ANDRE

I think I'ma work a root on him.
For his own good.

He upstairs now. I watched him get in the shower. Watched him peel his underwear off. His other clothes downstairs now. At the front door. The boots and the shirt and the bandana. They got that chemical smell. And smoke.

He come in and I hollered at him "You take all that off down there! Don't bring none of the outside up with ya!" Cuz Miss Rona in these streets as much as protesters, hunny, you hear me?!

And that's when I first thought about the root.
Hit me so hard: I gotta keep him here.

And he chokes and he coughs.
It's tight in here, so I can smell the milk turnin sour already. The milk that musta soaked in to his shirt and pants.

And he come up the stairs
"Told you I come back" he say
He says it with that voice I can't stand. That one that sound like he know every goddamn thang. The one that comes up when I call him when he's workin third shift. Or when him and his boys are goin downtown for a pickup game.
"Told you I come back"

And I wanna chew through my tongue.
I got a hot pan of oil and I wanna throw it at him
"Nigga wasn't no assurance you would come back!"
That's what I wanna say.

But then he comes up--
And mercy God Jesus Mary Joseph Methuselah Shadrach Meshach and A-Big-Negro I remember some of the many things I love about this boy
The whatchacall - *the contours of his body*
He seem so simple standing there across from me

"Told you I come back"
He smiles that gap-toothed smile
"Told you I come back"
There's sweat still - and I see parts of the tattoo on his stomach I don't always notice
"Told you I come back"
And I can see tear and milk stains streakin his cheeks

"This time.

You came back, *this time*."

"That all you gonna say?" He say in that third shift voice.

"No. Go upstairs and shower."

(pause)

I'ma work a root on this boy.

I'ma put something in his dinner.

I got almost twenty years of age on him. He don't know what I know.

I'ma work a root on this boy

I'ma put something in his coke and crown tonight.

He can't go back out there.

Out there

you use your third shift voice cuz it carries out of your throat and through the mask and out in to the night.

Your third shift voice just goes runnin' headlong out there to meet up with those other voices--

Y'all out there makin a choir - a roll of thunder

But baby do they know you got other voices?

Sweet tones that I hear

the voice that drops tongue licks on my ear lobe

the whimper the whisper when I'm inside of you

the breath the coo the sigh when you enter me

I ain't even gon ask if your boys would march for you if you showed up with that voice.

I know better.

So I'ma work a root on you.

Cuz you gonna learn we not all the same kinda black.

I'ma work a root on you cuz you need boundaries

fences

safety gates

Them out there will scream and holler and shout with you all day long with your third shift voice

But me--!

Me and my nursing voice and my sometimes false eyelashes and
my concealer and occasional lip gloss
ain't no place for my voice in your choir
y'all can't see your roll of thunder needs the snap-crackle-
pop of my lightning

Shower sweet baby
Wash it all away sweet baby
You came back
You came back
You came back
And I'ma work a root on you
to keep you
until they earn having you back
til they're willing to die for the voice of you when you bury
yourself inside me
I'ma keep you
until they'll die for me and my voice too

BLACKOUT