

Between Love and Hate

written by

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SCENE ONE

*The scene opens to a messy living room. There are sheets over a couch and chair. The floor is littered with trash. There are two doors, one to the couch's left that leads out of the house and one behind it that leads to Cecily's room. Next to the door of Cecily's room is an alcohol cabinet that hangs on the wall. Adjacent to the living room, is the kitchen which is also a mess. The sink is filled with dishes. There is a knock on the door. After a brief silence, another knock follows. JUNIOR enters. He is wearing a long trench coat. He begins to walk around exploring the space before removing a glass from the alcohol cabinet and pouring himself a drink. He then uncovers the chair and sits. He pulls out a recording device and begins to speak.*

JUNIOR

October 5th, 2030. It's been 16 years since everything went down. I decided to return home and find that inspiration to finish my book. I don't know how to feel about what happened anymore, so I decided to face it head on. I'm looking at this stupid couch now. Hating it. Along with this shit hole of a house. I can see that day unfolding in front of me like some nightmare I have yet to wake up from. I can hear my mama now.

*At this moment Cecily walks out from her room. She is an angry mess. She rushes trying to get things cleaned up.*

CECILY

Markous you get your ass up now before your damn granny gets here and sees this house! You know how I can't stand her damn nagging. And where yo silly ass brother?

JUNIOR

Cecily Johnson, CJ, bore two sons. Jackson Dametri Johnson Jr. and Markous Everett Johnson. Both to Jackson Dametri Johnson Sr. who died to the streets. Cecily went crazy. Then life happened. Markous grew sick. Something mama could never remember the name of, but I knew. Cancer. We were broke and had no way to pay for his medicine. So Junior did what he had to do. He went to the streets.

*SEAN enters from Cecily's bedroom. He is also a mess. He looks around for Cecily.*

SEAN

CJ, baby what you cook? I'm starving.

JUNIOR

Then there was Sean, mama's way of forgetting everything going wrong in her life. In our lives.

CECILY

I'm gone cook for us baby. As soon as my mama leaves. You know she on the way today. Markous and Junior get yall asses up!

JUNIOR

Louise Bennett, the matriarch of our family. The only person that made life easy for us. She was my real mother. That's all I have to say about that. Anyway, it's been 16 years to the day. Like I mentioned before, it changed my life. So the question here that I want my readers to ask is, what happened on October 5th, 2017?

*Junior stands and sheds his coat.*

CECILY

Junior, boy didn't you hear me calling you? I swear yall some dumb kids. Wake your brother up!

JUNIOR

Yes ma'am.

*Junior walks over to the couch and pulls off the spread to reveal Markous. He is still in his PJs.*

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

Mark, mama said get up.

*Markous stands weakly and coughs.*

MARKOUS

Okay I'm up. Hey can we still go play ball today?

JUNIOR

Now you know you too sick to be doing all that today.

CECILY

Hey! Didn't I say to get this house clean!

JUNIOR

Mama, I got this, let Markous rest you know he need it. By the way, he also needs his medicine. Can you take me to get it today?

SEAN

What he need is a damn job. All he do is sit on that couch.

JUNIOR

Mane shut up! You don't even stay here with yo broke ass!

SEAN

What'chu say?! I oughta-

CECILY

Shut up! I'm not finna have it with yall today. Junior get this house clean! Markous baby just uh make the couch up baby. You know mama loves yall right? Now Junior, you're old enough to walk to the store and get his medicine. Wait until yo granny get here and go get his stuff. Then bring me my change.

*They nod. Markous coughs some more.*

CECILY (CONT'D)

Sean, baby, why don't you go get the uh stuff ready? Ima cook us something to eat ok?

SEAN

Yeah whatever. Hurry up

*There is a knock on the door.*

CECILY

Damn! Hurry up and finish cleaning up Junior! Markous go open the door for your granny.

*Markous goes to the door to open it while Cecily runs to her room and Junior rushes to clean as much as they can. Markous opens the door and LOUISE enters. He embraces her.*

MARKOUS

Hey Granny!

LOUISE

Hey baby, where ya mama?

MARKOUS

She's in the back with Sean.

LOUISE

That damn boy. I knew he was gonna be here! Here give this to your mama.

*She hands him a wad of cash. He coughs again.*

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Matter of fact give it to your brother. Where is he? In the kitchen? She always have you boys in here cleaning something. Junior! Come here boy.

*Junior enters from the kitchen.*

JUNIOR

Hey granny.

LOUISE

Here baby. This is for your brother's medication. Don't let yo mama get hold of it.

*She takes the money from Markous and hands it to Junior.*

MARKOUS

Granny can we come stay with you?

*He coughs again. This time Louise takes him to sit on the couch.*

LOUISE

Come here, the both of ya, now yall know I'm trying my hardest to make room for you both. Just hold on a little longer ok? Now Junior make sure you go get his medication today. How long has it been since his last dosage?

JUNIOR

Yes ma'am. It's been almost three weeks granny.

LOUISE

Lord. Make sure you go there today. You understand? I wish I could go but between all these hours I just cant.

*Markous coughs some more.*

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Baby, here lay down. Junior go get your mama.

*She lays him on the couch and places the sheet over him. Junior calls for Cecily and knocks on her door. She staggers out. High. Louise drags her to the kitchen.*

CECILY

What?

LOUISE

Cecily I know you not high while these babies up in this house!

CECILY

Oh hey mama. Did you bring my money?

LOUISE

Now you know that money is for Markous's medication. Why are these babies telling me he hasn't had it in almost three weeks Cecily!

CECILY

Mama I don't need you trying to tell me how to live my life! Markous is ok! We needed that money for food!

LOUISE

No you used that money for that stuff! You and that man up in there! You're not fit to take care of these boys and I promise you I'm coming for them when I get established!

CECILY

Mama you can't even get on your own feet! I know you're living off those stamps! Don't try me! This is my house! See your way out of it!

*Louise stands and looks at her for a moment. She then storms into the living room and stops at the boys.*

LOUISE

Babies get some clothes ready. I'm gonna come back and get yall when I get off work. Markous stay in the bed baby. Junior you take care of it. Granny gone come get yall and yall can stay with me ok?

*Cecily storms in.*

CECILY

Oh no they won't! These are my kids! You will not come into my house and take my kids!

*Sean enters*

SEAN

Baby what's going on?

LOUISE

Now you take your behind back on in there! No one called for you!

CECILY

You aint gone talk to him like that mama get out of my house!

*Cecily starts to shove her.*

LOUISE

I'm gonna be back boys. Junior take care of your brother!

*Cecily forces her mother out of the house and slams the door. She looks at the boys.*

CECILY

Junior, where my money?

*Junior moves closer to Markous. Markous starts to cough some more.*

JUNIOR

She didn't give me none.

CECILY

Don't lie to me boy!

JUNIOR

Mama I'm not lying!

*Cecily moves closer to Junior and starts patting him down.*

CECILY

Where did she put it boy?

*Markous jumps up to stop her and she pushes him back on the couch. He goes into a coughing fit.*

JUNIOR

Mama stop! It's for Markous! He needs his medicine mama!

CECILY

Shut up! I know what he needs I'm his mother! Give me that damn money!

*Sean runs up and holds Junior in a head lock while Cecily probes him for the money. Markous tries again to free his brother and is pushed back on the couch, yet again. The coughing continues. Cecily gets the money and Sean shoves Junior to the couch and stands by the alcohol cabinet. Junior tries to comfort him. Markous continues coughing.*

JUNIOR

What is wrong with you!? Can't you hear him? He can't breathe! He needs the medicine!

*Cecily looks at Markous. She then runs to her room and grabs a pill.*

CECILY

Here give him this! He gone be alright!

JUNIOR

What is it?

CECILY

His medicine. Give it to him!

*Junior gives Markous the pill and runs and gets him some water. Markous takes the medicine and lays back down on the couch. He coughs some more but it has calmed.*

JUNIOR

I hate you!

CECILY

What?

JUNIOR

I hate you! You're no good! I'm leaving and I'm taking Markous with me!

*Junior walks towards the kitchen and grabs a shopping sac. He walks back into the living room and starts packing any clothes he can find.*

CECILY

Oh so yall gone leave me now? Your mama? After all I do for you?

JUNIOR

You don't do shit for us! Yes I said it! You don't think I don't know what you do in your room!? My brother, your son, is dying, and you can't take care of him!

SEAN

And you can? You don't even have a hustle!

JUNIOR

Shut up! I'm not talking to you!

*Sean rushes at Junior. They begin to fight. Cecily is screaming and Markous does not move. The fight continues before Junior grabs a nearby bottle and hits Sean in his head, knocking him unconscious. Cecily runs up to him.*

CECILY

Sean! Baby wake up!

JUNIOR

Is that all you care about? We're you're flesh and blood! You'd rather have drugs and no food than your own flesh and blood? You're pathetic! I'm the one that takes care of him! Do you know what I have to do? I have to walk through every gang on that street and risk my life to get Markous what he needs to live! I give him my food to make sure he gets enough to eat at night! You don't do a damn thing!

CECILY

You don't understand baby. When your father died I had nothing.

JUNIOR

You had us! We lost him too. It's funny though, because now you've lost all of us. Come on Markous.

*There is no response. Junior looks at him and kneels next to him and shakes him.*



JUNIOR (CONT'D)

Markous. Hey man this isn't funny wake up!

*He continues to shake him, but there isn't a response. Cecily turns and sees what's happening. She runs over and starts screaming.*

CECILY

Markous! Baby wake up! Wake up baby!

*Junior shoves her away.*

JUNIOR

Don't touch him! Markous! Wake up! Wake up!

*Junior sits Markous up and holds him in his arms while staring out into the audience. Time stands still. Cecily stands and walks backwards into her room. Sean does the same. After they've exited, Junior stands up and covers Markous's body back up with the sheet. He then walks over to the chair and puts his coat back on and pulls out his recording device.*

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

October 5th, 2017. That was the day I lost my brother Markous. It's been 16 long years. I still hate that couch. It bound him. It became his prison. I could've done more, taken him to places, and made his last days happier. I think that's what kept me from finishing my book. With that I log off. Happy writing.

*Junior turns off his recording device and starts to leave, a noise startles him. An older Cecily enters from the bedroom.*

CECILY

Markous, baby is that you?

*Junior hesitates to speak*

JUNIOR

No mama, it's me, Junior.

*She moves closer to him.*

CECILY

Junior baby, mama missed you. Where's your brother? Yall need to clean up before your granny gets here. You want something to eat baby? I can cook for you. Oh, and don't forget to get Markous's medication.

*She looks at Junior and studies him.*

CECILY (CONT'D)

Markous baby, is that you? Where's your brother.

*Junior looks at her and starts tearing up.*

CECILY (CONT'D)

Baby don't cry. We gone wait on your brother and then I'm gonna cook us a good meal and we are gonna eat together. Like old times.

JUNIOR

Mama, it's me Junior. Markous is-

*He pauses. She's still staring at him. He pulls out his recording device again.*

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

October 5th, 2030. I was wrong. I remember why I was so blocked from finishing my book. I never learned how to forgive. Forgiveness, it's the perfect place between love and hate.

CECILY

Baby what are you talking about?

JUNIOR

Nothing mama, you should come with me to my house. I can cook you some food. We've got a lot to catch up on.

*Junior helps Cecily out of the door before turning and looking out into the ruined home one more time. He then closes the door and the lights fade on the scene.*