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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Sunset Baby

by Dominique Morisseau

SAMUEL FRENCH

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SUNSET BABY was first produced by the Gate Theatre in London on September 19, 2012. The performance was directed by Charlotte Westenra, with sets and costumes by Francesca Reidy, lights by Hartley TA Kemp, sound by Simon Slater, dialect coaching by Sarah Stephenson, and assistant direction by Melanie Spencer. The Production Manager was Bernd Fauler, the Stage Manager was Kate Schofield, and the Deputy Stage Manager was Natasha Emma Jones. The cast was as follows:

NINA . . . . . Michelle Asante
KENYATTA . . . . . .Ben Onwukwe
DAMON . . . . . Chu Omambala

SUNSET BABY received its US premiere at the Labyrinth Theater Company in New York City on November 6, 2013. The performance was directed by Kamilah Forbes, with sets by Lee Savage, costumes by Esosa, lights by Jen Schriever, sound by Amatus-Sami Karim Ali, and projections by Kate Freer. The Production Manager was Peter L. Smith and the Stage Manager was Stacy Waring. The cast was as follows:

NINA . . . . . DeWanda Wise
KENYATTA . . . . . John Earl Jelks
DAMON . . . . . Harvey Gardner Moore

CHARACTERS

NINA – Black woman. Late 20s. Hard, quiet power, deeply guarded, and nonetheless brilliant. Has a lifetime of walls up and will fight you before letting them down. Were she an animal, she'd be a dangerous panther. A robber and drug dealer, but in another life could lead a righteous revolution.

KENYATTA – Black man. 50s. Strong, quiet power, also deeply guarded. Almost a duplicate of Nina, except he has lost the hardness and is now navigating a softer version of himself. Riddled with guilt and desperate to break through Nina's walls…and his own. A former political prisoner and Black Revolutionary. Nina's estranged father.

DAMON – Black or Latino man, 30s. Broad, street smart, intelligent, and a drug dealer and robber. Has lost his hardness and is on the brink of retiring from the game. Nina's partner-in-crime and boyfriend. Not a stereotype. A true, genuine soon-to-be o-g. In another life, could be a helluva scholar…

SETTING

A distressed apartment in Brooklyn – East New York.

TIME

Present Day.

SCRIPT NOTES

The language of this play should drive and not take many pauses in air and breath unless indicated in the script or earned in the action. The elipses (...) are not indications of pauses, but rather just a natural way of capturing one's attempt of finding the right words, or at the ends of sentences they indicate where a thought was incomplete or weighted.

(/) Slash marks indicate places where the next line begins and overlaps with the dialogue.

Please Note: For no reasons ever should this play have an intermission. It is written to drive and hold us hostage and breathless from beginning to end, like the characters. If a production finds itself running long, please consider cutting down on Nina's preparations and also consider overlapping some of Kenyatta's speeches with transitions and other moments. These are things that have worked in several other productions and I feel very strongly about the play's need to remain un-broken. Thank you for respecting this matter.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Sunset Baby is inspired by a few important things:

1. A picture my father took of me as a little girl (the picture described in the play is it)

2. All of the Black activists throughout time that have shaped the world in which I live, and

3. Tupac Shakur – one of the most complex and brilliant hip hop artists there ever was.

1. The inspiration behind the pic my father took is self-explanatory. I'm a knock-off of my ol' man and this is a homage to him.

2. The Black activists of the past – this is different. I am grateful for their contributions to the freedoms that I enjoy, and yet I stand in recognition of their complicated struggles. I find their layers intriguing. How do you build a world and a home at the same time? What gets lost in the struggle? These are the questions that spark my play.

3. And finally, Tupac Shakur – this is most important. He would've been in his forties now were he not a victim of gun violence in 1996. I was always moved by his deeply thoughtful yet contradictory music. One minute he'd be an intelligent orator breaking down the poverty-mentality of a lost generation, and the next he'd be the contributor to a violent generational abyss. How can my generation be so brilliant and so self-destructive at the same time?

This is the question that guides my play. It is not a blame game. It is not about discrediting a movement or a people. It is about the un-treated wounds between the generations, and the hope for healing. It is about love.

That is all…

Dominique Morisseau

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Scene One

(Lights rise on a handsome man, **KENYATTA**, *who stares into the eye of a camera. Just him and the camera. Intimate.)*

KENYATTA. Fatherhood. Complex. Complicated. An abstract concept. Not clearly definable. Stages. For sure there are stages. Levels of its effectiveness. Affectionless. Manhood. Confusion. Preparedness. Lack of preparation. Funding. Resources. Instructions. No instructions. Child support. Life being run by child support. Drama. Suffocation. Lots of suffocation. Guilt. Lots of guilt. Incompetency. Freedom. Freedom lost. Freedom never acquired. Fear. Lots of fear. Decades and decades of fear. Lifetime of fear. Fear.

(Blackout.)

Scene Two

(Lights up on **NINA**. *She is at her apartment. She dolls up – gaudy makeup. Big hair. Thigh-high hooker boots. Looks over her attire.)*

(Nina Simone, "Feeling Good" plays on her iPod speakers.)*

(Buzzer rings.)

NINA. Hol' up Damon. I'm coming!

(She pushes up her bra. Applies hairspray. Grabs her purse. Heads to the door. Opens and sees **KENYATTA**. *Not who she was expecting.)*

What the?

KENYATTA. You stood me up.

NINA. Fuck.

KENYATTA. I went to the hotel you suggested. Rooftop. Times Square. I waited for two hours.

NINA. Gotdamn.

KENYATTA. Never even called.

NINA. I text.

KENYATTA. Short text. Two words. "Not coming."

NINA. I don't have / time for this.

KENYATTA. After two hours.

NINA. I gotta get goin', so…

KENYATTA. You don't have a minute?

NINA. I got work.

KENYATTA. Work?

*(***KENYATTA** *eyes* **NINA**. *Scans her attire. Her full get-up. It dawns on him.)*

(hmph) Work…

NINA. You got a problem with that?

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* Please see Music Use Note on page 3

KENYATTA. Would it matter?

NINA. No.

KENYATTA. I just need a minute.

NINA. That's all I got. Somebody's coming to pick me up, so…just come and say what you gotta say.

*(***NINA** *lets* **KENYATTA** *in. He walks in and slowly peruses her surroundings. Not much. Meager.)*

How'd you find out where I live?

KENYATTA. Asked around. People know you around here…

*(***NINA** *glares at* **KENYATTA**. *Then shrugs it off and goes back to her makeup.)*

NINA. Right.

(Beat.)

KENYATTA. You listen to Nina?

NINA. Apparently.

KENYATTA. That's what…your mother and me…

NINA. I know the story. Don't need a re-cap.

KENYATTA. Just…haven't heard it in a minute… *(beat)* reminds me of her…

NINA. I'm not doing this.

KENYATTA. Doing what?

NINA. This…dirge. Informal funeral. I'm not doing it.

KENYATTA. I'm not asking you to –

NINA. Should've come. We had one. Full of folks who gave a damn. They came. You didn't. It's too late now…

KENYATTA. I gave a… *(beat)* That's not why I'm here.

NINA. Then you better get to the point. My ride comes – whether you've made your point or not, it's over.

KENYATTA. You look like her.

NINA. Fuck you.

KENYATTA. I'm just…telling you –

NINA. I know what I look like.

KENYATTA. Under the makeup…all that paint –

NINA. Paint is my prerogative. Do not come here and tell me what I can or cannot put on my face. I cover what I choose to cover. I govern myself. You're a stranger that I'm offering five minutes to. Take it or leave it.

KENYATTA. I guess I'll take it.

NINA. So? *(pause)* Spill it.

KENYATTA. There are these…letters –

NINA. I knew it.

KENYATTA. – she wrote.

NINA. Paper thin.

KENYATTA. You know what I'm saying?

NINA. Transparent as hell. That's what you are. I don't even know you and I can see through you like x-ray vision.

KENYATTA. I'm trying to be upfront.

NINA. Upfront. *(hmph)*

KENYATTA. You have them?

NINA. What if I do?

KENYATTA. I'd like to see them.

NINA. Fuck no.

KENYATTA. You have them?

NINA. I didn't say that.

KENYATTA. Please, Nina.

NINA. Don't please Nina me. Do not say my name as if you've said it a hundred times. As if we have this familiarity between us. We are not familiar. We are not close. We are not in sync. You are a stranger that I let in and now that you've finally said what you wanted, I'm letting you out.

KENYATTA. I know you don't trust me.

NINA. You think?

KENYATTA. I know you don't know me.

NINA. I don't know anyone. But her. And she knew me. She's the only person who knew me. She's dead, and I'm a mystery to everyone else. Got it? You and me…

we don't know each other. She was the link and she's dead. Let it go.

KENYATTA. I can't just let it go.

NINA. You better.

KENYATTA. I need them.

NINA. For what?

KENYATTA. I just…need them.

NINA. You and everybody else.

KENYATTA. Who's everybody else?

NINA. Act like you don't know.

KENYATTA. I don't know.

NINA. Liar.

KENYATTA. I don't know.

NINA. How do you know there are letters?

*(***KENYATTA** *is quiet.)*

Yep. Caught you. Damn liar.

KENYATTA. I'm not lying.

NINA. How do you know there are letters?

KENYATTA. I have heard.

NINA. From who?

KENYATTA. Friends. Former…colleagues.

NINA. *(laughing)* Colleagues? That's what you call them? Colleagues?

KENYATTA. It's been a long time. Not exactly sure what to call them now.

NINA. Losers. Deadbeats. Fiends –

KENYATTA. Alright. That's enough.

NINA. That's enough?

KENYATTA. Yes. That's enough.

NINA. You comin' in my house telling me what's enough?

KENYATTA. I'm coming in your house to try to…

*(***KENYATTA** *falls silent again. Words escape him.* **NINA** *glares at him.)*

NINA. You can't even admit it. Hunh? Can you? You can't even be straight up.

KENYATTA. It's not what you think.

NINA. You don't know what I think.

KENYATTA. Nina, do you –

NINA. Do not fucking call me Nina!

KENYATTA. That's your name –

NINA. I hate the way it sounds when you say it. Like you know me. Like you own my name. You do not own shit around here. Got it?

KENYATTA. We named you.

NINA. I know that.

KENYATTA. You know?

NINA. Yes, I know!

(The buzzer rings. Pause.)

*(***NINA** *walks over to the buzzer to speak.)*

I'm coming down in one sec Damon.

(Pause.)

I gotta bounce.

KENYATTA. I need to know about the letters. Are they here?

NINA. I'm not telling you.

KENYATTA. They belong to me.

NINA. No. That's where you're way the hell off. They belong to me.

KENYATTA. She wrote them to me.

NINA. She left them to me. It's in her will. "So that you will understand what we do for love, Nina." That's her statement. To me. They're mine.

KENYATTA. You've read them?

NINA. It doesn't matter to you. You're not putting your hands on them.

KENYATTA. I just need to read –

NINA. No.

*(***KENYATTA** *falls silent. Buzzer sounds again.* **NINA** *walks over and presses the button to talk.)*

(into the speaker) Two minutes.

(She looks at **KENYATTA**.*)*

You know how many people want these letters?

KENYATTA. How many?

NINA. Hundreds. Folks from all over. Stupid college robots writing their dissertations. Professors at universities. Publishing companies. The press. Everybody wants them. Long lost love letters to a political prisoner. Notes on the revolution. Ashanti X writes to Kenyatta Shakur while he serves time for…what was it again?

KENYATTA. Nina –

NINA. Oh right…robbing an armored truck. Nice.

KENYATTA. Okay now.

NINA. In the name of some bullshit cause –

KENYATTA. Wasn't bullshit –

NINA. To steal capitalist dollars in the name of third world democracy –

KENYATTA. That's an understatement –

NINA. While she's raising his bastard child.

KENYATTA. That's not how it –

NINA. Bastard being moi.

KENYATTA. You're not being –

NINA. So fucking romantic.

KENYATTA. Okay now.

NINA. And who would've known? They're worth a fortune! These bullshit letters to a bullshit nigga in jail. Worth tens of thousands.

*(***KENYATTA** *falls silent. This surprises him.)*

Oh. Wait. Tell me you didn't know that.

*(***KENYATTA** *remains silent. A little shocked.)*

KENYATTA. Worth what?

NINA. You didn't know these letters were the hot shit? You didn't know that every asshole from left to right has been calling me trying to get their hands on this treasure? My mama not six feet in the ground before I'm getting calls and emails on how amazing Ashanti X was and how this one is such a huge fan of her work in the Black Liberation Movement and that one has been studying her since she instituted the Free Lunch Programs for inner city kids and this and this and that and that… You didn't know? You didn't come here cuz you want a piece of that Ashanti X sweet potato pie? Wanna put your hands on them tens of thousands that my mama's worth now that she's dead?

KENYATTA. No.

NINA. Bullshit.

KENYATTA. I didn't know.

NINA. Bullshit. Even the blogs are talkin'. Ashanti X passes away. She leaves behind a stash of un-mailed letters. To you. *(pause)* But left-in-writing – to moi.

KENYATTA. I didn't know they were worth… *(beat)* I just need to see them…

*(***NINA** *looks at* **KENYATTA**. *The desperation in his eyes.)*

(Buzzer rings again. And again. And again and again and again.)

*(***NINA** *storms over to the intercom and crushes the button.)*

NINA. I'm fucking coming!

(Beat.)

Well…too bad for you… I already sold 'em.

KENYATTA. *(incredulous)* You're lying.

NINA. Nope.

KENYATTA. To who?

NINA. Some white motherfucker. Don't even remember his name. It's a wrap. He's gone. Probably writing a paper about the un-requited love of Black activists right now.

*(***NINA** *grabs her purse and keys. Looks at* **KENYATTA**, *who looks crushed.)*

I got a deal to go make. You gotta bounce.

*(***KENYATTA** *heads to the door emptily. He stops.)*

KENYATTA. We named you after Nina Simone because she was our rebel music. You were going to be our revolution. That's what we said.

NINA. Well… I sell drugs and rob niggas. Ashanti X died with an addiction. And your ass is coming back here to be sentimental. Ain't nothin' sentimental about a dead revolution.

KENYATTA. I'm going to find those letters.

NINA. Good luck.

*(***KENYATTA** *looks at* **NINA** *inquisitively for a moment.)*

KENYATTA. You do have her eyes…powerful, unrelenting eyes.

*(***KENYATTA** *exits.)*

*(***NINA** *remains…staring after him.)*

(The buzzer rings and rings and rings. And rings and rings and rings.)

(Blackout.)

Scene Three

*(***KENYATTA**, *alone, with his camera.)*

KENYATTA. Revolution. Change. The act of shifting things… hopefully for the better. Recognition that things "as is" is not good enough. Too much ignorance. Too much apathy. Not enough selflessness. Greed and corruption. Ignoring basic human suffering. Ignoring basic human need. Negligence. *(beat)* Revolution is the man in the mirror. Change is self. *(beat)* The man in the mirror. The scariest revolution there is…

(Lights shift to **NINA** *in her apartment. She counts cash.)*

NINA. Five hundred. Eight seven. And fifteen cents? What the fuck is this change?

*(***NINA** *re-counts the last bit of cash quickly. Remarkably fast. She is a super-pro.)*

(She stops short. Frowns.)

Damn him.

*(***NINA** *takes the cash. Removes a book from a shelf.* Debt America Owes To Blacks. *Opens it. It is missing pages. Instead, it is a deep vault for cash. She stuffs the money inside the book securely, and places it back on the shelf.)*

(Then she disrobes. Gets ready for bed. Wipes off makeup. Maybe lets her hair down. Suddenly she becomes a softer version of herself.)

(She goes to her iPod. Puts on Nina Simone, "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair.")

(Pours herself some tea. Rubs her feet. Sits on the couch.)

(Suddenly – a break. Emotion overwhelms her. She cries to herself. Wailing in her privacy.)

(Buzzer rings.)

(Beat. She doesn't move.)

(Buzzer rings again.)

(She wipes her tears. Goes over to the buzzer. Stares for a moment.)

(It rings again. She finally answers:)

What nigga?

(For the first time, we hear a voice through the intercom.)

VOICE. *(through intercom)* Can I come up?

*(***NINA** *hesitates for a moment. Then finally buzzes the person in.)*

(She goes back to sit on her couch.)

(The door opens shortly. **DAMON***, young handsome man, enters. He goes straight to a table and starts unloading money. Vials. Weaponry.)*

DAMON. Run with this nigga clear across town talkin' bout he gonna pay me. We go up to damn City Island. I'm like – I know this fool don't live up here with this little project money he got me playin' with. But he does. I follow him clean to this damn condo. White nigga got a condo. Take me all the way 'til we get to the building before he wises up like – maybe I shouldn't take this drug dealin' motherfucker up to my clean ass condo in the Bronx that ain't really the Bronx no more. Maybe I should keep him out here in the windy ass cold night air when the breeze from my waterfront property is so strong it could lift up ten niggas carrying 50,000 kilos a piece. So I stay out there…wondering why I ain't just shoot this nigga and be done with it. I'm gettin' too soft for this… *(beat)* My gray sweats here?

*(***DAMON** *stops and looks at* **NINA***.)*

What's wrong with you?

*(***NINA** *ignores him.)*

You put the money up already?

NINA. In the book. *(shift)* What's with the change?

DAMON. Was payin' me in pennies. Ain't gonna turn down no money. But when he come back for more and can't pay the debt…we got problems. Follow his ass to City Island or shoot that motherfucker in the head. *(pause)* I followed him…

*(***NINA** *lays out on the couch and pulls a blanket over herself.* **DAMON** *eyes her for a minute. Then approaches.)*

We get ten stacks. That's it. We're gone.

NINA. You said that a million times already.

DAMON. Ten stacks don't come quick when you got other shit to deal with. Setbacks. Pay off Rene with this child support B.S.

NINA. He's your son.

DAMON. Don't mean she gotta bleed me dry, Nina. That's not how we gotta do this.

NINA. I'm not talking about this tonight.

DAMON. What's the deal with you?

NINA. I'm tired.

DAMON. You tired of me?

NINA. I'm just tired.

DAMON. Want me to rub your feet?

NINA. No.

DAMON. I'll do it anyway.

*(***DAMON** *grabs* **NINA***'s foot and starts massaging it. She doesn't protest. Doesn't enjoy it. It just…happens.)*

So you gonna tell me?

NINA. Tell you what?

DAMON. Who the dude was that was keepin' you tonight.

NINA. I told you. Nobody.

DAMON. Seem like somebody. Make you uptight and stiff all night. Seem like somebody who knows how to get under your skin –

NINA. Damon –

DAMON. Skin that only I'm supposed to know how to get under. I'm the only one 'spose to know that code. I'm the only one 'spose to have the key to unlock all that attitude. Shouldn't be nobody else can rub you wrong and make your skin itch but me. But somebody else had that goin' on 'fore I even got here. You think I ain't noticed?

NINA. So what – you trying to accuse me of something?

DAMON. I'm just wonderin' who you gave all my agitation power to.

NINA. An old man. Washed up ole' man. That's it.

DAMON. What's he here for? Got a habit?

NINA. Wanted some stuff. But I wasn't sellin'. He's…messed up on some…stuff.

DAMON. A customer?

NINA. Wanted to be. But he wants a different product. Ain't got it, so I sent him on.

DAMON. What's he want? He got money? We can get it.

NINA. He's worthless.

DAMON. Yeah?

NINA. Yeah.

*(***DAMON** *looks at* **NINA** *intensely.)*

DAMON. You ain't lying to me Nina?

NINA. Damon can we fuckin' drop it? I'm too tired for this.

DAMON. Cuz if somebody movin' in on my space, I need to know now.

NINA. He's gone. Not coming back.

DAMON. Alright. You say so…then I'ma take that…

*(***DAMON** *grabs* **NINA***'s other foot.)*

You feel tense baby.

NINA. I'm always tense.

DAMON. Mad knots in your feet. Walkin' on balls of stress. It ain't healthy.

NINA. You my doctor now?

DAMON. I'm your man. I'm tellin' you what I feel in your body. Somethin' tight and rock hard. You too hard baby. Even for this shit. Need to soften up.

NINA. You tellin' me to soften up while you takin' pennies from niggas? I get as soft as you we ain't never gonna stack ten g's.

DAMON. You callin' me soft?

NINA. You called yourself soft.

DAMON. For this shit – yeah. I ain't tryin' to keep bein' this cold-blooded nigga. This shit wasn't 'spose to last this many years. This was on some elevate-up-out-the-hood plan. Not on some retirement-social-security-plan. Shit don't come with no 401K, Nina. I ain't tryin' to live on a hustle 'til I'm eighty. Get somewhere and start over. Warm weather-type-shit. Go to a beach where the water is true blue…not no rustic brown or green. Bathe you in the fuckin' Euphrates or the Tigris. Make love to you on the Nile. Feed you some nana and chickpeas or crush some grapes under our feet in fuckin' Tuscany. I'm over thirty – know what I'm sayin'? I want some of that real dough boy livin'. Not this hood-on-the-corner chump change livin'. I want that "sit-up-in-my-casa-while-other-motherfuckers-do-my-dirty-work-and-I-don't-never-have-to-even-look-at-another-blown-out-brain-on-the-concrete" type shit.

NINA. London.

DAMON. You want London?

NINA. Trafalgar Square.

DAMON. London's kinda expensive, Nina.

NINA. You said wherever I want.

DAMON. When I say that? I didn't say that just now.

NINA. You said it before.

DAMON. You want London? You got London. I'ma get it for you.

NINA. You lie.

DAMON. You think I'm bullshittin'? You want it? You gonna have it. May have to be more like Brixton or Peckham. I don't know about Trafalgar Square. But you gonna have it.

NINA. I wanna spend my nights on the London eye. Maybe see a sunset. It'd be nice.

DAMON. That the ferris wheel type thing?

NINA. Yep.

DAMON. You ain't gonna change up on me now, right? Cuz every time you watch the travel channel, can't be changin' destinations.

NINA. That's what I want.

DAMON. First you said Paris cuz of the Eiffel Tower. Then Rome cuz of the shots of the Sistine Chapel. Now you see Trafalgar Square –

NINA. The universal health care. The art. The theater district. I like the accents.

DAMON. The accents?

NINA. Sounds nice. Friendly to the ear.

DAMON. Asshole is coded in every dialect, Nina.

NINA. It's what I want.

DAMON. Then I'ma give you what you want. You believe me, right?

NINA. We'll see.

DAMON. *(hmph)* We'll see. *(beat)* I'ma get us a globe. For perspective. Not just remember the shit from geography class…but see what it is. The world. And we gonna get around it. Leave this east New York shit and move on. So I can finally see you…happy…

NINA. We'll see…

DAMON. You believe in me, right Nina? Cuz if you don't, then fuck the whole thing right now. Fuck the hustlin' and the stackin' and the Bonnie and Clyde deal between us. If you ain't on this with me, say whassup and we can dead this. Cuz the only thing I'm pushin' for is you and me. That's the fuel. And if I ain't runnin' on this, I ain't runnin'. So…you believe?

(Beat.)

NINA. Yeah…I believe…

*(***DAMON** *mounts* **NINA** *and kisses her passionately.)*

(Lights fade.)

Scene Four

(Lights up on the empty apartment. Echoes of male conversation in the hallway. The doorknob in the apartment turns.)

*(***DAMON** *enters. Followed by* **KENYATTA**.*)*

DAMON. *(offstage)* …she ain't even in right now…out takin' care of some business….but we can parlay 'til she get back…

*(***DAMON** *enters. Followed by* **KENYATTA**.*)*

You can chill on the couch right there.

*(***KENYATTA** *nods and sits, tensely.)*

You do coke and Henny / Vodka cranberry / what?

KENYATTA. Vodka's fine.

DAMON. We got this Ethiopian honey wine. But my girl ain't gonna want you havin' none of that. It's her shit. She get real nice off it. Sweetest bitch you wanna know.

*(***KENYATTA** *raises an eyebrow to* **DAMON**. **DAMON** *catches it.)*

You lookin' at me like that for? Whatsthematter? You don't like them words? Don't worry. Nina don't mind it. She knows she can be a bitch. Attitude be with the up and down on some bi-polar shit sometimes. I told her to get checked out for that and she smacked me. She can be no nonsense sometimes. Even with me. My bad bitch. Down ass bitch. Got levels. Not just how you thinking of the word. Bitch be her independence. No curve in her backbone, scoliosis type deal. She walk straight and hard. Musta got that from you, right?

KENYATTA. *(ignoring this)* You both live here?

DAMON. This her crib really. But I leave my stuff here time to time. This close to where we do a lot of…work. So I'm over here enough to make this my address. But I don't though. Leave her to her independence. When

we live together, it's gonna be an upgrade. For now, we just bide our time wherever we got space.

KENYATTA. You and Nina are…exclusive?

DAMON. Better be. I'll fuckin' kill her if she breaks my heart.

(Beat. **DAMON** *laughs.)*

Naaa, we cool. But it's just me and her. Down for whatever.

KENYATTA. Down for whatever. *(hmph)* How long have you been together?

DAMON. Two and a half years – officially. Longer than that if you count the time she made me sweat her. We on that serious track. Most women don't make it past two months.

KENYATTA. You a rolling stone, hunh?

DAMON. Not even. It's just these women. Too simple. Too materialistic. Too caught up on that other stuff. Nina the only woman I can slow down to….you know? Make me move at her pace 'steada the other way around.

*(***DAMON** *hands* **KENYATTA** *a drink.)*

Here you go. Vodka cran.

KENYATTA. So tell me how you met.

DAMON. Ain't romantic. You sure you wanna hear this?

KENYATTA. I'm asking.

DAMON. What difference do it make? We met.

KENYATTA. Makes no difference. Just curious. Finding out about her life.

DAMON. Some things better left unknown.

KENYATTA. You and her plan to move in together?

DAMON. We got traveling plans. I'ma take her to see the world.

KENYATTA. That right?

DAMON. That's what all this paper pushin' is about. Gotta make moves. Get the funding. Get up outta here.

Move overseas. She's on this London kick right now cuz of the free health care or whatever. But I'm on that Rio tip. We'll see if I can charm her over to Brazil. England'll burn a hole in my pocket before I get through customs.

KENYATTA. What do you know about Brazil?

DAMON. I know they got slums. Just like over here. You can survive in one slum, you can survive in 'em all.

KENYATTA. A Brazilian slum over an East New York project.

DAMON. I'm not choosing the slums. I'm just saying what's over there. It's also beautiful women and Latin folks that are really Black and political consciousness in the lowest of the masses. Social dynamite. That's what they got over there.

KENYATTA. Social dynamite?

DAMON. You know Steven Spitzer?

KENYATTA. The academic.

DAMON. Breaks down these two terms: Social junk and Social dynamite. The social junk…those are the group of folks who've fallen through society's cracks. Or been pushed through. Whatever. And now they are the dependent class. The people stuck on government hand-outs and what not. Accept the roles given 'em. Then you got the Social dynamite. Same conditions. Fell through society's cracks…but they fight back. Rebel against the government 'steada asking for hand-outs. Explode and be heard or whatever. Dynamite. Junk. Thin line…right?

KENYATTA. Huh…

DAMON. So the question is always…which one are you?

(Beat.)

Nina say I be on my Malcolm-in-prison shit sometimes. No disrespect.

KENYATTA. You're well read.

DAMON. I know some shit.

KENYATTA. You do.

DAMON. I know you famous just like her mama.

KENYATTA. Famous is relative.

DAMON. Famous to the streets. Kenyatta Shakur. It's a lotta underground emcees that name-drop you on their mixtapes.

KENYATTA. So I've heard.

DAMON. 'Specially cuz of the way you helped to hide refugees at your crib back in the day. Underground jail-dodge safe-haven. That's some new age underground railroad shit.

KENYATTA. It wasn't that simplistic.

DAMON. Don't sound too complicated to me.

KENYATTA. A lot of those fellas that were being targeted by government agencies were kids. They had no proper legal defense. Their rights were being violated and they were being pinned to statements against the movement through all types of brutality. I was offering what I could. A place for them to be sheltered until they had time to earn proper legal funds.

DAMON. We need soldiers like you out here now. I know a bunch of folks could use you to help them dodge some time and blow some shit up.

KENYATTA. It wasn't just about dodging jail. This was the early '80s. Different time than now. Crack had hit. Was being pushed into the community and destroying everyone's families. We were protecting our neighborhoods from drugs and corrupt authority. We were combating the capitalism that was eating away at the fabric of our society and inducing community violence. It wasn't just about blowing shit up. It was about attacking dis-enfranchisement. There was method to the madness.

DAMON. You ain't gotta defend your cause to me. I get it.

KENYATTA. You get it.

DAMON. The fuck-the-government, disrupt capitalism, develop our own economy-type-shit. I'm with it.

Believe in that cause myself. My line of work is a little different, but same principles.

KENYATTA. Principles? Which are?

DAMON. Defy the rules of the current economy or you will always be at the very end of the receiving line. You didn't know that, hunh?

KENYATTA. Know what, exactly?

DAMON. Working off-the-books, creating commerce that doesn't contribute to the lowering of national debt, that doesn't help to aide and abet war funds, that doesn't subscribe to the totem pole social structure that keeps the social junk at the bottom…that's another form of activism.

KENYATTA. I wouldn't call it that.

DAMON. Nah, you probably wouldn't. Probably lower your status among the masses. Put you on the same level as the street hustlers. Or maybe raise the street hustlers to your level. But then…that's what the Black liberation movements were ignited by, right? The social dynamite…

*(***KENYATTA** *sizes* **DAMON** *up.)*

KENYATTA. You talk a lot.

DAMON. I got a lot on my mind.

(Beat.)

KENYATTA. So you and Nina…you have traveling plans to leave – when?

DAMON. Soon as we stack the right amount of dough.

KENYATTA. Just the two of you?

DAMON. 'Less Rene give over DJ.

KENYATTA. Rene?

DAMON. My son's mother.

KENYATTA. Ah. Rene.

DAMON. DJ is my son. Seven years old. He's a tough one. Punch is already hard. Gonna have a left hook packin' more power than mine one of these days.

KENYATTA. Your son.

DAMON. But his Mama is a bitch. Not the good kind.

KENYATTA. The good kind.

DAMON. Like Nina. Nah, Rene is on that vindictive shit. Won't hardly let me see my kid and when I do, she's screamin' on me for all my stacks. Can't come around this chick for all the yackin' she do. She the kind of woman think with her heart. And once it's broken, her mind breaks too. Can't think straight and simple logic. Use our son to try to win back some love that wasn't really there. Selfish is what she is. And my kid is sufferin'. Make me out to be the bad guy when I'm only half bad. You know what that's like, right?

KENYATTA. I'm sorry?

DAMON. Father – bad-guy shit. You and Nina, right?

KENYATTA. I don't –

DAMON. Cuz she must hate your fuckin' guts –

KENYATTA. Pardon?

DAMON. To never mention you.

KENYATTA. She didn't mention me?

DAMON. But I get it. She's not as slick as she thinks she is. You come here the other day?

KENYATTA. She didn't mention that?

DAMON. Nah.

KENYATTA. I see.

DAMON. Tell me this. How'd you find me today?

KENYATTA. People know you.

DAMON. No shit. A lot of people know me cuz I know a lot of people. But you come askin' for me, you got business. That's the only reason people pointing me out. What you think I can help you with? You got a habit?

KENYATTA. No.

DAMON. I ain't think so. 'Least not the kind I cater to. But you need somethin'. What is it?

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