

(Name of Project)

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The Premonition

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT

Wade, North Carolina is a haunting rural town. The forests are thick and impenetrable. The fields are vast and endless. All that can be seen from the long, dirt road is the church, the store, the bridge over the creek and the Walters farm.

It's dusk. The sunset is an enchanting purple, but the darkness is inevitable. The earth is still. MARY and ARTEMIS WALTERS enjoy the quiet evening on their wooden, wrap around porch. They are an old, but handsome mahogany-hued black couple. They are both tall and thin.

Mary sways back and forth in her oak rocking chair and shells snap peas.

Artemis sits on the steps of the porch with a couple of tools and repairs his transistor radio sitting in his lap.

MARY

My son is home.

ARTEMIS

Mrs. Walters, quit talking crazy.
That boy's still in Germany.

Silence re-consumes them.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Dammit! These ain't no good.
Where's that flat head?

Artemis sits the radio on the porch, gets up, and into the house. The screen door slaps behind him.

Mary continues rocking and snapping.

A low rumble grows in the distance. The rumble becomes louder and catches Mary's attention.

She looks down the road and sees an army truck approaching³.
Not believing it's real, she quints, then smiles.

MARY

Teem!

No answer.

MARY (CONT'D)

Artemis! Get out here!

ARTEMIS (O.S.)

I'm busy, woman!

MARY

Come out here, please!

Artemis comes through the screen door in a huff.

ARTEMIS

What do you-

Mary cuts him off by nodding her head and pointing her index finger at the dirt road.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

You don't think-

The truck stops and a young, black man jump off of the back in full uniform and an army green duffle bag over his shoulder. He has a smooth caramel complexion, warm brown eyes, and pearly white teeth. He is smiling from ear to ear and sprints toward the house.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Lord Jesus.

Mary and Artemis wait patiently.

Mary puts down her bowl of peas and stands beside her husband.

Artemis dusts off his dirty overalls.

The boy drops his bag at the bottom of the porch steps and leaps onto the porch, engulfing both of his parents.

JEROME

Mama! Pop!

MARY

Romie.

Jerome breaks from them and puts his hands quickly in his pockets. He looks down bashfully as they inspect him.

ARTEMIS

You look good.

JEROME

Thank you.

MARY

You hungry?

JEROME

Yes Ma'am!

Jerome opens the screen door with his right hand and steps back to let his mother walk through.

Artemis goes to the bottom of the steps to get Jerome's bag.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Aww, Pop! I'll get that.

ARTEMIS

Nonsense, son.

Heavier than he expected, it takes a couple of tries before Artemis successfully gets the bag on his shoulder. He gets to the door and gives Jerome a look.

Jerome grins and walks in behind his father, letting the door slap shut again.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The three of them sit around the wooden table in the homey kitchen. The wallpaper has yellowed, but the house is clean.

Mary has fixed a hearty dinner and every plate has an ample helping of fried chicken, corn on the cob, butter beans, black-eyed peas, and cornbread.

Jerome scarfs down his food. His left arm sits on his lap under the table.

Artemis chuckles.

ARTEMIS

Slow down, boy.

MARY

At least the army done taught Jerome some table manners.

JEROME

Don't get food like this in the army.

MARY

There's plenty more. I'm so glad you're back home for a little while.

JEROME

I'm home for good.

ARTEMIS

You are?

JEROME

Been discharged.

MARY

Oh, praise God!

ARTEMIS

Hush, Mary.

(to Jerome)

Honorable?

JEROME

I'm out. Ain't that good enough?

MARY

Yes it is, son. Now you can start thinking about settling down and helping your father run this farm.

JEROME

Ma, I got plenty of time for that. Excuse me.

Jerome wipes his mouth with his napkin, tosses it on his plate, and gets up from the table. He picks up his bag and walks back into his bedroom.

ARTEMIS

What is wrong with him?

MARY

Nothing. He's a good boy.

ARTEMIS

He ain't never talked to us like this.

MARY

He just a little hot under the collar. Been fighting so long, feel like he has to fight at home, too.

ARTEMIS

Umm hmm.

(pause)

Gotta fix this radio before the game starts. Satch is on the mound tonight.

Artemis picks up his tiny radio and his tools and walks out to the porch. He sits on the steps.

Mary collects the dishes and scrapes the scraps into a bucket. She puts the dishes on the counter, then pours boiling hot water from the kettle and cold well water from another bucket into the sink and makes her dish water. She hears muttering and sobbing from Jerome's bedroom.

INT. JEROME'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jerome has changed into civilian clothes. He wears a white, starched collared shirt and brown slacks and brown striped socks. Brown leather shoes that need to be shined sit on the floor near his discarded army uniform. He is in front of his bureau and mirror, but is crouched down looking for something in the dresser drawers. He slams a door in disgust.

JEROME

Shit!

Jerome stomps over to his bed, stepping on his uniform. He crouches under the bed.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Aha!

Jerome pulled out his old shoe shine kit.

Jerome fits a shoe comfortably over his left hand. He dabs shoe polish on the shoe with his right, then picks up the brush and begins shining.

The shoe keeps slipping and Jerome becomes frustrated and he shines harder. The shoe flips off of his left hand revealing its disfigurement.

All of Jerome's fingers have been chopped off.

Jerome looks at his hand in the mirror. He remembers and starts to cry. He recollects himself, puts the dusty, unshined shoes on, then puts some hair pomade in his trembling, fingerless left hand and spreads it in his hair, brushing with the right.

Jerome shuffles through his uniform, takes out a wad of cash, then stuffs it in his brown pants.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary walks back outside with her knitting and sits in her rocking chair.

Artemis tunes the radio, hearing white noise, then finally the ball game.

ARTEMIS

Yes, sir!

Jerome busts through the screen door and bolts down the porch steps with his left hand in his pocket.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Where you off to son?

Jerome spins around.

JEROME

Mac's Juke Joint. I'm meeting up with some of my soldier buddies.

MARY

Tonight? You just got home. You ain't even settled in good.

JEROME

Ma! We just gonna celebrate! I'm a grown man and can handle myself.

ARTEMIS

The ball game is on tonight. I thought we-

JEROME

I ain't listening to no goddamn baseball game.

Artemis clutches Jerome's left arm which is still buried in his pocket.

ARTEMIS

I want to stay home. You ain't well.

JEROME

Let loose my hand!

Jerome flings his arm out, finally revealing the injury to his parents.

MARY

Oh my God! Romie!

ARTEMIS

Son, what happened to your hand?

MARY

How did this happen?

They wait for his answer while looking at his hand in shock.

JEROME

Ain't no big deal, Pa. It's just my glove hand.

Mary and Artemis look into their son's pain filled eyes. They understand.

ARTEMIS

You come home decent, boy.

JEROME

Yes, sir.

Jerome turns around and walks into the darkness.

Mary and Artemis watch him until they can no longer see him.

Time passes and Mary still watches and waits.

Artemis gets up and heads for the screen door.

ARTEMIS

I'm tired. Let's go to bed.

Mary ignores him and keeps her eyes fixed on the darkness.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

You can't sit there forever. He'll be back in a little while.

MARY

You shouldn't have let him go.

ARTEMIS

That boy is grown! How was I gonna
stop him?

(pause)

You don't know what war is like,
Mary.

Mary remains silent and keeps watching and rocking.

Mary sees something. It looks like a dim lantern floating up
the road. It starts moving faster and getting bigger until
the round glow is hovering in front of Mary.

Artemis stares at her, trying to figure out what has
entranced her.

Mary is face-to-face with the sun-like glow and she observes
it knowingly. The glow begins to oscillate faster and faster
until it looks out of control.

It bursts.

Mary does not flinch.

Glow bits and specks float in the air, fall to the ground,
then disappear.

MARY

My son is dead.

Artemis looks through her and to the dark sky with all
emotion devoid from his face. He walks in the house and
lets the door shut.

INT. MAC'S JUKE JOINT - EARLIER THAT NIGHT

Spirited blues music fills the dingy, run down, one-room
shack. The place is packed with wall-to-wall sinners. Men
and women are drinking, gambling, and dancing too closely.

Mac, a short fat light-skinned man, slings drinks from behind a homemade counter.

Jerome sits at a round table with two men in uniform and a mean looking dark-skinned man that is obviously nobody's friend. They laugh, play cards, drink, and all but Jerome smoke.

A big grin comes across Jerome's inebriated face. The other men at the table groan.

SOLDIER #1

Great poker face, Rome.

JEROME

I don't need one. I ain't lost yet.

Jerome puts down his hand.

JEROME (CONT'D)

I believe that's a straight flush.

The dark-skinned man glowers at Jerome.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Problem, Buster?

BUSTER

You cheatin'! That's your fourth hand in a row!

JEROME

Bout to make it five if you'd quit hollering and deal the cards.

BUSTER

Nah, you done took all of my money.

Jerome scans the room and spots Buster's beautiful girlfriend, Sally, in her bright ankle-length yellow dress. She is a young, curvaceous, caramel colored girl with long silky black hair.

Jerome stares at her full red-painted lips and big brown eyes and salivates in his drunkenness.

JEROME

Let's play for your girl.

BUSTER

You best leave Sally out of this.

JEROME

Aww, you ain't no fun! But I understand. I wouldn't want to lose her neither.

Jerome's other soldier friend grabs his arm and tries to lead Jerome out of the bar.

Jerome shakes him off violently. He walks over to Sally, who sits with some girlfriends.

JEROME

You sure are one fine lady.

SALLY

Thank you.

JEROME

What are you drinking? Don't worry about cost. I got all your man's money.

Buster pulls Jerome back and puts a knife up to his neck.

BUSTER

You keep on and you gonna be missing more than fingers.

MAC

Hey! Ya'll ain't gonna bust up my joint. Break it up.

The entire place is at a stand still. The music has stopped and everyone watches Jerome and Buster.

Buster smiles and puts his arm around Jerome's neck, mocking a friendly gesture.

BUSTER

He can't do nothin', Mac.

(to Jerome)

What are you gonna do, Rome?

Tickle me to death with those nubs,

Mr. War Hero?

Buster laughs to himself.

Jerome squirms and tries to attack, but Buster tightens his strangle hold.

BUSTER (CONT'D)

Now which hand got messed up? Was it just your glove hand or did they get that little pitching hand of yours?

Jerome continues to struggle and reach for escape.

BUSTER (CONT'D)

Well, it really don't matter. You couldn't pitch all that good anyway.

Jerome reaches and grabs a beer bottle and swings his arm back, smashing the bottle into the back of Buster's head.

Buster collapses in pain.

Jerome pries the knife from Buster's hand and holds it to his neck.

JEROME

That's a lie and you know it! I was the best this state had ever seen. I was on my way to Atlanta before I got drafted. Say I was the greatest, you bastard! Say it!

BUSTER

You were the greatest.

JEROME

Get up.

Jerome backs away.

Some men help Buster up.

BUSTER

You can keep that money, you
fucking cripple. I got plenty
coming.

JEROME

What are you talking about? You
ain't nothing but a sharecropper's
son.

BUSTER

That's true, but this
sharecropper's son is on his way to
Kansas City.

JEROME

What?

BUSTER

That's right. I'm going to play
for the Kansas City Monarchs.

Jerome lounges for Buster. His two soldier friends work hard
to restrain him.

JEROME

You bastard! You ain't better than
me! I should be playing with them!

Jerome slashes at Buster with the knife, but drops it.

Buster motions for Sally to come to him.

Jerome breaks free and grabs Buster's hand.

The soldiers grip his waist and pull. Buster pulls the other way, but Jerome manages to break one of Buster's fingers.

Buster bellows he pain.

JEROME

That should be me! You ain't shit!

It takes four men to keep Buster from retaliating. Finally, but men are fully restrained.

BUSTER

You broke my finger!

Buster looks at his hand in disbelief.

BUSTER (CONT'D)

I'm going to kill you. I'm gonna
fucking kill you!

Mac's bring up his shot gun from under the counter.

MAC

Ain't nobody killing nobody.

(pause)

Buster, you and Sally get the hell
outta here and go straight home.

(to Jerome)

Jerome, go sit over there and don't
get up until I tell you.

Sally scurries to the exit grabbing Buster. He backs out staring at Jerome until he can no longer be seen.

Jerome sits like he is told and breathes heavily.

SOLDIER #1

That was so goddamn stupid! You
know he's gonna come after you.
He's gonna kill you.

JEROME

He ain't shit.

(to Mac)

Mac!

Jerome holds up a shot glass.

Mac rolls his eyes.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Forget him.

Jerome pulls a flask out of his back pocket and downs it.

The soldiers shake their heads and leave Jerome's side.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Where ya'll goin'?

SOLDIER #2

We can't help you, Rome.

JEROME

Ya'll gonna leave me by myself?

They exit.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Hey! Hey!

Jerome passes out on the floor.

Jerome comes to and Mac is nudging him. The place is empty and has been cleaned up.

JEROME (CONT'D)

What time is it?

MAC

Closing time, Romie. You gotta go home.

Jerome rises and crawls to a table to pull himself up.

JEROME

I reckon it is time to go on home.

(pause)

You'll walk me a piece of the way
up the road.

MAC

You know I can't do it.

Jerome walks outside.

JEROME

Yeah.

Mac puts out all the lanterns one by one, leaving Jerome in total darkness.

EXT. MAC'S JUKE JOINT - NIGHT

Jerome can't see a damn thing. Not even his hand in front of his face. Jerome only hears the gravel of the dirt road crunching under his feet. Even the crickets and owls have taken the night off.

Jerome lights a match, then puts it out. He walks in the darkness.

Jerome finally gets to the bridge where the town keeps a lantern posted. Jerome grabs the lantern and makes his way onward.

Jerome dims the lantern, so there is only enough light for himself. Walking, he hears something behind him, but doesn't turn around. He feels more light. There is another lantern behind him.

Jerome spins around. He sees Buster's black face in the lantern light.

Buster holds his lantern in his injured hand and a .38 pistol in the other.

Buster fires a pistol and Jerome falls to the ground.

Jerome's lantern rolls over by his disfigured hand. A stream of blood comes into the light and is absorbed into the earth.

Buster takes off.

The sun rises and reveals Jerome's dead body.

The two soldier's come and pick Jerome up and carry him up the dirt road.

Mary watches the soldiers bring the dead body up the road. She hasn't moved. Her eyes are swollen and bloodshot from the crying.

The soldiers finally reach the porch and lay Jerome down.

FADE TO BLACK.