

Hoop Dreamin'

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Thursday, mid-day, 12:38 pm

The following Thursday, I came home early, shortly after my normal lunch-time, because I knew Davante was in school and his parents were at work. Because I'm one of the systems administrator for a local hospital, I can make my own hours; therefore I took the remainder of the day off. I wanted to take time to carry out my plan to get Davante back; it ought to really piss him off and satisfy my vengeance for paying \$150 and labor for a damn taillight replacement.

Now you may be thinking that I'm acting a bit childish, but you have to understand what a punk this kid has been towards me. From the first week that Davante's family moved in, I've had to deal with the kid's attitude. For example, I had a beautiful glass-back basketball hoop in my backyard; now I would allow the neighborhood boys to use it because I knew what it was like with nothing to do and all the malicious and silly-ass thoughts that collect do to boredom . I would let Sugar, my Labrador, in the house so she wouldn't get in the middle of the fellas' game. Now, because I had life, I would let them play when I wasn't home, which is where the first problem occurred. I come home one day and half of the Plexiglas backboard is shattered on the ground with the metal hoop still dangling from what was left of the board. As I looked up at the destroyed \$350 piece of equipment, one of the "good" neighborhood boys walked up behind me and squealed that Davante, trying to be who the hell knows what... Michael Jordan or whatever, was making a slam-dunk and hung from the rim shattering it to bits. It's funny how even though I was mad, I still cared enough to ask the kid if Davante was okay. As it turns out, he was just fine and never even rang my doorbell to apologize or say anything about what he did. In fact, every time I would see him outside, the kid had the nerve to just ignore me like I wasn't even there. Add on the fact that this was not the first time that my car got hit, I had a Tahoe that got hit with a football or with a baseball, and I turned it in with a fucking dent in the hood, probably from the same damn football. Over these past eleven months I've racked up more than a few heavy bills; all, in one-way or the other were caused by one teen menace: Davante.

I looked out my kitchen window, which faced Davante's house, and noticed that the coast was clear. Both of his parent's cars were gone and the block seemed empty and quiet. There's a privacy fence between our backyards, but at the farthest end of my yard I have a rather large stack of firewood that I used to jump over the fence. As I jump down into Davante's backyard, I take a look around my other neighbor's backyards, to make sure no ones watching me. Once in his backyard I spot out one of my targets: Davante's basketballs. Shortly after he broke my hoop, Davante's parents bought him a basketball hoop and ever since then I've noticed that he keeps a few basketballs out in the yard.

By now you may be wondering how I know all of this, especially with a large privacy fence between our yards. Well, I will admit that from time to time I do sit upstairs and watch Davante and his friends play from my back guest bedroom window. I can't help it, even though he gets on my last nerve, the 16 year old the boy sorta has it going on. Davante is about 5'7 and I would say only about 120 to 125 lbs. His skin, which is also damn near flawless, is a toasted cashew color. Although almost always covered in a doo-rag, that matches his outfit, Davante has always kept his hair very neat and waved like mine. I've noticed that although he goes to a high-school that requires he wear a uniform, when he comes home its always back into baggy jeans and jerseys. He rocks the hell out of the whole street look thing. I mean I have to admit that the boy always has his shit together. Although his favorite form of footwear around the neighborhood would seem to be his Nike flip-flops with ankle socks, I've never seen him in gym shoes that weren't sparkling clean.

As I reach the basketballs, I feel for the 8-inch hunter's knife I stuffed in my jogging suit pant pocket. Kneeling down, I take the first ball and palm it with my left hand, making sure that I was holding the ball firmly to the ground, I slash the shit out of the first ball. Quickly I grab the next one and repeat the action, I continued like that until all the balls in the yard looked like plunger bottoms. Next, I spot my second target... his basketball hoop. I knew this next feat was gonna be tricky. I proceed to move Devante's father's step ladder from the side of his garage directly under the hoop. I nervously look around, for spectators (there are none), as I proceed to unscrew the hoop.

Guilt starts to set in as I walk into my kitchen and set my hunter's knife, wrench, screwdriver and Davante's basketball hoop down on the counter. Doing what I had just done was supposed to make me feel better for all the crap Davante put me through. But, it only made me feel bad for fucking up this kid's number one joy in life: basketball. Soon, instead of thinking about how fun it's going to be to watch him find all his basketballs slashed and his hoop missing, I started thinking of a ways to replace them without him knowing who did it.

Thursday afternoon 3:32 p.m.

I have a large picture window in the front of my house and, from my living room, I can watch all that goes on outside on the block. About fifteen minutes ago, droves of kids appeared, walking home from school. Although I didn't see him, I know that Davante was somewhere in the crowd with them. Still feeling guilty about stooping down to a level in which I would willfully destroy someone else's property, I pick up my cordless phone and dial directory assistance. I ask the operator for the phone number to the Sports Authority out at the mall closest to my house. I know that I'm not going to be able to replace the balls before he notices that they've been slashed. But, I'm going to replace them and the hoop, none-the-less.

I grab my wallet and keys from my dinning room table and head down the few stairs to my side door. I'm a bit startled at the fact that as I open the side door, looking down and not really paying attention, I see a pair of ankle-socked feet in a pair of Nike flip-flops. Immediately, I recognized the signature look that was pure Davante. I looked up and for a few seconds we simply starred each other up and down. This was the first time that we had come face to face in a long time. And I couldn't help but notice he was looking damn good today in a pair of long-leg blue jean shorts. As usual, he had on a brand spanking new do-rag (stark white). I couldn't read the look on his face, but I could only assume that he was standing outside of my side door because of the slashed basketballs and missing hoop in his backyard. It looked as though he was about to walk away, before I opened the door.

"Uh, yo what's up?" they were the first words I had heard him speak, to me, in the last six or so months.

"Chillen, what up wit you?" I replied still trying to read his intentions for being at my door.

"Nothing".... Silence "Look man, I just came over here to see if we can just bury this shit. I mean...okay dawg it's like this, I skipped [school] today" he said. "Oh shit" began to run through my head and suddenly I feel the urge to piss... not out of fear, but I'm guessing embarrassment or fear of embarrassment... "had he seen me... Oh SHIT".

"I was in the kitchen when you was out there cuttin' my balls and shit." I can't believe my ears. "FUCK ME" I thought. Now in addition to feeling like shit for doing what I did, I feel REALLY stupid on top of that.

"I saw you but I ain't come out there and shit, because I knew you was mad bout yo ride and you think I did that shit. Well, dat and the fact that you like fuckin' twice my size and could fuck me up if you wanted to." He looked me in the eyes and smiled; I smiled back, amused at his logic, which starts to break down the tension in the little moment we were having here.

"Now I hate snitching yo, but dawg it really wasn't me that hit your truck the other day. Yeah, I was out there playing with the football, but it was ole' boy, Shawn, up the street that actually threw the ball that hit yo shit." Dumbfounded and still reeling from the fact that my dumb-ass got caught; I can't believe the sincerity in which Davante was coming at me with. I can't help but believe what he's saying, and I'm starting to think that maybe I mis-judged him.

Not knowing what to do, I offer to let him in the house in order to discuss this situation a little more. He accepts my offer and follows me inside back up the short flight of steps to my kitchen.

“Okay, check it... ever since you moved in next door, I feel like you’ve been like a little destructive muthafucka and careless with shit. I mean, let’s be real... you may not have fucked up my Caddy but I know you remember the Tahoe and I know for a fact that you destroyed my hoop. And that wasn’t even a big deal...it was the fact that the next day when I saw you. You didn’t even come to me, like you doin’ now, and say sorry or anything!” Looking a bit scared by my words, he opened his mouth to speak.

“Yeah, you right I did break yo hoop, and I know that was wrong. But, when ole’ boy told me that you was like you was gonna kick my ass I figured that you didn’t want to hear from....”

“Whoa... slow down, playboy.... ‘kick your ass’... who told you that shit?”

“Homeboy from across the street...you know that little boy, what’s his name? Terrence” I walk over to the kitchen table and pull out a chair to sit as I start to put the pieces of this puzzle together.

Terrence was the boy that told me that Davante broke the rim. Now I know for an absolute fucking fact that I never said anything about kicking anybody’s ass. That shit is so lame, how would it look claiming that I’m want to fight a fucking teenager? That shit is so wack! Davante’s move to lean against one of my kitchen counters brought my attention back to our discussion.

“So you didn’t say that you wanted to beat my ass? Cause, I was kinda thinking that I wouldn’t have wanted to fight you. I mean, I’ll do what I gotta do... I ain’t no hoe... but, I was not lookin forward to that shit!” As, he spoke I thought: “this whole thugged out street image shit is all just for show. This muthafucka is really a cool dude, he just needs to live a little longer to learn some more about life”

Being this close to Davante, I got a chance to see, up close, what I already could see from a distance... he’s fine, gorgeous, cute... all of that rolled up into one. Today, he’s got on a white-and-blue-plaid button down short sleeve Oxford Polo with his blue jean-shorts. I have to admit that I’m getting a bit horny; he just looks so good with his feet in white Polo ankle socks showing off those beautifully tanned, strong and slightly hairy legs.

We continue to talk about our history on our block, telling our stories about our brief run-ins with each other, from our own perspective. Soon we start to realize that, instead of having a real beef with each other, we just simply had a real bad case of miscommunication; made worse by little motherfuckers, like the one across the street. It’s running on about 6pm now and it turns out that we’ve been in this kitchen talkin’ for about 2 hours. Davante told me all about himself, the fact that he wants to go to college on a basketball scholarship. He wants to play pro, but he’s not about to sit around “expecting [that] shit to just happen”, he wants to get an education. And I’m certainly not going to crush his dream (of going pro), even though I’ve seen his game and he’s good but not good enough too pro at his height. But our conversation confirmed my premonition that the whole street thing was just a front for this boy. He also told me about his dream of being a rapper...

Now wait.... I know what you’re thinking.... But don’t pretend like the thought of being a superstar hadn’t crossed your mind, especially when you were young.

End of Part 2

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Jayboichitown@yahoo.com.