

## Three Little Wolves

"Lay it down fah me... slow, slow, like the drive-by-show, shootin' in tha dark darker than coal. No, no, tha ghetto don't know friend from foe, even niggas an niggers ain't brotha's no mo," said the first little wolf.

"Shit, pigs bitin us like their motha's tit. Cause every nigga's a suspect fo a suspect verdict. Don't matta none if pigs don't plant a gun, paint a nigga's hands red an he don't need one," said the second little wolf.

"Pigs hate niggas like niggas hate SPAM, food stamp stampede unda tha boot ah tha man. Each can makes us wonder if we can, make mo out a less by sellin by the gram. Cause I'll be damned if I don't poison my brotha mahn, let him smoke my problems away putting papah in my hand," said the third little wolf.

"Yeah, yeah, check it... uh... pigs ain't welcome here cause... um... cause it ain't like thay our cousins," said the little wolves little brother.

"Nigga what? Sheep what tha fuck you doin here?"

"I'm kickin it."

"Hell no you ain't. Way you kickin it you gun get kicked."

"But I wanna hang wit ya'll."

"No, Sheep. Lea'us alone an go play witch'yo frayn's."

"But..."

"But no, get yo butt outa here. Da street ain't no place fo kids. Go over to da playgoun' and we come get'chew layta fo suppa, aight?"

Sheep, as his brothers called him, dropped his chin and turned his head. He walked slowly away from them towards the playground as his brothers resumed their rhymes. They never included him except when their mother told them to, and even then he could tell they didn't want to. It seemed he couldn't do anything as well as they could and, because of that, they couldn't respect him. He mumbled rhymes to himself as he walked, determined to show them he was the missing link in their circle.

“Mahn, dat little nigga got some balls comin’ out here.”

“Yeah, he got balls but he ain’t got no brains.”

“Serious, yo. Dat kid should know betta.”

“Nigga please. He does know betta. An him bein’ out here don’t matta none wid us around.”

“Shit yeah... yah know dat ain’t wack, it’s a matta a fact, three little wolves watching Sheeps back.”

“He cravin’ fo a grazin’ like bran fo raisins, raised in dah hood, darker than what’s pavin...”

But before Straw could finish his verse gunshots rang across the street. Startled, his two brother’s, Stick and Brick, ducked behind a wall. In the distance they could see the battle. Straw joined his brothers behind the wall, watching a war wage between two cars as they drove wildly, firing at one another.

“Nigga, come on!” Straw cried, tugging at his brother’s sides. Stick stood up and followed him to run away. But, before they turned the corner they looked back to see Brick stay where he was. “Brick come on!”

“Sheep’s ova there mahn!” he yelled, as the cars made a disoriented pass past the playground. “Mahn, fuck it!”

Brick exploded into a sprint towards the feuding cars and the playground in their path. The screech of tires and cracks of gunshots echoed into the neighborhood that had emptied from the sounds. Stick and Straw watched terrified as Sheep innocently crept towards the gunshots, thinking it a game or something fun—too young to know better. Brick darted frantically behind cover until he made one final run for his brother. He snatched him under his arm and pulled him behind a building, peeking his head from behind the wall to see the cars drive off, guns blazing.

“Fuck, mahn,” Brick wheezed, collapsing against the wall and loosening his grip on his brother. But, as he did so, Sheep went limp and rolled out of his arms. “Sheep?” Brick exclaimed, pulling his brother towards him. But Sheep said nothing. And as Stick and Straw came running to his side, Brick pulled his hand from his brother’s body to see it stained with blood. Sheep had been shot.

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"Where was his mother?" the officer demanded, quickly scribbling on a form while the paramedics zipped the bag around Sheep's body.

"She's at home," Stick answered, fixated on the black bag they'd stuffed his brother into.

"I asked where she **was**."

"She was at home," Straw exclaimed, glaring at the officer. "Where was ya'll?"

"What?"

"We called you, mahn... ova an hour ago. Where were you?"

"Why did he run towards the gunshots? Was he retarded or something?"

"He's a kid, he didn't know any betta."

"Didn't his mother teach him better? Or wasn't she around for that either?"

"She..."

"Yeah, whatever," the officer interrupted. "Was he carrying a gun?"

"He was five years old."

"So probably just a knife then," the officer exclaimed, tearing the form off his clipboard and stuffing it into his pocket. "We're done here. Go home and tell your mother that where she should have been was watching her kids."

The officer strolled back to his car and gave a signal for everyone to pack it up. Stick and Straw retreated angrily from where they stood to join Brick who rested against a nearby wall. He stared into the distance, watching the sirens drive back to the stations—past the houses where the killers lived. The boys stayed silent, trying to think of how to tell their mother.

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*Continued in The Collection: Volume One*