

Here, Your Auntie's Tears

You flick on the lights of your auntie's living room. Her floral print sofa is flipped over. Her cheap glass coffee table is shattered. A dirt outline in the shape of a 46' television marks the wall. Every family picture is broken on the ground, except your mother's framed obituary.

"Auntie. Auntie Robin", you call out.

There is no response.

Where your auntie hung the picture from the ending credits of Good Times, a Lucky's grocery bag hangs out of a new hole in the wall. You step over your cousin's picture. He is holding a first place Golden Glove medal. You hold the picture close to your face, and notice his lucky tiny blue glove hanging from his trunks. You put the picture down to move the dusty pink curtains to peer out across the window, into the backyard calling out "Auntie. Auntie Robin!"

Each step closer you get to the backyard, the more audible the sound of weeping becomes. From the muffling of the cries, you can tell someone really has a hatred for tears. You open the door to the backyard, and through the flimsy screen, you see your auntie's worn-in black work shoes. When you walk down the steps, she looks up.

"He fuckin' found it. Found it," says your favorite aunt.

"How do you know it was him?"

She reaches for her knees and shakes them.

"Who the hell moves a mothafuckin' picture to look for money?"

"Only a shermhead," you say. It hurts to talk about your older cousin that way. At one point, you once saw him as a big brother. You reach with both arms to hug your aunt.

She shoves you away. "Get the hell off me. Hugs don't pay no damn rent."

You step back quickly because you are aware of how well she can execute a strong left hook. At the age of five, you watched your auntie beat her ex-husband's sidepiece up Crenshaw Blvd. She dries her tears with her beige blouse and removes a cigarette from her bra. "Go find your cousin for me. Tell his ass don't come back without my damn money." She hawks a wad of spit on the ground.

At Denker Park, you walk up to a dice game, and see a group of young men all in their late-teens and very early 20's, wearing blue Dickies shirts and blue Dickies bottoms.

"Gimme the foe!" yells Jay, one of the young men with cornrows. They sway from left to right as he shakes the dice.

"Damn it!" He yells as he rolls a seven. The group laughs as they split the small pool of money on the ground. Jay stands up to give you dap.

"What's good, Jay? You seen Blu around?"

"Earlier. We had to pull him off Herman's stanky ass. He's been trippin' since he's been on that shit. Damn. Blu was my nigga."

You look back at the dice game. "Thanks anyway."

"I'll tell Blu you lookin' for him, if I see him."

As you are halfway through the park, Jay screams, "check Gene's."

You walk into Gene's liquor store, on 35th street and Normadie and walk out with a forty-six cent Honey Bun.

"Can you let a nigga hold a dolla' If not, then seventy-fiv' cent?" asks a man in a ripped Bob Marley T-shirt and green camo pants.

"The hell out of my face, Herman! You smell like goat cheese, Old English, and ass. What happened to your shirt?"

He stumbles in circles. "Your cousin did this to me," says Herman. He points at a giant knot on the left side of his face.

"Damn. He did, where?"

Herman falls on his ass. "Yeah, he beat me like he used to do them boys in the ring. Nigga damn near made me feel sorry for Rodney King."

You look at the giant knot. "I see that, but where?"

"By that busted ass house, on 39th and Western. He rolls over on his side and shoos you away.

"Old drunk." You reach in your pocket, place three quarters on his chest, then step over him.

On 39th Street and Western Ave., the entire neighborhood is standing outside. Blue and red lights take turns flashing. You shove your way through the crowd and see you see your cousin's tiny blue glove on the sidewalk.

You pick your cousin's lucky glove and clip it on to your pants. When you look up, you see your aunt in shock. She is staring at your cousin in the backseat of a police car. Several witnesses say her son killed another black man, in the beat up white house. Even smoked out, your cousin still got skills. He beat another shermhead to death.

You reach with both arms to hug your aunt. She does not push away. First, you hear, then, on your shoulder, here, you feel your favorite auntie's tears.