

Stoop Pigeons Excerpt

written by

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2. THE BLOCK

The block. The neighborhood. The stoop. The past. Everyone is younger. LEXI and TANYA hold double-dutch rope, they're about 11 years old. It's not any ordinary jump-rope. They use long cable wires as "rope". LEXI holds both ends of the rope, one end in the right hand, the other end in the left hand. TANYA has the middle of the rope wrapped around her waist. They double-dutch, hard. You can hear the wires slap against the concrete. BRIDGIT, 9 years old, is waiting to jump in, but she's frightened. She keeps hesitating.

On the corner of the stoop, is a small fold-up table with two beach fold-up chairs. MISTA PETIE and MARIO, 10 years old, sit at the table together. MISTA PETIE is showing MARIO how to play spades. There's a boombox on the table playing some late 90's music.

LEXI

Come on Bridgit, just jump in already!

TANYA

Yeah, stop being a scaredy-cat!

BRIDGIT

Hold up! I'm concentrating!

TANYA

Come on little leprechaun! There's a rainbow at the end of the rope!

BRIDGIT

Why are yah using cable wires for?!

TANYA

Shut up! This is all we got.

LEXI

You gotta jump in when the highest rope is in the air! Just count...1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2....

BRIDGIT

Yeah but yah turning the rope too fast! Slow it down!

TANYA!and!LEXI!share!a!look.!They!slow!it!down.!

LEXI

Okay, try it now! Remember, the closest foot near the rope goes in first...c'mon girl...

*BRIDGIT!attempts!to!jump-in.!Her!foot!steps!on!the!
cable.!She!gets!hit!by!the!other!side!of!the!cable.!*

BRIDGIT

OWWWWWWWWWW!

TANYA!and!LEXI!laugh.!

TANYA

White girls can't jump!

BRIDGIT

That's not funny! Yah made it faster, I was counting...1...2...1...2...and then ya'll went, 1-2-1-2-1-2. Mad fast!

TANYA

No we didn't!

BRIDGIT

Yes, yah did! Especially YOU, Tanya!

TANYA

Girl, shut your mouth before I do it for you-

*MS.!SUZY!yells!from!her!second!floor!window!of!the!
building.!*

MS. SUZY

OYE!!MIRA!!

*The!girls!look!up!at!MS.!SUZY!with!a!head!full!of!
rollers!safely!tucked!inside!of!a!thick!hair-net.!The!
rollers!might!be!distasteful,!but!her!face!is!done!up!
nice!in!some!way!and!she!looks!very!beautiful.!Maybe!
she!wears!a!fashionable!kimono.!*

MS. SUZY (CONT'D)

You girls better behave yourselves! I'm watching you! You know I got all eyes on this neighborhood. Don't play with me!

MS.!SUZY!looks!around...!

MS. SUZY (CONT'D)

Lexi, Where is my son?... MARIO!!!!!!/

LEXI

He's on the corner playing cards with Mista Petie!/
/

MS. SUZY

Petie!?

She!checks!her!rollers.!Fixes!herself!up!quickly.!

MS. SUZY (CONT'D)

Tell his little butt to be upstairs by 6:30! I'm cooking dinner!

LEXI

Okay, Ms. Suzy!

MS. SUZY

You come up too, Bridgit! Your momma asked me to feed you, she's working late. Again.

BRIDGIT

Yes ma'am!

MS.!SUZY!goes!back!inside.!

TANYA

Alright, c'mon. Let's try this again.

BRIDGIT

Lemme turn this time. I'm better at turning.

TANYA

You too short to turn! The rope is gonna be uneven.

LEXI

It's fine, she can just stand on something. I'll jump.

TANYA

Whatever...Let's walk to the park though. Maybe we can battle some other girls in double-dutch and win some quarters.

LEXI

Hell yeah, we out.

BRIDGIT

Yay! When yah win, can yah get me a bag of salt and vinegar chips, a quarter water and a 10 cent blue icee?!

TANYA/LEXI

Fine/Sure.

The!girls!grab!their!double-dutch.!

LEXI (CONT'D)

Ms. Suzy!

She!pokes!her!head!back!out.!

LEXI (CONT'D)

We gonna walk to to the park. We will be back in an hour!

MS. SUZY

Make sure you girls stick together! Nobody leaves nobody behind!! *¡Escuchaste?!*

LEXI/TANYA/BRIDGIT

Yes, ma'am!

They!exit.!MS.!SUZY!spots!her!son!(MARIO)!and!goes!back!inside.!

MISTA!PETIE!and!MARIO!are!holding!up!cards.!They're!playing!spades.!

MISTA PETIE

Aight, so tell me the order again...from the highest suit to the lowest suit...

MARIO

Shouldn't we start from lowest to highest?

MISTA PETIE

For what?

MARIO

Cuz that's how we do it in school...that's how we count.

MISTA PETIE

Yeah, that's how they trick ya'll minds little man...that's that imperialist shit...

MARIO

What you mean by a trick? It's just counting numbers...

MISTA PETIE

When you think low to high, you already setting yourself up with limitations. From the get, you teaching yourself what it is to be low. Making yourself see the top as if it were something hard to aspire. Changes up your whole mindset. Makes you feel inferior. But that ain't true, little man. You a king, son. You come from kings...your momma never taught you that?

MARIO

She taught me about Jesus...OH! And Jesus went from low to high! He started off as a poor carpenter's boy and then ended up being a king!

MISTA PETIE

Nah, you got it twisted little Mario. Check it, Jesus was the son of God, right?

MARIO

Yeah.

MISTA PETIE

And then he was sent down here with an angel, right?

MARIO

Uh huh...

MISTA PETIE

God is the almighty, right? Up in heaven, on a throne or some shit?

MARIO! nods.!

MISTA PETIE (CONT'D)

See? He never started low. Maybe he had to hit a low place so that he can become who he was meant to be. But he was always a king. We all God's children. We all kings and queens. Sometimes we just hit lows because we have to learn a lesson or something.

MARIO

But why? Why some of us gotta start off low?

MISTA PETIE

Boy, is you listening to me?!

MARIO! nods.!

MISTA PETIE (CONT'D)

We don't start off low! We *end!*up low. Our circumstances in life...they dictate where we fall. You are growing up in the hood, not because you low, but because your parents ended up here. This ain't your fault. Nah mean? BUT, you can change that...you know what I'm saying? You can always change up your situation, little man. This life is full of possibilities...opportunities...

MARIO

It's kinda sad that sometimes people are put in low places, huh?

MISTA!PETIE! takes!out!a!card,!an!ace!of!spades.!

MISTA PETIE

See this card? This is us my little brother...we are as black as this ace of spade...powerful, conquering, we got the ability to cut right through other people and their bullshit. We collect books, and all the spades together are one hell of a hand, you know what I'm saying?

MARIO

A lot of spades in a hand means you winning...

MISTA PETIE

Yeah, but we gotta be careful...sometimes we renege with the spades. We don't follow suit and we gotta pay the penalties.

MARIO

Wow, I never thought of it that way...how did you become so smart about all these things?

MISTA PETIE

Experience.

A!moment.!

MARIO

Did you learn these things in jail Mista Petie?

Small!beat.!

MISTA PETIE

Nah, you just reckon with these things in jail...thats all.

MARIO

Well I'm glad you out. Cuz now you can show me all the things you know. Cuz my daddy, he...well my *mami*...she's single...

MISTA PETIE

Word, your momma is looking right too. She still in beauty school?

MARIO

I don't think so. But she works at the hair salon. They let her cut hair without a license. That's how good she is.

MISTA PETIE

Maybe I should walk you upstairs later...

MARIO

Word, you should! And she be cooking!

MISTA PETIE

I know, I be smelling those rice and beans from down the block!

MARIO

She make a mean lasagna too!

MISTA PETIE

Yeah, I fuck with lasagnas.

3. NEW FACES, NEW PLACES

Years later. The present. It's day time.
 LEXI and TANYA (in their 20's) are sitting
 on the stoop. LEXI is braiding TANYA's hair,
 pulling on it, trying to comb out the knots.
 TANYA "ooww!" and "ouch's!" every now and
 then.

LEXI

I told you to start putting coconut oil in your hair...you
 don't listen...

TANYA

I don't like that shit, it's too greasy.

LEXI

Your dry-ass hair needs the grease.

TANYA

I'm about to cut my whole shit off yo. I wanna go bald like
 Amber Rose...you think I'll look cute?

LEXI

People are gonna confuse you for a boy.

TANYA

What you talking about? I seen a whole lotta women cut off
 all they hair and look pretty as hell too.

LEXI

Yeah, but you...you like to dress...you know...

TANYA

Butchy?

LEXI

Uhhhh...yeah...kinda...I mean you've always been a tomboy-

TANYA

Whatever yo, I don't care. It's not like I'm out here trying
 to get a man anyway...

LEXI

True, true...

A!moment.!Maybe!it's!awkward.!

LEXI (CONT'D)

And not for nothing, all you would need to do is like put on
 nice earrings or something. Because your face is pretty just
 how it is, you don't even need makeup or anything/

TANYA

Ok, okayyy, Lexi...I don't care. Just braid my hair.

LEXI!continues!braiding.!MARIO!enters.!

MARIO

Look at all these lil pigeons sitting on a stoop. Ya'll got nothing else better to do?!

LEXI

MARIO!!!??? You alive! /

TANYA

Oh shit, is it really you man!?!/

MARIO!hugs!LEXI!and!TANYA.!An!extra!long!hug.!Tight.!

TANYA (CONT'D)

Chill man! You gonna mess up my hair!

They!struggle.!MARIO!lets!them!go.!

LEXI

Well damn Mario, its been a while! Your moms kept us all in the dark, said she sent you away somewhere because you were messing up in school...what happened?

MARIO

Yoooooo! You saw what Johnny did to the corner store?! It's a gourmet!deli now? It's all fancy and renovated. Yo, they selling all these *natural!*and *organic!*products in there...I didn't know there was such thing as organic soda and shit/

TANYA

You're super late, homie. Where you been?

LEXI

Yeah! *Where!*have you been, Mario?

MARIO

Who me?

TANYA!and!LEXI!stare!at!him,!waiting!for!an!explanation.!

MARIO (CONT'D)

Well umm...I been...you know...I was working upstate and/

TANYA

Upstate?/

LEXI

We know you got locked up/

MARIO

No! Nothing like that. I was...making connections and shit/

TANYA

Connections? What type of connections you talking about Mario/

MARIO

Chill Tanya, you out here making wild assumptions/

TANYA

Assumptions?! I didn't make any assumptions, that's your guilty-ass conscience/

LEXI

Who were you with, Mario?/

MARIO

No one man! I was dolo...

They!finally!take!a!moment!to!pause!from!the!bicker.!

TANYA

Mmmhmm...you think we stupid, dude.

MARIO

Nah, never that...

LEXI

Just make sure you lay low, Mario...the block has changed a lot. It ain't like how you left it. People moved out, people moved in. And it all happened quick.

MARIO

Who moved out?

LEXI

The Jacksons left. They moved down to Florida. Boobie ended up going to college down there, and then they all just moved eventually.

MARIO

Boobie?! His crazy-ass went to college?!

LEXI

Yeah, yo. He went out there playing basketball.

MARIO

Oh wowww...good for him, good for him...

LEXI

Well shit, I went to college too! Can I get some love?

MARIO

You good, you good...congrats big sis from another miss.

TANYA

I didn't go to college, but I'm the best trainer at my gym. Check these out...

TANYA!flexes!a!muscle.!MARIO!checks!it!out.!

MARIO

Oh! I knew you was always diesel and shit.

TANYA

Yup, you already know. Oh and you remember Maggie?!

MARIO

Yeah.

TANYA

She's clean now.

MARIO

Oh yeah?! No more crack?

TANYA

Nope. She's a Jehovah's witness now. She be knocking on people's doors all day giving away them book pamphlets.

MARIO

Damn...well that's good for her! I guess rocks ain't the drugs around here anymore, huh?

LEXI

Maybe not on this block...but it's still out there, ruining lives everyday.

TANYA

That was your thing huh? It's why you went to/

LEXI

Tanya! /

MARIO

It's okay Lex, I know how to protect myself from Tanya's fangs...