

Prologue

Children of an all-black school recite the pledge of allegiance, with their hands over their hearts as dark clouds and strong winds loom over the indigent community of colored people. “Good morning class,” said Dr. Davis a light-skinned black man, who is one of the most revered persons in the community. “Today we are going to talk about the Jim Crow Laws and one of the most important speeches in American history,” he continued. “Does anyone know the history of Jim Crow or how the Jim Crow Laws were established,” asked Dr. Davis. The students in the class were silent. They knew of the Jim Crow Laws; but did not know how they were established. Dr. Davis holds his hands in front of his face as if praying... “Let me rearticulate that question. Can anyone tell me about the Jim Crow Laws,” asked Davis. Will Wanton raises hand and speaks, “It is the law that provides facilities for black folks to use just like the ones white folks use.” Yes, Mr. Wanton that is correct; but I must ask (as he scans the room), are the facilities equal, Mister Odom,” Asked Davis?

“Of course, they are equal,” Pee Wee Odom answered. “Both bathrooms have toilets, don’t they?” “If Mr. Odom is correct, can anyone explain, why white folks have school buildings and we are taught in churches and barns,” asked Davis? “Therefore, the reality of the Jim Crow Laws are separate and unequal,” Davis continued. Dr. Davis removed his glasses and put them on his desk. “People, you are the future and there are some things that you must understand and stand for,” implored Davis. “Understand that nothing in this world is free, not even freedom,” explains Davis. “Therefore, I implore you to stand and fight for your God given rights, which served as the basis on which the U.S. Constitution was written.” Davis continued, “Abraham Lincoln recited one of the most important speeches in U.S history during the American Civil War in 1863. It is called the Gettysburg Address.” Listen to these words. “Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation: conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” “Many of our forefathers have died for our freedoms and now it is up to us to fight for equality,” implored Davis. “Do you remember the poem Freedom’s Plow by Langston Hughes,” asked Davis? Young Pee Wee Odom jokingly replied, “A long time ago but not so long ago, a lot of men said and did a lot of things.” “Thank you for that comedic interpretation, Mr. Odom, but I am looking for a more substantive answer,” replied Davis.

Little Will Wanton raised his hand and stood once Dr. Davis pointed to him and began to speak. It seems to me that freedom was a birthright to some in this country, while others had to work for it, some fought for it, and some even died for it. I think the poem Freedom’s Plow is about how people from all races worked and sacrificed to make this a great nation. “Yes! Young Mr. Wanton, yes,” replied Davis, “that is exactly what the poem was about, it was a rallying cry for an oppressed people and the ways they came to this country and worked for their freedom.” “I find this poem interesting because it is rooted in the word,” explains Davis. “Romans 8:20-22, says that we have been groaning since childbirth up to the present time. We cannot stand idly by and wait; we must work for what we want in our hearts. The bible also reminds us in James 2:14-26; faith without work is dead.” A kid runs into the school yelling, “Dr. Davis! Dr. Davis!” Davis grabs the kid by the arm, “hold on young man, what’s all the commotion?” The kid pulls a note from a torn pocket of his dirty jeans and gives it to Dr. Davis. The doctor unfolds the note, reads it, and puts it on his desk. “Okay class, I have been informed that a severe storm is heading this way, therefore, I must release you to go home....so, class dismissed,” Davis explained. The kids cheered, put their books away and began to exit the building. Young Will walks up

to Davis, taps him on the shoulder; Davis turned and looked at him. "Dr. Davis are you still going to give me music lessons tonight," asked Will.

Dr. Davis smiles, looks at Young Will and replies, "Yes young Will, you are my most promising student. Come on over tonight if it is okay with your parents." Will started walking toward the exit; Davis calls him back. Will slowly turns and walk over to Davis. The doctor puts his hand on Will's shoulder. "Will, one day our generation is going to fade away and each generation needs someone to stand for what's right and speak for those who cannot be heard. Therefore, I give you this, it is called The Word, if you hold on to these teachings, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Puzzled by Davis' words, Will looks at him and walks toward the door. Davis calls out, Will you have that fire burning inside of you and one day you will be a torch to lead your generation to live in a nation of a more perfect union. Once out of the building, Will runs to catch up with Pee Wee. Will almost out of breath, "Look at what Dr. Davis gave me, holding his book up in the air. He said the teachings in this book will lead our generation into a more perfect union." Pee Wee laughs, "Dr. Davis is really doing a job on your head, the only teaching you need from Dr. Davis is those guitar lessons so we can make our music." Later that evening, Dr. Davis walks into his home out of the streaming rain only to find his wife on her knees praying. "Honey, what's going on, asked Davis. Startled, Mrs. Davis jumps up runs to her husband and embraces him in her arms.

"The police! The police and some Soldiers came here looking for you," she replied. "What?" asked Dr. Davis. "We have to move, start packing!" Davis commanded as he runs to the closet and starts throwing clothes into a trunk at the rear of his bed. Mrs. Davis stands in front of her husband impeding him from pulling more clothes from the closet trying to find out why the police and soldiers were looking for him. Dr. Davis grabs his wife by both her arms looks her directly in her eyes and says, "Honey, I was on the front line protesting black men being sent off to war to fight for a country that does not recognize them as equals and my number came up in the draft. I refuse to fight for a country that denies me fair and equal treatment, so I ran away." "What? Are you a fugitive?" Asked Mrs. Davis. "No honey, I am a conscientious objector, I will explain it all to you later after we get out of here," explained Davis as he continued throwing clothes into his trunk. They here a knock at the door, Dr. Davis ducks into the closet and signals his wife to go and answer the door. Mrs. Davis opens the door and yells to her husband, "Honey, it is Will." Dr. Davis breathes a sigh of relief, and tells his wife to let little Will in. Will walks into the house with rain dripping from his clothes. "Are you leaving," asked Will. Davis puts hands on Will's shoulders and looks him in the eyes, "yes, Will we are but I have something to give you before we go."

Davis reaches into the closet, pulls out his guitar case puts it on the table and opens it. "This is yours to remember me by, but I want you to promise me something," said Davis. "Anything Dr. Davis, anything," said Will. "Practice. Remember the Freedom's Plow. Study the word and hold on to its teachings," exclaimed Davis. A loud and thunderous noise is heard at the door as the police traverse. Dr. Davis pushes Will to the side and tries to escape through the back door only to get captured by the police waiting for him on the other side of the door. Mrs. Davis and Will try to help to no avail because some of the police are restraining them as the other police officers escort Dr. Davis away. "Guard in your heart the seed planted by Thomas Jefferson and stand little Will stand!" screamed Davis. "I love you honey, they can take me but they can't take the love that I have for you," Davis continued.

The dream always started with him staring into the darkness, surrounded by smoke and the smell of death. He knew it instinctually. Will Wanton's animal sense made his dreams seem so real, as if he could feel the flames of fire hidden by the plumes of smoke in the air. In the distance, Will could see silhouettes of fighting soldiers outlined by the tense flames of a powerful fire. Friendly soldiers retreated toward the town as the enemy advanced. One friendly soldier was hit by shrapnel in the back as another, shot in the leg, fell to the ground. Still another friendly soldier entered an abandoned warehouse on the edge of town. Somehow, Will felt himself moving away from the action. He felt a connection, a need to know what was about to happen. He looked over the war-torn village—to see only one house standing with a single light glowing in the window. Everything else was shrouded in darkness. Will stepped toward the action and found himself on the stage of a colored-only club. Some people in the club danced to the music of the band. Others sat at tables playing cards, dominoes, and drinking in the lively atmosphere.

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With a final riff, Will slung his guitar over his back and jumped offstage. Hands reached out as people patted him on the back. He made his way through the crowd, grinning as people complimented him and the band on their last set of the night. In the corner of the room, beneath the exit sign, stood a beautiful, light-skinned girl with brown hair and wide brown eyes. Her generous lips curved into a smile as their eyes met. Will slowly moved toward her but was stopped by a young man organizing an equal rights rally the next day. The young man asked Will if he and the band could perform at the rally. Torn by passion, Will halfheartedly listened to the man while trying to keep track of the girl. In an act of desperation to get away, he agreed to sing at the rally. However, when he looked back toward the exit sign, the girl was gone. Will made his way to the exit and opened the door to see if the girl was in the alley way. Stepping into the cold, deserted alley, which was usually filled with club patrons, the door swung shut behind him. The alley was dim, except for the green light flickering above the dangling sign: Club 6661. Now in the middle of the desolate alley, Will was frightened but tried to maintain his cool, thinking his friends were playing a practical joke. Walking back to the door, Will knocked a couple of times. "Come on, man, whoever is holding the door, let it go. All right? This is very funny! Let me in." Something moved behind him. He turned and saw a dark silhouette running toward the opposite end of the alley. Unable to resist, he ran after it. The distance between Will, the man, and the club seemed to

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get longer and longer. Following the silhouette, Will ran out into an empty, rain-slicked street. A stoplight flickered red, casting light on the figure that stood in the center of the intersection. The soldier stood holding his rifle, looking and listening for the enemy as blood streamed down his face. As Will approached, he recognized the man's face. "Dad?" Will cried in horror. "Dad!"