

Excerpt from: *Wake, child*

By Dave Harris

CHARACTER: DAWN, Black woman, late 40's

TIME: Always.

DAWN

Your honor, let me tell you something about my son.
I sent him to private school in the sixth grade.
Philly school system would've killed him.
I sent him unprepared into a sea of something he never knew.
Private school out in the suburbs. No one else there that looked like him.
Type of school that you wear a coat and tie to. All boys.
Children of doctors and politicians and Wall Street managers.

You know what I would do for him each morning?
I would give him a funny tie to wear to school.
He didn't know how to tie a tie so I did it for him, everyday.
He had a tie that was covered in footballs.
He had a tie that had Snoopy from Charlie Brown.
He had a tie that was shaped like a music note.

I gave him the ties so that he would be known for it.
He'd be known as the funny tie kid instead of just the Black kid.
They weren't ever gonna see him as the smart kid. Or the charming kid.
Or the boy that I know my son is. He was gonna be the angry Black kid.

He never said the phrase I love you until his high school graduation.
He said olive juice for a while. Then he said I glove moose.
That doesn't even make sense.
You don't know what love is until you're a mother. That's the truth.

Once, this kid Sayeed, trifling little boy, smacked David with a stick.
He came inside crying. I looked at him; the wound wasn't too bad.
But he just didn't understand how someone here would want to hurt someone else.
Physically.

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So I said boy if you don't get your ass out there and show that boy that you are
Mrs. Dawn's son then Imma do you worse than he did.
So David went back outside. And the minute Sayeed saw him, he ran.
And David chased him down and beat him bloody.

Everything that happens to you as a child is the most important thing that has ever
happened. And that boy was as safe as he could be in my arms.
The one thing we both got in common: you put life in front of us

and we know how to deal with it.

That boy got a country's worth of weight on him.
We all do, but now I see it. I see it and he's too old for me to raise him anymore.
But I'm still here. I'm still here.
What a miracle it is to be Black and still alive.

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What does all this mean?

Well, it's simple really.
I'm a Christian woman.
I believe in God because, well, we are the same.
I am a parent, just like God.
I've been here as long as God.
Just this morning, 73 different things tried to kill me and they all have failed.
I am just as immortal as the God you gave me.

If you were to wake up with skin like this, like ours, I'll tell you what would happen.
Your bones would shatter from the weight.
Your nerves would turn to acid.
You'd look in the mirror and scream.
And, we know this from old mythology, you do not look God in the eye
and walk away unscathed.

Which brings me to my final point.
And, see this is the part I really need you to understand.

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I will choke the life out of Jesus if he looks at my son the wrong way.
I will strangle God until he takes it all back.
You. You do not speak to me with your head unbowed.
I am a mother. What the hell are you?