

THE LIFE OF BOY

Short Story

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - 1957

A small, poor southern tenant shack. Dimly lit by a single ceiling bulb. An old potbelly stove glows in the corner. Through a window with ragged curtains, darkness outside.

ARRON (16), a young black boy with close-cropped hair, lies on a thick old quilt on the wooden floor. Dressed in jeans and t-shirt, barefoot.

JOYCE (15), Stony's aunt, lies in another corner on an old quilted blanket with a very young baby sleeping beside her. She wears an old colorful dress, barefoot.

ESTER (56), Stony's grandmother, sits on an old couch reading the Bible. Her salt-and-pepper hair has been straightened with a hot comb. She wears an old colorful dress.

STONY (5), a young black boy in a white t-shirt and white underwear briefs, sits next to Ester, listening intently.

ESTER

(reading the Bible)

And they brought into him also
infants, that he would touch them;
but when his disciples saw it, they
rebuked them. But Jesus called them
into him and said, suffer little
children to come unto me and forbid
them not; for such is the kingdom of
God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever
should not receive the kingdom of God
as a little child shall no wise enter
therein.

Ester lays the Bible beside her on the couch.

ESTER (CONT'D)

Ooo um gittin so sleepy.

STONY

Momma kin you tell me da story bout
Grey Simon?

ESTER

Yeah baby, take da bible n put it on
da dresser n brang me dat big comb

layin on da dresser, n I a tell you
dat story.

STONY

Ok momma.

Stony picks up the Bible.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stony puts the Bible on the dresser and grabs the comb.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ester nods off to sleep.

ESTER

(yells to Stony)

Brang da jar of hair grease, da Sufa
8.

STONY (O.S.)

Ok.

Stony returns with the grease and comb.

ESTER

Scratch my head n grease it fa me n
umma tell you bout Grey Simon.

STONY

Ok.

Stony stands on the couch, sets the grease on top, and starts
parting and greasing his grandmother's hair.

ESTER

Ooo, it itches right dare, is dare
dander dare?

STONY

Yes, mam a lot.

ESTER

I thought so, it sho itches.

Stony continues to comb and scratch Ester's hair.

ESTER (CONT'D)

Umm dat feels good.

(pause)

Ok, once upon a time dare was a
little boy name Grey Simon, he lived
wit his momma.

STONY

Jest him n his moma?

ESTER

Uh huh.

STONY

How ol was he?

ESTER

(matter of factly)

He was bout yo age.

Stony just shakes his head yes, listens intently.

INT. GREY SIMON'S HOUSE - DOORWAY - DAY - 1950s (FLASHBACK)

GREY SIMON'S MOTHER, an older heavy-set black woman with a
bright face, stands at the door. She wears a small flowerful hat
cocked to the side and a colorful dress.

GREY SIMON, a poor little black boy in overalls and a grey
short-sleeved shirt, stands with his back to us.

ESTER (V.O.)

His mother said, I have to go to town
Grey Simon, to git some grocy. I want
you ta stay home n watch the house
like a big boy fa me, till I git
back. I a brang you somtin sweet n a
play pretty when I come back.

GREY SIMON

Ok momma.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Grey Simon's mother walks down the road until she's out of
sight. Shot on the back of Grey Simon's head watching her go.

ESTER (V.O.)

Grey Simon waited until his mother
was way down da road, den Grey Simon
loved ta fish.

EXT. GREY SIMON'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Grey Simon, with a wide-eyed look on his face, grabs his fishing
hat and runs out. He looks under the porch and gets his old
fishing pole with a can of bait.

GREY SIMON
I wont stay but a little while, I a
be back fo momma git back home.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stony looks at Ester wide-eyed.

EXT. CREEK/FISHING LAKE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Grey Simon walks down by the fishing lake.

ESTER (V.O.)
Grey Simon said, I a catch me some
fish n hurry back.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

STONY
(to Ester)
His mom agon see da fish when he git
back.

ESTER
I guess he wadnt thankin bout dat.

EXT. CREEK - UNDER TREE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ESTER (V.O.)
When Grey Simon got down by da creek,
he found dat big ol tree dat he like
ta sit under n fish. Be fo he knowed
it Grey Simon had fell asleep.

Grey Simon sleeps under the tree.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stony's eyes go wide.

EXT. CREEK - UNDER TREE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Grey Simon wakes up.

DEEP GROSSY VOICE (O.S.)
Bait yo hook Simon!

Grey Simon looks all around but doesn't see anyone.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stony's face shows a wide-eyed look.

EXT. CREEK - UNDER TREE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

DEEP GROSSY VOICE (O.S.)
Bait yo hook Simon, bait yo hook
Simon, bait yo hook Simon, mamma's
callin Grey Simon.

ESTER (V.O.)
Grey Simon looked all around but
still didn't see nobody, he was sced
so he baited his hook.

Grey Simon, scared, baits his hook.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stony's face, wide-eyed.

EXT. CREEK - UNDER TREE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

DEEP GROSSY VOICE (O.S.)
Cast right in Simon, cast right in
Simon, cast right in Simon, momma's
callin Grey Simon.

Grey Simon casts his line in the water.

ESTER (V.O.)
Grey Simon was sced even mo, he cast
his lin in da water.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The scared look on Stony's face.

EXT. CREEK - UNDER TREE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

DEEP GROSSY VOICE (O.S.)
Pull me in Simon, pull me in Simon,
pull me in Simon, mamma's callin Grey
Simon.

Grey Simon pulls his line in, struggling.

DEEP GROSSY VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pull me harder Simon, pull me harder
Simon, pull me harder Simon, mamma's
callin Grey Simon.

Grey Simon pulls harder.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stony's scared face.

EXT. CREEK - UNDER TREE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ESTER (V.O.)
So Grey Simon pulled harder, but when
he did the line snapped but the big
ol fish still flew out of the water
and hit dat big ol tree behin Grey
Simon. When dat fish hit dat big ol
tree dat big tree flew open n da fish
wen inside dat tree.

The line snaps. A big fish flies out and hits the tree. The tree
opens up and the fish goes inside.

DEEP GROSSY VOICE
Walk right in Simon, walk right in
Simon, walk right in Simon, mamma's
callin Grey Simon.

Grey Simon walks inside the tree. The big tree closes up with
Grey Simon inside.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stony's scared face.

INT. GREY SIMON'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Grey Simon's mother comes in the door.

GREY SIMON'S MOTHER

Grey Simon!

No answer. She looks in all the rooms, goes outside and looks around the house. Doesn't see Grey Simon. She starts to get worried.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Grey Simon's mother talks to the MAN NEXT DOOR and other neighbors.

MAN NEXT DOOR

I saw Grey Simon goin dine da road
wit his fishin pole.

GREY SIMON'S MOTHER

I bet he went down by da creek ta
fish, cause he loves to fish.

MAN NEXT DOOR

We a go wit chu n help you fin em.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Everyone walks down near the fishing creek.

ESTER (V.O.)

Dey looked all arine but dey didn't
see Grey Simon nowhere. Dey saw his
ol hat n his fishin pole wit da lin
broke, but no Grey Simon.

They find his hat and broken fishing pole. Grey Simon's mother breaks down and starts crying.

GREY SIMON'S MOTHER

Oh my baby done drowned!

She cries and cries. Some of the men jump in the water looking for him. They can't find him. They walk all around the woods looking for him. He's nowhere to be found.

EXT. GREY SIMON'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAYS LATER

ESTER (V.O.)

Grey Simon's mother sat on the porch
every day cryin waitin fa Grey Simon
to come home.

Grey Simon's mother sits on the porch, crying, waiting.

INT. TENANT SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

STONY
(wide eyes)
He neva came home?

ESTER
No, dey kept goin dine by da creek
and lookin in da wood but dey neva
found him to dis day.

STONY
I a neva do dat.

ESTER
I know you wont baby, n dats what da
bible says, obey yo mothe n father,
dat yo days maybe longer in da lord.

Arron gets up and puts some wood in the stove.

ARRON
Dats you Stony.

STONY
(crying)
Uh uh.

ESTER
I know you wont baby. Arron stop
teasin him. Stony go git ready fa
bed.

STONY
Ok mama.

Stony takes the comb and hair grease into the bedroom.

Joyce, with baby, goes back to her room.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stony lies in bed. Ester sits on the bed next to him.

STONY
Mama um sced.

ESTER

Sced bout what baby?

STONY

Kenny, bought his cousin, Teddy, ova his house da otha day ta play, n he had both.

ESTER

Kenny dat live next do?

STONY

Uh huh.

ESTER

Kenny had both what?

STONY

No, Teddy had both.

ESTER

Teddy had both what?

STONY

He had a tooka wit a little tinka inside.

ESTER

Both a tooka n tinka, what chu talkin bout?

STONY

He pulled his pants down rine you?

STONY

Uh huh, he said he wanted ta show us somthin, n he showed us dat.

ESTER

Dat boy shouldn't be takin his clothes off around yall in da first place, um a talk to Mr. Bo bout his nephew, he too big ta be round yall anyway. Aint he in da 6th grade?

STONY

I thank so.

ESTER

Yeah um a tal ta Mr. Bo bout dat, but
you aint got ta be sced bout baby,
dats da way some people bon, dats da
way god made em.

STONY

Mama.

ESTER

What baby?

STONY

Um still sced.

ESTER

Sced bout what now?

STONY

Um sced I got ta die.

ESTER

You don't have ta be sced bout dat
baby, da bible says, some people gon
be living on da day a judgement.

STONY

Yes mam.

ESTER

Now say you prayers n go ta sleep.

STONY

Yes mam. Now lay me down ta sleep I
pray da lord my soul ta keep, if I
die befo I wake I pray da lord my
soul ta take.

Ester kisses the boy on the forehead and walks out of the room.

Stony turns over and goes to sleep.

DREAM SEQUENCE - STONY'S NIGHTMARE

Dreams about Grey Simon and the boy with both genitals.

Stony wakes briefly, moves the curtain back and looks out the
window. Turns back over and goes to sleep.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Sun is shining through the window.

Stony looks under the sheets to see if he peed in the bed. He sits on the side of the bed and smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Ester is in the kitchen cooking eggs, sausage and biscuits.

FADE OUT.

THE END