

ZANDER (WORKING TITLE)

by

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Draft #9
11/25/13

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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A typical, blue collar homestead. Eggs and toast sit on the table. At one end, POPS (68) an older black man sits in glasses and a wife beater, reading the newspaper. JEREMY RILEY (40) his son sits at the other end in an office shirt, eating from his plate.

Several black & white and color photos hang from the kitchen walls, showing images of the Greensboro sit-ins, proud black men marching down Birmingham, Martin Luther King, Jr., baby photos, etc.

MARCUS RILEY (17) an athletically built black teen, enters the kitchen with a backpack on his shoulder. He grabs a fork and starts to scarf eggs off one of the plates.

POPS

Slow down, boy. You're gonna choke on those eggs.

MARCUS

Can't help it, Pops. I've gotta carpool Ron and Trevor today.

POPS

(grunts)

Aren't those a couple of white boys? When I was your age, I'd never be able to--

JEREMY

C'mon, Dad. Things are different nowadays. It's more accepting out there.

MARCUS

(to Pops)

Yeah, y'know, it's cool.

Pops buries himself back into his paper as Marcus gives a one armed hug to both him and Jeremy, before leaving the kitchen.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL/TRACK FIELD - DAY

A group of twenty students in t-shirts and gym shorts perform arm and leg stretches alongside the pavement track. CONVERSATION ensues.

Marcus stretches with TREVOR DANIELS (17) and RON PRESTWOOD (17), both white with the same build as Marcus.

Ron and Trevor inaudibly chat engaged in conversation. Marcus listens more or less, giving limited attention.

He turns his head to see ZANDER (15) finishing a run and then stretching alone by a pair of bleachers. He continues to nod to Ron, before ultimately walking away.

Marcus approaches Zander, who turns his head but nevertheless continues to stretch.

MARCUS

You're a little small for a runner.
Sophomore?

ZANDER

Freshman. I take it you're a
junior.

MARCUS

Yeah. The name's Marcus.

He holds his hand out for Zander, who shakes it mid stretch.

ZANDER

Zander.

Marcus notices Zander's shaved, smooth leg against the track.

MARCUS

Goddamn, Zander, those legs are
silky smooth. What's the deal?

ZANDER

Swim team. Gotta keep 'em shaved.

MARCUS

Huh, I thought the swim team don't
start for another two months--

ZANDER

I still do laps at the Y, y'know.
Warm up for the season.

MARCUS

Gotcha.

A blow of a WHISTLE alerts the twenty students, as they begin to jog at varying moments on the track.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Well, let's see if those smooth
legs can catch up with this--

Before Marcus can finish his sentence, Zander speeds off in front of him. Caught off guard, Marcus tries to catch up.

Both boys sprint furiously across the track, with Zander leading the way by several feet. Ron and Trevor stand to the side of the track and watch this unfold with dissatisfaction.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL/LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The sounds of a SHOWER FAUCET and CHATTERING fill the room, as Zander, still drenched in his shorts and t-shirt, fiddles through his locker as other boys undress around him.

Marcus walks out of the shower across the locker room, hair drenched and wrapped in a towel.

MARCUS

Yo, Silky Smooth. Rematch next week, alright? You got damn lucky today.

Zander smiles back, but nods, keeping his nervous composure.

Marcus walks over to his locker, a good distance from Zander.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You've been in here a pretty long time, man. You gonna take a shower?

ZANDER

I am. I'm just checking to make sure I have everything.

Marcus looks at Zander with a quizzically humored grin.

MARCUS

Wait, you're not, y'know, insecure about--

ZANDER

No, no, hell no.

MARCUS

I'm just sayin', a lot of guys get intimidated when I let the Black Panther out of its cage.

Zander chuckles, as Marcus finishes getting dressed.

Marcus waves to Zander and walks off with his backpack, soon joined by Ron and Trevor, as Zander waves them off. A pair of keys sit by Marcus' locker door.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL/LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The last of the boys walks off with his backpack, leaving Zander the only one in the locker room. SILENCE.

He gives a few glances around to verify his solitude. He slides off his shirt, then, with his eyes still wearily darting around the room, slides off his sweat shorts.

The sweat shorts hit the floor, revealing Zander in nothing but a pair of blue silk panties. Nothing risqué, but nevertheless feminine. Zander takes a deep breath and kicks off his shoes.

Within that moment, Marcus returns around the corner, inspecting the floor. He grabs the keys around his locker and looks up at Zander, who stands frozen and caught off guard.

MARCUS
(covering his eyes)
Whoa, what the fuck?

ZANDER
Marcus, wait a minute - I can--

MARCUS
(averting his eyes)
Oh wow, um...I'm just gonna--

Marcus runs out of the locker room, keeping his eye contact away from Zander's, who stands sheepishly at his locker. He slams the locker door with embarrassed frustration.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL/LUNCHROOM - DAY

Marcus, a lunch tray in front of him, sits by Trevor and Ron. LUNCHROOM AMBIANCE accompanies them.

RON
Panties? Like, girl panties?

MARCUS
Exactly. I turned around and BAM - just right there.

TREVOR
Sounds fruity to me, Marcus.

MARCUS
(with a laugh)
It's fuckin' bizarre, I'll say that.

TREVOR

Maybe he's a fag. You never know.

RON

There's no "maybe" to it. This sounds 100 percent homo.

MARCUS

I just-I don't know. He seems like a cool dude and all, but this is...I don't know what this is.

A RINGTONE catches his attention, as he pulls out his phone.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(reading the phone)

Shit, I gotta bounce. I'll catch you guys later.

Marcus picks up his lunch tray and walks off from the table.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL/TRACK FIELD - DAY

Zander, gym bag in hand and dressed in his morning clothes, leaves school, cutting across the field to get home.

Trevor and Ron sit, waiting, on the bleachers. Zander notices them, picking up the pace. They stand.

TREVOR

Hey, Ron, look who it is.

The boys make their to the track, closing the gap between them and Zander. They stand on either side of him.

ZANDER

(avoiding them)

What do you guys want?

RON

We just wanna talk, that's all. Just a little conversation.

ZANDER

Look, guys, I need to get home--

RON

Don't worry. This won't take long.

Zander tries to push his way past, but Ron shoves him back. Zander goes for him, but Ron swiftly punches him in the stomach. Zander hunches over in pain, dropping his gym bag. Trevor grabs him from behind while Ron digs through his bag.

He pulls out a vial of purple nail polish and mockingly shakes it in front of Zander.

RON (CONT'D)

What the fuck is this? What are you, a five year old girl?

ZANDER

I'd rather look like one than be hung like one.

Ron decks Zander. A fierce punch, leaving a trail of blood down his nose. Ron unscrews the nail polish, stirring it.

Trevor tightens up on Zander as Ron begins to write something in nail polish on his face. Zander struggles to break free.

MEANWHILE: Marcus leaves school through the same door as Zander. Music blasts from his headphones. Gym bag and water bottle in hand, he makes his way to the track. He notices his friends. Then Zander. He drops everything, running.

MARCUS

Hey! Hey! The fuck are you doing?

RON

Just making him look pretty. Y'know, sending a message.

Marcus pulls Ron around to face him.

MARCUS

C'mon, man, are you listening to yourself?

RON

You said it yourself, this is fucking weird.

MARCUS

That's not what I meant.

RON

Look, I'm doing you a favor. Just back off.

Ron gives Marcus a slight shove, turning back to face Zander. Marcus comes back, grabbing Ron's shoulder in protest, but Ron comes around fast at Marcus with a swing. Marcus dodges and swiftly lands Ron in the jaw with a punch. Ron collapses.

No one moves.

Ron feels his jaw, then looks back up at Marcus, still in fighting stance. He considers his next move intently.

He gets up, still adjusting his jaw, then turns to Trevor.

RON (CONT'D)
Come on, Trevor. Let's leave these
two faggots by themselves.

Trevor nods, dropping Zander on the ground. Ron holds Marcus' gaze as he backs off, finally breaking as he joins Trevor, rounding the corner.

Marcus turns back to Zander. He returns to his stuff, grabbing the water bottle and dumping out ice. He sits beside Zander, putting the ice to his nose. Zander pulls away.

MARCUS
I didn't mean for any of that to
happen. Here.

He hands Zander the ice. Zander takes it hesitantly and holds it up to his nose.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
So, I gotta ask. Why do you do it?
The panties, the polish, just
everything - why?

Zander removes the ice from his face and looks at Marcus.

ZANDER
It makes me feel like myself.

Marcus runs this through his head, taking in Zander's words. Zander starts gathering his things as they both rise.

ZANDER (CONT'D)
They're not gonna forget this.

MARCUS
Whatever. I'd like to think sixty
years ago, you would have done the
same for me.

Zander ponders this, shouldering his gym bag.

ZANDER
I probably wouldn't.

Then he smiles, joking. Marcus shakes his head, laughing.

CUT TO BLACK.