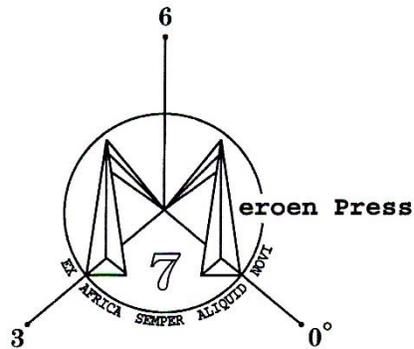


William Hobbs

NORTH OF THE GROVE

By William Hobbs

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Dedication:

This is to my wife Dr. Tameka Bradley Hobbs, my co-partner in the grind to save minds, my brother, Bryan DeWayne Hobbs, now missing for 20 years and other young brothers struggling to find their way. Too human not to feel the loneliness, yet too scared to trust anyone that does come along. Everyone seems to wait for tragic circumstances to notice you, to categorize and condemn you for their own selfish purposes. You find yourself wanting to live and prosper not because it is your right to, but for the sweet and hateful purpose of embarrassing a world that minimized you at birth. Your existence is worth more than being fueled off such rage though. I know what's up. I am listening.

Chapter 1 - Ulterior



Howard Capelton

Professor Lovelett, I'm going to meet this kid in a week and my stomach is in knots! I feel so ashamed. People like that can tell when you're uncomfortable.

August 15



Victor Lovelett

People like that? Like what?

August 15

North of the Grove



Howard Capelton

You know, the lower class people that need this program. The violent, loud kind that are even worse when you're black because they think all black people should be the way they are.

August 15



Victor Lovelett

Which is?

August 15



Howard Capelton

Raw. Ugly. Out-of-control.

August 17

William Hobbs



Victor Lovelett

Lol.

August 18



Howard Capelton

I just want this mentoring thing to work so I can stand myself. If I can do that, I can calm down and she'll stop asking me so many questions. Then, this marriage and having kids "thing" can work out. I'm afraid of what will happen if this doesn't work. I've tried everything else.

August 18



Victor Lovelett

This should put you in the right direction. That 5000 Role Models group you joined was a good move. More black professionals need to reach back and help kids. So they hooked you up to volunteer with this in-home counseling service?

August 19



Howard Capelton

Yes. An invite came through my company email out of nowhere about the induction process. I had never heard of the organization before. You know I don't bother with all of that fraternity, organization stuff. I just keep to myself. Tiff said it would be good for me though so I went and they put me to work with this counseling situation fast! Lol. She thinks I'm doing this counseling just to get used to being around kids since she wants to get pregnant. Well, in a way I am.

August 19

William Hobbs



Victor Lovelett

But?

August 21



Howard Capelton

More than anything, I have to do this to keep from jumping off of an overpass face-first.

August 21



Victor Lovelett

How long have you all been married?

August 21

North of the Grove



Howard Capelton

Six years.

August 21



Victor Lovelett

I must say that a lot of my own recklessness slowed down after I had my first child. The key to the Africanized community mindset we used to discuss in class is getting beyond European selfishness and self-preservation to recognize how others need and value you. They may, at times, value you more than you value yourself.

August 22



Howard Capelton

Thank you for keeping my secret. I know you told me to stop thanking you, but when I typed the words thank you and saw them on the screen, it became easier for me to breathe. I think if this all works out with this kid, it won't sit on my shoulders and pick at my brain so much and I'll be able to get on with my life.

August 22



Victor Lovelett

I understand. I have an issue with discussing such sensitive information over Facebook. It was the one concern I had with "friending" you, wondering if after all this time, you were still struggling with this and would bring it up in this forum. Our discussion in my office when you were here at FAMU is one thing. Like you, I'm trying to be more community-oriented and help others beyond lectures, but I don't believe these Facebook Instant messages back and forth just disappear into thin air. You shouldn't either. Keep me posted on your meeting with the boy. Prepare for struggle, without it, there is no

North of the Grove

progress. It might also do you some good to write a journal for yourself about this mentoring experience.

August 22



Sharia Troy



David Troy

August 24, 2009

Journal:

I was told it would be good for me to write about my mentoring experience. Honestly, I believe I'm writing for you, Tiffany. If this mentoring with Sunrise Family Services doesn't work out and you learn more about me than I was ready to say, at the very least, this will give you more of the explanation I won't be around to give you. I scanned their pics. This is the mother, Sharia and her son, David. I doubt you'll ever meet them. This is how my initial meeting went.

I drove back to the old neighborhood in West Grove for the women's shelter. The presence of my people is still there. The vacant lots and boarded up windows cannot erase it. The spirit dances off the Africanized murals up and down Grand Ave. When the heat from the street gets caught in the breeze, in spite of the exhaust from passing cars, I still get a hint of it in the scent of cocoa buttered black skin, old houses and the leaves of tired palm and oak trees. You felt in the black restaurants, churches, dry cleaners, movie theatres next door or across the street from each other. We were doing it and it was even

stronger with my dad's generation, when our Carver High School taught every black child in Miami. We had our own like the Cubans.

Ms. Cheney, the shelter's administrator, met me out front among the Pandora vines crawling out of control along the fence. Cheney, a hard-looking Jamaican lady, took me inside and introduced me to Sharia and David. I went over the specifics of Sunrise Family Services, which included a 24 hour intervention, seven days a week. I informed David and Sharia that there would be at least two face-to-face sessions every week. Cheney excused herself when an argument broke out in the main hall. In Cheney's absence, I went over how I would run mandatory weekly case management, which included school visits, contact with service providers and curfew checks. I stressed to Sharia and David the importance of cooperating with facilitating SFS sessions. Sharia's hair was in complete disarray. She sat in her chair laying her head in her hands and nodding at my questions. He sucked on a lollipop and sat in a chair pushed back away from us in the room. He kept his thick, dry arms folded and his eyes on his untied sneakers. Cheney returned. I asked to speak to Sharia and Cheney in private. He got out of his chair and proceeded to the door before I finished asking the question. Sharia pounded her thigh and asked David if anybody had informed him to move yet. He sucked his teeth and rolled his eyes. Sharia leaned forward in her chair in order to close the distance between them and hissed at him to give her "reason to"; that she wished he "would" (presumably give her a reason to hit David)... I thought she was going to lay him out. He remained still. Sharia warned him that if he made another move she would "stomp a hole" in him and "watch it dry." I told Sharia it was okay for him to go. David dragged his feet out of the room.

I addressed issues brought on by David witnessing Sharia's sexual assault due to a home break-in at the hands of two local males back in her hometown of Richmond, Virginia. I spoke of the file's saying he distrusted older men, teenage boys and authority figures. I spoke about reports of his hyperactivity and sudden rash of violent outbursts since the assault. Sharia huffed and commented that I "looked real bookish" and wondered if I could "just talk" him into not getting her kicked out of the shelter. I asked what she was talking about. Sharia explained that due to his fighting with the children at the afterschool program he attended, she and David were "liable to be put out." I looked at her in some kind of way I can't explain. I just remember thinking, "is that all you want to say?" Sharia apologized and said she knows David is just "acting out of what he might have saw" in regards to the assault. Sharia, Cheney and I agreed that most of his anger is from his inability to defend her. Sharia seemed to soften, somewhat. We talked of his violent outbursts in school, where he responded to playful behavior from other fourth graders with flurries of punches, kicks and then spitting, once the victim was on the ground.

I recalled reading in the case file of Sharia's attacker's spitting on David during her assault. I observed his recent schoolwork (he struggles in school and sucks in math). I asked Sharia if it was alright for me to talk with him alone for a while. Sharia got up and before walking out of the door, mentioned that he likes basketball. Then, I'm alone with him in a separate room, he appeared agitated and demanded I leave the door open.

I opened door and asked David how old he was. He said nine. I told him that I understand why he fights with classmates. I admitted that kids do annoying things. I admitted I had wanted to beat up a few people when I was a child, but refrained because it was not worth

the trouble. He quickly countered by insisting grown-ups “do stupid junk, too.” I asked if he meant how adults may stick up for people that annoy him. He remained silent. I explained that fighting is understandable in the right circumstances, but that swarming someone with kicks and punches to someone who did a little teasing, was rather excessive. I emphasized that such force makes people take the other person’s side. I suggested he refrain from spitting on people because that was beneath the honor of a true warrior. David attempted to ask something, but I could not understand his words. I suggested he either throw out the lollipop or chew it up so his words would be understood.

David asked what the word honor meant. I stated that honor was a discussion for the future, but he could consider improving his fighting skills by learning karate or boxing (which would in turn stress discipline and self-restraint from spitting on people). He slowly chewed the lollipop, sat up and began to offer more eye contact. I re-emphasized that learning karate or boxing is about self-defense, not becoming a bully. I stood up and informed him that I would see him the next day and wanted to hear that he was doing better in school and with his mother. I attempted to pat him on the shoulder. He stepped back out of reach and told me I really did not need to “be doing all that” (physical contact). I agreed, but accidentally extended out my arm in order to shake his hand. David scratched his head and looked away as I withdrew my hand. I thanked him for his time and left.



Howard Capelton

I went on my lunch break to see him. The shelter was so dark! The mother is a drunk for sure. She was beaten and gang raped by her drug dealer ex-boyfriend's rivals. The boy's name is David and he saw way too much of what they did to her. His file says he was teased by others about what happened to his mother and became more violent. Sometimes he was violent to himself. Like licking 9 volt batteries for the sting, rubbing erasers into his arm for the burn, beating his head on his desk at school.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

You're not supposed to be telling me his actual name. That's confidential. I don't trust Facebook instant messaging, Howard.

August 24

North of the Grove



Howard Capelton

Yeah, you're right. I'm messing up everything already.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

Watch him closely around sharp objects. He could be working his way to cutting.

August 24



Howard Capelton

It's like he hates himself for not being able to save her. He was only eight at the time and is ashamed that he could not fend off armed, grown men for his mother.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

It's amazing what children expect they should know and do at such an early age.

August 24



Howard Capelton

Thanks. I know what you mean. He seems to only half-way care what she says. Typical kid, I guess. His clothes smelled bad. His breath smelled worse. I don't even know how I can get to that subject with him. "Hello. Boy, are you brushing your teeth?" And he has this look in his eye. It's like he's not impressed or trusting of me as an adult. He told me adults do things just like kids.

August 24

North of the Grove



Victor Lovelett

Adults have let him down.

August 24



Howard Capelton

And I won't? He already sees me as bookish, the mother, too.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

Bookish, meaning?

August 24

William Hobbs



Howard Capelton

As in, not being a man. She actually said I was bookish-looking.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

There is a certain kind of masculinity they've seen around them, a narrow, specific type that has garnered respect thus far. They just need to see that black men have other ways to carry themselves and still get things done. They need to see your style of masculinity navigate through situations. It will broaden their world.

August 24

North of the Grove



Howard Capelton

You make this sound easy.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

It isn't. No struggle, no progress.

August 24



Howard Capelton

I even suggested he try boxing or karate. Lol. I came up with that off the top of my head to get his attention. Self-defense initiatives aren't even in the program's budget. We have no community connections to help get him into any kind of class, not to mention waivers

William Hobbs

to consider in case of injuries. He's already violent. He could injure someone and it would be my fault.

August 24



Victor Lovelett

Okay, insurance man. Lol

August 24



Howard Capelton

Yeah, I gotta get back to work anyway. I'm in over my head promising things I can't deliver in order to connect with him. I'm already at a loss. I shouldn't have put that boxing stuff in the report. I don't know what I'll do if they make a big deal out of it.

August 24

North of the Grove



Victor Lovelett

You'll do the work. You'll explain what needs explaining. Some things belong on record and some don't. It's funny how what doesn't belong on record is what's needed most these days. Just do the work, which is figuring out what's for the records and what isn't and be there for him. That's all you can do.

August 24

August 24

Tiff:

I know you have your counseling session after work. Just heard of some kind of drug-related shooting in that area where you said the boy lives. Be careful while you're out saving the world. Text me back on what you want for dinner.

1:34p.m.

He does live out there. I'll be alright.

1:51 p.m.

Tiff:

My hero ;)

2:03 p.m.

That's how I roll. I want some salt fish and dumplings. And bacon.

2:10 p.m.

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August 24, 2009

Journal:

I rode by the old house in West Grove (I refuse to call it Village West). I had stayed up all night thinking about the grown folks' parties ma and dad threw in the living room. I thought about my old room and the plastic covering nailed onto the green bean-colored carpet through the hall. The new, periwinkle paint job helped the house, gave it new life under power lines that still hung with more slack than they did on Grand Ave. An older man walked out if it like it's just the house he happened to buy, nothing special. Like he never could imagine that the bedroom to the right, by the shrubs, was locked up from the rest of the family and life the neighborhood once had. I went down the old store fronts on Grand Ave, counting black light posts without Coconut Grove historical banners, past vacant lots and abandoned apartment buildings, AC units poking out of their boarded up windows. Barely fifty yards down the road stood the Cheesecake Factory, Fat Tuesdays, Starbucks of the polished CocoWalk, where spoiled UM students, tourists in Croc sandals and the silicone and botoxed well-to-do shop and act like they can't look to see all this just beyond the Post Office. This, the city of Miami's, and our own, neglect. I always grit my teeth at the brutal contrast, even though I am glad I have the means to be among them.

I got to the Fairchild After-School Program to meet with Sharia and David. He kept eye contact minimal and remained beyond arm's reach as though fearful I would touch him. I suggested we go to a nearby basketball court and shoot hoops (Yes, I know... *me and basketball*). David winced and asked if I knew how to play basketball. It reminded me of

all I went through coming up over there. I had to say I could play well enough to beat him. I playfully jabbed him.

David went stiff. I instructed him to fix his shoes (he walks on the heels of his sneakers like they're sandals). He backed up before doing it as if to keep me from touching him. I walked him out to the car, opened the passenger door and presented him with a new basketball. He was hesitant about getting in until he saw the ball. He got into car and ran his fingers over the grain of the basketball. He commented on how new the ball smelled and then mentioned that he was going to lift weights so he could grip it with one hand one day. I joked that David needed to try weights "or something" since he was small for a fourth grader. He looked me like I was stupid.

I drove out of the parking lot and challenged David to a game. He reminded me that I had on "church shoes and pants." I asked if he was scared. He snickered and responded "nigga you silly." I hate to say it, but he speaks with this strength, this certainty, that annoys me. I informed David that there was no need to speak so disrespectfully just because he was going to lose. I made David buckle his seat belt and lock his door. I advised him to consider different ways of expressing himself so he wouldn't keep butting heads with Sharia and people at his school. I suggested he tell people when something's becoming a problem instead of holding it all in and exploding about it to the point that no one wants to hear his point of view. He remained silent and stared out of the window. I said the only way to know he has a good life is by the kind of relationships he has with people and relationships are handled by the way he communicates with others. Yes, I used something I heard you say.

David appeared to be stifling laughter. I asked what was so funny. He shook his head and informed me that I just said “relationship” and that “ladies and girls be saying that on TV.” I went to the court at Virrick Park (since I still suspect it’s toxic over there by Barnyard Community Center court where that Old Smokey incinerator used to be). Maybe that possible arsenic and cadmium in the soil’s why the people seemed drained. I think of the Gibson Health Initiative on Grand Ave. Maybe they know how people have suffered and felt justified in protecting them with the tinted and mirrored windows out front that tell me to mind my damn business with my own reflection. Family practitioner Pierre Blemur’s office is next door, with his MedPlus, Labcore and West Diagnostics drop boxes outside of his tinted doors. The Grove Pharmacy is still a short way down at the Douglas intersection. They all could be out on the main road to take care of the nosy, poor and aging that remain in West Grove. They could be there to fight what that incinerator, and a few other things, did to the whole community.

I say it’s the people in general. Their tired, unfamiliar faces barely acknowledged me as they sat on wooden benches at bus stops, hung out at corners or moved along shuttered, vacant storefronts. Shirtless black men in sagging Dickie work pants and old school Converse high tops rode bikes at a pace that said they really had no place to go. It all seemed to help the overcast sky that swallowed up the modern buildings and palm trees. I called myself warming up with lay ups off the backboard. It had me thinking of the old days, of being laughed at for getting my first major erection listening to a Jam Pony Express DJ’s mix of Too Live Crew records between pick-up games of football at Ambrister Park. That made me recall finding out, days after filming, that Michael

Jackson crept into town and filmed his *Thriller* video in our local cemetery, of imagining how it disturbed my little sister, even though I got a jheri curl like Jackson soon afterwards. That messy hairstyle blinded me so the day after Christmas when my Schwinn ten-speed was stolen off Plaza Street. I ran home in a dry-mouthed panic. Dad had warned me things were changing in the neighborhood, that I had better lock it up.

David informed me that other players on the court were looking at me “dressed like that.” I said I would still beat him anyway. I did fairly well, beating him by one point to a game of ten without busting a sweat. I tried to impress him with almost gripping the ball with one hand. David ignored it to practice his dribbling and asked if I had to dress “like that” to see him. I said not really. He asked why then did I dress like that when “all these other niggas down here be in flip flops and shorts.” I advised him to refer to people in a term other than the “n” word. I explained that I was Bahamian. I motioned to other players on the court, all whom were black, and stated that some could be Haitian, Jamaican or any of the other nationalities that are in the South Florida area. I stated that many black people from all over the world do not tolerate being called the “n” word. I offered that apples come in different forms; apple pie, apple juice, regular apples. David shot the basketball into hoop without touching the rim and stated: “they still apples.”

The funny thing is I feel the same way. The fools out there with stocking caps and gold teeth were the types that gave me way too many problems. Underwear poofed out over pants like pampers. You think I’m crazy but Chris Rock is a genius; there is a war between blacks and niggas. Yes, David, these are niggas, but I’m an adult so I have to lie. I have to be phony. And yet, even though I could be attacked and robbed by one of these

thug bums, I preferred them around over one of those neighborhood elders with a good memory and too many questions.

David asked what job I had besides “seeing him.” I said I was part of an organization called 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. His eyes grew large. He asked if I really had “5000 dudes rolling” with me. I said “in a way” and that these “5000 dudes” are all intelligent brothers looking to help guys like him stay out of trouble, that they got me into doing what I was doing with him. He asked how I made money. I explained that I worked with an insurance company. He asked what was insurance. I explained that insurance is an agreement that someone help people if something bad happens to them. He passed the ball and asked “how insurance do that?” I said with money mostly. He said he never had insurance. I told him that I was in his life now and that was a start. He asked if that meant that I had to give him money. I stated no, explaining that I meant insurance as in he had someone to help him out when things got crazy.

David tried a behind the back pass to me and said insurance “sound like people making sure each other okay, like maybe a gang.” I suggested he consider it as someone who has friends. He said Sharia “might could have insurance, but just don’t.” I asked why. He hesitated answering, stopped dribbling his ball for a moment and then asked if I “go give insurance money to people” when something happens. I stated that I determine how much money a family receives when, for instance, a family member is killed accidentally. He said that sounded like “too much” and asked if I “got rich” doing it. I shot the ball and assured him that I was far from being rich. He caught the ball and stated it did not look like I could “fight good,” that I looked like people who “always hopin’ somebody hold

‘em back and break it up.” I was smiling but I was pissed. I insisted that most people don’t truly want to fight even when they get into it with others. David shot the ball in and stated, with dead seriousness, “I do.”

I lied and assured David that I had a few scuffles “in my time.” David asked what “in my time” meant. I explained it meant when I was younger, as in a teenager. He asked how old I was and I responded age thirty-five. He appeared confused and stated that men who look my age and even “high school boys” fight “everybody, even little kids sometimes” in his hometown of Richmond, Virginia. I escorted him back to the car. He remained silent and held tight to his new basketball. He then began to observe the dashboard and what was in the back seat and the car stereo. I smiled. He nodded as if tolerating the gesture. This boy has a strength in him I despise and admire. Where would I be now if I had had it back at such an early age?

I caught David taking special notice of a karate school as I drove back to Fairchild After-School Program Center. I thanked him for his time and ended the session. He ran quickly into the building with the basketball, as though fearful that I would ask for it back. I saw him at a window, clutching the basketball, watching as if to make sure I was driving off.

August 26, 2009

Journal:

I drove to Fairchild After-School Program to meet with Sharia and David. I discovered he had punched a kid in the ear for asking where he lived. He felt the kid was making fun of him and Sharia having to live in the shelter and, for some time, in their car. He greeted me with arms defiantly crossed and quickly stated that he did not have the basketball I had given him. I reassured him that I would not ask for the basketball back. I asked if he had people give things to him and take them back. He looked off and shrugged his shoulders. I suggested he walk with me outside so we could talk. He trailed behind, holding his hand as if he had hurt it. I instructed him to stop walking on the backs of his shoes and asked exactly what the boy had said that was so troubling. He stated the boy, Effrom, was constantly “talkin’ mess about people anyway” so when he asked David where did he “stay” and continued to ask even after David said “around,” he thought peer was “tryin’” him. He yelled that everybody knows that when people say “around” it means “things ain’t good” and that people do not want to talk about it.

I suggested that David say “none of your business” instead of punching people. He said he “sort of” did when he informed Effrom to get out of his face. He said Effrom asked again, and said that he thought he had seen David playing basketball near a crack house. I reminded him that he was playing basketball at a nearby court – with me – yesterday, in fact. He stated that Effrom “got this smile all the time like something’s funny” and that he “just couldn’t take it no more.” He stated that he hates when people whose clothes are “all new and good” and smell “all flowery like yours (mine)” ask questions about his

“business.” He stated that they don’t care and “just ask to show you you ain’t like them.” I told him that the first part about having good clothes is taking care of them and that walking on the backs of his shoes only break down his shoes and make them look as crappy as those people want him to feel. I asked if he thought I asked him things to make him feel bad. He took out a box of Airhead candy, emptied half the box into his mouth and mumbled something under his breath. This boy eats way too much candy.

I asked David if he remembered that I could help him get boxing or karate lessons if he behaved. He suggested I say “stay out of trouble” because “behaved is for babies and dogs.” I informed him that I planned to take him out to play more basketball and do different things of that sort, but could not if he continued to get into trouble. David reminded me that I “can’t play none noway.” He then straightened his posture, swallowed the candy and said since Effrom did not try to hit him back, that it was not “really really” a fight, just “a hit.” He said he did “not even spit” on Effrom “either.” I agreed that there are rude people who don’t deserve what they have and who say and do harmful things. I re-emphasized that he must deal with people who “try” him in equal measure with what they do, so a possibly innocent question does not deserve such a “hit.” He asked what about adults that “try” him.

I asked David which adult does that to him. He grew tight-lipped and shook his box of candy. I informed him to let Sharia handle adults who “try” him. He gave a pained expression. I asked him to go up to a nearby window of the building and point out peer. He picked candy out of his teeth and walked to a window. He stood on the tip of his toes and pointed Effrom out. I asked if he noticed that Effrom has this funny-shaped head. He

North of the Grove

smirked and, between trying to keep his mouth closed and chewing more of the candy, agreed Effrom “kinda did” and that it was “all long in the back like the hooky part on a hammer.” I suggested that Effrom may not have been trying to be funny but, if Effrom ever did, that he keep that “hook hammer head of his” in mind and joke about it with peer. David said all he ever noticed was Effrom’s nice clothes and nasty smile. I walked him back into the building and complimented him on his honesty, to which he squirmed. I concluded the session. David did not watch from the window.

August 27

Tiff:
Enjoyed last night.
1:09 p.m.

Yeah. I know.
1:13 p.m

Tiff:
Jerk. ;)
1:30 p.m.

Tiff:
Did you enjoy last night?
1:45 p.m.

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Yeah. Why?

1:50 p.m.

Tiff:

Because I want to know if I make you happy. You never share how you feel about me. You never share how well I do what I do... why?

1:57 p.m.

Lol. Guess I focus mainly on you being happy and just leave it at that.

2:03 p.m.

Tiff:

Don't leave it. Ever. I'm trying to make it so that you can't even imagine leaving it.

2:05 p.m.



Howard Capelton

Would you believe I was out playing basketball with him? I figured I should try to get him going with some sport not as violent as karate and boxing. He's still sniffing me out, like they all do.

August 27



Victor Lovelett

Sniffing you out? I don't follow.

August 27



Howard Capelton

You know, sizing me up. Seeing if I'm soft. The other guys on the court were doing it, too. Like they wanted to see if I was jackable. Tiff doesn't even think I can handle this. I

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can tell from her “be careful” comments. I came home and she acted like I was some vet from Iraq.

August 27



Victor Lovelette

Jackable?

August 27



Howard Capelton

Jackable as in being jacked, as in getting robbed. We were in West Grove. I don't know what I was thinking.

August 27



Victor Lovelett

A little confidence and common sense on your part will go a long way. When I was in grad school at Northeastern in Chicago, I was walking down a street one night and picked up on a dude walking in my direction. I sensed his intentions and immediately straightened up my back. I made a point of looking him in his eyes as he came close enough to pass me. His mouth just dropped like he was tongue-tied, like he was used to people looking away to make it easy for him. He was bigger than me and the whole nine, but it didn't matter. I walked off in a cold sweat but with my wallet and life intact.

August 27



Howard Capelton

Imagine if I had gotten robbed or something by them in front of this boy. He called me a silly nigga because I had my clothes from work on. I don't even own a pair of basketball sneakers! I think I was talking too much. I told him it was important for him to work on his relationship with his mother. He basically called me soft for using the word relationship. He said only females use that word. He's still in elementary school and

North of the Grove

ready to tell me what macho's all about, at least in his world. He even said it didn't look like I know how to fight.

August 27



Victor Lovelett

You've got an interesting situation! Lol. I thought about you and this kid while I was in church the other day. "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

August 27



Howard Capelton

Let's hope so. The sad part is, I might have to get kind of street in my approach. The same 'hood crap I've hated all my life. It amazes me that I have to get a gold tooth in my mouth, and some record with the police before a kid will listen to me. I guess people,

William Hobbs

especially men, who know better than to get into all that street crap from the beginning can't reach kids.

August 27



Victor Lovelette

I've struggled with that one, too. At least you're young. All they see in me is some old man that wandered out of a barbershop talking like he hates his own grandchildren. I speak at some of the rougher high schools and kids are on their phones or have headphones in their ears the whole time. Such disrespect. I'm hoping to learn ways to reach them through your experiences as well.

August 27



Howard Capelton

I did get a little street with him, actually. It pissed me off that he said all that stuff so I used the aggression to beat him at the basketball game. All these dudes were around

North of the Grove

looking at me like I was an idiot. Some guy cracked a joke about me and the kid froze with the ball in his hands, waiting to see what I would do.

August 27



Victor Lovelett

What did you do?

August 27



Howard Capelton

I heard another guy with him say at least I was there with my kid and then he asked the guy cracking jokes if he knew where his little girl was. Everybody laughed except the guy cracking jokes who started cursing everybody out. He started getting loud so I finished up the game and left.

August 27



Victor Lovelett

Crisis averted.

August 27



Howard Capelton

Not really by anything I did. I don't know. I think he wanted to see me react to the guy, to confront him. I was afraid to get into any more enlightened talk of how to handle things with people so I acted like I didn't hear what was being said.

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Victor Lovelette

I thought you said you do neighborhood watch in your community? Lol

August 27



Howard Capelton

That's nothing. It's a gated community. Nothing really happens in gated communities. I jog with my cell phone. If kids are smoking or drinking by the playground or basketball court, if some couple's arguing too much by the lake, or somebody's by the clubhouse afterhours, I call security, period. I don't even break my stride. That's all I do, call while jogging. I only volunteered for that mess so these white folks out here can calm down and treat me like a neighbor instead of a suspect.

August 27



Victor Lovelett

Good luck with that. As far as merely talking theory about confrontations, being able to do that won't last for long. Eventually, he's going to want to know your perspective on how to handle direct confrontations.

August 27



Howard Capelton

He asked me about my job though. That was fun. I just can't let him and his environment rattle me. I just can't let that hood element in him annoy me to the point of forgetting he's just human.

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Victor Lovelett

Everybody in his environment, your old neighborhood, is human, Howard.

August 27



Howard Capelton

Yeah. When I saw him yesterday, he had punched this boy in the head for asking him where he lived! Actually, I think the boy was just trying to get to know him. I could tell his hand was hurting, but he kept his cool.

August 27



Victor Lovelette

He's a soldier. He's hardened from witnessing what happened to his mother. And since older males like yourself committed the crime, he'll be looking for (and possibly be repulsed by) signs of strength and compassion in you for him to respond to.

August 27



Howard Capelton

He can tell his clothes don't smell too good either. He said people with clothes that smell good who ask questions about him are usually doing it to make him feel inferior. He was really pissed off, but I used the bait of karate/boxing to keep him focused. He said sometimes it's not kids that ask questions to make him feel low, that it's adults. I told him to let his mother handle the adults, forgetting that he witnessed his mother being assaulted by adults. You should have seen the pained expression on his face. I've got a lot to learn in a hurry.

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North of the Grove



Victor Lovelett

You're up to the challenge. You prove your strength and compassion by returning each day.

August 27



Howard Capelton

How'd you learn so much?

August 27

William Hobbs



Victor Lovelett

You forget that I'm from Cherry Hill in Baltimore. I'm from a single parent home, so much so that I still cannot stand that "Rolling Stone" Temptations song. A lot of what I've learned came, unfortunately, the hard way.

August 27

Man, woman robbed in home, then detained when cops find marijuana and guns inside

August 27, 2009

(AP) A man and woman living in West Coconut Grove were robbed at gunpoint in their home early this morning and then detained when officers found dozens of marijuana plants and guns inside, a police spokesman said. The robbery occurred at about 1:48 a.m. at a home in the 200 block of 30th Avenue. The 28-year-old woman and 33-year-old man were at home when three suspects stormed in through a back door and robbed them at gunpoint, according to police.

According to the victims, the robbers took a registered assault rifle, an iPad, three cell phones and cash. Officers responding to the robbery then found 26 marijuana plants and 14 hand guns inside the home and detained the man and woman, police spokesman Lt. Charles Howard said. The names of the pair were not immediately available, but have been arrested, Howard said.

Paraphernalia on the premises indicated marijuana was being sold, Howard said. The robbers had not been found as of this morning and are believed to be part of a new scourge of gang activity in the area looking to get into drug dealing. They are described as three black men and “were more than likely known to the victims,” Howard said. The black men are described as being 5 feet, 10 inches tall and weighing about 170 pounds, 6 feet tall and 200 pounds, 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighing 175 pounds, according to Howard. Anyone with information about the robbery is asked to call the Police Department’s anonymous tip line.

William Hobbs

Chapter 2 – The Code