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words

Nameless
Avanté Cross

"I just don't understand, it's supposed to pay for my tuition outright. That's the entire point," he says into the phone.

"So, what am I supposed to do? I can't afford that on this short of notice," he shouts. He screams throwing his phone onto his bed. *How am I supposed to get all of this done?*

"Teferi!" *Hmm, who's calling you me now?* "Teferi!!"

Teferi whips his head around and realizes the voice is coming from outside in the hallway. He goes into the hallway.

"Hey! Teferi! you in there?!"

He peers over the handrailing realizing it's the voice of Miss Makenna, his downstairs neighbor. "Yes, Ms. Makenna," refer says as he peers over the railing.

"There you are Teferi!"

"Yes, here I am." Teferi notices the concerned look on Miss Makenna's face and quickly shuffles to the top of the stairs. "Are you alright, Makenna?"

"Teferi, we need to chat. Come down please." Taken aback by the request, Teferi runs back to shut the door and shuffles down the stairs. Teferi rounds the corner to Makenna's apartment and smells the tea brewing.

A sense of fear and concern overwhelms Teferi's senses. He walks into the apartment into Makenna's kitchen just as the kettle starts screeching.

"Sit Hun," says Makenna as she picks up the kettle and begins to pour the tea.

The vibe in the home is off, usually, it feels peaceful and calm. Makenna came over hands slightly trembling as she carried over the tea to the table. Teferi burst out suddenly, "ok what's going on I know something is wrong."

Makenna let out a small gasp, catching her breath in her throat. She slowly sat down and looked straight into the eyes of Teferi. "Just tell me!" said Teferi.

"It's your father," Makenna lets out a slow breath. he is in the hospital," Teferi stunned, "they aren't sure what happened, and he hasn't woken up yet."

"You can't be serious," Teferi falls into a wall his eyes shaking.

I can't do this first my scholarship falls through; now my father is in the hospital. Teferi regains his composure, "Take me to my father."

Makenna nods her head. Beeps echo throughout the hospital room. The steady rhythm almost sounds like music to him as his eyes are locked on to the man that has raised him his whole life. Teferi tightens a fist, gritting his teeth. Makenna goes to reach for him pulling her hand back at the last second. "Listen, I have to get going I'll be back later to check up on you ok."

"Yeah, thanks Makenna, you're the best."

Keena walks out the door, leaving Teferi alone with his father. Chaotic thoughts rush through his head. He takes a deep breath pushing back the tears.

"Four years old man, I just needed four more years and then I could have gotten you out of that place."

Teferi pushes the button calling the doctor. The door to the room opens to a man in a long white coat.

"So, how are we doing today?"

"About as well as I can doc, considering," Teferi's gaze falls on his father.

"I can understand that," the doctor sits in a chair placing it across from Teferi, "I hate to add to your stress, but there seems to be an issue with your father's insurance."

Teferi and the doctor talk for a while about his father's condition and even on treatment options. Teferi overwhelmed sat at his father's bedside for what seemed like hours. He watched as nurses and doctors came in and out of the room checking on him, checking on his father, just constantly checking. He walked out of the room down the hall to a vending machine to grab a soda. "Hey man, you don't look so hot."

Teferi looks up, "Ray Ray is that you?"

"In the flesh cuz."

Teferi daps up his cousin, pulling him in for a quick hug. "Man, it's been years how are you now?"

"I'm doing good man," Ray-Ray tells him, "Well not as good as you, college man, but I'm doing alright for myself."

Teferi looks at Ray-Ray noticing that his outfit looks like it came straight out of a magazine. Ray-Ray was wearing a brand-new Rolex and a fresh new pair of Jordan 1's. *Yeah just alright for yourself*, Teferi leads Ray-Ray back to his father's room. He catches him up on everything going on with his father. "Damn kid, that's heavy are you sure that you're alright?"

"Honestly," Teferi thinks for a moment, "It'll be tough, but I got this."

Teferi sits in the chair next to his father's bed. "It be one thing if I had to just pay for my school, but father's insurance only covers his stay," Teferi grabs the armrest, his hands shaking "they want to try this new treatment that they think could wake him up, that we can't afford."

Teferi takes a deep sigh, "I don't know what I'm going to do man."

Ray-Ray turns around a smirk comes across his face, "Well you know man maybe I can help."

Teferi looks up hope gleaming in his eyes. "You can help?" Teferi asks, "I don't know man, you know how I feel about handouts."

"Don't even think about it, what's family for," Ray-Ray says placing his hand on Teferi's shoulder, "let me make a few calls and I'll see what I can do?"

Ray-Ray walks out of the door meeting Keena in the hallway. Ray-Ray goes to wave at her, but Makenna looks away in disgust. She walks into the room, "You seem to be in a better mood. "

"Yeah, Ray-Ray came by just said he'd make a call; help finds a way to make some extra cash to help with everything."

"Did he now?" she says sarcastically.

"Uhm yeah," Teferi ponders, "You don't seem to approve?"

"Just be careful when it comes to your cousin, I heard he's into some shady things as of late."

Ray-Ray continues down the hallway when he gets to the stairwell. He pulls out his cellphone, pushing one on his speed dial. The phone rings for a second, "hello."

"Yo, it's Ray-Ray look I think we finally found a way onto the campus down the block from us."

"I don't know man this is a big job, Onyx ain't going to want no scrub on this."

"Listen, don't worry about Onyx, the guy I got is on the up n' up," Ray-Ray snickers, "besides he's too prideful to get caught, just be ready the next time I call you," Ray-Ray hangs up the phone.

Over the next couple of days, Teferi sells anything he can to try to help with his father's hospitalization. Try as he might, there isn't enough money to do anything. He sits at the kitchen table looking over some papers. *They're just too many bills I can't keep up.* Teferi's phone light with a text message from Makenna. He ignores it, his phone rings. He picks it up, "Hello."

"Hey cuz."

"Ray-Ray?"

"The one and only."

"What's up man, " Teferi gets up from his chair.

"Not much man just hanging in there. Look I know you don't do the whole handout thing but."

"But?"

"But I may have found you a job to try and make some of the cash you need?"

"Really," Teferi says excitedly.

"Calm down my guy, look I'm going to send you a text go to that address and talk to a guy named Frank, he'll hook you up with the job."

"Thanks, man I owe you for this one."

"Don't even think about it man, now I got another call to make so I'll call you later."

"Yeah man thanks again."

Ray-Ray hangs up the phone with his cousin and dials another number. "Hey, it's my everything's set up all you got to do is make sure he doesn't deliver the package and then everything will be ok."

The next day Teferi goes over to the address that Ray-Ray sent to his phone. When he gets there, he finds an old worn-out warehouse. The doors were off their hinges, the windows were busted out. *This may be a bad idea.* Teferi makes eye contact with a man walking out of the warehouse. "Hey, kid you are looking for Frank?"

"Ugh, yeah."

"Follow me."

The man leads Teferi through the warehouse. People in ragged clothes are all over the place sneezing, coughing, and scratching all over their bodies. *This is a bad idea.* The man stops opening the door in front of him. "Frank's inside," the man turns to leave, "word of advice to walk in that room or you'll never leave this world."

"I know," Teferi tells him. *But what choice do I have?*

Teferi walks into the room. He finds a man sitting at a large table in the middle of the room. Teferi walks towards the man. "Ray-Ray sent me he told me you could help me make some money?"

Frank looks Teferi up and down, "look kid you have one job to do you take this package," He throws a brown package onto his table. "Once you deliver that, I'll take care of everything else?"

Teferi picks up the package gripping it tightly, "I don't know man, this seems wrong?"

"Look, man, your cousin told me everything that's going on with you," he lights a cigarette and takes a pull, "Your smart kid got into one of the best colleges in the city. "Your

scholarship doesn't pay your full tuition and your father needs help with some of his medical bills. "Frank stands putting out his cigarette, "I'm offering you a chance to take that harness off your shoulder so that nothing will hold you back," He walks around the desk, "It's a simple job all you have to do is go to the address on the box and then you get your life back."

Teferi takes a breath and puts the package in his bag. "I'll get it done. "

Teferi walks out of the warehouse and begins walking down the street. *Deliver a package and then everything will be ok.* Teferi pulls out his phone and looks at the time. "Ok I can make it to the subway on time and this will all be good."

Teferi bounds the corner, the subway station is right down the street from the warehouse. He figures that taking the subway from the warehouse would be the fastest way to get out of this part of town. His phone rings in his pocket. He answers his phone. "Hello, he says."

"Hey man, are you good?"

"Oh, hey Ray, what's happening?"

"Not much just wanted to make sure that everything went good with Frank."

"Yeah, everything's going to be OK. He's a bit cryptic, though."

"Ha-ha yeah, that's Frank. He always tries to show off this stoic persona. But he's a real softie when you get to know him. I'm just glad he was able to help you out. Where is he got you doing anyway?"

"Oh ugh, he's got me delivering this package across town."

"You going to take the subway station right there on 5th."

"Yeah, and I should be there in a few minutes."

"Alright look I got to make another call."

"Oh, ok man I'll call you when I'm done."

"Yeah, no doubt man."

Teferi continues walking down the street making sure that he keeps an eye out for anyone that might hinder his progress when he spots three guys standing on the corner near the subway entrance. Teferi pays them no mind and walks down the stairs. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees the men come in behind him. *Are they Following me? No, I'm just being paranoid.* He gets to the bottom of the stairs and goes through the security gate. The men just on his tail. *They're probably also getting on the same train.* The train comes to a complete stop, a group of passengers comes off the train. Teferi steps into the train car, glancing over to see the men also getting on to the train car. Teferi grabs one of the balance rods on the train car. He pulls out his cellphone and looks for Makenna's number. He stares at it for a few seconds trying to decide whether to call her or not, suddenly he feels the pressure of an arm come across his back. He looks up and finds that the three guys from earlier have surrounded him. "How's it going man?" One of the men says.

Teferi puts his phone back in his pocket and looks at them around. *Great know this is a thing.* "Look guys I don't want any trouble."

Everybody in the train car switches to the front car not wanting to get caught up

"Trouble why would there be trouble?" the second guy says.

Teferi moves to put his back towards the train doors. "Listen kid just give us your bag and we go away."

"Well, that's not going to happen."

"I think it is my guy?"

OK, think three of them one of me. Breathe. first, take a step off the train to create some space before doors fully open. Next punch first guy in the throat forcing him down. The guy on

the left will move him back, poke his eyes out. He'll move of his volition the last guy will come forward, spartan kick to the chest, Doors close run the other way.

"I just want to ask before we get started," the train comes to a complete stop and the doors open, "does anyone want to get off the train."

"Check it out guys we got ourselves a good M.C.U. fan-" Teferi proceeds to punch him in the throat while stepping off the train.

Another guy steps forward, "you little shit," Teferi proceeds to poke him in both of his eyes, "argh, you bitch."

The last guy tries to pull Teferi backs onto the train. Teferi then proceeds to kick him in the chest forcing him back onto the train. He falls into the others when the doors of the train close. "Actual I'm more of a DC fan honestly.

Teferi runs out of the station towards the street. He checks behind him making sure that no one was chasing after him. Teferi leans against the wall of a building near the station entrance making sure he can see who comes out. His heart pounds almost out of his head. *What a rush.* Teferi hurries to the address on the package. Checking his surroundings, he spots the guy from the warehouse. He drops the package at the designated spot and walks over to the man. "Frank send you?"

"Yeah, he got a tip wanted to make sure you're ok," the man looks Teferi up and down, "seems you came out unharmed."

Teferi phone rings, he answers it, "Hey, I've been meaning to call you."

"It's fine, just wanted to let you know that your dad is awake, and he'll be able to get the treatment."

"That's great, thanks for letting me know Makenna."

"Anytime, just call me back."

"I will I promise," Teferi turns back to Frank's goon, "Frank works quick."

"That he does," Frank's goon takes out a cigarette, "listen kid you have a chance to get away from this life."

Teferi thinks for a minute, "No, I don't want my father to deal with all this while I'm at school."

The guy takes a pull from his cigarette, "alright kid I hope you know what you're doing."

"Trust me, I do."