

STASH HOUSE

Written by:

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Logline: Upon discovering a bag of money in a stash house, a troubled latchkey kid sees a way out of the situational poverty and violence of West Baltimore, but first must outrun the men looking for their money and a ghost that seems to have followed him.

FADE IN:

EXT. WEST BALTIMORE CITY STREET - DAY

A once working class neighborhood, now deteriorating. The few inhabited row homes are shackled by a block of long vacant dwellings. The remnants of a small community garden between buildings are choked by tall weeds. The street is empty.

A POLICE CAR patrols by at the end of the block, like a tumbleweed rolling through a desert. It's presence seems to offer the opposite of safety.

Somewhere nearby, the sound of something heavy being DRAGGED.

In the middle of the street, a detached home that has been boarded up sits back on a plot of overgrown grass. The sound is coming from inside.

Someone inside forcefully GRUNTS, which is then followed by a THUD THUD THUD. Then the BANGING sound of construction echos out.

Soon the house falls SILENT, like the rest of the block.

A MAN dressed in all black with a hood covering his face climbs out a first story window on the side of the house. Once out, he DUCT TAPES a large piece of cardboard over the window, sealing it off. He looks around and jogs away.

TITLES: "STASH HOUSE"

INT. COMIC BOOK SHOP - DAY

A store packed with racks of comic books and pop culture memorabilia. Only a few customers linger inside, flipping through bins of books in mylar bags.

JUSTIN (13, a demagnetized compass, trying to find north) and D'ANTHONY (23, an omniscient of hustle culture) peruse outfacing single issues on the New Release wall.

JUSTIN
This guy's badass.

D'ANTHONY
He looks like all the others.

JUSTIN

No way. His costume is sick.

D'ANTHONY

It's all black. How can you even tell?

JUSTIN

It's a fitted, ultra-adaptable, exo-skin armor. That's how big he really is.

D'ANTHONY

Yeah. He's ok I guess.

Justin looks up at D'Anthony while he gazes at the rack, flipping through some large adult titles. Justin sees an omniscient confidence that he aspires to.

JUSTIN

Thanks for takin' me out.

D'ANTHONY

No prob, Cuz. I told your mom I'd keep you off them video games. At least for a little while.

JUSTIN

She never takes me out.

D'ANTHONY

Yeah, well she gotta work.

JUSTIN

She always workin'.

D'ANTHONY

Someone gotta pay the bills, little man.

JUSTIN

Than how come she never has any money?

D'ANTHONY

Bills expensive.

Justin sees a hardback graphic novel on a lower shelf and excitedly grabs it.

JUSTIN

The complete Team Ups series! This is what I want.

D'Anthony flips it over and looks at the back.

D'ANTHONY
Whoo. Thirty-five dollars? Keep
lookin'.

JUSTIN
But that's the only book I want.

D'ANTHONY
I said I'd get you a comic. That's
like four bucks.

JUSTIN
Fine.

Justin begrudgingly sets the book back on the shelf and continues to look in disappointment.

A well-groomed MAN in a suit enters the store and heads straight to the counter.

EMPLOYEE
Hey Jake. Your order came in this
morning.

JAKE
Yeah. I got the notification.

The employee digs behind the counter and brings up a towering pile of comics.

Justin watches with wide eyes.

EMPLOYEE
That comes to two thirty-seven,
ninety five.

Jake hands over his credit card and flips through his stack of books.

The employee hands Jake his receipt and bags the comics.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
There you go. See you next week.

JAKE
Yup.

Jake walks out looking at his phone, barely acknowledging the employee.

JUSTIN
Did you see that stack of comics?

D'ANTHONY

That's called dispensable income.
When you drop a thousand a month on
comics.

JUSTIN

How do I get that?

Justin follows D'Anthony as he looks around the store,
glancing at book covers, absorbing them. He seems dismissive
of the world around him, like he created it.

D'ANTHONY

Privilege.

JUSTIN

That's bullshit.

D'ANTHONY

Watch your mouth. But yeah, it is.
People like that talkin bout just
bootstrapping and saving. But they
handed those jobs and college
degrees and rent money. They don't
got no hurdles.

Justin thinks hard about this sentiment.

JUSTIN

I don't need a comic.

D'ANTHONY

It's alright. Just pick somethin.

JUSTIN

I don't need one that bad.

D'Anthony give Justin a proud look and nods. He takes out a
five dollar bill and shoves it in Justin's pocket.

D'ANTHONY

You save that then.

JUSTIN

Damn. Thanks D.

As they're walking out of the store, D'Anthony pulls his
shirt up slightly. He's got the comic Justin was looking at
sticking out of the top of his pants.

Justin smiles as D'Anthony winks at him.

EXT. WEST BALTIMORE - LATE AFTERNOON

POSTWAR ROW HOMES line a quiet street. Their shallow stone porches remain unoccupied late in the day. Their brick exteriors absorb the last traces of sunlight.

Between paver walkways extending from the homes, patches of grass grow wild. Few have been maintained.

INT. ROW HOME BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Justin bounces on the edge of his bed playing video games. D'Anthony is in a chair scrubbing his sneakers with a Magic Eraser.

JUSTIN

Yes! Found the grenade launcher.

D'ANTHONY

You're gonna need all the help you can get.

JUSTIN

I don't need any help. I'm a killing machine even without the grenade launcher.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Aw Damn. You distracted me and I got shot.

D'ANTHONY

Watch your mouth.

JUSTIN

What're you doing?

D'ANTHONY

Freshening. You ever scuff your kicks, hit em with a magic eraser.

JUSTIN

That work?

D'ANTHONY

Check these out.

D'Anthony holds up his first shoe. It's spotless.

JUSTIN

Damn. Ok.

D'Anthony takes a hit from a vape pen and blows the smoke toward the window.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Can I try that?

D'ANTHONY
Hell no. Aunt Trina would kill me
if you were doin' this.

He sets the pen on a desk and gets up.

D'ANTHONY (CONT'D)
I gotta run to my car. Don't touch
that pen. That thing's old.

D'Anthony heads for the door.

JUSTIN
Hey, D.

D'ANTHONY
What's up?

Justin pauses as if he's about to say something sentimental.

JUSTIN
You gotta play when you come back
so I can whoop your ass.

D'ANTHONY
Ha. Keep dreamin'.

Justin picks up the vape pen and holds the button down. It gets too hot and burns him.

JUSTIN
Ow. Shit.

Justin jumps over to the window and watches his cousin walk out to his car.

EXT. ROW HOME - CONTINUOUS

D'Anthony turns and points at Justin in the window,
pretending to shoot him with a rifle.

Approaching his car, he pulls out his cell phone and turns a
song on.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Justin keeps watching his cousin out the window. He's got a view of the ENITRE STREET where he can witness the coming event unfold.

An older MERCEDES with blacked out windows creeps down the street and stops in front of the house.

D'Anthony bobs his head to the music and digs around in his car.

A MAN in a hoodie jumps out of the Mercedes and walks at a brisk pace toward D'Anthony.

JUSTIN
D! Look out!

EXT. FRONT OF ROW HOME - CONTINUOUS

D'Anthony looks up from his phone toward Justin. Justin is yelling and pointing, but his words aren't clear over the music.

D'Anthony turns slowly to see the MAN walking up on him, hand in pocket. His hood is pulled up, covering his face.

As he approaches, he extends his arm revealing a PISTOL.

D'Anthony scrambles back, bumping into his car. There's nowhere to run.

He tries to sprint toward the house and makes it only a few steps before the SHOTS ring out. He drops to the ground.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

JUSTIN
No! D!

D'Anthony's cell phone continues playing music from the ground near him.

The hooded man jumps back into the passenger side of the car as it SQUEELS off down the street.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Help! Somebody help!

Neighbors peek out through their blinds, unwilling to step outside after hearing the shots.

Justin sobs as he leans out the window.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Please! Somebody!

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SCHOOL COUNSILOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Justin sits across a cluttered desk from a middle aged MAN. He is clean cut, well dressed with a youthful face. His name plate reads MR. COLESON.

The room is silent. Justin repeatedly clicks D'Anthony's old VAPE PEN by his side.

MR. COLESON
Justin, I'm starting to think you like hanging out in here.

JUSTIN
Better than sitting in class.

MR. COLESON
Well this time I'm actually impressed. You got Derek's chair to stand up after taking the screws out.

JUSTIN
That shit was hilarious. He fell right back with his feet in the air like a turtle.

MR. COLESON
I bet. He's kind of got a small head too.

JUSTIN
I know, right?

MR. COLESON
I think I liked it better though when you used to put that same effort into getting straight A's.

JUSTIN
Yeah? Well this is way more fun.

MR. COLESON
Justin -

JUSTIN

Jester.

MR. COLESON

I'm not going to call you that.

JUSTIN

C'mon, Coleson. Everyone does.

MR. COLESON

No one does. I'll call you J.
That's the best you get.

Justin's body language implies his resistance to the session.

MR. COLESON (CONT'D)

This has got to be a tough week for
you, J.

JUSTIN

No different from any other week.

MR. COLESON

C'mon man. It's been a year since
D'Anthony...passed.

Justin looks out the window to evade eye contact.

JUSTIN

So?

MR. COLESON

So, he was a good dude. But you've
got to address these things.

JUSTIN

What's done is done.

Mr. Coleson studies Justin, debating his reply.

MR. COLESON

I think you need to get out of
here.

JUSTIN

Great.

Justin hops up grabbing his backpack.

MR. COLESON

Sit.

Justin sits back in his seat, attention on Mr. Coleson.

JUSTIN
Make up your mind Coleson.

MR. COLESON
I see who you run with now. Maurice
isn't exactly raising the bar for
you.

JUSTIN
It's Reece. He hates being called
Maurice.

MR. COLESON
Did you know I'm psychic?

JUSTIN
No.

Mr. Coleson pretends to rub a crystal ball.

MR. COLESON
I can see your future.

JUSTIN
Am I rich?

MR. COLESON
No sir. You're far from it. And you
can't read, or get a job.

JUSTIN
Can I get back to class now?

MR. COLESON
J. There's a big world to see out
there.

JUSTIN
You payin'?

MR. COLESON
Money ain't everything.

JUSTIN
Like you would know.

MR. COLESON
Act tough boy. Take advantage of
what's in front of you, while it's
still there.

The bell rings. Chatter fills the hallway through the door.