You Will Know Your Tribe by Their Joy

by Julia Mallory

Nina directed her displeasure across the street.

"That don't make no damn sense. They out here selling them fake Black Cards again.

And for what when they know they sitting on reparations."

"If them white folks wanna convince themselves in 2120—The Year of Ra, that can't nobody tell they white AND that those cards are fake, they deserve to get got," offered Kysha. The light in the sky illuminated the highest peaks of her face, dazzling off of her gold cowrie shell hoop earrings.

"You ain't right, girl," chuckled Nina.

Nina brought her shades to the bridge of her nose to get a closer look at the transaction-in-progress.

"But am I lying? Stop laughing and tell me I'm lying, Nina."

Kysha waited as much as someone who wasn't waiting could.

"Well gimme my joke back since you so self-righteous."

Nina reached into the top of her shirt and pretended to release something into the air towards Kysha. "Here. Take it, then."

The second floor window was behind them before realizing that they had laughed so hard they were levitating.

"See what you made me do." Nina layered between laughter. 6 aH laughter. Passed down from their people centuries ago. Known for its deep thunder from the diaphragm. Firm on the ground, they could see GrannyGo cleaning the Hope Station marquee, stopping to shoo them from out front of her door.

"Uh, uh. I done told y'all to take y'all mess from around here," she said, pointing the amethyst-hued cleaning solution at them. GrannyGo's presence scared off the would-be buyers—but not before her right eye scanned their license plate. Just as I thought, she mumbled to herself. In unison, the sources of GrannyGo's irritation whined, "Awww, GrannyGo! We just tryna to come up!"

"Come up from what? What y'all know about coming up? Y'all were born UP!"

The ComeUp Boys broke out into a near hyena giggle. 1 aH laughter.

These new age babies. Born with reparations in their account and still trying to be in the wrong mix, she thought.

"Don't y'all know hustlin' is dead?!" she shouted.

ThemMines slid up, undetected as usual. The ComeUp Boys only needed to see the shadow to know their exit was imminent. They tucked the counterfeit cards into their matching chartreuse neoprene capes as they slid off. So much for subtlety.

"G*G* do they come around here often?"

"Who? The ComeUp Boys or those white folks?" she asked, avoiding eye contact.

"Both."

GrannyGo's non-response was the response.

"Hmmm," grumbled ThemMines.

They both knew what that meant. They also knew that it needed no additional attention in the moment.

"Anywho! What you know good GrannyGo?," asked ThemMines, their crystal-crusted teeth forming a hologram on the marquee.

"It's all good ThemMines, since the check cleared."

"I know that's right!" ThemMines retorted.

It was their 9 aH laughter that brought them in a circle around Lil Sun Baby, a pyrite crown in her hair.

"Lil Sun Baby, don't get too high now. The sun love you but it don't want you touching it," warned GrannyGo.

Wrapped in blue lace agate sky, the three of them matched smiles with Nina and Kysha who were watching them from across the way, a prism in their enthusiastic waves.



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