

#### Excerpt 4 of 6 "Outside Chance"

Andre didn't get home from work until long after dark and Rick could tell he had been drinking. He wasn't as funny as usual. After Rick introduced him to Schwartz, Andre glanced at her swollen belly and joked in his best Butterfly McQueen voice, that he "didn't know nothin' about birthin' no babies," then remarked that white folks wouldn't understand the joke about the joke. When that too was met with silence, he stared at Schwartz for a moment.

"Are you..."

"My mother is white!" she snapped.

"Don't get mad at me. It's dark, I've had a couple of shots and it's been a long day, alright? I know a lot's been happening 'cause you're here without your husband."

"Tyrone's her brother, not her husband. There's stuff I need to tell you."

"Tell me in the morning. I'm going to bed. You and me are going to the anti-war march and the bus leaves early. You can come too if you want," he said to Schwartz.

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Andre woke up before everyone else and fixed breakfast. Rick came down and, before he could ask what had changed his cousin's mind about going to the march, Andre began telling him about seeing Wilson in a wheelchair with a bunch of other Nam vets. They were about to walk out of the door when Schwartz came down. She seemed even more pregnant than the night before and had to convince the two guys that walking was good for pregnant people.

They walked over to the stadium and got on the bus that would take them to the National Mall. The bus was already packed with young people. It seemed all the men had long hair. Some of them stared at the trio of Andre, Rick and Schwartz as they paid their fares. A woman got up to let Schwartz take a seat. One young man thought she looked familiar, but when he realized where he knew her from, decided to stay silent.

None of them had ever been to a protest march before to say nothing of one that large. Schwartz only knew about it because Tyrone had paid to have some of the flyers printed. Rick had first read about it in an underground paper

he found on a table at the Museum cafeteria waiting for Andre's guard shift to end. They saw dozens, then hundreds of people walking to the Mall. They arrived overwhelmed by what seemed like millions. Andre had not known what to expect. The crowd was overwhelming white. There were some older people and a few black men his age. Every time he saw one, he flashed to Wilson handing him the flyer.

At one point, Rick became separated from Andre and Schwartz. Andre had zoned out on the speeches and, after buying a Black Panther paper from a woman he knew, he became sick of telling other people he didn't want to buy another paper. He was very ready to go. Schwartz was the one who noticed Rick was missing. She began to wander aimlessly looking for him as Andre tried to convince her they needed a plan find his cousin.

She made it to the edge of the crowd where the police presence was evident. Andre was beginning to feel the effects of the previous night's drinking and to question why the hell he was here with this white looking black woman he barely knew. Suddenly, he couldn't even remember her name.

"Hey, hey wait," he shouted.

She couldn't hear him as she approached a police officer to ask if there was some area where lost minors were gathered. Another cop who had seen them emerging from the crowd, assumed Andre was an unwanted pursuer, approached and shoved him to the ground. Andre hopped to his feet. The crowd around him gave way as two other cops rushed in for back up.