

# FIST FULL OF PLIGHT

JAMAAL NELSON

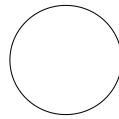
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# CHAPTER ONE

## LANDS



A variation of noises saturated the area. Men talked amongst each other as they stood posted up by their cars, women danced and twerked as their friends' recorded videos, and cars blasted bass-filled music through their speakers while arriving at or parked at the scene. What seemed like an endless aroma of weed stained the air as the crowd smoked blunts freely. The age range of the festive spectators varied drastically. Some were barely old enough to buy a ticket for an R-rated movie, and some neared their ten-year high school reunion. I guarantee summer nights like these bring vibrant energy, rhythm, and excitement. You know, the type only Black people can elicit. I feel these are the golden days older people are always telling young folks like us to enjoy.

My name is Joel, but it's not pronounced like most people would think. It's pronounced *Jole*, not *Joe-el*. This particular car meet, or some say car show, took place in the parking lot of a rundown shopping mall on the east side of the city. Car meets spring up randomly across the city of Indianapolis; also referred to as Naptown or simply Nap for short. If you are connected enough with the right people, you get the word about them through text messages. Along with any other happenings. Like in Fall, I always got word about low-priced Nike sweatsuits from boosters across Nap. Doing any kind of business with a

## JAMAAL NELSON

booster is hit or miss. The items could either be named brands or knockoff versions, but you couldn't even tell the difference. Car meets almost always end up being posted and talked about on social media. Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, etc. I don't think it's wise to post the details online. 12 can easily look online, pinpoint the time and location, and shut it down. They have many times in the past and will continue to do so in the future. You know the police hate seeing Black folks having a good time. Police, 12, po-po, cops, five-o, pigs, whatever you want to call them. It's all the same. Each car meet kicks off in the evening or later hours of the day. They end whenever people get tired or when 12 pulls up. SRT Chargers, Hellcats, Track Hawks, Camaros, customized old-school whips, and other flashy vehicles stir excitement amongst the roaring spectators as they perform donuts, make sharp uneasy turns, and generate smoke from their tires. Burnt rubber could be smelled from miles away. A good number of them also had 5% tints, with some having 1%. You know; the really dark windows you can easily see through from the inside of the car but see nothing but a dark abyss when looking from the outside. Car meets are filled with predominantly Black spectators and drivers. All rocking overpriced shoes, fresh outfits, haircuts, fresh nails, and a pistol to top everything off. There were more guns than cars in attendance. You don't have to be a so-called street or hood nigga to carry a gun. That's just how the world is today. You never know what could happen, so always have a proper means of protection. Indiana just made a new state law saying we don't even need a permit anymore to carry a pistol. That's sweet music to a lot of Indianapolis native's ears.

"Mu'fuckas been stepping on my shit all night!" Ta'Juan said, referring to the minor scuff to his Jordan Cherry 11's. He lightly licked his thumb to lean over and rubbed the scuff off the toe of his right shoe. He stood posted in front of my grey 2001 Impala. He stood in the middle, Rolan stood to his left, and I stood to his right. We bore witness to the extravagant cars and unpredictable chain of events. I laughed and then responded to Ta'Juan. "Why did you think it was a good idea to wear white shoes to a car meet? You knew it was gone be hella' people here." Rolan smirked as he leaned up against my car with his arms folded. Suddenly, a Black 1999 gloss-painted Cutlass cruised by us. We became fixated on its perfection. The 24-inch rims complemented its elegance. The chopped and screwed version of rapper Pimp C's "Pimpin' Aint' No Illusion" blasted through its trunk rattling speakers. On the other hand, my car is on its last leg with almost every maintenance

## FIST FULL OF PLIGHT

light on. From the low tire pressure indicator to the engine light. But as long as it keeps getting me from point A to point B, I'm not complaining. I paid \$750 for it so I knew what I was getting myself into. The mirror on the passenger side is held together by duct tape. Something in me refuses to come off \$65 for a new one. My car speakers are barely functional. They only work on the right passenger side of the car. Ta'Juan usually puts his portable Bluetooth JBL speaker on the dashboard, and we roll with that.

Of the three of us in our dynamic trio, Ta'Juan causes most of the havoc. Once, he called me 'Jewel' instead of Joel, because of my taste in music. I rarely listen to Hip Hop and Rap to get my day started. I like Hip Hop and Rap, but I don't listen to it 24/7 as Ta'Juan does. For example, if it's 7 A.M. I'll be listening to R&B. Ta'Juan will be listening to NBA Youngboy or EST Gee. He thinks listening to R&B is for women or "soft" men. To him, R&B is more depressing than soothing and relaxing. We don't see eye to eye on everything, but we remain solid friends. We always had each other's backs, right or wrong; same with Rolan.

A thin, medium-height man in a Gucci sweatsuit walked by us. His sweatsuit was a few sizes too small for him as the bottom of his jacket rose above his waist and arm sleeves were above his wrists. Possibly to show off his designer underwear and flashy watch. You could see his sweat leaking through his armpits and pouring down his face and neck. I think wearing a sweatsuit in 90-degree weather is crazy, but that's just me. You know some people will go above and beyond just to show off their materialist possessions. He was on the phone yelling something about going to the club after the car meet. He had a pistol, with no gun holster, hanging out in his right pocket. I peeped he had a switch and an extended clip as well. I never saw anything wrong with having protection. Especially for Black people. When you see a white man teaching his five-year-old son how to handle, clean, and shoot a hunting rifle they are not labeled thugs or ghetto, but they label Black people "thugs" and tell us to "put down the guns" even as adults. When you see white individuals shooting up schools and large gatherings of people, why are they not labeled thugs? White people beat that case by being labeled as having a clinical or mental disorder. As if they are the only ones with mental health issues. They get taken into custody while unarmed Black men and women are slaughtered on the scene. For white folks, it's clinical, but for Black folks, it's criminal. Read that again. For instance, take the case of white supremacist Dylann Roof. He walked into a Black church with a rifle killing nine worshippers. What

did local law enforcement do after they apprehended him? They treated him to a bite to eat at Burger King. The news and media outlets went above and beyond to paint him as a mental health case rather than a racist white supremacist. George Zimmerman killed an unarmed sixteen-year-old Trayvon Martin and was acquitted even with outstanding evidence indicating his racial hatred. They blame gun violence in Black neighborhoods and communities on everything and everyone except for the initial causes of factors that make a person inevitably respond to their predicament. Poverty, disproportionate distribution of resources, kindergarten to high school curriculums that aren't suitable or don't directly apply to Black people, menticide, mass incarceration, I could go all day. Would you expect a Jew to happily read student books and other material that glorifies Hitler in a positive and heroic light? So why would you expect Black people to happily learn about George Washington, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and other founding fathers of America when they owned and raped African slaves? Ben Franklin wrote key parts of the American Constitution and Declaration of Independence. He wrote eloquently about freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people while having dozens of enslaved Africans under his ruling hand.

You hear nothing about Asian-on-Asian violence, Latino-on-Latino violence, or white-on-white violence, so why do we always hear the Black-on-Black violence narrative throughout the media? It's not because Black people are more violent or commit more crimes than any other racial group, so what else could it be? There is a fundamental difference between Black people killing each other and white folks killing Black people. For example, if Marcus kills Rashad, Marcus is getting arrested in the next 24 hours and does life in jail. If white Police Officer Smithers kills unarmed Ja'Darius, he doesn't even get questioned or brought into custody for another week or two. Then, gets paid leave of absence, a book deal, and probably won't even be prosecuted.

For the last few minutes, it was difficult to focus on the cars, because the ladies were looking good. Edges laid, bodies to perfection in their sun dresses, biker shorts, and other revealing clothes to flaunt everything they were born with. Ta'Juan had his eyes set on a girl he thought was eyeing him. "She been eyeing me all night," he said as he continued to look at her from a distance. Rolan and I immediately looked at each other and smirked. We were all still posted by my Impala. I responded, "Nah bro, I think she was just looking

## FIST FULL OF PLIGHT

at the cars passing by. Just like we were.” Rolan laughed. “Ight, we gone see about that,” Ta’Juan said with a slight grin. He began to slowly make his way over in her direction. She stood by a silver Nissan Altima wearing a gold necklace around her neck with a pendant that reads “*Tierra*” hanging from it. Tierra was accompanied by two other Black girls who looked to be her friends. Tierra was dark-skinned with long flowing locs. Her skin radiated with melanin in the kind moonlight. She was no taller than 5’2. Real petite figure. Her friend standing to her left was a tall, brown-skinned beauty. She had to be 5’9 or 5’10. She had piercings all over her entire right ear, belly, lip, and nose. You could see her nipple piercings through her shirt. Nothing clung to her left ear. The other friend to her right was brown-skinned and the same height as Tierra. She rocked pink box braids and a hoop piercing on her nose. When Ta’Juan finally approached Tierra, he didn’t sound as smooth as he thought he did. “Aye, how you what?” he said. The term how you what is local Indianapolis slang for a variety of things. Depending on how it’s used, it can mean what’s going on, what are you trying to do, or sometimes can mean to agree with something or someone but in this particular situation Ta’Juan meant it as what are you trying to do. Ta’Juan went on, “You been looking good all night. You gone keep staring at me or give me your number?” Rolan and I stood twenty feet away bearing witness. We couldn’t hear a single word being said, but the reaction from Tierra and her friends told us everything we needed to know. The three of them shot one another a look with their mouths dropped open. They simultaneously laughed right in Ta’Juan’s face. After 5 long seconds of laughter passed, Tierra finally responded. “Boy, ain’t nobody checking for your dusty ass.” Ta’Juan just stood there, not quite knowing how to respond and a little caught off-guard. I’m sure she was accustomed to being approached by egotistic men all the time, but not quite how Ta’Juan just had. She added, “Plus my boyfriend around here somewhere looking for me.” That might have been true, but sometimes females say that when they don’t want to talk to you. In my opinion, it’s best for guys to take the hints females throw at them and charge it to the game. Take the “L” (a loss, to lose, or not accomplish something) and move on. There are more women you can try your chances on. Plenty more fish in the sea. After the flop of an attempt to get a girl, Ta’Juan took his “L” to the chin and headed back towards Rolan and me. We were both dying of laughter. It was 11 P.M. as the night sky hosted the moon and a steaming summer heat.

## JAMAAL NELSON

Suddenly, an all-black SRT Charger pulled up a few feet away from Tierra and her friends. A dark-skinned man wearing a black t-shirt, light blue skinny jeans with a tan Gucci belt with green and red trim, and black Balenciaga shoes hopped out of the car. His face was engulfed with rage. Rapper NBA YoungBoy's song "Green Dot" blasted from his car. He bullied the driver's door open. His tight-fitting t-shirt gave away the bulge on his right hip, indicating he had some type of hidden weapon. Another man wearing a white shirt also stood only a few feet away from where Tierra and her friends stood. He backs his back towards the girls as he was taking a phone call. His phone call was abruptly cut short, with his phone flying out of his hands. The man in black ran up and swung at the man in white. He snuck him. His body smacked the ground. He never saw it coming. Multiple bystanders could be heard. "Daaamn!" and "Ahh shit!" Or even a long exaggerated "Oooh!" A few hours later I found out on Instagram that the fight broke out because the man in white was on Twitter talking crazy. He said something disrespectful about the other man's friend that got killed. He tweeted, "That nigga P-lo always been pussy. May he rest in piss." No more than fifteen minutes later, there was a second fight between two females. One of the females who fought was Tierra, who claimed she had a boyfriend. The funny thing is she fought over a guy that couldn't care less about either one of them. His name is Dre. He's always been known for messing with two or more females at one time, but he's a player about it. He always lets his women know that he entertains more than one woman. Maybe they fought thinking the winner would gain Dre, who knows?