

“Back From the Crossroads” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 1

A front porch on a hot summer day somewhere in the deep South.

MAYBELINE, an woman in her mid-20's is sipping lemonade and fanning herself. LEON, her son, is standing anxiously behind her. LEON should be played by a 30 something man, but played with the enthusiasm of a 7 year old.

MAYBELINE

Oh lordy, the sun's a beating down on me like the Devil's making time with his ol'lady.

LEON

Momma, I wish you wouldn't talk that way.

MAYBELINE

What way, child?

LEON

'Bout the Devil, Momma. 'Bout the Devil and his old lady. I don't like it. Gives me *The Nightmare*.

MAYBELINE

It's noon, child, noon. The Nightmare don't come until the night.

LEON

I can't stop thinking about it though, Momma. 'Bout the Devil--

MAYBELINE

Lord, it's hot.

LEON

And his fiery breath.

MAYBELINE

Hot 'nough to keep the Devil from jumping on his ol' --

LEON  
Momma!

MAYBELINE  
Hush.

LEON  
(trying to change the topic.) Can I have a sip of your lemonade?

MAYBELINE  
You drank yours up, this is Momma's.

LEON  
I was thirsty. (reaches for her glass.)

MAYBELINE  
No, now. This is Momma's “special” lemonade. (pause as she fans herself for a moment in silence.) Helps Momma get through such a hot hot day. (pause.) Hotter than the Devil's drawers, I reckon.

LEON  
I'm going inside. (exits)

MAYBELINE  
S'hotter in there. (notices LEON has left.) Suit yourself. (brief pause.) Dumber than a bucket of bacon grease.

LEE, a man in his 40's, enters through the audience.

MAYBELINE  
Now who's that, you reckon?

LEON  
(from within) Some one here, Momma?!

MAYBELINE  
Hush, child, stay inside.

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LEON

(from within) Is it Papa?!

MAYBELINE

You hush, and don't say that name 'gain. 'less you want me to send the Devil to take your shoes!

LEON

Momma!

LEE

(Chuckling.) Ooo hoo, he's grown to be a precocious young man.

MAYBELINE

(Shading her eyes to see better, then in a shocked and stunned voice.) No.

LEE

(Fanning himself with his hat.) Hot 'nough for ya Maybeline?

MAYBELINE

Now you just stay away. You done chose your own path at the crossroads. That-away. Not this-away.

LEE

You got me all wrong Maybeline.

MAYBELINE

I got you just right. You're just like all the other men in this town. Ya' headed off to the crossroads to find some sort of, what? Some sort of meaning in your life?

LEE

That's true. That's true.

MAYBELINE

Leavin' your family behind. Not a care in the world. Then, what? I suppose you ran into the Devil himself out there, didn't you? Made a

MAYBELINE (cont.)

deal with for something, didn't ya'? But it wasn't exactly what you thought it'd be, now was it? More of a curse then a blessing, isn't it? Now you're back to spread your curse. Back to dump all your problems right on your family.

(pause.)

LEE

Maybeline. I stand corrected. I said you got me all wrong, but actually, you've quite accurately and succinctly summed up the past couple of days.

MAYBELINE

Well.

LEE

Yessir.

(Pause while they both consider.)

LEON

(From within.) Can I come out now Momma? (Pause) That man still here Momma?

LEE

You tell him about me?

MAYBELINE

He ain't stupid. He knows he's got a Daddy.

LEE

How big is he now?

MAYBELINE

He's a thirty-four year old man.

LEE

What now?

MAYBELINE

You’ve been gone 27 years now.

LEE

(Is stunned and has to take a seat.) 27 years.

MAYBELINE

Wrote you off a dead long ago.

LEE

I swear it was a month... or was it a week?

MAYBELINE

You’re weak. So. What was it? What was the deal you made?

LEE

Wasn’t like that at all.

(LEON enters.)

LEON

Momma?

MAYBELINE

Dun told you child, stay in the house. ‘Course you don’t listen none hardly. Worse than your father. Oh. You’re Father’s home.

(LEON and LEE take each other in for a moment. LEE with a confused fascination, LEON with surprise moving into bitterness.)

LEE

You’re so old.

MAYBELINE

27 years.

(LEE comes up on stage. LEON and LEE circle each other.)

LEON

Why'd you leave?

LEE

I just went down the road aways.

MAYBELINE

Down to the crossroads.

LEON

(like MAYBELINE just swore.) You tol' me never go down there.

MAYBELINE

That's right. Now you know why.

LEE

Your Momma's right. I went down there. I went down there with an aching and yearning in my heart.

MAYBELINE

And he dun made a deal with the Devil.

LEON

Momma!

LEE

She's right. That's what happened. We're in agreement on that. We're just a little off on the time-line.

(pause)

MAYBELINE

(With a bitter politeness.) You want some lemonade?

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LEE

I am a bit parched.

MAYBELINE

Very well then. (exits)

LEON

Well?

LEE

You’ve grown to be quite a man.

(LEON just broods.)

LEE

I suppose some explanation is needed.

LEON

You went to the crossroads?

LEE

Yep.

LEON

Meet the (whispers) *Devil* there?

LEE

Yep. Yep I did.

LEON

(eager now, but still whispering) *What’s he like?*

LEE

Welp.(looks around) He’s actually an alright fella.

LEON

(wide eyed now) *Really?!*

LEE

Now don't be gettin' your head full of ideas now. Sure, he was a nice enough fella. And he throws a heck of a party. I swear I've never danced so much in my life. Danced like your Momma and I used to do before you came along. (LEON gives a look.) Sorry. Didn't mean no offense. But here's the thing. I was gone for a week... I swear just a... well, just a short while. And I come back and you're... you're a grown man.

LEON

Yeah. Momma says that things haven't worked right since you gone.

LEE

Things?

LEON

The calendar. Calendar don't work like it should.

LEE

Don't work? (touches his face.) Your Momma... she looks just like she did when I last saw her a week ago-- (looks at his reflection in the window.) And, I'm so old...

LEON

(conspiratorially) *You want to hear 'bout The Nightmare?*

LEE

This whole thing is a nightmare.

LEON

I have all kinds of dreams. All kinds of nightmares too, but this one I call The Nightmare. The Devil he comes into our house and drinks up all our lemonade, Momma's "special" lemonade. Then he takes Momma away.

LEE

Is that the whole thing?



LEON

That ain't enough?

LEE

Does the Devil look like anyone you know?

LEON

Not until just now. He looks like you. ... are you the Devil?

LEE

(almost to himself. ) I think I might be.

(LEE looks off towards the crossroads. LEON stares at the back of his head in genuine concern/fear. MAYBELINE enters with a glass of lemonade.)

MAYBELINE

(to LEON) You run along inside.

LEON

Yes'm. (exits quickly.)

LEE

Maybeline, I know you're upset. But, I think I know how to make things right.

MAYBELINE

(drinking his lemonade.) How's that?

LEE

I think it's your turn to go to the crossroads.

MAYBELINE

(drinks all the lemonade.) Damn right it is. (Exits towards the crossroads.)

LEE

(Eits as MAYBELINE was at the start. Starts to fan himself.) Oh

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LEE (cont.)  
lordy it hot.

(Fade to Black)