

Chapter 1

The overhead light in the cab was very dim. At just past 8:00 the sun was down and nighttime was creeping over the city. Sitting alone in his cab, Reginald sang to himself.

"I think that a song... Should be something more than a beautiful melody..."

A knock on the window broke his concentration. Reginald rolled down the window and saw a white man in dark suit. "I need a ride. Open up," demanded the man. "No-can-do pal. I'm off duty," Reginald said. "Open the damn door. I will pay you double your normal fair," said the man.

Reginald pondered for a moment. "I could use the money," thought Reginald. "Get in man," he said as he unlocked the door. The man got into the car. "Where we headed," asked Reginald. "Image Records, 3rd Ave South. You know where that is right," asked the man. Butterflies built up in Reginald's stomach. "Yes, I know where that is," he said as he pulled off into the traffic.

"So what do you do at Image," asked Reginald. The man didn't say anything. He stared blankly out the window of the cab. "Hey man, are you alright," asked Reginald. "Can you just not talk to me? I'm thinking," said the man. "Dog, I'm not asking for taxi cab confessions or nothing. I'm just trying to find out what you do, that's it," laughed Reginald.

The man took a deep breath and looked down. Reginald's eyes bounced back and forth between the street and the rear-view mirror. "I'm an Artist and Repertoire guy for Image," he said mumbling. "You're an A&R guy for Image," Reginald asked excitedly. "Yeah, that's me," grumbled the man. "Shit dude, there's no way I'd be all down in the dumps with a gig like that," Reginald laughed.

The man looked irritated. He squinted as he stared at Reginald's eyes through the rear-view mirror. Reginald's smile quickly left his face. "Not that it's any of your business, but I'm on my last legs there," said the man. "What? You can't find talent in this city man," asked Reginald. "Look, not to toot my own horn, but I'm a singer and song-writer," continued Reginald. The man shook his head with disgust. "Do you know how many talentless sacks of shit I see every day? Everybody believes they can sing. Damn American Idol rejects," yelled the man.

"Look man, I know I can sing," replied Reginald. "As a matter of fact, I sing three nights a week with my band at The Hill," he continued. "My name is Reginald, but my folks call me Reggie or Reg," Reginald said as he reached back to shake the man's hand. The man reluctantly reached out and shook Reginald's hand. "I'm Craig Martin," said the man.

Craig seemed to go into deep thought. "So you sing at The Hill," asked Craig. "I hear that place is not good for your health," Craig finished.

"Listen man, it's a shit hole, that's the honest to God," said Reginald. "Me and the owner grew up together, so he gave me a job as a house act. They're open six nights a week and three nights a week they have some kind of drama going down," said Reginald. Craig snickered. "What about the other three nights," he asked. Reginald smiled slightly. "Those are the nights that I sing," said Reginald. Craig smiled at Reginald. "I like you kid," said Craig. "I don't know why, but you are the first person to make me laugh today," Craig said.

Reginald felt this might be his opportunity to make a connection. "Mr. Martin, I'd be forever grateful if you would just come by Tuesday night and listen to us," said Reginald. "I promise you, we won't disappoint you," pleaded Reginald. Craig sat quietly for a moment. "Could this be my break," Craig asked himself. "Yeah, I'll be there. What time," asked Craig. "Hell yeah," exclaimed Reginald. "Umm, just come by around 8," said Reginald. "Don't waste my time kid. As a matter of fact, we've got a couple of minutes before we get to the studio. Sing me something, anything," asked Craig.

"Anything," asked Reginald. "Yeah, just sing, we don't have much time," said Craig.

Reginald thought for a moment. Then he cleared his throat.

"I see us in the park

Strolling the summer days

Of imaginings in my head

And words from our hearts

Told only to the winds

Felt even without being said.

I don't want to bore you with my trouble

But there's something 'bout your love

That makes me weak and knocks me off my feet

There's something 'bout your love

That makes me weak and knocks me off my feet

Knocks me off my feet.

I don't want to bore you with it

Oh but I love you

I love you

I love you

I don't want to bore you with it

Oh but I love you

I love you

I love you more and more."

Craig's eyes bulged out of his head. "Jesus Christ kid, why are you singing at that hole in the wall," he asked. They pulled up in front of the studio. "Here, take my card. And how much do I owe you for the ride," asked Craig. "Man, you just paid me. We're even," said Reginald. "Tuesday night, 8 sharp," said Craig as he exited the cab. "I'll see you then Mr. Martin, thank you," said Reginald.

Reginald pulled off and headed towards the cab depot. He couldn't wipe the smile from his face. As he pulled up to the stoplight, he felt a vibration on his hip. He reached down and checked the caller ID on his cell phone. "Brandie," Reginald said to himself. "Hey beautiful," he said. "Reg, what are you doing tonight," asked Brandie. "Celebrating! I've got some great news," Reginald exclaimed. "What's going on babe," asked Brandie. "An A&R guy from Image is coming to listen to the crew on Tuesday night," said Reginald with a huge grin on his face.

"Oh baby, that's wonderful, but don't get your hopes up," said Brandie. "You know what happened last time the talent scout came," Brandie said. "It's not going down that way this time, Brandie," said Reginald. "Them niggas can't play," said Brandie. "You sing so well a cappella, but they mess you up," said Brandie. "Brandie, they've been there for me for years. I've got to give them an opportunity," said Reginald. "You gave them a chance last time," said Brandie. "Do you want to make an impression on this guy," asked Brandie. "Of course," said Reginald. "Cut them bums loose," said Brandie.