SLY

Vol. 1

Rodney Allen

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Prologue

It's 2005! The year is starting off crazy. I never thought that my rise on the rap scene would be this fast. OMG, I am backstage at the Grammys! Chillin in LA at The Staples Center. This moment is better than anything I've ever dreamed. As I said, this is crazy.

SLY has been nominated for best new rap artist of the year. The song "Nobody Knows," went triple platinum, and word on the street is that no female past or present can touch her. SLY, Franco, and a few of her peers in the industry are all hanging out backstage. They all asked, Are you nervous?

SLY replied, “Come on now, do I look nervous?”

One of her friends said, "Ahh, yes!"

Everyone erupted in laughter.

Franco questioned, "Do you have your mint green tea, SLY?"

She answered with a nod. He joked, "Man, you're tall tonight! How high are those heels?"

“About six inches, ” she responded, rolling her eyes, “ Now shut up before I dunk on you!”

Everyone in the room cracked up, except SLY. She was beginning to shed tears as she heard James Smith (a popular entertainer) giving her a huge introduction. The audience was going crazy. They were screaming and dancing in their seats. A mix of SLY's hit songs was playing. While wiping away tears, she began to daydream about how it all started.

1

Just Gettin' Started

The year is 2000. It's a cold November evening in Gary, Indiana. The students at Martin Luther King Jr. High School are preparing for its annual talent show. Everyone looks forward to this event every year. Sylvia and her best friend Dana, are among the many contestants. This is their first year performing. In the past, they've only watched and wondered what it would be like to participate in the school's biggest event. They're ready to start their senior year off with a bang.

A confident Sylvia Whitmore is backstage preparing for the show. She has on a killer outfit. Dressed in a white T, cut off Jean shirt and blue jeans, with five-inch stilettos. Her hair is cornrowed on the sides, and frizzed into a mohawk in the center. SLY watches the other performers before wondering what she can do to win. Sylvia's best friend, Dana, comes off the stage after singing " The greatest love of all," and asks, "How did I do?"

“ You did great!” Sylvia says.

“Thanks a lot! I thought so too!”

Sylvia continued, “But you’re still going to lose,” she said with confidence dripping from her voice.

Dana responded playfully, “Yeah, okay. By the way, what are you going to do?”

“ Rap.”

“ RAP? I never heard you rap before in my life. And what song might I ask?”

"I'm not using anybody's song. I'm going to use Lil Wayne's beat, though."

“ So what you’re going to freestyle?” asked Dana.

"Yes, and why not?" as she answers her friend while Dana is shaking her head. "I don't believe this." Just then, the host called Sylvia to the stage. She walked confidently across the stage and handed the DJ a CD containing instrumental music. She gestured for the mic to which the DJ snidely responded: "for what, all you're going to do is lip sync!" With a new swagger, she didn't even know she had. She mouthed just loud enough for him to hear, "there are no lyrics on there; it's an instrumental ." The DJ glared at her in response.

Sylvia caressed the mic like fine china and proceeded to rip it freestyle. The crowd was rocking. Everyone was hanging on to her every word.

" I got the floor, you fools a bore. You might as well go sit down. This is the final act, so go ahead and gimme the crown. That's right, I said crown, not no Tiara. If one of y'all gets in my face. I'm going to bury ya".

People were dancing in the aisles as if it was a club instead of a high school auditorium. Her performance was spectacular. So much so that the last three contestants backed out and decided not to perform. They'd rather quit than be upstaged by Sylvia. When the three judges cast their votes, they announced Sylvia Whitmore as the unanimous winner. Sylvia jumped up and down, screaming, " I did it! I knew I could do it! She and Dana hugged and jumped around in circles.

"So, it's like that?" Dana questioned her friend, as she now took a more serious tone.

“Like what?”

"We’ve been best friends since kindergarten, and you’ve been hiding this from me?"

“I thought I told you.”

"No, you didn't."

The best friends hugged and laughed some more. After kidding around, Dana got serious again and asked Sylvia, "well, what is your name?"

“You know what my name is, stop playing.”

“No, I mean your stage name.”

“I don’t know. I haven’t thought about it. Any suggestions?”

"Well, let me see. How about Gary's Finest," Dana suggested.

" I don't know about that. It's too long and sounds old," Sylvia criticized.

“How about the Queen?” Dana questioned.

"I can't ride off Latifah like that; she's one of my idols. I need something that defines me. At least one of my dope characteristics."

Dana said, “You’re making this so difficult.”

As the auditorium was clearing out, everyone was still chatting in awe over Sylvia's performance. The students, teachers, and the principal commented on how great she was. .The host caught up to Sylvia and Dana, as they were on their way out of the auditorium." Hey, wait, here's your prize for winning the talent show."

"Oh, thank you so much." Sylvia reaches for the envelope. She opens it, and inside is an American Express gift card for one hundred dollars. Dana asked jokingly, "well, what do I get?"

The host said, “How about a pair of black socks.”

Dana says, "okay, where are they?"

The host raised his pants leg and said, "here, they're on my feet."

All three bust out in laughter. Sylvia told Dana, “you asked for that one.”

Sylvia and Dana walked past the DJ as he was packing up. When he notices them, he says, "You're leaving something, aren't you?"

Sylvia responds,“ what would that be?”

“Your CD.”

" Oh! I forgot about that thang," she said, laughing," I don't need it anyway, you can have it."

Dana chimed in, saying, "Dang. I don't get the CD either, that's messed up."

"My name is Franco, by the way," the DJ said, introducing himself. Franco was tall, slim with shoulder-length dreadlocks. That was really slick of you leading me on like that like you couldn't rap."

"Well, you found out like everybody else," Sylvia said, "and by the way, it's called talent."

"Whatever."I'll see you around".

Sylvia and Dana nodded as if to say okay. As they were leaving, Sylvia asked: "Dana, did you hear what he called me?"

“ What “slick?”

“Yeah, he better recognize. I could be the next big thing.”

“That’s the perfect stage name for you, “Slick.” Umm Dana, haven’t you heard of Slick Rick? Wait a minute, how about “SLY”?”

Both of them became silent, then Sylvia smiled, "I like SLY."

“How much do you like it?”

“I'll show you how much,” Sylvia reached into her pocket and handed Dana the American Express Gift Card. Dana thanked her.

Are you sure you want me to have it?

"Yeah, girl, you can be like my manager. If I'm going to do this, I want to be known as the best rapper of all time, not about how many contests or awards I win."

“WOW!!! That’s deep.”

"Shut up, girl!" They both shared a laugh and hug and walked out of the auditorium doors.

2

I Know I'm Good

Sylvia's father, Chuck, was in the basement nodding in front of the TV with the ten o'clock news watching him. Sylvia comes in, still excited over her fantastic evening. She runs through the house frantically looking for someone to tell the good news. She finally finds her dad relaxing in the basement.

Sylvia headed downstairs to tell him the good news. Chuck knows that she can sing, but what he doesn't know is going to blow him away.

‘Daddy! Daddy! Guess what?”

Sitting up in his chair. He responds tiredly, “what Sylvia?”

“I won the school's talent show,” she screamed.

Sitting further upright and now fully awake, he asks his daughter, "Talent show? What talent show?"

"The school's talent show! I did great! Everyone was congratulating me! It was awesome!" Sylvia said with such excitement; her father could barely understand what she was saying.

"That's great. How come you didn't tell us about it? You know that your mother and I would have been there. By the way, what song did you sing?"

" Well, Dad, I have to tell you something. I didn't sing."

"Well, uh, what did you do?" her father asked, becoming more confused by the minute.

“I rapped!” Sylvia responded somewhat pensively.

“Rapped what?”

“I rapped! You know, like rap music, rapped.

Chuck sat in his chair, looking at her in a way that expressed his confusion. He began to talk. You mean like..."

But Sylvia cut him off, "Dad; you know what I mean! I'm tired of singing. I've been singing since I was five. I wanted to do something else."

Her father laughed. "Boy, I can't wait to tell your mother this one."

"Dad, why can't you just be proud of me?"

"I am proud of you. I just didn't know you liked *that* music.”

Sylvia was sure she heard an extra emphasis on "that." She tried to explain to her dad how much she loves rapping and how good she is.

" Well, Sylvia, nevertheless, I'm proud of you. Besides, it's not like you're doing this all the time. I'll give you a pass," he added, with a bourgeois tone.

“A pass?” Sylvia, is now really getting upset, “what if this is what I wanted to do with my life?”

"Sylvia, you can't be serious?".

"But Dad, I'm really good. Let me show you." Sylvia starts to rap her talent show winning rhyme,) but her father gets up out of his chair and goes upstairs. Sylvia heartbrokenly whispers, "See, that's why I didn't tell you about the talent show."

3

Start Spreading the News

The next morning Sylvia's mom Gloria and her dad are in the kitchen getting ready to eat breakfast. Chuck had planned to fill his wife in on Sylvia, winning the talent show.

“Good morning honey how are we doing this morning?”

I'm lovely, now that I've seen you," Gloria answered.

The young at heart couple liplock in a passionate kiss only to be interrupted by their only daughter.

"Oh, God, cut it out. You could have stayed in your room for all that."

" Yeah, Yeah, come over here and get some of this lovin'," Chuck said. The next thing Sylvia knows, she is between her mother and father, who are showering her with wet kisses. She allows her parents a few minutes of this way too public even in the kitchen affection. Sylvia interrupts the love fest by asking her mom if she's heard the good news, even though she isn't sure if her father told it as a good news story.

“News? What news?” Gloria answered, confirming Sylvia’s suspicion that her dad didn't share the most important event of her life to date.

"I'll let her tell you," he stated with more of the bourgeois tone from last night.

“ Mom, I won the school’s talent show last night!”

" That's wonderful, sweetheart," Gloria stated as she hit her husband on the back while cutting her eyes at him. It was the look only a Black mother can give. "Why didn't you tell me last night?"

"You were asleep," he added while he moved out of reach of another slap on the back.

"Sylvia, tell me about what happened. Did you win anything?"

“Mom I was great if you didn’t know who I was you would have thought I was a professional.”

"That's great, honey," as Gloria gives her daughter a big hug.

“Mom I’m really good, Dad doesn’t believe me.”

"Why can't you sing, he chimed, "you're just so good at it."

"Dad, why can't I try something different?"

"Chuck, why are you overreacting, it's just a talent show, Gloria voiced.

"Mom, it's more than that. I'm really good. Dana and I even came up with a name for me."

“A name! We gave you a name sixteen years ago,” Chuck shouted.

"Dad, you know what I mean, a stage name. It's "SLY."

"SLY!" Chuck said, laughing his head off.

“Chuck please, it's kind of cool.”,.

" Thanks, mom." Sylvia rolled her eyes at her father. Chuck leaves the kitchen laughing as he is amazed over the name "SLY."

"Sylvia, your dad, is just old fashioned, he doesn't mean anything by it. You know we're with you every step of the way," Gloria added.

"Mom thank you, I needed to hear that. By the way, mom, can you start calling me SLY so I could get used to it?"

“Now wait a minute missy, Sylvia is just fine under this roof,” she said firmly.

"OK, I thought I would just try." They both shared a laugh.

7

Mom Seals the Deal

Later that afternoon, Chuck and Gloria met at their favorite sandwich joint for lunch. There, Gloria had devised her plan to convince Chuck into letting Sylvia pursue her rap dream. Chuck was already sitting down, waiting for Gloria. He was a bit agitated as he flipped through the sports section of the newspaper for the second time.

Gloria walks in, "Hey, honey! Have you been waiting long?"

" No, not too long.", "How is work today?"

"Well, sweetheart, work is work. It's cool, though".

“You know towing cars all day, isn't exactly hard work. It's just when dealing with people who can’t read street signs”. That's tiring. As both of them share a laugh,

“Have you ordered yet?”

" No, not yet. This place is always so busy, but the sandwiches are great! Let me get the waitress' attention." As Chuck was about to get up, a waitress appeared behind him. "Good afternoon, how are you all doing today? Can I start you off with something to drink?"

"Yes, I'll have a Dr. Pepper and ah, Gloria, how about you?"

" I'll take water with lemon for now," she replied.

“ Alright, a Dr. Pepper and a water with lemon coming right up. Oh, by the way, my name is Brandi. I'll be right back to take your order.”

" We'll be here." Chuck replied, " I'm sorry, honey, I didn't even ask about your day so far."

" That's ok. I'm doing fine. She said, " I just wanted to talk to you about Sylvia."

" About!" he shouted cautiously, "I hope it's not about that rappin' thing she wants to do. I know you didn't come down here for this did you?",

"Yes, I did, and I think we need to talk about this." I know she caught both of us off guard, but as her parents, we really need to discuss this. After all, she is going to be grown soon, and we won't have much say in the matter."

" I don't want Sylvia wasting her time with this mess!" he states firmly."

"Well, I don't think it's a mess. I heard one of her songs, and I thought it was kind of cool." Gloria added.

“What do you know about what's cool?”

" Excuse me? I'm very musically inclined. Thank you very much! Let's give her a chance to explore this new thing that has her bursting at the seams." Gloria stated calmly, as she reached across the table to touch Chuck's hand.

“I don’t know about this. What's up with this Franco dude? What is he all about?” Chuck asked.

" I don't know, and that's something we have to trust our daughter's judgment on."

"Well, I'll tell you this. I know we have a good kid, but she needs to be focused. S.A.T's and college apps and not to mention, her studies I don't want anything derailing that." Brandi finally appears with their drinks, "a Dr. Pepper for you and a water with lemon for you."

"Thank you very much!" Can you give us a few minutes? Everything is so good. We need to look over the menu a bit longer."Sure!"Brandi replied, "Just give me holla when you're ready."

Chuck stated, " Will do."

"Chuck, let's give her a chance. I think we owe her that much, and if her grades start slipping or she's not pulling her weight at home, we'll adjust some things, but let's just try to support whatever she wants to do!". You know Gloria, you should be a politician, or I'm just sweet on you. I'll go along with it on two conditions: One, I have to meet this Franco kid, and two, I want to check his studio out to see if it's legit."

Gloria tells Chuck,” Thank you so much! I'm sure Sylvia will be happy. I can't wait to tell her!”

"You mean we will tell her." chided Chuck.

END OF EXCERPTS