

DANCE OF THE HOLY GHOSTS
by Marcus Gardley

About the play (from Center Stage):

Oscar Clifton is a Blues man living through his memories of the past, until his estranged grandson Marcus pays a visit. Together, they confront a history of loves, regrets, and missed opportunities. This acclaimed play by Marcus Gardley is a poetic family drama set in the key of Blues—a memory-scape skipping seamlessly across the decades.

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OSCAR CLIFTON – M, 50s-70s, African-American. A cantankerous blues man worn down by a broken heart and dream.

About this scene:

Ten-year-old MARCUS is visiting his grandfather, OSCAR, in prison. OSCAR decides to give the boy some advice.

OSCAR

Hog shit, your father's fuckin lazy. God put man on this earth to work and I don't care if it's flippin a burger or flappin a jack – a job's a job and there ain't no reason why he can't get one. He's leadin you to slaughter Marcus. You better watch him. If I was you, I'd find me a job, work some over time, move out and get my own place.

MARCUS

But I'm only ten.

OSCAR

So? When I was ten I built my own house out of can goods and fishin wire. See, you kids today ain't got no damn ambition. And sit up straight when grown folks is talking to you! No wonder you stupid enough to steal, you ain't got nobody at home to keep your ass in check. You need a girlfriend, Marcus. You too old to be twiddling your thumbs, waiting for some girl to pass your way - women ain't no bus. They don't arrive blowin smoke from they ass expectin a transfer. You got to get at em. They like balloons that way, you gotta go and buy em. Take em to parties, carry em around town so they stand out. And they like that and you'll like that. And when you get tired of holdin to em you let em go. Release they string and they fly off till some other fool gets a hold of em. I mean, let's be honest. You're not really a looker, Marcus. I'm a looker. So it's pie for me – getting women. You on the other hand...well, you're not ass ugly but you know...you need an angle. A mack.

[...]

What is it you do?

MARCUS

I on't know. Sometimes I read.

OSCAR

Why!?

MARCUS

Cause it's fundamental.

OSCAR

Shiiiiit. Fucks up your mental - what it does. You can't learn 101 from a book. All knowledge comes from the street, sits in the air like a stench. Ain't no wise men writing knowledge. Wise men tell stories. Hell, even God told stories. He had a transcriber but he told the stories. And that's what you need: a story, a mack, a game.