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## Destro y el

by *Stephon Senegal*

There he laid. His head torn from his body. I picked him up. A part of. Prodding for a sign. Holding his lifeless body. Destro! I shouted. Muted. Pleading with whomever would listen. I stared at him. A swell of dry tears. A soundless breath. In shock. A playful demeanor replaced with a deft stare. Rage overtook. Eight-year-old me plotting a path to sweet vengeance. Over the faint whisper of a cooling unit in the window. I looked up. And there he was. My cousin. The kid destroyer. Waiting. Looking. Mouthing a pitiless sorrow. He picked up the polished head of Destro. Attempting to put it back on. To no avail. Oblivious to what he had just done. I typically did not bring my action figures when I played with my peers. They were not privy to the world I had built for my plastic army. And frankly I was not interested in explaining. Admittedly, my toy play was a little highbrow for a third grader. Justifications aside, my vengeance did not find conclusion that day. Our equally pitiless mothers, best friends as they were, saw to that. But instead. Destro had met his demise. A Lego wall was his undoing.

Prized possessions. I had only four toy action figures and their general Destro had been lost. For the others. This put everything in jeopardy. Their fear. Palpable. I crafted robust stories for the voyages in the yard, under the kitchen sink or amidst the flames during Sunday grilling. Destro was stout amongst his compatriots. Thickly built, he wore an all-black outfit. His plastic frame took the heat better than most. Boots high and outfitted with straps to hold his weaponry. Oversized lapels. Underside red accents on his tactical shirt. Even in battle. Couple buttons undone. Being a man of style or toy of adventure. He sported a chromium steel helmet and mask. Humanoid features. It fit atop. Covering his neck, face and head. In the G.I. Joe playbook, Destro was considered the bad guy. Oh well. A terrorist for them. A freedom fighter to me. Anybody with that type of bling must come from kings.

Upon my return to Grandmas, I immediately went to the bedroom. Pondering how to fix him. How to make Destro whole. Frantically to the kitchen I went. Clinking through the roughage of pewter and rusted steel. Screws and hair pins. Nothing. Spotted. A butterknife on the counter. Too big. Too clumsy. I needed something more precise. Then it hit me. To the tool box I went. Strewn across the floor. Destro's parts, my army and Unk's tools. I began my operation. Unscrewing to fasten. Rotating. Piece by piece. Taking parts from other figures. I put him back together. Different though. A mixing. Satisfied I sat. He was made whole. A confluence of fragments. Creolized. Altered now. His chest completely bare. White out for war paint. Arm bands and the like.

Playing my usual games. Their dialogue began. Starting anew. Winded from the afternoon pause. The figurines discussed their day. Destro reborn. Preparing for the coming mission in the den on the plastic covered sofa. They began their chant. Stoic. I convened. To listen.

*Look at you. Those around you want to forget. Not made for remembering. You think they honor your lost. Our enemy is unkind. And what else should they be. Recall your tears. It has coaxed no pity. Plowing our toughness. They have plucked your heart. You have discarded your own for the imaginary. And yes. Your courage. How could I forget. What is so easily forgotten. And yet. There you sit. Stalled in the rear. Your face chilled on the Pintos blue leather. The ride back. Aggrieved. I assure. The specter of our demise held more. We have endured the flame and the crush of steel. But what of you. What tale can you tell. Did you dare. Munster of song. A smattering of the insightful. Pause. Just a second. Boom. Rum pum pa pum. You want to be king. Splatter your enemy. As I. Or is the comfort of illusion your creed. I goad you. Mandinka. Maroon. Color your crown in the blood of the pale. For your fathers sake. Sought. Our history is what they fear. Captured. O prince. A summit awaits. The thorn of thugs. Dem niggas aint bussing no grapes. A will to win. Hay sue us. Mix in thy provocation. Mask off.*

And to what do I owe the honor. *To destiny.* He suggested. *Its ways have brought you. To begin anew. Again.* An ode to my Creole peeps. A hodgepodge of genetics. To create something whole from the broken. Tales fashioned from the violence of envy. A lineage born from conflict, raised in the morrow of none. Our everything was misremembered for the sphere of misunderstanding. No fret. Rainbow walls. Celebrating freedoms stole. Peering upon them. I took them. To break. Arms and legs. I took another and then another. Mixing. Matching. They begged for more. The playthings. Reconfiguring. Becoming. Practicing. Until I could lift the hammers. A talisman for today. Destro spoke. *Save your adoration. I want devotion.*