THE TYSHEEM CROCKER READER'S COMPANION

A COLLECTION OF EXCERPTS

TYSHEEM CROCKER



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The Tysheem Crocker Reader's Companion

A Collection of Excerpts

Tysheem Crocker

S.G. Publishing

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IT COULD HAPPEN TO ANY OF US

One of three gut-wrenching memoirs written by Tysheem

Crocker while wrongfully convicted in Pennsylvania

God given talent and an unapologetic grind is what Kept Tysheem grounded while grappling with a criminal justice system that seems to wrong uneducated brown and Black people in mammoth proportion. The same passion Ty climbed up out of poverty with in the streets during the mid-90s, he channeled to remove ignorance of the law from his path in prison. And after nearly 23 years of inequity and unjust incarceration, all the hard work finally began to bear fruit.

Read on for a look at It Could Happen To Any Of us.

Excerpt from *It Could Happen To Any Of Us* copyright 2022

by Tysheem Crocker.

Foreword

As a kid, growing up in the Bronx, I thought I would become a legend for my accolades and accomplishments on the streets. Thought I would land in the pantheon of street scholars because I was getting to that bag. Never did it cross my mind that battling the criminal justice system would make my story legendary.

And what makes a legend? Doing something very few have achieved.

Let me make something very clear: I have never accepted this as my fate. I have never walked this walk without making complaints. Without being disgruntled. Without trying to do something about it. My efforts have amounted to many sleepless nights. My unrighteous attempts at righting this manifest wrong has landed me in the hole for long periods of time. I'd been met with great resistance by prosecutors. One had even lied on the stand, under oath, to keep me in prison. I was in prison throwing bricks at the prison not because I wanted to, but because I had no other choice.

It takes a special type of person to survive these types of droughts. You try to imagine waking up everyday without a purpose. That's the life of a Lifer.

Women left me, they thought I was finished. People stole from me because they thought they would never have to face me again. I lost my mother to cancer.

Many would be unwilling to admit this, maybe even afraid, but here it goes! Several years existed where I was shrouded in humiliation, and

super ashamed about my situation. Point blank being imprisoned for life (especially for a crime I didn't commit) left me unable at times to look in a mirror. Just the idea of being condemned, viewed as irredeemable, and side-eyed as the walking dead does something to the psyche and the esteem. So, for as long as I could, I hid my sentence while there existed people who weaponized the devastating blow.

I never hid my sentence out of deception, never had a desire to mislead anyone, I was only protecting my feelings and emotions from further injury. But in the process, I had inflicted pain. When the truth surfaced, chicks would be like, "Ty, why didn't you just tell me? You could've told me!" (I'm telling you, the advancements of the world wide web is bananas. Anything can be Googled. Yes, even your case and the outcomes. And chicks be on it.)

"That's not something easy to discuss," would be my natural response. And just like that, what took time building was destroyed in no time.

Sentences like this weren't just designed as deterrents to crime for those deserving, but also as invitations for further rejection, and reason to discount one's worth. I lost everything when I came to prison.

Makes one wonder: is it better to have had it and lost it, or to never have had it at all????

See, when you had it, you know how to get it back...

"Congratulations, Mr. Crocker. You are now a Business Technology graduate..." the instructress had cheerfully announced, placing evidence of this accomplishment in my waiting and eager hands. After two and a

half years of being educated by her six courses in total, I had finally completed the curriculum. While the streets had prepared me for the entrepreneurial world, now school had prepared me for the business world!!!

Prior to that day, fall of 2003, such a joyous and momentous feeling had eluded me. I had not graduated from elementary school, Jr. high school, or high school. And, I had never smiled harder.

Unfortunately for me, Accounting, Business English, Human Relations, Typing 1, Word, and Access/Excel would not have been on my radar had I not been incarcerated. Truth be told, I hated school when I was growing up in the Bronx. Too many distractions. School was secondary, while the streets were necessary.

And then ever so suddenly, knowledge had become the most important thing in my small and miniscule world. Academics and scholarly attributes were things I now coveted. Those would become things I worked hard to acquire and attain that no one could ever take from me.

Education is what I relied on in my twenties, and into my thirties, almost in the same way an addict is dependent upon its drug of choice. During those years of incarceration, I completed Drug & Alcohol Education (12.5 hrs.), Thinking For A Change, Life Skills, Violence Prevention, and Breaking the Chains. Also, I have a certificate in Creative Writing, finishing at the top of my class in 2013.Though some of those classes/groups were prescriptive, it was my choice whether or not to participate. It was my choice whether or not to quit.

Through education, my cognitive thinking had been refined, my impulses had been curbed, my urges to indulge in drugs and liquor had

been subdued, and my ability to build had never been more efficient. Academics were redefining my perception of reality, and magnifying my imagination.

However, this growth and development was no easy feat. Along the way I'd made many mistakes, several bad decisions, and did things I am not proud of. Sometimes circumstances dictate habit. And habits dictate behavior. One day I would feel like I had everything going for me, and then the next I would feel like I had nothing to live for. That is because, prison isn't about rehabilitation, it's about how much suffering can one take.

I was an all around good student, above satisfactory, but once I left that education building I was venturing back into darkness. And defiance seems to dance its best in the cloak of darkness.

There were times I've felt helpless. Times I'd feel cheap, working for pennies when competent counsel cost tens of thousands of dollars, and productive Private Investigators carry hefty price tags. Attorneys and PIs don't take Honey Buns and candy bars. I felt like I was in this hell on earth all alone. Times existed when I felt like it had to be this way, because the only time my soul didn't ache is when I was accomplishing something.

I needed to be uncomfortable in order to ward off complacency. I needed struggle because that invites urgency. And everyday I wore that brown uniform or that brown sweat suit, it was a reminder of what I'd left behind, and what I needed to get back to. I was the bread winner in my family. I was securing the bag.

In addition to prison being uncomfortable, prisoners are also unable to

go after the moments that will define who he or she is as a person. We're just known as numbers.

These institutions (prisons) were built to warehouse poor, uneducated people with propensities for violence, while institutions of higher learning were erected with exclusion in mind. The misconception is: we're incapable of complying with the organizational expectations of western civilization. With that said, I think there are five ways in which to visualize prison. THE HANGOUT, THE HIDEOUT, THE HOTEL, THE HOSPITAL, THE HOSTAGE SITUATION. I call this philosophy THE FIVE H's...and I will be laying it out in the first chapter.

At the age of twenty-six, I made one of the best decisions of my life. I started writing my first novel. The process began with an intention and concluded with a commitment. Regardless of obstacles, or the length of time or the road ahead, I was on a mission.

By my 30th birthday, I had a business plan for S.G. Publishing. Today, I have penned double digit novels, published nine independently, met some of the culture's top writers along the journey, and entertained offers to make movies.

But, my greatest accomplishment is: I learned how to interpret American criminal law, and craft legal arguments. It proved to be a valuable skill, having been accused and convicted of conspiring to commit murder. Yes, I was forced to undertake such a tedious, meticulous and demanding path. People weren't lining up to help me. I was strapped for cash. I was undoubtedly at rock bottom. And I am innocent.

There is only a statute of limitation on Innocence if we allow for it. There is only an expiration date on justice if we allow it.

So, yes, education changed my perspective, while creative writing saved my life. Progress comes in pieces, my friends...

IT COULD HAPPEN TO ANY OF US is not an autobiography. This is an inspirational and informational book including explosive interviews, anecdotes, criminal law, and the circumstances surrounding my wrongful conviction.

I've suffered from PTSD, I battled depression, I've represented myself in the court of law for many years, I've been denied a new trial a dozen times, I have exceeded expectations. I also continued to imagine. Imagination is its own form of courage. Each denial, dismissal, AFFIRMED, was a lesson learned about my case, and about the American criminal justice system. And that is: No matter what we do, how far we have come, Blacks will always be looked at with great suspicion...

Survival and attracting light in a place of utter darkness takes time and perseverance. I landed a Legal Dream Team by thinking outside this box.

In addition to telling this story of survival, I have interviewed three men on three very important topics: DUE PROCESS, THE POST CONVICTION RELIEF ACT, and COMMUTATION IN PENNSYLVANIA.

The good, the bad, the ugly, *IT COULD HAPPEN TO ANY OF US*...

This book was created with the ability to be read and digested in chronological order, or each chapter can be read individually.

"The imagination is sometimes more

important than knowledge..."

— Albert Einstein, 1879-1955, physicist

Chapter One

The Five H's

The Hangout, The Hideout, The Hotel, The Hospital, The Hostage

In January of 1998, Rikers Island was gangland, the battlefield of a bloody war between two races, Blacks and Latinos, that lasted almost four years before a truce was agreed upon.

When I was dumped on Rikers, the backstory was front and center. I cannot front, I was fascinated by the gory details and the sudden unity the lifestyle had created. Through five principles, New York City's underworld had been unified! A city that once suffered from territorial unrest had a common goal: obliterate racial group oppression.

I'd been thrown into the lion's den, at a point in life where a male is no longer considered a boy, but not quite yet a man. Maybe a more befitting term than lion's den is: THE DEVIL'S NEST.

I credit that tumultuous time of captivity to my ability to exert the necessary power to prosper despite the limitations prison places on a kid. And that is a mentality very different than the one that can take you to the top on the streets. Prison will swallow you whole, one large gulp, if you are not mentally fit.

Six months of my life was spent in G.R.V.C.—0909 Hazen Street—notoriously known as the Beacon. By several years, I was the youngest fugitive on 19-Block. Attempted murder, murder, and armed robbery were most of the charges on the rap sheets. Standing 5'7", just 140 lbs., it was there that I learned: if I didn't continue making decisions for myself,

like I'd been doing on the streets, somebody else would be making decisions for me...

The universal consensus is: prison is a very dangerous place. And that it is. And every time I came out my cell, I had to be on point. Because it could pop at a moment's notice. Overall, though, the strong survive, but the powerful prevail.

There is an ecosystem in direct correlation with anomalistic ambition. Care, custody, and control is the motto of the Department of Corrections, but once I got that classification number, I was on my own.

It didn't hurt that I had a comrade by the name of Tankhead who had not only survived that Rikers Island gauntlet, but he also had a legendary name in the prison system. At the age of sixteen he had gone in, and by the time I hit Rikers, he was twenty-one and O.G. had been added to Tankhead. As young dudes, running the streets of New York, we'd had a few gains and losses together. Our neighborhood was brimming with violence.

If you're not strong or powerful, not connected to dudes who are, prison is horrible. With that said, there's nothing wrong with keeping a low profile. After all, it's about getting home, lavishing in liberties and the sensations of society. I don't know any dudes, (serious about legacy), who enjoy incarceration.

Now, I say this with absolutely no gratification—The Beacon had become another hangout for me. The allure was not just magnetic, pulling me in, but equally as intoxicating; in the same way street life had been to me eight years earlier.

Different baddies (women) pulling up on visits every other day, prime time phone slots (8 PM - 10:45 PM), and getting blunted everyday had put me at a great disadvantage. No question, getting back to my family, my cars, and my spot in the winning circle resided at the forefront of my

young mind. But I wasn't doing anything to avoid this wrongful conviction.

As a result, I had no sense of direction. Just lawless principles predicated on survival—while 200 miles away, as an alleged gang leader, prosecutors in York County were lining me to take the fall for a 1997 murder case.

Prison politics had a stronghold on me. I was so consumed, so entrenched, I didn't even realize how bad things were getting for me. Although, I hadn't pulled the trigger, and I wasn't present when the murder went down, conspiracy laws was rearing its ugly head.

The day after Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls won their sixth ring, my fugitive warrant was executed. And in York, Pennsylvania, I had been formally charged with conspiracy to commit murder.

Though I was thoroughly prepared for whatever prison could throw my way, I was not prepared for what the York County Assistant District Attorney was planning... That's because I was hanging out. When I got to York County Prison the games didn't stop.

Exactly six months from June 15, 1998, (the day I was removed from New York and brought to PA), I was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, and sentenced to LIFE in prison.

I thought I would come back on appeal after sitting for three, four, maybe five years, but here it is 2022 and I've served nearly a quarter century of unjust incarceration.

Because there were no outstanding men in my life when I was growing up is no excuse for how things turned out for me. I could've got out, I should've got out, but I didn't got out the game. Now I was in prison, hanging out. Want to know what that got me convicted of a crime I didn't commit???

Anything that could have gone wrong had gone wrong. Nothing

about me said business. Nothing said I was taking this whole thing serious. And to think, I was in the streets calling shots.

The morning of jury selection, I got down to the receiving room of York County Prison, where I learned that I would be going to trial in Foam Posits and a gray sweat suit. A friend of mine, Cindy Marion, had mailed my trial clothes overnight, but the mail room had rejected the UPS package because I had not taken the proper channels to have it accepted by the mailroom. A policy was in place addressing this very matter, but I didn't know anything about the mail room policy because I was in prison hanging out.

An all-white jury convicted a black boy dressed like he was going to a pickup basketball game, not just because the prosecution withheld exculpatory information, not just because his best friend framed him, but because he did nothing to prevent it.

It is so critical and incumbent upon us that upon detainment we hit the law library, that we understand the charges, that we reference the statutes and check the controlling law that the government intends to use to support their theory of the crime. It is imperative that we know the prison policies where we are being housed awaiting trial.

As a conscious Black man, treading the waters of injustice, my imagination will not allow me to cheat myself of the reality that those jurors handling my fate in 1999 thought, look at this super predator! He didn't even have enough sense to wear a suit and shoes for trial...

At the time of my apprehension, arrest and prosecution, the terminology SUPER PREDATOR had just begun to resonate. It was associated with threat. A domestic threat to societal norms. It derived out of a necessity to curb the influx in crime, specifically in the inner cities of America. Young black men became targets as a result.

Prosecutors, judges, and all white juries put more Black people away during this era of tough-on-crime than any other time in American history.

First Lady, (at the time), Hillary Clinton was the first politician I ever heard use the term—SUPER PREDATOR.

It was the launch pad for then Senator Biden to introduce his legislation, which ultimately became known as the 1994 Crime Bill that disproportionately imprisoned minorities and made it extremely hard to fight a wrongful conviction.

I'm sure neither of these politicians saw this far into the future to witness just how destructive the terminology and Bill would be nearly 30 years later. They were just pandering to their base and constituency, I imagine. But I will never allow my imagination to overrule my common sense. Surely those jurors knew they had a duty and an opportunity to put away a SUPER PREDATOR, even if certain things didn't make sense.

I was left with regrets I live with everyday.

Proceeding to trial with a lawyer who wasn't with me.

Being ignorant when it came to the prison rules.

Being unaware that a constitutional protection was: I pick my jury.

And being unaware of what evidence was admissible and what was inadmissible.

Being wrongly convicted was an awakening for me. A rude awakening too. I had to accept the reality that my life was in shambles, and it would take a miracle to reverse this fate.

And for that, I'm witnessing seeds I'd planted many years ago sprout into beanstalks.

The man with no vision, unable to see past where he is in life, is no different than the man without a land. He is lost.

As we learned in this chapter, I was once lost. Which brings me to the purpose of this chapter ...

Everyone has their very own perception of reality. Everyone on lockdown copes with the pressures of prison differently. Though we own some of the same principles and even traits, we possess totally different perspectives. Quite frankly, prison is something different to everyone who is faced with the challenge.

I see it this way... To some, prison is a hangout. When I first came to this devil's nest, I was one of them young dudes hanging out and putting no work in to protect my future.

To others, it's a hideout.

Some see prison as a hotel.

Then there's that few who see prison as a hospital. There is also a fraction of prison population who view prison as a hostage situation. When I look in the mirror, a hostage glares back at me.

This is just my philosophy, and I call it the Five H's. THE HANGOUT, THE HIDEOUT, THE HOTEL, THE HOSPITAL, THE HOSTAGE SITUATION.

Five H's is based on experience, as well as what I've had a front row seat to for over 24 years. And I'm going to break it down in hopes of enlightening those interested in self-awareness, self awakening, and eventual elevation.

Prison doesn't have to be—end all be all.

H-1) The hangout! That select sector of brothers too consumed with playing games instead of making the time count. Basically, (and at times subconsciously), they're approaching the prison experience like it's nothing serious, favoring insignificant occurrences over important matters.

Whether you're serving one or 100 years, nothing should be more important than regaining your freedom. If it's not going to be through the parole board, then it has to be through the courts. Maybe even commutation. But, don't cheat yourself by treating prison like it's a hangout.

H-2) The hideout! Now this is heavy. And I can't count how many times I saw it...

The sands of time have dwindled, it's time to roll, and a dude does something dumb to go to solitary, fully aware that an automatic parole hit will follow.

Whenever there's an opportunity to reunite with love ones, that moment must be seized. And if you have to, then relocate and start over. But do not stay on prison grounds any longer than you have to. Because tomorrow is not promised.

H-3) The hotel! I understand it can be hard for some dudes to function in society, let alone thrive in the world, because of institutionalization, but languishing in prison is not the answer to that conundrum. Sadly, there is a portion of dudes who actually live better in prison than they do on the streets. So, they keep coming back, or outstay their welcome. The government calls it recidivism, I call it "life on an installment plan."

H-4) The hospital! There exists a select case of people who commit crime because healthcare is almost free in prison. Maybe if healthcare was afforded able to all Americans, the prison population wouldn't be overcrowded. But there is a darker and more sinister side to this. And that is, prison has become a dumping ground for the mentally ill. In the 90s the government decided closing down mental health institutions in favor of erecting more prisons was a bright idea. Simultaneously, the word "Prisoner" was replaced with "Inmate." And prisons became known as institutions.

They blame gang culture, and that could very well be the case, but sending people to prison who should be in mental hospitals equally adds to the dangers of prison life.

H-5) The hostage situation! Hostages are held against their will. Hostages are uncomfortable. Hostages endure great duress and immense

suffering. Hostages are always planning a way to win even when they aren't winning.

I've been held hostage for all of my twenties, all of my thirties, and well into my forties. And after 24 years of unjust incarceration, I hold the same disdain for prison today that I held the first day I was taken hostage.

Before it was too late, I became vigilant of my intentions and my purpose. For me, it was education. After acquiring a respectable level of comprehension, and being cheated out of my first opportunity to challenge my conviction, I gravitated towards the law library. Insignificant matters had no place in my mind. And the only thing that mattered was outliving this deprivation, and one day returning to my family and friends. And then, if my moves coincide with my intentions, I could make a positive impact in society.

My eyes have taken in a lot. At a tender age, and even more at an advanced stage. And I'm on board with my pain and my plight serving as a cautionary compass, supplying some sense of direction to the misguided.

Prison is what the person makes it. I've been at both sides of the spectrum: hanging out and the hostage. And I wish I had taken it serious from day one. My life would certainly be different today.

RESPECT THE STRUGGLE

To *respect the struggle* you must understand the struggle.

Ta-Ta is a product of his environment, the firstborn of his

young abusive mother, and practically living at her mercy. Trying

to break free of her violent grips and come into his self is no easy task when trapped in the triple stages of her darkness.

But when tragedy strike in the Bronx flat, and the pressures of BCW threatens her position, Sabrina, Ta-Ta's mother, crumbles, letting her drug addiction nearly take her life. Immediately, he and his two younger siblings are removed from the unfit home and split up.

Now, Ta-Ta must struggle with his own ups and downs, valleys and peaks, all brought on by his newfound freedom and sudden infatuation with the streets. By the time he's thirteen, he's exposed to everything from sex and drugs to violence, all of which simultaneously become daily indulgences.

Read on for a look at *Respect The Struggle*

Excerpt from *Respect The Struggle* copyright 2005 by

Tysheem Crocker.

CHAPTER 1

Split Decisions

"Ta-Ta! Ta-Ta, come here!" I heard my younger sister Shavon cry. "Hurry up pleeeease!"

I was in my mother's room watching cartoons when the hollering of my little brother also fell on my ears. "What happened?" I asked, gaiting through the living room towards the kitchen. There I saw tears streaming Shavon's pretty face. And melted flesh falling from Rashid's bare chest as he lay on the filthy kitchen floor in severe pain, only a foot from a puddle of scolding hot water and steaming pot.

"Damn, what happened?" I asked, worried sick.

"He grabbed the pot handle and the hot water fall on him."

"What the fuck was you doing?"

"Making some Oodles of-noodles," she cried. "I was hungry. Please don't tell on me?" she begged.

"You just came home from school, how was you hungry?!" I responded, scooping Rashid up in my arms.

"Hurt," he wailed, breathing heavily.

"Don't touch it, baby boy," I told him, rushing him to my mothers room, with no idea how long it would be before she'd return. Every day the wind blew her in at different times. I laid him across the bed then paced the tiny room.

We didn't have a phone, and we weren't allowed to leave the apartment, so there was nothing I could do. And even if there was, authorities would want to know what an eleven-year-old, a nine year old, and a two year old were doing home unsupervised.

With my moms being strung out on crack, things were already fucked up. But Sabrina not coming home until 9:30 that night took things to a deeper and darker state. Her negligence, along with the unfortunate accident, would launch a full fledged investigation by the Bureau of Child Welfare, which would expose not only her insatiable crack addiction, but a long tale of child abuse.

The minute Sabrina stuck her key into the front door, Shavon took flight, seeking refuge beneath her bed. Having witnessed her beat me with anything she could get her hands on-broom sticks, skillets, extension cord-Shavon wanted no parts.

"Where ya'll at?" Sabrina quizzed upon her entry. "I know ya'll hungry."

You damn right! I thought, knowing she knew there was nothing to eat in the crib when she left that morning in chase of the almighty dollar. But I would never say that, knowing she'd knock the shit out of me.

However, I managed to get out, "Sabrina, ya son got burnt!"

She replied, "What? How the fuck that happened? Yo ass was suppose to be watching him! I'ma fuck you up!"

I was watching him, just as I was accustomed to her fuckin' me up. I'd missed damn near two months of school watching Rashid everyday, while she ran the streets.

Sabrina raced over to her bedside and examined the wound. "Goddammit!" she exclaimed, having yet to remove her leather coat and scarf. He was lying there drinking a bottle I filled with sugar and water.

"Ta-Ta, I'ma really fuck you up, now!!"

Used to the abuse, I didn't even react. I was just glad my boy would finally be getting' some medical attention. I could take her blows to the face. What I couldn't take was not being able to hear Rashid laugh.

Sabrina grabbed some of Rashid's clothes off the windowsill, and began dressing him. He cried the entire time.

"It's gonna be alright, baby," she told Rashid, hoping to calm him.

She then turned to me, "How the fuck did this happen?"

"A pot of hot water fell off the stove."

"Get your ass over here!"

Without hesitation I joined her at the bedside. And as soon as she finished putting Rashid's socks and shoes on, she hooked off. But I ducked the close hand and backed up. She kept charging, trying to breakdown my defense.

"Put ya fucking hand down!" she demanded, realizing my "D" was above par.

Never flinching, I did as she said, taking my fists like a champ, even though I thought I was getting a little too old to still be getting physically chastised. But a little did she know, every time she hit me, she taught me bravery, strength, made me rugged, a standup nigga-without even knowing. It would be the physical and verbal abuse she ruled with, that would mold the gangsta I'd become.

"And where that bitch Shavon at?!" Sabrina shouted, heightening my sister's crying. "I'ma fuck you up too!"

"I'm sorry mommy", Shavon replied, revealing her guilt. "Oh, you the one who burnt my son?!" Sabrina called out, searching the two-bedroom apartment for her. The next thing I heard was Shavon screaming her lungs out, at the hands of Sabrina's beat down. "Now get ya fucking coat on!" She marched back into her room and told me, "You go get dressed too, bastard!"

Shortly after we arrived at the crowded emergency room of Lincoln Hospital, Rashid was admitted for treatment. And soon after that, some mysterious looking lady approached us. I knew she wasn't medical staff because she was dressed in a dark wool overcoat, corduroys, a knitted hat

and some cotton collared suede boots. I could also tell she'd just come in out of the cold.

"Hello, my name is Mrs. Monroe, and I'm with BCW I have a few questions."

Immediately Sabrina was on the defense. Nostrils flaring, she said, "What for?"

"My supervisor called me at home after receiving a call from the hospital's chief-of-staff, about a possible case of child abuse," the cocoa brown woman replied.

Sabrina grabbed Shavon's hand and said "I love my kids, so I don't know what the hell you talking about." That was the first time I ever heard her mention loving us.

"I understand, but I have a job to do. Your son suffered third degree burns, and I need to know how it happened and what time it happened? That's all."

Mrs. Monroe glanced down at a clipboard she had in her gloved hand.

"The report I'm reading says he suffered the injury approximately six hours ago. So do you mean you found out an hour ago, or it happened an hour ago?"

Before answering, Sabrina glared over at me and Shavon then said, "An hour ago!"

"Ms. Carver were you there?" the lady asked, insinuatingly.

"Yeah, I was there, Mizz Monroe!"

Mrs. Monroe scribbled something down, then presumed her attack.

"Being honest is in your best interest, Ms. Carver, because medical reports are very accurate. Several hours elapsed between the time of the incident and the time he was admitted. Now, are you hiding something?

And it's Mrs. Monroe, not Miss."

"Whatever your name is, don't talk to me like I'm a child! I'm twenty-seven-years old, and I ain't lying about shit!"

On Mrs. Monroe's face was a look of outrage. "I'll be in contact! I'll also be contacting the schools your children attend. Your reluctance to cooperate with this interview has now become an investigation. I sense the deception, and all will reflect." She looked at my nappy head, the swelling on the right side of my eye, then my rundown kicks. She glanced at Shavon noticing the scratches on her face and neck. She scribbled something down then said, "Good night," in the calmest of demeanors.

Sabrina waved the woman off while rolling her eyes. "You do what the fuck you gotta do!"

"I sure will," the social worker smiled then vanished through the revolving door.

Coming through the other side of the same revolving door was Todd, Rashid's father, in a brown leather jacket, matching cap, dark jeans, and shoes. I really didn't know my father, and Shavon's pop, Lloyd was the closest thing I had to one-only he was always locked up, so I respected Todd for his paternal presence in my little brother's life. With each step he took towards us, it was clear he was angered. Finally, Sabrina was being attacked, and I felt like I'd been waiting for this moment all my life.

"Sabrina, what the hell happened to my son?" he barked in his African accent. He pointed at her, "I'm willing to bet you was out running the streets, or smoking goddamn drugs."

"Todd, keep ya voice down," Sabrina whispered.

"You using drugs again! I can tell! That's why this happened," he voiced, before looking over at us.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Todd. I was in my room when it happened," Sabrina lied. "And I ain't using drugs."

"I don't believe nothing you say anymore, after I seen you smoking crack myself," Todd said walking off. "I just want to know how my son is!"

A lonely crocodile tear fell from Sabrina's light brown eye. And for the first time she was confronted about her addiction, something I'd detected more than a year ago. The bizarre and peculiar behavior, along with the drastic weight loss during the summer of '87 was the first of many signs. I'd just turned ten, but even then I could tell when and when she wasn't high. The mood changes, the subtle paranoia, the quivering of the lips. But now she had no choice but to confront her demons.

"Ya'll two don't move!" Sabrina ordered me and my sister, then left the hospital. When she returned, Todd was talking to the surgeon who treated Rashid.

"He's going to be fine," I heard the surgeon say. "But we're keeping him."

"What did you just say?!" Sabrina stammered upon her return. She had a cigarette in her right hand that she must've cut short.

"He said they're keeping him," Todd replied, disgusted. Another lonely tear fell from Sabrina's eyes.

"Yes, he's been traumatized," the surgeon continued. "But he's a very strong little guy. Had he'd been brought in as soon as he was scorched, the healing process wouldn't be so complex."

Todd gave Sabrina an ice-cold glare, then asked, "Just tell me when can I see my son? And how long before he will come home?"

"You can see him tomorrow. And we may be able to release him in a few days. That's it for now."

Todd thanked the man, then pulled Sabrina to the side. Whatever he was saying had Sabrina boiling inside. Both short, they were looking each other square in the eye. And then Sabrina stormed off.

"Get up, bitch!" she said, snatching Shavon by her collar. "And you come on, bastard!" she shouted at me.

Rashid spent the next five days in the pediatric ward, and when he was released, Todd claimed custody, threatening to keep him until Sabrina got her shit together. While all this was going on, Mrs. Monroe was on the move. She interviewed teachers and neighbors, eventually making her way to me and Shavon.

Recognizing the severity of the situation, Sabrina slowed up on running the streets and getting high. And I went back to my six grade class, attending faithfully, like I should've been. The fridge and cabinets were filled with food. The apartment was clean. To the visible eye, Sabrina was doing good. But history always repeats itself. Behind closed doors Sabrina was back at it, coppin' fat ass nicks from the kid on the corner with the thick gold chain. And I went back to missing school, watching Rashid, while she ran the streets scrambling to support her insatiable addiction.

But one day while she was treating her addiction, I slid to the local Keyfood supermarket to get my hustle on, bagging groceries for tips. I wanted to get the new Jordan's to go with my fresh haircut, and I was determined to get them. Stuffing my pockets with crazy singles-the quarters, nickels, dimes and pennies piled up in my change bucket from me hustling my ass off. By four o'clock I had $50. Thinking about them kicks, I couldn't stop grinning. Then suddenly Shavon raced in. Her coat was open, she didn't have her hat on, and the tears staining her cheeks were damn near frozen from the plummeting winter temperatures. She looked so scared.

"Ta-Ta! Ta-Ta!" she shouted, terrified. All the cashiers, the customers and my fellow bag packers turned around, as I did, alarmed.

I left the lane I'd been workin', walked over to her and put my arms around her shoulder. "What's up? Why you crying?" I asked.

"Something's wrong with mommy," she said somberly. "She was lay-

ing on the floor when I came home from school." "Where Rashid?" I inquired, more concerned about him at the time.

"I left him in the house, be-be-cause, I didn't wanna bring him out in the cold."

"What's wrong with Sabrina?" I then asked.

"She laying on the bathroom floor, not moving!" Shavon cried.

"Come on, you gotta help her!"

She's probably high, Ithought grabbing my change bucket. Quickly, I dumped all the coins in my coat pocket, threw the coat on, then told the cashier chick I worked with that I'd see her later, not knowing I wouldn't. She smiled encouraging me to leave. I grabbed Shavon's hand and together we cut through the gusting winds, racing pass the hustlers hugging the corner, strAight to the crib. When we got there Rashid was standing over Sabrina's limp body, with a baby bottle in hand, chanting, "Mommy, mommy."

As soon as I saw the foam around her mouth, I knew what it was.

Sabrina had overdosed; so, I thought. I told Shavon to take Rashid into Sabrina's room and find something to watch. I then ran back downstairs to the pay-phone on the corner of Tremont. Unbeknownst, my next move would not only be the one to free me from Sabrina's treachery, but also the one to forever change my life.

I dialed 911, explained the situation, then gave them my address.

They reacted promptly. Me, Shavon and Rashid sat silently while two officers looked around. The paramedics strapped Sabrina to a gurney and rushed her to their ambulance to be shuttled to the nearest hospital.

Watching all this, Shavon and Rashid wept their hearts out.

"Why ya'll still here?" I asked the cops.

"Apparently, your mother tried to commit suicide-" "Suicide?" I quizzed, rather shocked.

"Yea," the Rican cop nodded. "So, we're stayin' here until a representative for the Bureau of Child Welfare arrives."

No sooner than he said that, the doorbell rang. I merged towards the door, that being the first time I could answer it and not face Sabrina's repercussions. "Who is it?"

"Mrs. Monroe, I'm with BCW, so please open the door."

There she stood, ready to do her job, when I opened the door. "The lady from the hospital?"

"Yes," she smiled, then stepped in. "I see you got a haircut," she added, approaching the cops. "Officers, I have order to remove all three children from this unstable environment-immediately."

"And take us where?" Shavon asked. "Yeah, where?" I asked.

The Rican cop said, "Let me see the order and some identification, please."

Mrs. Monroe complied. The Rican cop scanned the items with his partner hovering over his shoulder, while I secretly hoped everything was official.

"The order was signed and sealed today," the Rican cop stated, handing the items back. "It's official."

"Young man, dress your brother, then assist your sister. I've been ordered to remove you'll from the premises. Sorry."

"Aight, but where are we going?" I asked, hoping it was to Queens with my godmother, or over to Lloyd's sister, Aunt Linsy's crib, where I could run wild.

"Aaa ... Mrs. Harris will be taking temporary custody." "Darlene?!" I questioned, outraged.

"Oooooo, my godmother," Shavon grinned. Rashid had cried himself to sleep.

"They can go, but I ain't going with Darlene!" I stated, arms folded across my puny chest.

"Rashid's father will retain custody of him. And you don't have a

choice in the matter, young man," Mrs. Monroe stated, her voice soft yet aggressive. "Now please do as I say."

I looked over at Rashid's resting body, thinking ...they're 'bout to split us up. The longest he'd ever been away from me was the week he spent in the hospital, and the three weeks Todd kept him from my moms.

I practically cared for him since he took his first step! And now, all because of Sabrina and her incompetence, the courts were deciding where who stayed and for how long. I dressed Rashid, helped Shavon pack what we had, then left that apartment, escorted by Mrs. Monroe and the police, with a return-date nowhere in sight.

LOVE AIN'T WHAT YOU SAY IT'S WHAT YOU DO

"In prison, Tysheem began writing stories as a pastime and

quickly started to get rave reviews from fellow inmates. He's

published 8 novels under the pseudonym Boog Deniro. Check out

Love Ain't What You Say It's What You Do now on Amazon."

— Jason Flom, CEO of Lava for Good

The American justice system is eating its young whole, amputating emerging adults from society at rapid proportions. Attempting to challenge the convictions in courts are often thwarted with the practice of unconstitutional law, misrepresentation of the record, corruption, or procedural bars. But people like Romello Mayo and Riley Cohen have something to say about this, and it is their love connection that threatens to upend the entire operation. Having been convinced Razmeek Jones was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death by incarceration, hard-working Milan Jordan is willing to do anything to get justice for her lover. Even if it means entertaining an indecent proposal. The love connections and grandiose gestures are chronicled by exotic dancer turned fiery reality TV producer, Rocki Wright. Will the ensemble get their flowers in this life, or the hereafter?

Read on for a look at Love Ain't What You Say It's What You Do.

Excerpt from Love Ain't What You Say It's What You Do copyright 2024 by Tysheem Crocker.

Prologue

It was an election year in America, a fight for the White House, between a lifelong democrat politician who supported bussing in the sixties and wrote the 1994 crime bill that contributed to mass incarceration. And the current president, former host of *The Apprentice*. One candidate was campaigning on the platform of criminal justice reform, while the incumbent, Mr. Make America Great Again was in the Oval Office preparing to lock down the nation. Covid-19 had just declared war, becoming the first pandemic in more than one hundred years.

In a matter of weeks, all over the news, the world watched the body count rising. On CNN, the numbers were moving up like a video game. Visible for all eyes to witness were dead bodies behind hospitals filling up meat trucks. The internet was abuzz with speculation of the world's possible end, causing mass hysteria, and folks to make the best of the time they had left before the reaper showed face.

And at a maximum security prison in Pennsylvania warehousing just under 2,500 men of high classification, prisoners were ordered to lockdown. The chow halls were shut down, the law library off limits, the weight rooms, the mosque and the chapels. No education, no programs, no in-person visits. Thirty minutes a day the prisoners were allowed out of their cells, and required to wear N-95 face masks when on the restricted movements. The thirty minutes provided just enough time to shower and to contact a loved one. Then it was right back in, and behind

secured doors. Only four prisoners was allowed out at a time with social distancing.

On this particular April 2020 day, the lockdown had been in effect for an entire month already. The men were used to being locked in by now. And because of the highly contagious coronavirus, most of the dudes welcomed the quarantine. Three prisoners had already perished that they knew of, while several others were in the gymnasium hooked up to ventilators.

The cell block was quiet. More than two hundred cells, over three hundred men behind secured steel doors. Never before had the block CO been able to hear himself think and stuff his bottom lip with Snuff at the same time. But season two of *Game Of Thrones* was on the prison channel playing marathon style, episode after episode. Adult content! A sure way to keep their uneasy minds occupied. Everyone was tuned in.

Word was the prisoners could be locked in until a vaccine was created. Scientists were on it, but all believed that could take years.

"Pop cell thirty-three, and thirty-four!" the young corrections officer called out from his post at the elevated control center. "You four got thirty minutes!"

Meek's door popped and his cellie Kid Camden hopped down from the top bunk into his flip-flops and shot to the shower area. He didn't have prepaid minutes, and he had already burned through his family's collect calls. He wouldn't be using the phone again until commissary day.

Meek took his time to the showers, walking slow, fresh clothes in a

shower bag tossed over his shoulder, his shower shoes in his right hand. He had been up into the wee hours of the morning or night depending on how you read time, making music with Kid Camden. While showering, Meek wondered how his life had come to this. Being imprisoned with no way out?

He heard the kid in the next shower say, "Yo, Meek, can I score three e-cigarettes off you?"

"You gotta gimme back five!" Meek returned in his deep melodic baritone.

E-cigarettes had become the new currency in prison and were highly addictive. Meek was trying to get a new lawyer so he could get some new evidence to reopen his case, so he was hustling hard and sitting on a couple hundred e-cigs. There was only one dude in the prison with more currency than him. They called that cat E-Chapo. Yup, like El Chapo.

"That's cool. Can I grab them off you before we lock in? Season three of *Game Of Thrones* starts tonight, bro," the guy replied.

Meek told the dude, "I got you, bee."

After washing, drying, dressing, Meek called his on-again off-again female companion of Queens, New York.

No answer.

He called his young girl, a twenty something cutie from Pittsburgh, PA.

No answer.

He dialed his ex-girl from the Bronx.

No answer.

I can't rely on anybody! he thought as he sat the phone back on its post and checked his GTL account on the kiosk. There was a red dot on INBOX. Meek closed his account and shot up the stairs to grab three e-cigarettes and get his 2.0 model GTL tablet. While allowing for it to sync, he filled all three of his water bottles with fresh water. Smiling, the dude who wanted the e-cigs came up, grabbing them and saying, "Thank you, bro."

"Start wrapping it up!" the CO said to no one in particular. He was just monitoring the clock and wondering how the fuck he was going to get all the men showered and back in their cells without any conflict.

Kid Camden was stopping at nearly every cell he passed talking to dudes who were caged in and waiting their turn to wash and use the phone. One of them dudes slid something out from under his door. Meek shook his head in disgust because he knew what was in that piece of paper. And he wondered was he entrusting his dreams and talents in the hands of a drug addict? Was he wasting his time and his rhymes?

Inside the cell, Meek applied some deodorant to his shaved armpits, African Pride to his thick wavy hair, then fell back on his bunk and sighed.

Kid Camden dried his toes, threw some socks on, some roll-on up under his arms, then crushed up some pills and vacuumed the dust up his left nostril. "Shit!" he snarled, shaking his head with a squinched up face.

The only person Meek had ever been good at judging was himself. And

nothing about Meek said myopic. At thirty-years of age, he had abundant foresight. He could see past the moment. Now leaned back in his bunk, he opened his INBOX feature. Part of him hoped it was his mother. She was diabetic, a pre-existing underlying condition corona was said to prey on. But he had a new contact.

[Milan Jordan]

And a message from this new contact.

Hi, I saw your profile and contact info on Instagram Pen pals. I like what I saw so I am reaching out. When you're not busy making music, or educating yourself, hit me up. Milan, of New York City.

"Oh shit!" Meek bellowed walking back and forth for the length of the cell.

"What? What? One of your chickens came back to roost?" Kid Camden quizzed with his eyelids sinking low and cackling a bit.

Meek stated proudly, "I done came up!"

Part I

1

Milan Jordan

Three years later...

Diversity and vibrance was at the heart of the West Bronx, one of New York City's most famous sections. Hip Hop started right there on Sedgwick Avenue during the warm months of 1973, and today was a landmark. Dominican, Nigerian, Jamaican and Asian restaurants were all over this area, as were the people favoring the flavorful foods.

On this particular day, the First Baptist Church of the West Bronx became the battleground of a hellified hat war. There were big hats, tiny hats, colorful ones, brims with veils as dark as the dog days of Covid-19. The pews were filled with all shades of brown skin, present to praise their lord and make invocations in the name of their sacrificial savior.

Nothing about Milan Jordan said she was religious. She loved makeup, getting her hair and nails done, partying and taking things into her own hands. But she did pray from time to time for her lover Meek.

In the last of a dozen pews, Milan squeezed into an empty seat right by the middle aisle where she could be spotted by her friend Rocki. Lacking the proper attire, Milan stuck out like some well-seasoned croutons on a green salad. She was drawing the attention of some of the mass's most devout members. Noses were turning up, eyes were cutting at her, but Milan didn't care too much. She was feeling really special this summer day. But the stares of the older god-fearing women intensified becoming too much for Milan.

Milan lowered her head, brought her hands together and began a silent prayer: "I know I should not have worn this short skirt and this tight top and these open toe shoes, but you know my heart, don't you God?" she prayed. And then she felt a hand rest on her bare shoulder. She looked up and there was Raquel "Rocki" Wright with her light brown eyes and 34DD boobs peering down on her.

Rocki was clad in some dark slacks and a pinstripe blouse, flat shoes and her hair in an upsweep type of do. She fit right in with the worshipper.

"Rocki," Milan cooed, leaping up to embrace her good friend.

After taking Milan into her bosom, Rocki said, "Let's go out here where we can talk ..."

The two had met on a bus ride to Pennsylvania right after the pandemic got under control, half the country was vaccinated, and normalcy was returning. Now it has been a solid three years of friendship and sisterhood.

As they were sidestepping through the sea of worshippers, Rocki couldn't help but notice the labels Marissa was wearing and how good the clothing looked on her banging young body. Milan had put on some pounds, but it was a flattering quarantine thickness. Rocki estimated Milan to be wearing at least a thousand dollars and that was just the shoes and the handbag.

"So what is up? What is the emergency gurl?" Rocki asked as they made their way to the quiet sidewalk outside the small tabernacle.

Milan was about to explain, but her iPhone rang. It was her lover and fu-

ture husband Razmeek "Meek" Jones. "You have a prepaid call from an inmate at the maximum security prison in Pennsylvania ..."

Both women became utterly giddy as they were all too familiar with the automated female voice who determined when the call began and when the 15 minutes would be up.

Milan pressed the number "1" on her touch screen, then said, "Hey, boo! This call is subject to monitoring and recording, blah blah blah blah ..."

"What up, ma?" Razmeek shot back.

"I'm here in the heart of the city with Rocki. We standing outside the First Baptist Church on Tremont Avenue. We're about to have lunch at this new African restaurant."

"Ask him if he seen Justice," Rocki mouthed, her red lips moving intently.

"You seen Justice?" Milan asked her dude with her deep dimples beaming.

Razmeek said, "I don't really see him that much. Law library or the visiting area, that's it."

"Nope," she told Rocki then whispered into the phone, "You weren't supposed to call me again until tonight when I was home and naked under the covers ..."

"Big Facts. But I just wanted you to check the Cash App, see if one of my homies sent you any money for me."

"Okay, hold on." Milan checked the App and sure enough there was an alert for $400. "Four?"

"That's a fact. Go ahead, do your thing, and I will call you later on tonight."

"I love you," Milan said.

And Razmeek returned, "Love you more ..."

The call disconnected and Rocki said, "So what was so urgent that you had to see me on a Sunday afternoon?"

"Raz asked me to marry him this morning. Said he already priced a ring and all that," Milan shared, gushing. "Really???" Rocki quizzed, mixed feelings flowing through her mind, body and soul. "Gosh, do you think he's really ready for that? Are you really ready for that? Or is it just jail talk?"

"Jail talk?" Milan blurted with this stoic stare in her eyes. "Are you serious?"

"Ah, does I look like I'm playing?"

"Do I look like a chick a dude can run game on? Look at all this ..."

Both Milan and Rocki were attractive and driven, and in possession of respectable levels of education. They were from the home of the pretty women, and they were above average, and above mediocrity. So, as they were passively caught in a stare, cars riding by were honking the horns on their foreigns. It was 2023, but it felt like it was the 1990's in New York City. Foreign cars were everywhere, everyone had money, and crime was rising daily due to the Covid masks everyone had been forced to wear.

Everyone was outside still trying to catch up on the loss time due to the state-of-emergency lockdowns. Man, it was like the Eighties!

Before the moment got weird, Rocki said, "I'm happy for you." But she really wasn't. She felt like, as the Queen of the New York city faction of the Prison Wifey's, she should have been the first to wed.

As sure as the sun was bright and shining, Milan knew there was more shade than goodwill in Rocki's well wishes, but she smiled and lavished the moment. Rocki taught her how to do this. How to be loyal to a man in prison. How to be an independent thinker when it came to her happiness instead of giving credence to the thoughts of people who would never understand that kind of connection. "In the same way people are loyal to Trump, and I'm not judging them, why can't I be loyal to Justice," she had once told Milan and some other women who were in their chatroom. So, Milan knew there was no hate involved, just the desire to be wedded herself. They were part of a world many would never understand. A world only made for helpless romantics. People thought their logic faculties were off for any woman willing to put her life and heart in the hands of an incarcerated man. There were people who thought women like them were foolish. But each and every one of these extraordinary women felt like—you can't knock it until you've tried it.

"We have to plan a bachelorette party!" Rocki suggested, placing her hands on Milan's shoulders. Rocki was 5'10", at least a half a foot taller than Milan.

"Period!" Milan excitedly agreed. "I am so fucking happy! He makes me so happy!"

□ □ □

When the pandemic first hit the world it was a lonely time for so many, and Milan wasn't the exception. But she found herself with a choice: quarantine with her cheating ass dude or entertain a guy behind bars. She chose the latter since she wouldn't have to worry about being cheated on, or having sex all crazy and ending up pregnant a fourth time by a man she was certain was not serious about a future with her.

So, one month into the restrictions Milan decided she was not going to be a frontline worker and took a doctor's note to work. After those two weeks ran out, she cited a lack of child care for her inability to work. Two more weeks were allowed. But while she was ducking all the drama at the hospital, her supervisor was lining her up to be fired for abandoning her job. That month of work she had put in prior to the time off, she had witnessed too much death. She'd seen too many bodies being tossed into meat trucks. Being fired was not how she planned on things going. Her union rep was put on notice and Milan filed for unemployment while the misunderstanding was being investigated.

Meanwhile, the mother of three found herself on Instagram regularly. One particular page stood out to her. This page was promoting an opportunity to become pen pals with a prisoner. At first she just browsed, checked out a few of the bios, LIKED a couple pictures, then tuned into one of Bernice Burgos' Live Chats. But something brought her back to Razmeek Jones' profile. He was giving her French Montana in prison clothes, and Milan read that he was from New York and wrote rhymes and wasn't looking for anything serious, just something or someone genuine. He had also completed 2 years of college.

The pen pal service had been up and running since 2017 and boasted that they were responsible for more than 20 marriages and reconnecting over 100 American prisoners with family and friends.

Milan thought that was a great accomplishment in only 3 years of existence. There also existed on Instagram an entire community of Prison Wifey's! Women who were savvy, sophisticated, attractive and successful. Milan was amazed by her discoveries and found herself going down a rabbit hole.

Clicking on pages and finding some of the women from the Prison Wifey's group in pics with their healthy men in strong embraces, no worry in their eyes, Milan saw that for herself. The women seemed to be in love and looked like they were safe.

Milan's intrigue grew more and more with each passing day. She'd rather be doing that than standing on her terrace singing with her neighbors. I'll be in my thirties soon, I have three children, she pondered, and I have never truly been in love.

Milan spent her teenage years, and as an emerging adult, chasing ballers and musicians and ended up having children with three dead beat dudes. Nothing to be ashamed of, but also nothing she saw as an accomplishment. Outside of giving birth to three healthy and handsome boys, her only true accomplishment was finding the willpower to finish nursing school. Being a single parent as a nurse's assistant sure beat being a single mom on welfare.

It was like yanking fangs from a wolf's mouth to get the boys' fathers to pay the small amount of child support, but easy to pull sixty hours in a

week if she so chose to. It was like, if she warded off their advances, there would be no support. And Milan had her days when she was just irresistible.

Her first baby dad was a music producer, working with mid-level and mainstream artist, and her son with him was his eighth offspring. When they began dating, he was 27-years-old, and she was nineteen. She was in awe of this guy, hanging out in studios and nightclubs with him. Then she found out he was already living with another woman.

Her middle boy's father was a ticket scalper but tricked her into believing he was a successful concert promoter. Milan was 22-years-old then and he was in his thirties. He would have tickets to all the big shows at Madison Square Garden. Tickets to the Knicks games. He also had a wife and kids.

Her youngest son's father was the serial cheater she dubbed in preference of Razmeek Jones' attention and affinity.

□ □ □

"I'm gonna run back inside and grab my bag," Rocki said, then headed back into the tabernacle.

Milan went to her Honda truck and parked at curbside where she waited for Rocki's return.

THE WAR REPORT, Street Fiction

"A beautiful vivid portrait of a slice of life."

-- Khaliah Ali, Author/Activist/daughter of Muhammad Ali

Warren Smith is seemingly rescued by an urban mastermind at the age of twelve, only to be converted into a fearless enforcer for the Family by age sixteen. An exit from the street life was never a reality for him until one dark evening on Macombs Road in the Bronx, a murder mystery changes everything.

Read on for a look at The War Report, Street Fiction.

Excerpt from *The War Report*, Street Fiction copyright 2023 by

Tysheem Crocker.

CHAPTER 1

June 1999…

From the start of one summer to the next, nearly twelve months and counting, Marissa Hall would watch from her perched position in her 175th Street and Macombs Road bedroom window as Warren "War" Smith regulated shit with an iron fist. His name was buzzing in the town, and he was living that gangster lifestyle for real. His muscles were barely there, but he had a knuckle game, and his mind was super advanced. The 21-year-old's presence exuded strength, West Bronx flowing through his veins, not a chink in his armor. Some accredited the bravado to his rough upbringing, being adopted and all, while others just saw a villain they could root for.

Local DJ's were shouting him out on their mix-tapes, rappers were inviting him to their video shoots, and girls fawned over him. He wasn't flashy, wasn't loud like his brother Crumb, but wore the Walls Family name like no one else.

Marissa knew all this because she was popular too, for her knack for dance, and being Ira's daughter. She craved her own shine, her own stardom, and in order to acquire that, she felt she needed to team up with a dude like War. They had never crossed paths, and the Universe kept it like that for its own reasons. Marissa and War's initial interaction was a thing of chance. She guessed the Universe was accommodating those interest in their soul's progression.

It was pitch black out, summer night, street laps the only source of light, and Mariss had been returning home from an errand. In her arms was some groceries for that night's supper, along with Newports for her

mother, and a pint of strawberry ice cream for her dessert. She had a sweet tooth, but because she had braces, she stayed away from the candy. Taking her time, she entered the building, then the stairwell. On her way down there was urine in the elevator. Unbeknownst to her, two men were in the stairway; one with a gun, the other lifeless.

"Oh shit, fuck, sorry," were the words that escaped her paralyzed body. Things were falling from her bag as her limbs suddenly trembled. "Really, I'm sorry, War." She turned her focus to the pale paint on the wall, letting out, "I didn't see anything."

Never blowing his cool, War tucked the murder weapon and scooped up the fallen items. Stuffing them back in the brown paper bag, he said, "You're Ira's daughter."

Still unable to make eye contact, Marissa said, "Ira is my mom ... yes."

In manly circles, average players to hood celebrities, Marissa had been the talk of the neighborhood. She was easily identifiable by her eyes, smile and braces. But there was so much more that made men want to bed that young lady.

"You look just like Ira before that crack wave," War said, then disappeared.

Seven years prior, a streak of unfortunate events led Ira Hall to drugs as a reprieve. She'd been smoking for almost eight years now. Marissa hated it, but the love and respect would never go. And she still thought her mom was gorgeous, just as men once did.

With the paper bag in her arms, Marissa floated up the stairs, and didn't take a sigh of relief until she was sitting at the kitchen table. It felt like her heart would burst from her bosom if she didn't calm her nerves.

Ira, Marissa's 32-year-old mother saw her leg bouncing uncontrollably and asked, "What's wrong with you?"

A thin coat of perspiration covered Marissa's forehead. She said, "Can you back up please?" She was now hyperventilating and unfastening her jeans.

Ira went in the bag on the table, got her cigarettes and just as she was lighting one she could hear the police sirens getting closer and closer to her residence by the second. They were racing to the deadly Macombs Road. "Something must've happened again. I hear a lot of police. When I get back on my feet, we out of here."

The idea of preparing dinner had become an afterthought. Marissa grabbed her pint of ice cream and took her seat on the windowsill overlooking the infamous Macombs Road.

This was the late nineties, and not yet a surveillance utopia it would become, so it took a while before homicide made its appearance. Marissa noticed two suits pull up exuding importance. They approached onlookers, but no one was talking; the beginnings of the stonewalling. A normal practice. There were so many unsolved murders in the neighborhood. But this one was ugly, and was going to receive mass attention, because the guy who got hit was an informant, scheduled to go before a grand jury in the coming days.

Spooning her pint and feeding her sweet tooth, Marissa watched as the two suits entered her building, which the cops had already taped off as a crime scene.

Her heart jumped from her chest when she heard the doorbell ring. Immediately after, a fist pounded the door. "Open up!" she heard as she advanced towards the peephole.

"No," Marissa sulked while fastening the top two buttons on her skintight Baby Phat jeans. She tucked the bottom of her Baby Phat Tee into her jeans, then sighed. She could barely fit her 162 pounds into her clothes, and not because she wasn't in athlete shape.

"NYPD. Open up!"

"Detective Kelley," she sulked. There were stories floating through the hood that he tortured and tormented people. That he had a cabin in the woods where he got confessions from people who refused to cooperate.

"We have a few questions!" Marissa heard him say.

Thinking it was something she had done, shoplifting maybe, Ira raced to the door, moving Marissa out of the way. She had just smoked a piece of crack that looked real buttery. So, she was schizophrenic. Her lips were quivering. She wasn't smoking crack on the regular basis, but she was in deeper than the occasional smoker.

"That's detectives," Marissa said, covering her mouth, preferring for the meantime, her mother think they were there for her.

"I hear them. I been heard them. But I'm trying to find out why they at my door!"

Marissa shot back to her bedroom, shut the door and turned her stereo up. She could not tell anyone what she saw. War would kill her.

"Is your daughter home?" Detective Kelley asked as soon as the door opened.

Even with the music playing above a respectful volume, Marissa with her keen hearing, could hear her mother saying, "My daughter is still a minor. If you wanna talk to her, you have to talk to me first. I believe that is law."

Detective Kelley laughed. "Is this woman quoting the law?" he quipped, standing sternly.

"Yes. And I wanna see some identification."

During their initial interview someone informed the police that Marissa had been traveling from the bodega and may have some information.

Marissa hadn't witnessed the murder; the guy was already gone. First class trip to heaven. So, Marissa quickly dispelled that with, "I took the elevator. And all I know is someone pissed in there. Yuckie."

Neither of the detectives had reason to find her incredible. With her braces and bright eyes, she looked innocent. Those pale gray eyes, the long fine and dark shiny hair, that yellow skin. Detective Kelley was not impressed the least. Her name hadn't come up for no reason.

A business card was placed in Ira's hand, and then a "Thank you for your time," followed.

Behind closed doors Ira said, "Why would some mutha-fucking body be saying my daughter saw something???"

In her five-foot-seven stance, mischievous smirk taking form on her face, and one hand on her shapely hip, Marissa said, "Because I did ..."

URBAN ROYALTY

This is a gritty crime drama that involves a successful but

divided Philly family being hunted by a familiar foe. The first

novel in this explosive trilogy will clearly leave readers

thirsting for the rest.

A trip to New York would prove to be one of the best moves

Bishop King ever made. Angel Ross, just a young woman and Bronx native at the time, not only became his love interest, but his ride or die. In a short time, and after a couple of hiccups, the devoted couple become *urban royalty*—flourishing in fashion, music and property restoration. The Philadelphia millionaire no longer needed the streets. But old habits are hard to break. With his ambitious son, Mes'siyah King, running the dark-side of the family business, dudes pushing up on his adorable daughter, Rubi King, his beloved wife Angel up against her biological clock, and their shady past catching up with them, Bishop King begins to wonder can a street dude ever really get out the game.

Read on for a look at *Urban Royalty*.

Excerpt from *Urban Royalty* 2 copyright 2019 by

Tysheem Crocker.

JULY 13, 1977

NEW YORK CITY

The city was experiencing a blackout, blanketed in utter and unforeseen darkness. Stores were being looted, properties were being vandalized. And at Lincoln Hospital, in the Bronx, New York, a doctor was delivering a seven pound, 11 inch baby girl. That was the day Angel Harriett Ross was brought into this cold world.

For her first years, all Angel knew was darkness. Well after electricity was restored to the country's most populated city, Angel still lived in dire straits, a home without lights and heat. Angel was poor.

By the summer of 1989, she had been exposed to all kinds of violations of the New York penal codes. Unfortunately, crime was a way of life for the impoverished.

Angel was a honey complexion, honey before it is harvested, like her mother. And fully developed by the age of sixteen, just like her mother. Hustlers and heavy hitters all up and down University Avenue, on the west side of the Bronx, wanted to break Angel's fine ass in. She walked with a mean switch, had hair like the Puerto Ricans, eyes like the Asians, and the attitude of a rap star. Angel was Cardi B. before Cardi B. Seductive, tantalizing, outgoing, outspoken, and a stealth learner. When men stared, their eyes would tell her exactly what she was worth. PRICELESS! Which meant she would be setting the tone.

The minute Bishop "Bish" King laid eyes on Angel's 5'4", stacked frame, he knew he had to have her. When he heard her talking to his crime part-

ner, it became even more clear—it didn't matter who he crossed, or how much it would cost, Angel was meant for Bish.

Their first time alone, Bish got Angel's little fine ass pregnant. The two were truly in love, and took up residence in the city of Brother Love, where Bish was from. They named their firstborn Mes'siyah King.

$$$

Twenty-two years later, somewhere in Philadelphia, PA, rain poured down from the dark and cloudy overcast skies. Strong winds thrust through the city, making the rain fly sideways. It was just after 5:30 PM, on a Tuesday, so the streets were still very busy. More than enough distractions. But, as I came through in the candy apple red Bentley GT coupe, windows tinted, all eyes were still on me. Everyone wanted to see this distraction. Yeah, I was heavy. Bottom line!

I'm Mes'siyah King. Yeah, that Mes'siyah. If you from Philly or New York City, you probably heard of me. My whole life I always knew my dad was a gangsta He'd been running the city for nearly 20 years, with my mother, Angel, by his side. I knew he was next level when he just up and moved us out of southwest, and into this big ass mansion out in Villanova, PA. Eight bedrooms, six baths, a private pool house, built-in theater, an arcade, on 2.5 acres of land. The next closest home to us was a quarter mile down the road.

On the legitimate side of things, my parents owned a popular fashion line called Dir'Me. The designers were very creative, so my parents had something for everyone. Women, men, children, suits, rompers, swimsuits,

urban, even couture. They even owned a construction company, and a music label. There was also five car dealerships. My folks were paid.

With my pops being who he was, me and my sister, Rubi, were spoiled rotten. I'm used to having it my way, basically doing whatever the fuck I wanted to in these streets. I was getting away with murder. Literally. Maybe that's why people say I'm unreasonable sometimes, or egotistical, or narcissistic, and hypersexual???

See, my pops had ties to the Mayor, the District Attorney, both Republicans, whom he donated handsomely to during their campaigns and elections. He had police in pocket, medical surgeons on speed dial, and the new Johnny Cochran on retainer.

The way pops had things running, he had two top dawgs in every part of the city. With the best product in Philly in their hands, they flooded the blocks, bringing back eighty racks off the key. See, that would make the next nine kilos available at $30K. You do the math. We was heavy. But it's like the heavier pops got, the less attention pops paid to the streets. A nigga wouldn't dare move in on any of his territories five years ago. But now, with the day and age we were living in, not many controlled blocks anymore. It was 2016, we were in a presidential election year, and most of the hustlers operated off of phones. Hustling off the phone allowed hustlers to go where the money was. And that was in the wrong territory most times.

Now my pops' top dawgs could barely move their loads in a month, when they once dumped them in a week.

I was in the streets! He took me to the suburbs before I was a teen, but he

couldn't take me away from 58" Street. I was witnessing the changes, the dares, the double dares. I saw the rebellion coming. And I was there to put an end to it.

See, my dad is 44, and the more legit he became, the less active he was in the streets. Me on the other hand, I could see that it was time for him to step down. So, once I turned eighteen, I got more involved. That was three years ago. You see, I love this gangsta shit, and I was ready to take the thrown. With my gang following my lead, and backing every move I put in play, I was laying down the law. Straight like that!

But lately, I been seeing some shit out here in these streets. Niggas was pushing up on my little sister, dudes playing both sides, so I gotta handle that. I ain't got time to be telling my pops shit he can't see, happening right up under his nose. Nah, I'm handle this shit, and answer questions at the funeral. Period!

This is *Urban Royalty*...

The Mes'siyah story!

CHAPTER ONE

APRIL 13, 2016

FRIDAY, 5:30 PM

The Bentley pulled up on 57" and Malcome Streets, and Mes'siyah got out. He ran to the outside porch in some fresh butta Timbos, strings loose and dangling. The black Balmain jeans hugged his legs perfectly. The red belt, gold buckled YSL belt showed, as did the front of this black sweatshirt that read Dir'Me in large bold red letters, red stripes going across the chest. The red shiny bubble jacket hung down to his waist, covering the twin shoulder straps containing the gold plated Dessert Eagles.

He adjusted the black Dir'Me cap, red logo at center, as the iced out Rolex hugged his wrist, shining and glistening brilliantly. The brightness of the ring on his pinkie demanded just as much attention. Point blank, Mes'siyah had the fashion thing figured out, even more than he had the streets figured out. Celebs were taking tips from him in the city.

After one ring, the door opened. "Wassup, 'Siyah?" Nico said, extending his hand for some skin. Nico was Mes'siyah's right hand man's 16-year-old brother.

"What up, young boy?" Mes'siyah replied, walking into the two story row home.

Checking out Mes'siyah's gear, Nico said, "Chilling. Er' body upstairs, in the back." He shut the door and followed Mes'siyah, mimicking his strut.

"Clearly," Mes'siyah said sarcastically, as he climbed the stairs, two at a time.

"Big bro, can you do me a favor?" Nico asked. Before Mes'siyah could reply, Nico said, "Come get me in the Bentley? From school?"

"Sacari pick you up in the 550, right?"

"Yeah. But, that ain't the Bentley."

Mes'siyah chuckled and continued to move until he got to the bedroom door. "Clearly," he said, as he opened the door, gracing the room with his presence.

Sosa was there. Jack-Jack was present. Cash was lounging. Sauce was in attendance. That was Mes'siyah's immediately circle, all day-ones. "Yo, yo, yo! Gang, gang!" Mes'siyah sounded off, giving them all dap. He saved Sacari for last, as he bumped chests with him. There were also a handful of chicks on deck, all looking spectacular.

Sacari walked out the room pulling his hoodie on. Mes'siyah plugged his phones up to the chargers. Nico came in and sat with the gang.

"Nico, get ya lil' ass up out—

"Hold, chill, let my lil' brah breathe." Mes'siyah stopped them from kicking Nico out.

"Yeah, let me breathe," Nico said, smiling, his cornrows swinging and dangling as Mes'siyah tailed Sacari. Mes'siyah jogged down the hall lightly, and down the steps even lighter. He exited the front door as Sacari was getting into the passenger seat of the Bentley. Mes'siyah trotted down to the driver's side and got in. He shut the door, leaned back in the butta seat, said, "Dayyyam!"

"What's up?" asked Sacari.

"Us!" They did their 12-combo handshake, like the ones LeBron James did with his teammates before tipoff at a game. "How you though?"

Sacari said, "Same ole G shit."

Sacari was albino. He had blonde hair, every strand on his body, and grayish blue eyes. He had deep, deep rooted waves, and deep dish dimples

to go with them. At 5'9", some said he looked scary, some said he was cute. Attracting chicks was not a problem for him.

Mes'siyah had his mother's startling facial features, and his father's height and big beard. Bish was six-foot even, Mes'siyah was 671", tall and lanky. He put the fingertips of his left hand on the steering wheel and pulled off. "Who the bitches up there?" he asked.

Sacari said, "Nardia from Summerville. Stars around her nipples. We partied her..."

"In the back of the G-wagon?"

"Nah, the 745. The G-wagon was the bitch GiGi."

"Mermaid tatted on her ass cheek, right?"

"Clearly," Sacari agreed.

They laughed. They'd partied mad bitched together. The right-hand mans continued to kick it about their many episodes with countless women, from all walks of life, and all parts of Philly, South Jersey, and New York. It's what they did when they were alone, just like most 21-year olds.

"The next bitch we party, you gotta let little bro pop that pussy too," Mes'siyah suggested.

Sacari said, "Nico be trying to love these thots..."

"So what? Let him do him. How he gonna learn, if we don't teach him?" asked Mes'siyah as he pulled into the driveway behind 68" and Carroll Streets. They were to meet a local hustler they'd been doing business with over the last year.

"Cool. But why he be trying to eat every bitch pussy? What up with him?" Sacari asked as Mes'siyah laughed, parking the Bentley.

Mes'siyah chuckled as he turned the Bentley off. "I have no idea, but I eat pussy and ass, bro," he said.

They exited the brand new Bentley and made their way up to the back

door of the bando. As if on cue, someone knocked on the front door as Mes'siyah stood on the third step looking up. It was Rambo. He peeked out, said, "Wassup?" and Sacari gave him dap, leading Mes'siyah inside. Sacari locked the door behind them with his eyes on Rambo, who was carrying a black Nike duffel that seemed to match his Nike joggers and jacket.

"Who else you grabbing off of, Rambo?" Mes'siyah asked, looking down at his freshly manicured nails. "These Rican boys from the Boogie Down. They shit better than the shit Bish got. And they two points cheaper," Rambo explained, checking Mes'siyah out.

"So, me, my pops, aannnd some Bronx niggahs?" Mes'siyah quizzed, looking back up at Rambo.

"Well, something like that..."

Mes'siyah looked him up and down, real slow and arrogantly. Two days ago, he told Rambo he'd stolen ten kilos from Bish, and was trying to get them off as a startup. Of course, Rambo jumped right on it, confirming to Mes'siyah he was doing something on the side, even though he pledged his allegiance to Bish, the man who put Rambo on when Rambo was only fifteen.

"What you grade out shit?" Mes'siyah asked.

Rambo said, "A strong B-plus."

"And them?"

"A-plus! Numb everything down to the back of ya neck, on the gum test," Rambo explained, rubbing his belly which was protruding from his jacket.

Mes'siyah looked shocked. It was at that point that the Son of Bishop thing really kicked in. Mes'siyah wanted badly to be just like his pops.

See, Rambo knew all too well that Mes'siyah knew all the young up-and-coming players in the city. Not to mention, all the move-makers 35 and older. Seeing how Bish managed to run the city for nearly twenty straight years, with consistent B-grade product, Rambo knew what

Mes'siyah could do with some raw shit. He could see Mes'siyah running things with the top notch connect he now had. For Rambo, that wouldn't be good for B./. "Nah, see, they only dealing with a chosen few," Rambo said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Come on bro, link me in. Line me up," Mes'siyah requested, walking into the back room.

A plastic sheet that painters would use covered off half the room. Plastic was taped down on the floors and some of the walls. Sacari pulled the Glock 20 off his hip and walked in behind Mes'siyah.

Rambo hit a throwback Beanie Segal lyric," ain't the captain of the yacht, I'm just on the boat."

Mes'siyah was pulling on a Newport from the box. The only cigarettes he smoked. Rambo looked around. He was only 22-years old, but he'd been around, seen a lot with those young eyes. Somebody was about to die. He just didn't think he'd been setup. He seen the body bag, and panic quickly settled in. Mes'siyah put a flame to his Newport and puffed, lifting his head.

"Sorry to hear that," he said, lungs full of smoke.

Rambo reached for his piece, but it was too late. BOACK! BOACK! The loud 10-mili Glock made Rambo's brains explode like a pipe bomb. Rambo's fat ass hit the plastic like a ton of bricks. Mes'siyah puffed his cig while Sacari stood over Rambo. BOACK! Three to the head.

"Okay, let's get to work," Mes'siyah said.

With latex gloves on, they wrapped his body in the thick plastic and duct tape, then put the body into the body bag. Sacari snatched the plastic off the wall, exposing the hole in it. Mes'siyah grabbed the nail gun. They put the body in the wall, and nailed it to the wall's pillars so it stayed up. They nailed the drywall over the body bag, and no one could

even tell it was there. They snatched up Rambo's car keys, iPhone and duffel, and headed out the same way they'd come in.

"Time?"

"Fourteen minutes..." Sacari said.

"Not bad." Mes'siyah turned the corner, flicking the Newport out the window, as the rain began to slow up. He tossed the phone out the window, doing about 60 mph, making sure it would break into pieces. *

They pulled back to the curbside near Sacari's mother's house with $250,000 in the back seat. 5:55 PM! They were back before anyone even knew they had left. Sacari tossed the hoodie on the chair and pulled off his T-shirt, revealing his pale but super tatted physique.

Everyone was laughing and chatting, smoking and joking. Nico was sandwiched between a curvy 20-year old named Heaven, and a nubile beauty named Elle. Sacari stood in front of Heaven, unbuckling his Gucci belt. Heaven looked up at him as her girls got quiet. Every last one of the females on the premises were of age, and promiscuous, but had never been around dudes like Mes'siyah and Sacari.

Mes'siyah sat, leaning back, in this red lounge chair, swiping the screen on his phone. Sacari pulled his dick out, and gently grabbed the back of Heaven's head, right below her long raven ponytail. Heaven looked around at her girls whom all held curious stares. Not one uttered a word, as Sacari guided her glossy and ripe and juicy lips to his to his growing penis. And as if they'd practiced this lewd act, Heaven opened her mouth letting Sacari in. Mes'siyah scrolled through Instagram, thinking nothing of it, while all the others present looked on intrigued, or covered their eyes. What they didn't know was, ...Heaven had actually dared Sacari to pull out on her in front of everyone. Money was also involved.

Within minutes, all the bros were getting. fellatio, even Nico's young ass. Well, all except Mes'siyah.: He only went for the baddies. Jt was a

privilege for a girl to even be seen with him. Not to mention, he was super cocky. Sometimes to a fault.

Bish called Mes'siyah's phone, so he left the orgy.

"What up, old head?"

"What's going on, young boy?" Bish replied.

Mes'siyah repeated, ""What's going on?".

That's when he heard his mother's voice. He said, "Ma, how you doing? I watered your plants this morning before J rolled out.".

"Clearly, Mes'siyah," Angel said, having added her son's lexicon to her lingo. "You used too much water."

"We need to talk," Bish said, cutting in.

"OK. Holla at me when you get in. I'll be up waiting," said Bish, pulling Angel across their Cali King bed, and into his waiting arms.

LATER THAT NIGHT, Mes'siyah pulled up to the gates at 2 AM. As the gates locked behind the GT coupe, Mes'siyah came down the long driveway and pulled around the huge stone water fountain made into the shape of a king sitting on a befitting throne. He park between the Rolls Royce and the Porsche Cayman. He got out and stood on the oval driveway. Two chess style books, made out of stone, sat at the bottom of the steps. Then a knight was on the ledge of the stone railing. A bishop was up against the wall beside the large dual opened maple wood doors. King & Queen was engraved in the glass portion of the doors.

Mes'siyah walked into the house, pure elegance filling his eyes. He made his way to the oval office, behind the kitchen. Bish had a large bookshelf, which no one knew about, except he and Mes'siyah. The secret door lead to a secret lower level that wasn't on the blueprint of the house. Mes'siyah opened the door, and walked into the secret passage that lead to a room full of cash, safes, TV monitors, body armor, assault rifles with bump stocks, and all those B-grade kilos.

Mes'siyah sat at the desk in the large throne style chair. He called his dad. While waiting on Bish's arrival, Mes'siyah brought his sister's room into view. There were cameras and audio monitors all over the mansion that only Bish, Angel and Mes'siyah knew about. Not much, if anything, got pass the man of the mansion. They also had a motion sensor alarm system, and an ex-marine leading the security duty.

It was late, but Rubi King was still up, on her phone, talking. Rubi was eighteen, had just graduated from charter school in June of 2015. Rubi could be naive at times, but if she was telling it, she'd say "I'm just a bit misunderstood."

"Bitch," Rubi said, laughing. "Yessss! I just got in. He was all over me." Rubi smiled, palm smacking her thigh, before her hand went to her curly locks and she twirled. "I dropped him off."

As far as features, Rubi would put you in the mind of the Boo'd up singer Ella Mai. Rubi was just thicker.

Mes'siyah heard Bish enter the office, and turned the audio off, while exiting out, leaving their Dir 'Me logo as the screen saver. He knew Bish would have a fit ifhe knew Mes'siyah was spying on his precious Rubi. When she turned eighteen, Rubi made it clear; she was grown now.

Mes'siyah turned the chair towards the entrance door, and Bish walked in rocking a black silk robe with matching pants, no shirt on. Silk slippers were on his size eleven feet, and the Presidential Rolex was on his left wrist. Yes, even at two in the morning, Bish kept time in style.

Bish said, "I wanna give you the keys to the city." His hands were in his robe pockets as he looked down on his firstborn. "But, I gotta see that you can handle it. Your cousin got some things going on, on the west side of the Bronx. I want you to handle things with him. If you can manage that, I'ma send you more to oversee for us, Mes'siyah."

"Auntie RiRi's son, Mally Gz, right?" Bish said, "Yes, ya momma's sis-

ter RiRi's son...Mally Gz." A man from his past with a similar name came to mind.

"Cool."

Bish said, "I got too much to focus on, and still run the city. You got a year to show me you're ready and you can handle things effectively."

"Clearly."

"We ain't thugs, son. We are gangsters. We ain't shooting up the city when cats owe us, we make"—Bish took his hand from his right pocket, and blew into the air, acting as if that gust was enough to move his hand— "vanish."

"Clearly," Mes'siyah said, smiling and stroking his thick dark beard.

"But, if you can't handle it, I'ma give the keys to Whispers." Whispers was Bish's right-hand man, a brother he came into the game with.

"IT got this," Mes'siyah said, sitting up from his lounging position, and rendering his undivided attention.

"Believing is seeing," Bish said, then exited as fast as he had come. His Angel was waiting on him.

Mes'siyah smiled as he rotated the throne back to the monitors. "Hmmm...he know wassup. I been running this shit though. Now I just got an official title," slightly escaped Mes'siyah's mouth. He was determined to make his father proud. Then he got back to eavesdropping on Rubi...

"No, I ain't fuck him..." Rubi said, still twirling her tresses. "His dick is big though. Like seven, eight inches." Rubi batted her lashes, blushing and yawning at the same time. "I did let him taste my pussy though. He kept begging me, so I obliged him..."

Mes'siyah listened and watched, wondering who he was going to have to make disappear next...

RED RUBI, URBAN ROYALTY 2

This is a gritty crime drama involving the King family of

Philadelphia. Teenage daughter, Rubi King, is out on her own and

out for blood. The second installment in this explosive trilogy will

clearly leave readers salivating for more.

It's never been easy for Urban Royals. And now, Rubi King is

at the center of a sinister plot, having fallen into the arms of what one could call—a vigilante seeking vengeance. Mes'siyah, Angel and Bishop happen to be the targets, potentially making the Kings refuse to have their walls breached without the opps feeling the full force of the power they've spent decades.

In the midst of all the madness, Rubi King's naivete actually becomes her very own brand of power. You met her in *URBAN ROYALTY*, now get to know the adorable daughter even better in *RED RUBI*! A must read for those intrigued by the unpredictable, the powerful, and the mysterious!

Read on for a look at Red Rubi, Urban Royalty 2.

Excerpt from *Red Rubi*, *Urban Royalty* 2 copyright 2022 by

Tysheem Crocker.

Previously in Urban Royalty...

The driver's side door of the Hellcat popped open. After an intense gaze, Rubi got into the passenger side and saw smoke coming from Charlie's curled lips.

"Baby girl," he said, smiling.

"Hey, Charlie..."

"My cutie," he replied, checking out this fresh piece of ass. While in the joint, he used to dream about moments like this one. Just looking at Rubi was making his manhood stretch out the front of his jeans. He was well endowed too. So Rubi noticed.

"That don't smell like weed," Rubi noticed and said.

"They call this toochie."

"Never heard of it," Rubi said, smacking her lips and eyeing Charlie's fine and fly ass.

"Wanna see what's hitting for?"

"My brother told me...don't smoke nothing I didn't roll, or didn't see get rolled."

The synthetic weed was beginning to take its effect on Charlie. He was feeling it. And feeling Rubi. He turned the music on, and Jeremih sang:

...If it look this good ...I wonder how it taste... ... Baby if I touch yo body ...hear you scream my name...

THE 5 SENSES, that's what he had booming from the speakers as he sang along. And Rubi giggled because she thought it was so cute.

Charlie sat his Backwood down in the ashtray, then reached over Rubi's right shoulder and began unzipping her jumper.

Rubi looked at him like he was crazy, and said, "What are you doing?"

"T ain't no kid, Rubi..." he told her while staring her dead in her eyes. He was also pulling the top portion of her jumper down over her shoulders. "This comes off."

"Charlie," Rubi said, covering her luscious brown sugar nipples with her hands. ""There's people out here."

He grabbed her thick thighs, pulling them towards him. He yanked down her silk jumper even more. And to balance herself, Rubi released her juicy jiggling tits. He pulled the jumper down to her ankles, and seen her flesh colored G-string.

"T can't believe this...Charlie..."

He had her hemmed up with her limbs up. He licked his lips like a wild-cat, grabbed hold of the elastic on her G-string and snatched it down over her hips and knees in one swift motion. "Charlie...!"

His head dipped low and she felt his tongue between the first two toes on her left foot. She felt kisses on her ankles and shins. She could feel his lips traveling up her thighs, then at her inner thighs closest to her vagina.

She had totally forgot the advance was unwanted, and reminded herself

that she liked this man so much that he was the first thing on her mind when she woke up.

His mouth made its way to those brown sugar nipples and he sucked them feverishly. His hungry mouth didn't leave one portion of her juicy tits un-licked.

Inevitably, he ate her pussy, thumbed her asshole, and Rub experienced her first orgasm.

SUMMER 2016

Well, well, well, as expected—my mother is still tripping. Not disappointed, or shocked, but super upset. She told my dad, Bish King, her version of what she suspected had gone down in the Hellcat with Charlie a couple weeks back, and right before that shootout.

Charlie is my dude now. But at that particular moment, we were just getting acquainted. And, he was actually giving me face, not busting it open in the Hellcat. Contrary to what my momma may think about me, I do have class and would never play myself or the family by fucking in a car, on a busy city street. See, what had happened was, Charlie had overwhelmed me. His touch, his tongue, it all came at once. I tried to stop him, I swear to god, but he took what he wanted. And that was a taste of me. Rubi King. A bad red bone bitch.

Like I was saying though, I am very classy. And you know what??? I don't give a fuck what Angel Ross-King may think. Let her tell it, the crotch of my body hugging greenish floral silk jumper by Dir'Me, being wet was worse than the singer Avery Trap's white baby Tee being soaked with blood, due to two gunshot wounds unintended for her.

That tells moms would not hesitate to go right ahead and try to cut me out the will. She's pregnant too, expecting her third child. I did want a younger sibling. But that was ten years ago. So, I gotta start planning for my future now.

You may think I'm overreacting. Well, I'm not!

My brother Mes'siyah, y'all know exactly who he is, thinks he's god be-

cause he was named after Christ, slapped me. And my mother just sat there like she was a spectator and watched. Even told my daddy, who was also present that Sunday morning, to "let it play out". I'm supposed to be daddy's little girl. But I guess because Mes'siyah has taken over the illegal side of the family business, and he happens to be doing a good job, that makes it open season on Rubi. Or, maybe it's because he's fucking that Daenarys Targaryen looking chick. Looking like the dragon queen from *Game of Thrones*. And she just so happens to be the District Attorney's daughter. I hope she burns his ass! Brother or not, he ever put his hands on me again, hmmmph, you'll see! He thinks he's the heir to the throne, but when it's said and done, I'll be wearing the crown.

Right now though, I have to figure out a way to get Avery Trap to sign with me and my new management company. I'll be nineteen in a couple days, and ever since she got shot, her streams on iTunes have quadrupled. Wouldn't that be a dope birthday gift??? To snatch her right from under my parents. I'm not cut out to be handling the illegal side of the family business, like my brother, but with this body of mine, these looks, my smarts, and the prestige that comes with the family name, I won't have any problems doing my numbers on the music side of things. I've already got a half million followers on Instagram, whom all respect my influence. So, yeah!

Hell, I even got Charlie's fine ass telling me my shit don't stink. Could use him for a little muscle, if I just so happened to need it. There's still a little bit of mystery to Charlie. Things I'd rather find out on my own, instead of googling his coochie-eating ass. Besides, at this point, he's still my lil secret. No one knows about us. Not even my BFF, Imani.

But you know men. They're so competent at fucking things up. But,

they better watch out. It's me bitches! Rubi motherfucking King! Game the fuck on!

CHAPTER ONE

The asphalt and the concrete on 57″ Street was still dampened from the rainfall. And anyone with effective nostrils could smell the scent of more downpour to come lingering in the air.

On that very street, less than a week ago, rising songstress Avery Trap had been shot twice in a barrage of gunfire while some top Philadelphia officials were less than a city block away. The block party had produced a huge turnout, and was organized by self-made millionaire and philanthropist Bish King's progeny, Mes'siyah. Also in attendance with the KING ENTERPRISES cofounder was his pregnant wife, and business partner, Angel Ross-King.

This shooting was a top priority for the Philadelphia police department. The mayor had been in attendance. State Senator Shafiq Rhoades had even dropped in with Congresswoman Mia Ortega. Because it was the 4″ of July, and an event sponsored by the Kings, who happened to be big campaign donors. And the festivities became the backdrop for gun violence.

Bish was still reeling about the whole ordeal, as he was dead smack in the middle of it. Not only was Avery Trap signed to his music group, but he was with her that night. They were in photos with the politicians. Now his son was being asked to come in for questioning.

"What the fuck was I thinking?" Bish asked himself countless times while pacing back and forth and peering out at the Brooklyn Bridge from his New York City loft.

Just moment before he began walking in small circles, scratching his forehead and salt-and-pepper beard, he had received a phone call from his attorney with the Chief of police on the other line. The chief said, "We're

putting two of our top detectives on this one, Mr. King. It would help if your son Mes'siyah would make arrangements to come in..." A lump had formed in Bish's throat.

Mes'siyah could go in and mislead them, or he could plead the fifth, thought Bish. But he can't not go in.

Bish also knew his son had spiraled out of control since he had given him the reigns. He had become someone other than the boy Bish had fallen in love with from the first time he held him in his arms. Bish knew Mes'siyah could and would contest the move, even if lawyers were to accompany him to the interview. Staying away from the police is at the top of his list of things to do, Bish reasoned. And they should be. But...

Thaila!, Bish thought while opening a brisk 16 ounce bottle of water and guzzling some.

Thaila was Bish's real estate agent. He slipped his android phone from the right back pocket of his PRP jeans. In two rings Thaila was on the line.

"Any word on that place out in Calabasas I asked you to secure for me and my wife?" Bish asked.

"Mr. King, two-point-five is what you have me working with. AndI am working. But, nothing yet, sir. Mmmmh."

"Are you okay?"

"Yes. Just, ah, fine."

"You're breathing seems a bit labored," Bish said, before taking another sip of the frosty beverage.

At that very moment, Thaila had company. And she was breathing a bit heavy. Mes'siyah had come to her office with lunch, and had just been feeding her his manhood. Mes'siyah was actually standing right in front of her, jeans and drawers down around his ankles, with his stick still erect and waiting for her lovely mouth to finish sucking him. With Bish on speaker phone, Mes;siyah could hear the worry in his father's voice,

didn't like it one bit. So he directed his meat back towards Thaila's lips with a smirk on his face.

While kissing and licking the tip and the shaft, Thaila told Bish, "I will be ramping up the search...using...all my...resources...and; I mean, connections...on the west coast to get this...done. Is everything okay, sir?"

"Are you sure, you're okay is the question?" He was truly concerned. Thaila had helped secure the King compound, the loft in New York, the Pocono Mountain villa. She was instrumental in the securing of all their personal properties, as well as most of the stuff they'd been paid to restore, or bought and flipped, over the past few years

Mes'siyah pushed his dick deep into her mouth, while wrapping his ponytail around his fist. She could not talk. But Thaila was most certainly smiling and enjoying her young and secret lover's hypersexual behavior. Behind Bish's back, she had been fucking Mes'siyah. Initially she had wanted Bish. They were both married, and could carry on an affair, while still sharing their lives with their spouse, Thaila had proposed. But Bish declined. Although they weren't still madly in love, Bish was still loyal to Angel. So, Thaila entertained the next best thing. The younger and more energetic version of Biship King.

"Call me back when you have something," Bish said, then ended the call. Real bosses never make their employees uncomfortable, if it isn't necessary.

While Bish was trying to put as much space as possible between him and that shooting, his son was questioning whether or not he could continue to operate under his father's guidance. He knew his father had left the city with opps still running around, and Mes'siyah didn't respect that one bit. The family was attacked. And there were a lot of people who saw that as a vulnerability. And Mes'siyah refused to lose the stronghold that was just taking on its form under the new King order he was putting in place.

Cowardice was one thing, and cautiousness was another. But, Mes'siyah didn't know the difference between the two positions. He lacked sense sometimes, and had very little pragmatism. But he was still young, and had time to grow. Or did he?

On the other hand, Bish was of the school of thought that taught intelligence over emotions. He hadn't shot his recording artist, but he knew exactly who had. He saw the distinct and handsome features nestled beneath that head full of prosthetic dreadlocks. And he knew Smally G was no longer a threat, but a clear and present danger to Bish, and everything he loved.

KINGS DISEASE, URBAN ROYALTY 3

An urban thriller that involves a Bronx born songstress suddenly tasked with softening the image of the callous King family while also chasing her own dreams of being rich and famous. The final book in this dangerous trilogy will leave readers thoroughly impressed.

Angel King has worn the crown—and the scars—since her teen years on the streets of New York. Now forty, pregnant with her third child, and sitting atop a crumbling empire, the past she tried to outrun is back with a vengeance. And this time, it's coming for her family.

Mes'siyah King, her golden child, was groomed for greatness— but also for darkness. Thrust into the streets of Philly to expand the family's reach, he's committed sins even his mother can't forgive. Rubi King, now twenty and sharper than most grown men, is done playing the good daughter. She remembers. She sees. She wants revenge.

And then there's Bishop King-the 44-year-old mogul, father, and street legend caught between legacy and loyalty. As his kingdom teeters between collapse and rebirth, Bishop must decide; fight for the family that's splintering ... or let it all fall.

The past or the future.

That same old song ... or that new R&B sound.

The clock is ticking for the Kings.

Read on for a look at Kings Disease, Urban Royalty 3

Excerpt from Kings Disease, Urban Royalty 3 copyright 2026 by

Tysheem Crocker.

They came from every corner of the Hip Hop community and corridors of trap moguls, street legends, and loyalists all to honor the life of Angel Ross-King, a woman whose name became synonymous with style, ambition and unshakable influence. She was a wife, a mother, a chief financial officer, and a mastermind.

Her presence commanded rooms. Her silence held secrets. Now, with her sudden and tragic passing, her world is left not only grieving but asking why...

The circumstances surrounding Angel's death remain clouded in speculation and whispered about behind closed doors. Those who were blessed to be in her orbit say she hadn't created the best energy all the time ... While others say, She simply knew too much...

She leaves behind a grieving husband, a son and a daughter, distant relatives, and a legacy that feels unfinished like a sentence abruptly cut short. Rest in mystery. Rest in power, Angel Ross-King...

One

Coming off a very hot summer, it was winter 2017 and just above bearable temperatures in the city that never sleeps. As always, the metropolis was alive and thriving despite the abundant snowfall. Big fluffy flakes dropped beautifully reminding most of how pleasant the 2016 Christmas season had been. Especially for singer, songwriter Avery Trap. Business tycoon, Bishop King had some bestselling books by some of his favorite writers delivered along with a couple pieces of custom made jewelry, a mink coat, a huge box filled with satin and lace lingerie sets, right before they vacationed for two nights in Saint Lucia. With a couple six zero royalty checks having been deposited into her savings account, Avery Trap was in a position to gift her family and friends in memorable ways as well. But the best part of the Christmas 2016 holiday was performing at the House Of Blues in an intimate setting with Bishop King front row. In her mind, there was no way her management hadn't figured it out yet, that she was dating her still-married father. The romantic connection was certainly secret, if not just low key, but with him popping up in cities they were in, at shows, how much longer before TMZ or some other celebrity ousters caught on that those were not coincidences? That he was much more than her executive producer.

Through her dope designer glasses, she gazed gleefully from the tinted window of the black Mercedes Maybach when her sharp brown eyes weren't on her big platter style phone with all the apps visible. She constantly checked her social media accounts, interacting with and reacting to her millions of LIKES and followers who seemed to be interested in her every move. If someone had told her she would hit it big as she was approaching her thirtieth birthday or after being shot like 50 Cent, she

would still have had to see it to believe it. Because it wasn't like she hadn't been signed and dropped from two labels already, or backup singing for less talented artists until Bishop saw something special in her. God works in mysterious ways, she tried reasoning.

Just a few blocks from the magnificently massive doors of the Sant Patrick's Cathedral and the iconic Rockefeller Center was a building laced with fancy lofts and spacious studios. There wasn't a soul in the entertainment industry who wasn't familiar with the famed area of New York City. Being in the area was a vibe, but being invited was exhilarating, and Avery Trap loved every bit of it.

The Mercedes Maybach pulled up and double parked allowing for the rising star to exit. It was the first time she's been in the city since the ball dropped a couple weeks back. With a place in West Hollywood too, she had become bi-coastal, often times traveling back and forth with her bossed up old head. She knew she was in love with Bishop when she came to, in a cold hospital room after being shot, and he was there allowing her yearning soul to be consoled by his warm and dreamy and staring eyes. No judgment in his gaze, just understanding as if he had been struck by bullets himself once upon a time and survived. What he owned, what he had achieved, his affiliations, that he was married, none of that mattered to Avery Trap. She wasn't a homewrecker, or a gold digger. As a matter of fact, love was an unstoppable force that countless songs were written about, and a whole city had been invaded for. Remember Helen of Troy? What about "Love" by Keyshia Cole?

Avery Trap was elated to be home. "Home sweet home," she sang as she gathered the tote she'd brought along on the plane from L.A.X. to JFK

for her upcoming interview. But part of her preferred the sun of Los Angeles. The palm trees. The oceanic scenery. Over the last month, she had been all over the United States, to Canada and London performing, and copulating with Bishop in Dubai and Paris, while also putting out tunes and going viral. She had her management to thank for all the gigs, since she had been a signed artist for years with not much success. "True & Living" had over a million views in two months. Directed by street legend Mally Gz, it was embraced by the culture and gave her street credibility. But attending the 2016 Hip Hop Awards with Rubi King is where the escalation of popularity could be traced back to. Together the two had killed the red carpet.

Sneaking around was wearing on Avery Trap, driving her insane somewhat too. "So many mixed emotions!"

While most held reverence for Angel King, Avery Trap held reservations. At least, not when it came to morality and the constructions of motherhood. She heard about how Angel had encouraged Mes'siyah to discipline Rubi when Rubi was eighteen, as if they were in some gang or cult. Mes'siyah had slapped the crap out of Rubi, Avery Trap had heard from father and daughter. Straight slapped Rubi to the ground. If he could do that to his sister there was no telling what damage Mes'siyah would to another woman. What mother would allow something like that to go down but a Trap Queen??? There couldn't be a double standard when it came to children. But it was no secret Mes'siyah was Angel's favorite, and Bishop took to Rubi more than he did his son. Avery Trap hoped there never existed a dynamic in her household as such and wondered how in hell it got that way in the first place. Beatings from parents was one thing, but by a sibling just a few years older was weird, she thought.

The winds were cutting through the city streets; vehicles were speeding by with Ubers and Lyft cars also in the fray contaminating the Manhattan air with carbon monoxide. Even though Avery Trap had been accidentally shot while in Philadelphia, she wasn't ready to travel with security just yet. As much as Bishop King urged her to take on a detail, she refused. Avery Trap was outside and still enjoying her liberties as much as she could before things really got hectic and stardom was truly upon her. Once a security detail became part of her life, she would be considered bougee. "I'm bad, but not bougee," she joked as she cozied herself in her all white goose down coat strutting the pavement with purpose. She was sporting some black stylish stilettos and navy blue skinny jeans that gave her a sexiness very few could ignore. Her hair extensions were neatly done and coiled at the tips, came down over her shoulders and stopped at her round butt cheeks.

A musician named Teyana Taylor could be heard singing in the background as she entered the building's large lobby. When she exited the elevator on the fourth floor, the lights were dim with red tent, framed photos of influential Black Americans were strategically mounted to the walls. The Obamas, the Carters (Jay & Bey), LeBron and Savannah. Black Jove thought Avery Trap. On the opposite wall of the corridor were still shots from iconic movies: LOVE JONES, INKWELL, BABY BOY, ABOVE THE RIM, BELLY. Then Avery Trap peeped a photo of the Kings: Bishop, Angel, Rubi and Mes'siyah looking so cozy and united.

"What the...?" she stammered as she removed her designer glasses from the bridge of her cute nose. She wasn't prescribed glasses; she just thought they gave her an astute look at times that drew in all kinds of male fans.

The image of the four Kings was captured recently because Angel was pregnant, looking like she was about to burst. That moment captured in time was the point of Avery Trap's focus. Her lingering eyes wondered if the three hosts of the Gorgeous Gangstas Podcasts knew the Kings as well as she did.

Avery Trap's blood was boiling...

STREET GENERALS 1

Written at the advent of Hip Hop Fiction movement.

Gangsters wanting to be rappers, rappers

wanting to be gangsters.

STREET GENERALS is a gritty masterpiece written by Boog

DeNiro, author of *Respect The Struggle*. It's as compelling and

complex as any crime story on the New York Times Bestseller List. You have love, heartbreak, loss and allegiances all built and destroyed in Harlem's world of organized crime. Capri and Zest Hayward, first and only cousins, are living the type of lifestyle fake thugs fantasize about, spit in their rhymes, or worse, die trying to attain. Accredit it to innate ruthlessness, impeccable reputations, firm understandings of the underworld's nuances, and the two loving women by their sides. But with a penchant for violence, a lethal vengeance that lies deep within, courtesy of his mother's unsolved murder, and other obsessions, Capri struggles with fidelity. The mysteries his vices unravel-no one sees coming!

Read on for a look at *Street Generals* 1

Excerpt from *Street Generals* 1 copyright 2005 by

Tysheem Crocker.

One

After finally getting through, Capri snapped. "Ayyo, Zest!"

"Yeah, yeah, what up?"

"What took you so long to answer the phone???"

"My caller ID say RESTRICTED."

"I'm locked up."

"Again???"

"Yeah. DTs from the robbery division in the Bronx snatched me off the corner. Now they got me in the Bronx House. Armed robbery. And, another hammer."

"Any witnesses?"

"What type of question is that?"

"No witness, no case," Zest replied in an aridity tone, as he played in the hair of his voluptuous chick.

Capri looked around, saw prisoners, at least fifteen, with impatient faces staring back at him, the man on the only phone, angst in their posture. He already knew what it was...the Christopher Williams, Al B. Sure look he inherited from his mother and his father, the man his mother always said he resembled so much.

He ice grilled them all, told Zest, "Chump named Money Mont, from Burnside, hustle dope on Webster, right there by White Castle."

Capri looked back again, his menacing eyes telling the rest of a story the scar on his face didn't, as he wait-ed for his cousin to respond.

"Pri, hold on." "Nigga, this a Doug E. Fresh, all I got is six minutes and we already blew five."

"T got you. Call me when you get a bail..."

Three days later. Capri saw the judge, a judge that released him on his own recognizance a couple months back for a firearm, and driving without a license. At the request of a young and ambitious prosecutor, he was remanded back to Rikers and held without bail.

No sweat though. Zest would make sure the District Attorney's Office couldn't compile the needed evidence for the grand jury to indict.

And just like his work, money talked.

After convincing Money Mont that it would be in his best interest to recant his sworn statement, he retained one of the best lawyers in the city to rep for his belligerent and unpredictable cousin, who had the robbery 1 tossed and his other cases ran concurrent with the firearm conviction he received a year for. There wasn't a blemish in Zest's reputation. Though small in stature, he was a very crafty-man, even more vicious than his cousin, and there weren't many who didn't know it.

Even the prosecuting D.A. had to look back over her sleek shoulder with respect after sentencing. As Zest exited the courtroom, it all came back to

him, the events that prevented his cousin from wearing state greens and playing cards in the mountains. And he smiled. He and a cohort snatched Mont off the streets in broad daylight and held him up in a Spanish Harlem flat. When he wouldn't cooperate, to make him a believer, the same night they tossed his dame in the same trunk they'd stuffed her man in hours before, and held her hostage. After hearing a recording of his beloved dame's precari-ous cries for help, he broke down.

Tied to a chair, dry blood in his nostrils and around his mouth, he whimpered, told Zest about how Capri had stripped him in front of his fiancee and kid, robbed him and took her five-thousand dollar engagement ring, for the umpteenth time, like that would justify his snitching.

Zest reached for his side and Mont flinched, terror in his eyes. "Okay. Okay. Okay. I won't testify," he stam-mered, eyes on the bulges on Zest's side, where his trusty twin Rugers rested, the ones he'd been smacked silly with the day before.

"It's bigger than that. You gotta convincingly assure that fucking D.A. that you picked the wrong man out in that lineup. Then, and only then will I release that sexy mami. But if you run off, or do some sideways shit, when I let you go, they're gonna find ya fiancée's dead body floatin' in the Harlem River. And then, I'ma come find you, and send you on a first class flight to meet her. Understand?"

"Nickels you know, me, man. You know me, Nickels. I sell my dope and I mind my business. I don't fuck with nobody. I'm no snitch," he pled, looking to Zest's accomplice for sympathy, like he wasn't the nigga that assisted in the abductions. Zest said, "Nickels isn't negotiating, I am."

Fright in his eyes, Mont said, "Okay. Okay. O-Kay." That night they released him, and he honored the agreement. Once Zest got word the grand jury didn't indict, he had one of his soldiers drop the blindfolded chick off on the 135th Street Bridge. Not a second before. And Mont went underground.

Eight months later...

Capri and his lil' man Nitti were up at the break of dawn blowing their daily intake of blunt-lah while waiting for transporting officers to escort them to the holding pins designated to employed prisoners. They'd smashed their mandatory portion of the monotonous breakfast: two slices of stale bread, two spoons of jelly, two individual sized boxes of Cornflakes, and a warm pint of milk—and were ready to roam the back halls and cell blocks of the Bronx County Supreme courthouse.

Together, they'd served most of their time on the infamous Rikers Island Six Building to be exact.

Capri was seasoned in surviving on the Island, so it didn't matter where he was housed. He'd been running off and on it since he was sixteen. C-74 adolescents at war. Court case after court case, he eventually made his way to the adult buildings. H.D.M. The Beacon. O.B.C.C.

Garbed, in their- green jumpsuits and Timb boots, shackled at the feet and hands, Capri and Nitti boarded the icebox on wheels, braced themselves for the dread-ed ride. An hour later, they were on post, keeping the bull pins clean. But while doing so they rapped with some of their homies and other disciples waiting to get in court. They'd all been indicted, just looking for a reasonable plea or hoping for an understanding jury.

“Heard you spanked that robbery,” one kid told Capri. Capri

replied, “More or less homie.”

Another, a general in his own right, said “You always catch breaks. Always. I wish I had ya hands. A nigga like me facing twenty-five to life. I’m suppose to pick six today. But if they offer me something, anything, I’m tak-ing it.”

Fronting like he was sweeping, Capri said, “I hear ya co-de giving up tapes. It’s like the game ain’t the same. Niggas need to start a cleanup crew, to start exterminat-ing rats.”

“Word, word.” “Before I let a nigga bring me down again, I’m clean-ing house, no witnesses. I put that on my dead momma.”

“Suppose to. Wish I had.”

“T should raise up next week. So, if I don’t see you before I skate today, stay in that law library, lil’ homie.”

The Blood kid almost sulked, not out of jealousy, but out of self pity. “Like I said, since I knew you, you always caught breaks. Look now, you a predicate cutter, proba-bly got the most slashings on the Island, and working in the courthouse.”

“Ay! Hayward, keep it moving!” the watchful C.O. shouted.

Capri looked the rotund dick-rider up and down, then saluted the homie before stepping off.

With so much at stake, like that four months of good time that would put him out in a five days, he swallowed his pride and cut the corner, bumping into some other caged homies he knew. He plucked their brains for info then found Nitti, copped a squat and took a break.

He thought of Zest and the success his crew was hav-ing. From what he was hearing, Zest was getting fat off that outta-town money. Lux had the hood. Bones bought a new bike. Nickels had dope in Spanish Harlem. Action still had mad shit under pressure. The list went on, and Pri couldn't wait to touch down.

Nitti had plans of his own, like sexing his conniving babymoms and creating time for his daughter, though he hadn't saw either since his untimely departure from the streets. He also wanted to connect thoughts with Capri on the streets. He was mesmerized by the clout and power Capri possessed, and how every time they came to work some nigga was paying homage. They had never done any dirt together on the streets, but they had put some work in together on a prior bid some years ago.

"Break's over! Got a spill around the corner, handle that. And don't be hanging by the pens!" the rotund C.O. sneered.

While mopping the floors and watching Capri's back as he again defied the C.O. by politicking with another fellow Harlemite, he thought back to the day they met.

At the time Nitti was only 15. He'd just been certified to an adult, and shipped from Spofford to C-74. He came through in some crisp Beef-n-Broccoli Timbs, and an equivalent green Champion hoodie. Nitti was

immediately targeted and rendered a vic by some grimey Brooklyn kids. And they wasted no time getting at him.

"Baby-paw, yo where you from?" Ness asked as though that really mattered. Far from timid, Nitti uttered not a word. Instead he returned a disturbingly grim stare. See, he wasn't shook or as weak as they suspect-ed.

"Yo! My sun talkin to you, nigga!"

"Word up, sun!" added the third accomplice.

Nitti knew what it was hitting for. He came from the D-4 Main, the roughest house in Spofford. But them BK kids were three-deep and dead serious about making him come up out his shit.

As they moved forward, Nitti back pedaled on his heels, before saying, "I ain't sweet. I'm from the Boogie!

And I'm ridin' for mines!"

To be a freshman on the Island, he had a lot of heart. But Nitti didn't stand a chance against the wrecking crew. He was marked for a 2-11, and the robbery went down.

"Handle that,' Ness ordered. And adhering to the command, his pupils made moves.

But Nitti went all out. Standing nearly six-feet, he rained hay-makers. The uncoordinated swings continued to come until one of them slept him from the blind side. The blow to Nitti's jaw buckled him, dropping him to his knees and nearly putting him to sleep.

When the assaults, the rapes, robberies, and slash-ings popped off, the block officers looked the other way. That's just how it went down. Once you got your i.d. and number, you were on your own. Incident and misconduct reports were practically nonexistent. It seemed like po-po would've rather seen blood than a nigga being escorted to the bing. And the criminal minded loved it.

Just a few feet away Capri sat by the phone, picking his curly blowout, while watching the everyday struggle. Niggas getting bagged was a daily strife in the building designated to the adolescent. And mod~8 was the roughest, housing the five borough's menacing youth.

The blood sport he and his squad were watching pro-vided much more entertainment than locking in with his stack of smut magazines. But when he saw they were about to splash the new-jack he intervened. "Ayyo! Fall back!!!"

"This ain't got nothin to do with you, sun!" Ness, the ringleader replied.

The boiling water between the two constantly over flowed into the mod. And the clear and present tension stemmed from Capri coming through and branding his handle on the phone, and continuous surveys about who controlled the house. Since they both had influential power, they tried avoiding the inevitable for as long as possible. But that night they bumped heads.

"Yo bee, what the fuck I tell you bout callin' me ya son?" Capri shot back, using the insulting statement for fuel.

"Ayyo, Pri, go ahead with that bullshit!" Ness replied from his stance above Nitti's nearly depleted body.

And while Capri was confronting the temporary vic-tors his team was forming like Voltron. Before you knew it, Uptown had stood ten deep. But they weren't the only niggas on their feet, Nitti was back on his toes with a mop-ringer in hand.

Observing the preoccupation his oppressors were faced with, he immediately pummeled the kid holding the banger. Capri then began to deliver blows to Ness, the only BK nigga he hated. When Nitti saw the razor fall from his hand, he dropped the mop-ringer and dove for it. The spectators discreetly watched without drawing attraction. It was going down, and they had front row seats. They enjoyed the gory beat-down, since they too were victimized by the thieving trio.

To Nitti the blade was an automatic weapon. His oppressors tried covering up, but he just started slashing away. He cut faces, opened up forearms, and ripped hands. As they tried escaping the assault, he ripped open Ness's upper back.

Capri directed the traffic, as he quietly whispered, "Don't blow it up. Don't blow it up, just go getcha shit and put it by the door. Y'all can't live here no more." He then told Nitti to go wash up and flush the razor.

But before the BK cats could reach their lockers they had been cleaned out. The victors became the victims.

With what little they had left, they grabbed their shit and headed towards the door for safety. An hour later, the C.O.'s dressed like Ninja Turtles

swept the block on one of the most eradicating shakedowns the mod had seen in months. But they retrieved nothing and nobody spoke, making the assault known as a slash party, end in silence. So had it not been for Capri, Nitti would've been cut to the white meat that night.

Capri and Nitti got tight that bid, like most Bronx and Harlem niggas did. It was an Uptown thing. But after Capri was acquitted, on murder charges, the next time they bumped heads was in the H.D.M. building the sum-mer of '95.

"Nitti! Yo, Nitti!' Capri called out, while wrapping things up in the 4th floor slop-sink.

"My bad, Dog. I was in deep thought. Here, put this mop in that funky ass closet for me."

Capri grabbed the mop, then said, "When I get back to the house, I'm takin' a hot one, then call my chick. After that, it's a wrap."

"Me too! I really jus wanna speak to my daughter. Wifie been

frontin'. All she wanna do is play the street."

Capri nodded his head in a confirming fashion, although he knew nothing of the sort. His chick was a soldier, whereas he saw no good in Nitti's woman. He didn't know her, never saw her, but he knew the bitch wasn't shit. "Don't sweat that, bee. You be home in a New York minute."

"Yeah, a few more months. You get any info from that kid you was polyin' with?"

"For sure! Remember that kid Chino from the Boogie Down? Rican cat from the towers?"

"Nah, not really," Nitti said.

"He use to flash his flicks! Used to run around with Sonny?"

"Okay. Stubby cat. Get-money nigga. He use to buy you a Pepsi two liter and five packs of turkey every week."

"Exactly! On the low though, he gave me more than that. He out there gettin paper again. And I want it. Niggas ike him ain't suppose to have nothing!"

Nitti chuckled, because he was familiar with his big homie's work. And though Nitti had the full beard, every-body knew the short, light-skinned, curly headed kid with the ight mustache was the elder.

"I'm fuckin' wichu this time, kid. Last bid we did together, you left without leavin' ya info."

Capri looked around, then said, "Yeah, I left from this same courthouse, the day I spanked the body. I'ma leave you my shit his time. But if I don't, 'ma get at you. Word to Blood!"

"T hope so, nig—" replied Nitti, before he was cut short.

"Let's go! Let's go! Transporting time! Come on, Capri! It's a wrap!" shouted Ms. Jenkins, the reason so many niggas took the gig.

"Be easy, we comin'," Capri shot back. Ms. Jenkins was the only reason Capri took the job. Seeing her five times a week was the closest he could

get to the hood, for the time being. And for a lot of nig-gas, making Ms. Jenkins drop her panties was a fantasy. But for Capri, it would've took nothing to make that a reality.

"Why you lookin' at me like that, Pri?" she asked in a kinky delivery.

Capri licked his lips, then replied, "I think you know why, Shyann, My fault, I mean, Ms. Jenkins."

She hadn't heard him call her by her first name since last summer, and she missed that. "When you gettin' out, Pri?"

"Next week. Why? You gon' gimme some? If so, I want it now," he playfully whispered in her ear, while watching to see if anyone besides Nitti was looking.

"Until then, hold ya head. Both of them too," she replied, then brushed her hand against his lower back, as they headed to the holding pins.

No one could tell Nitti that Capri wasn't smashing her fine ass every chance he got. But the truth was, they had never exercised the lopsided attraction. They were just childhood friends that grew up in the same housing project, she living right beneath him. And during those years, she had a serious crush on Capri. But over the years the crush transformed into an immense desire for him. Her day was coming, she mused, and it wouldn't be long...

Before securing the gate she escorted them through, Ms. Jenkins said, "T still live in 9-C. Get at me when you get out, and stop playin' games."

With a splash of arrogance, Capri replied, "Kids play games, men have fun."

STREET GENERALS 2
NOTHING IS SACRED

One of the best suspense novels ever written about the

1990s New York City street culture..

STREET GENERALS 2, NOTHING IS SACRED—Nothing is sacred in Harlem. Not right now. Not with the Feds knowing so much and coming on so strong. Not with prices on heads. When Capri's girlfriend goes missing, the pretty gangster finally realizes he may've bit off more than his jaws can handle. Things go from feeling like the entire universe is conspiring to help him conquer the gargantuan of Harlem's underworld, to the sky falling atop Capri. The suspense is so elevated, the twists never seem to end, nights are sultry, tomorrow is an afterthought and resolve just may never come. Witness unparalleled mettle.

Read on for a look at Street Generals 2, Nothing Is Sacred

Excerpt from Street Generals 2, Nothing Is Sacred copyright 2011 by

Tysheem Crocker.

ONE

All morning Capri had been cruising the city and smoking blunts, basically numbing his pain. There was still no leads on Action's whereabouts and Daffany wouldn't stop blowing his pager up. Patience could see the difference in her man since the last time they were together. Could tell something was eating him alive. But no matter how many times she asked him, "What's wrong?" she would get the same response. "Ain't shit, I'm good."

The conflicted demeanor had her lost, confused, and uneasy. Never before had there been a time Capri couldn't confide in her. This she knew. And what pained her most was he wouldn't even look her way. Clothed or nude she was as pretty as the city's skyline at night. Bright hazel eyes, glowing skin, flowing hair. This summer noon, she wore her best ensemble an Ellen, Tracy design the color of ripe peaches that fit her frame perfectly. Shoes to die for. Accessories she made look good.

Three quarter of her legs were exposed, just for him. Toes attended to, just for him. Cleavage on display, just for him. No panties...just for him. But, for him, the reason he couldn't give her his piercing eyes—the guilt knowing she'd been slighted, robbed of the right to birth his firstborn. That was causing him great distress. And the facts surrounding Olivia's death just added a deeper and darker degree of havoc to his decadent life. And for the first time he felt no comfort in her company. The last time he was this hazy, Patience lost him for a year. To steel gates, barb wires, inconvenience and ridiculous regulations.

Since he wouldn't talk she enveloped herself in Mary's melody, glared out the window, and marveled the Harlem streets that corrupted him.

"You ever think about just getting away from here, Pri?"

"Never."

For her viewing pleasure was debauchery at its worst. It was almost as if she could see the grim reaper floating, souls roaring with civil wars, and couldn't help but wonder was she the cause of Capri denying her so vehemently. Being reduced to his accountant was something she couldn't fathom, but that's the way it was looking, the way it was feeling.

Before asking to be dropped off, Patience took one last stab at puncturing the thickening tension. "Pri, what is going on with you?"

"Ain't shit."

"You came and got me two hours ago, and the only time you looked at me was when you said, 'P, this a hundred thousand...put this in the house.' What the fuck is up with you?"

"I'm good."

"If you really good, you doing a bad job concealing your little fucking attitude. And right now I'm not feeling you!"

"P, you buggin," he countered, wishing things were different, wishing life was still so simple. "I ain't got nothing to hide, nothing to prove."

"Then look at me," she demanded before snatching his right hand from the steering wheel, "when I'm talking to you!"

Reacting quickly, Capri grabbed the wheel with his left hand. “Fuck is you doing?”

“Trying to get your attention!”

Capri glared at her through squinted eyes, “Act right!”

“Act right? Man take me home! I didn’t know spending time together meant riding up and down Fredrick Douglas Boulevard! Who the hell are you looking for?”

“None of ya—! Told you before don’t ask things you don’t wanna know!”

“None of my business? I wasn’t like that when ya ass was locked up! Ya business was mines when I was accepting the collect calls! Putting you through three-ways, and keepin’ ya commissary fat!”

“Nah, I know you ain’t go there. Bitch, you ain’t do nothin’ for me I wouldn’t a done for you!”

“I’m sooorry, I didn’t mean it to come out the way it did.”

“Don’t touch me!” he flipped, as he pulled his arm from her grip.

She removed her Gabanna shades from her eyes and tried piercing his skin with an intense stare. And at that moment she couldn’t stand him. He had become the boyfriend she could no longer count on. “Take me home!”

“You sure you wanna go home, P?” “I said take me home!” she screamed.

The next cab base in sight, he pulled over, got out and employed a livery woman to transport Patience home. The driver pocketed the cash, and

Capri walked over to the other side of the Hummer. He pulled the passenger door open, and calmly stated, "Come on! You wan' go home? She gon' drop you off!"

Patience's face became distorted, and then the drama ensued. "Nigga, is you crazy?? I ain't takin' no fuckin' cab! You takin' me home!"

He knew his problem wasn't her, and she shouldn't have been exposed to his chaotic affairs, so he said, "You're right," got in and took her home.

During the ride back to Y.O., the silence continued. For Pri, the things that needed venting held no pertinence with her. He thought, Only if the right words would come to me, I wouldn't be so stressed! It bothered him to see that his recklessness had her discombobulated. But...it was what it was.

When he slowed up in front of her home, he noticed a lot of stirring, a lot of activity. There were a few men garbed in black FBI issued jackets, backing in and out the house. And the only colored man was Trent, Patience's father.

"Yo, I though you told me ya pops don't be here no more?!" "What?"

"My fucking money is up there!"

"My dad don't give a fuck about your money! And he don't be here like that!"

"Ayyo, P...you buggin', shorty? Get it right!" "Shorty? Get it right?" she uttered.

Patience was convinced she was losing him and he was losing his mind. So without reply, she got out and flung the door shut. Even in heels, her

feet were vastly moving with forward progress, never looking back. Frustrated, he closed his eyes and pounced his head back against the headrest. When he opened them, he slammed on the gas pedal. The truck skirted out, but before he caught speed, he was flagged down by a brown skin brother with wavy hair, a six foot stature, and a 5 o'clock shadow on his beard.

What the fuck this dude want? Pri asked himself as he pumped the brakes, then backed up. He let the window down to see what the verdict was, but Patience's pops said, "Pull over, we need to talk."

Adhering to the command, Capri complied, and the government official climbed in.

"What up, Mr. Trent?"

Before speaking, he looked around. "This is a nice truck, and that's some good ass weed. Can tell by the aroma. You know they use these in the military? Yours or did you take it?"

"I borrowed it," Capri sternly replied.

"Come on, I keep it real with you. Keep it real with me, Capricious," sneered the federal agent, as he leaned the passenger seat back to his liking. "I think we both know and respect each other enough to tell it how it is. I call a ball a ball, and a strike a strike. And you know this man."

"I told you, my homie let me push this. Now do a nigga need a lawyer for us to keep rappin'?"

"Cut the cavalier shit! We better than that! So, I'ma lay it all out for you.

Since your resurgence from prison, there's been a lot of murders uptown. Donneray Williams was killed, and left in the morgue on a damn block of ice! The same night, your former robbery accuser, Monte Montanez was murdered. The shells were discharged from the same gun! The next night a mother, her son, and Sonny Sanchez were found in pools of blood! Sonny was Action's fuckboy, and the third victim in that triple homicide, home invasion. So, if I wanted you, you wouldn't be running up in my house or my goddamn daughter!" "I feel you, and I heard about the casualties. But I don't know nothin'."

"I'm not saying you did any of this, but I know you know something! And I'm tellin' you, I've been assigned to a special agent's team located in Harlem's three-two precinct. That's your stomping grounds. And your name is under the scope already! There's too many unsolved murders and kidnappings in Harlem, and the government has stepped in. We've already determined Action to be at the helm of it all. And if the bodies ain't droppin' in the hood, the lifeless corpses were residents of the 10039 zip code! So, whoever wanted them dead either killed them in Harlem and took the bodies to the Bronx, or had them executed up there. Look, I'm giving you a heads up, on the strength of my daughter."

The information stunned Capri. Trent was a standup nigga with pure street smarts, so Pri knew he had no reason to pull his chain, and what he was saying had validity. "Who else you got under the radar, and what y'all investigating me for?"

"Marcel Pierce Junior, Savon Hayward, Anwar "Action The Voice" Outen...and Joseph Abraham, Action's right hand man. And you're affiliated with them all, one way or another!"

Stink, Zest, Action, Brother Joe...Capri thought avoiding Trent's green eyes.

"Tiger got your tongue, Capricious?"

"I don't know what you talking about," Pri abruptly stated, his sight set on the steering wheel.

But the agent wasn't trying to hear that. Trent was too familiar with Capri's tumultuous lifestyle. "See, I'm try'na look out for ya ass, and you try'na play me! Savon is your cousin! Known as Zest in the streets. And I can put you both at the double homicide in the Yonkers Ave grocery store back in '89. Yeah, I thought that would getcha attention."

"I was locked up in '89!" stammered Capri.

"The biker! And you were home, on furlough or some shit! Now moving on! Marcel goes by Stink! He's supplying Harlem's elite with tagged foreign cars that he's shippin' from Massachusetts! That's who let you hold this! Pri, I'm the Feds, and somebody's going to jail...if the killing doesn't stop! It doesn't have to be you..."

"What?" Capri snapped. "I'm a G, I ain't no fuckin' rat!" "Pump your brakes, and stop speeding!" Trent insisted as

he slid his hand over the nape of Capri's neck, looking at him the way an irate father would a stubborn son. "I don't want you to turn snitch! I want you to throw me a bone every now and then."

"If I throw you a bone, it ain't gon' have no meat on it!" Capri replied in a tone that left no room for misinterpretation.

"You ma'fuckas could be operating without government interference, if the killing stops! Free enterprise. You think I don't know that you're heavy in that Blood thing?"

"Okay, but—"

"I also know you're respected out there."

"—What that mean?"

"And I know Action's your main man, that he's got don status, and how he makes his living. Bleeding the community. That knowledge alone can get you booked on domestic terrorism. That's what that means."

"Domestic what?" Capri quipped, having never heard of the federal charge.

"Terrorism," Trent lamented. "Trespassing and vandalism is where it starts. Sticking your hand in the pocket that doesn't belong to you, your nose in business that isn't yours. Rallies. Things of that nature are domestic terrorism."

"Bullshit!"

"Real shit! You're added to a watch list, and by the time we're finished surveilling, we've got enough for a CCE indictment. And before we even deal or ask for a proffer, cats are rolling over on their mothers!" Trent paused, peered over at his pals, the cats he'd be working the Harlem probe with, watched as they loaded the last of his office supplies into the trunk of the jet Crown Vic. "Like I said, it doesn't have to be you. I'd rather be back in VA on some bullshit detail than the city."

"I can't help you."

Roughly the same height, Capri and Trent's eyes locked, Trent's hands now back at his sides. There was no wavering from either man, and no question the Feds were close, too close. And precision would be detriment if Capri was to avenge his mother's death, and get away with it. Both men had big egos, Twin Towers big, so neither was budging.

An outlaw with the potential to become an in-law, thought Trent as he reached for the door handle shaking his head. "I warned you," he said unable to predict how this would end, and wondering how it all began...

It was a dense autumn afternoon when his wife had noticed the sudden change in their daughter. Trent was watching an NFC East showdown between the New York Giants and the Philadelphia Eagles when Mary sauntered into the den, pasta sauce smearing her apron, and a look of concern plastering her face. Disturbing his focus, she said, "Patience isn't here yet, and dinner is ready. Third time this week." "She can't be far," Trent shot back never removing his eyes from the television screen.

"The last time she was late she was down at the park with Pearl Hayward's nephew," Mary returned positioning herself in front of the wide screen. "I don't like it, babe."

Trent didn't know what to expect when he got down to the park, nor did he know much about the Hayward kid, but by the look on his wife's face he knew there was nowhere more important to be than down at the park. He took one last peek at the game before escaping Mary's steady eyes.

When he got to the park his thirteen year old daughter was cheering on a

pure shooter with a lanky frame, jet curly hair, and a high yellow hue. The rim was like an ocean, and all Trent could hear was "swish!," Patience beneath the net securing rebounds. The kid couldn't miss. 15 footers. 18 footers. A quick flush off a vertical hop that looked so easy Trent wanted to see it again. And almost as though Capri could read the man's mind, he did it again. This time with both hands.

As Trent watched from a distance, the sun fading to black behind him, he smiled deeply. Never before had he seen such brilliant talent up close, or so much joy on his daughter's face. But what he remembered most about that day was the two teens kissing—his baby girl being the initiator—and him never saying anything about it. Probably because he didn't see a kid with his tongue down his daughter throat. But instead, a potential recruit for Kentucky, Kansas, Duke, or North Carolina, playing on national television every weekend before eventually becoming a lottery pick.

Little did he know, that one selfish act would have continuing ramifications for years to come.

By 1989 Capri was allowed in their house, though Trent thought fifteen was too young for his daughter to be in a relationship that already had a life span two years. Trent remembered Mary saying, "As long as I can see what's going on." And he thought, what about what we can't see???, that kiss of years ago in mind.

Like Patience's body, seasons changed, and so did Capri's demeanor. When he wasn't at their home, Trent found himself worrying. And when Capri was there, Trent wanted the kid gone. Not only did Capri not go to college to play ball, as Trent secretly hoped, but the only reason he even finished high

school was because of family court. Each time Capri went to juvenile lockup, he excelled academically. So much that every time he was released he'd be so far ahead of his peers in public school, guidance counselors had no choice but to promote the criminally depraved truant to his respected grade. And his final year he was able to avoid trouble long enough to finish school as one of High School's top scorers in New York State. Scholarships were in place. Agents were calling off the hook. Sports writers were publishing articles about him. He had even shined at the 1992 McDonalds All-star Game. And just when Trent thought Capri was on the right track, and going places, Capri was picked up leaving the famed Skate Key on murder charges. Capri spent the night in the Tombs, two weeks on the boat, and ten months on Rikers before eventually being acquitted of all charges. Through that whole process Patience stood by him. And all Trent could do was watch, wondering What if.

Now he couldn't get rid of him. Or could he?

"So, how are things between you and Patience?" Trent asked half his body in the Hummer, half out.

Capri said, "It's been nine years. And we're still going strong."

The sarcasm didn't fall on deaf ears. "Then why she storm off like that?'

"Why don't you ask her?"

Trent nodded then walked off hoping his daughter had finally come to her damn sense.

Capri nodded back then sped off, Harlem the destination, with Zest on

one line and Stink on the other. “Meet me at Wilson’s. I gotta put something in y’all ear, and something in my stomach.”

Neither man asked questions, the urgency in Capri’s voice evident, and was there when Capri stalked in. He was escorted by the hostess to their table, a perplex look on his face. The Black owned restaurant wasn’t crowded, but it was far from empty. Capri passed a group of women in their church hats humming hymns and gossiping over swine and grits. A few couples canoodling over late breakfasts. Graying old men ogling the scads of scantily clad working girls scattered about trying to fill their tanks. And there was Stink, leaned back like the Mack, high out his mind. Zest was right across from him, phone to his face.

Before taking his seat, Capri gave them both dap, then said, “I didn’t expect it to be this crowed.”

Stink said, “It ain’t that bad. What’s poppin’ though?”

“The Feds looking at us,” Capri informed them just above a whisper, his eyes all over the place.

“What?” Stink shrieked bringing the unwanted attention Capri had hoped to avoid.

“Huh?!” Zest huffed, hand over the receiver of his c-phone.

With their brows raised and ears wide open, Capri laid it out just the way it had been given to him. Even though the inside information had come from Patience’s pops, Capri felt funny repeating it. His gangsta has never been in question, but the way Stink was looking at him wasn’t exactly

validating either. As if Capri didn't already have enough shit on his plate. A baby on the way by a dame other than Patience. Then there was Shyann and her threats of dropping dime on that triple murder if she didn't start getting the dick. And then the task of getting to Action before the feds did.

Flaming, Capri said, "My name ain't never been associated with nothing but G shit. So don't give me that look."

Stink knew he was wrong, but one could never be too sure. In the 90s alone he'd seen quite a few cats cave under pressure. "He mentioned Massachusetts and my government?"

"Straight like that," Capri made clear. "And Zest, the nigga mentioned the biker from Yonkers Ave.,"

"They didn't follow you here, did they?" asked Stink, peeking out onto Amsterdam Avenue through the window they were seated by. He'd never seen the inside of a prison and had no plans to.

"What type of question is that, bee?" Capri snapped. "You in violation, Stink."

"That wasn't even a question, that was an insult," Zest added in his raspy baritone.

"The kind any nigga in his right mind would ask if presented with some shit like this," Stink replied in his defense. "Them ma'fuckas might be somewhere try'na take our pictures."

"He just told you the source is wifey's pops," Zest seethed across the table.

"Fuck out of here, Zest!" Sink sneered.

"Both of y'all niggas be easy," Capri insisted, his powerful aura reappearing for the first time since entering the restaurant. "We good though, if the murders stop."

"Easier said than done," Zest said, then told whoever he was on the phone with, "We're moving on with that. Peace."

Eyes wavering between the two cousins, Stink said, "What murders?" He wasn't sure if Capri was referring to the body up in Soundview, that had been disposed of expertly, or some other shit. But he wanted answers, some sense of security.

Capri said, "Murders period."

"Pri, it's too late for that. The pens have been lifted, and the ink is dry. He gotta go, but first she gotta go."

"What's poppin' Blood?' Stink quizzed, scooting up in his chair, elbows on the table, eyes all over Capri.

But a top heavy waitress with big brown eyes and long legs sauntered over, halting Capri response, her attention rapt on Stink, the gold in his grill, the Rolex on his wrist, likening the young Blood to some flashy rap star. As soon as she was done taking orders and grinning at the trio, Capri said, "Action laid the murder game down on my folks—moms and pops."

This frown of empathy appeared on Stink's face, almost as though he could identify with Capri's grief, as if it were his very own parents Action had hit. Then he sighed, a conversation he'd had with his father about

Action not too long ago resonating in his mind. "Tell me your pops name ain't Red?"

Zest sat back in his seat, shoulders bunched, his jaw in hand, just as curios as his cousin as to how Stink had come to that conclusion when they'd only learned of the paternal connection a little over a week ago.

Capri nodded, said, "How'd you know that?" "Remember that trip I took?"

"Nah, what trip?"

"Up north to see my pops?"

"Yeah," Capri shot back, shoulders hunched.

"Small world, scoob. My pops used to hustle with Red," Stink stated watching the uneasiness in Capri resolve. "And on that visit he was telling me Action had Red rocked over some female."

"How that come up?" Capri wanted to know.

"We were talking about the game, and the powwow we had after the game. After hearing your name he asked was you light skin, I said yeah, and he said he knew your moms," Stink expounded, wavering back and forth about whether or not to let Zest know his bitch was also at the pen that day. Surely Stink would've liked to relieve the 5-foot-3 general of some of that confidence exuded so effortlessly, though Zest had the right to be cocky with all he'd accomplished in his 20-plus years. Money wasn't a thing, his name was in tact, he popped his heat, and he had one of the baddest thirty-year-olds in New York's metropolis calling him daddy.

Capri and Zest looked at each other, this piece of information corroborating the suspicions of Mecca, and Pearl Hayward. And it just inflamed them more. The crime czar of their era, a man they'd killed for in the past was the one responsible for ripping their tight-knit family apart, leaving the whole ordeal a mystery for far too long.

Stink went on to say, "But he didn't know your moms was..." He cleared his throat, leaned back. "I take it Action doesn't know that you know?"

"Not a fuckin' clue," Capri seethed as he reached for the buzzing on his hip. "I gotta take this." When he picked up, Patience said, "Capri, you are the best thing that's ever been mine. But right now, my soul feels undernourished, starved. Maybe famished is the word I'm looking for. To suffer for of something necessary."

Capri leaned back so their waitress could sit his grub before him, thinking of something to say. "Right now I'm just under massive stress, ma. I'm sorry." "I know what it is!"

"You don't, Patience. Trust me."

She said, "I've been talking to my girlfriend Tameko who works at the Foodtown, and—"

"About what?"

"—she said that sucking dick isn't as bad as I think it is. Come get me, I'll do it. I've been practicing too. I'ma do it so good, you're gonna think I'm one of those porn stars."

Capri couldn't believe his ears. Never before had Patience even consid-

ered sucking him off. And normally his penis would've become engorged at the mention of a woman performing the act. Not that day. Instead it forced him further into confusion. "That has nothing to do with it, P."

"It's the triple murder up in the Bronx, right? The one that was on the news that morning the Voice called, isn't it—?"

"What?" Capri queried, brows raised.

"Things have been real coarse between us since you got that call that morning. I've noticed."

He tried to laugh it off. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"You left that morning with thirty thousand, and when you came back you didn't have it. I checked your pockets while you were showering."

Naturally, Capri became suspicions. Thought maybe, for a split second, just a split second, that Trent had flipped his own daughter. That they may've been being recorded. Then that inkling of distrust or the lack thereof was obliterated when Patience said, "I also remember you fucking me like I'd never been fucked before. So good, I still don't know if it was passion or anger that made you leave me with that cocky bowlegged stance."

After hearing a few more of her choice words, he realized she was wild drunk. She slurred, "Remember, remember when, when we got arrested in Harlem, and and I said the gun was mine. There isn't another nigga on this planet I'da did that for."

"Patience, you been drinking?"

"You make me drink, Capri. Sometimes I don't hear from you for days, sometimes weeks. I don't know if you're dead, or back in jail. And as of lately, I just don't know what's going on. Yes, I had a few glasses of wine. And, I'm gonna pour some on your dick and suck it off when you get here. Was gonna wait until your 23rd birthday next week, but Mommy and Daddy's gone now."

"I'm not coming to Yonkers," Capri replied, making his first attempt at the hefty plate of fried food before him.

Patience release a series of restless sighs full of unspoken words, creating this eerie air between them. Capri could hear Neo Soul's Maxwell crooning in the background over her heavy breathing.

"Patience?"

"I thought it was that phone call, but now I'm convinced it's another chick. Has to be," she said, revving up. "You've been trying to get me to give you head for five now, and when I finally decide I'm ready, you tell me you're not coming. I bet' not find out who this bitch is, because if I do, I'm put a cut on her fucking face to match yours!"

Click!

Capri sat his fork down, tried getting her back on the phone. But it went straight to voicemail. He called the crib and the answering machine picked up. As he finished off his home fires, sunny side ups, and fried fish, he thought of Christine and the stomach that would be protruding her sexy chocolate body very soon. Hoped she and Patience never bumped heads. Reflected on the threatening words of Shyann. Then

came the inevitable; avenging his mother's death. Six Million ways to die, choose one! he imaged telling Action, knee in his chest, gun to his throat. Then he thought Something of this magnitude deserves originality! before coming to the conclusion that the whole thought was silly, and that the only thing that mattered was that he take his last breath. And soon.

"What's up? You sittin' over there in a zone," Zest said to Capri, surprised by how fast Capri cleared his plate.

"I need a cigarette," replied Capri, stretching and yawning. "You don't even smoke cigarettes," Zest snickered. "None

of us right here do. So what's up?"

Capri finished off his iced tea, then said, "Wifey. If I don't get my act together, I'ma lose the best thing to ever happen to me. And right now I don't see her in my future."

"Well you had better, because we need that inside information," Zest shot across the table in a low and discreet pitch that only they could hear. "We got a lot of unfinished business."

Stink said, "I'ma tell you like Rosa told me: There are people who take things one moment at a time, and there's people who live in the moment. Living in the moment you string bunches of moments together long enough that you end up with chains of events—events that shape your life for years to come."

"Well most of my moments and events haven't been with her lately. And with the way things been shaping out in the last week, things could get

worse before they get better. A baby on the way, fed on the scene, and making old school pay."

"Baby on the way?" Stink asked.

Capri nodded, preparing to take care of the tab. "Yeah, got the other woman pregnant. All this at one time."

"Lil' mama from Eighth Ave?"

Again Capri nodded. "And though her father killed my parents, I'm happy she's carrying my seed."

"Run this by me again?!" Stink begged.

Capri tried explaining the back story without it sounding so much like a soap opera script it seemingly resembled.

"Action was bangin' my moms and Christine's moms at the same time. Got Mecca pregnant the threatened her he'd kill her if she told anybody, before cutting her off for a life with my mother. But when Action found out the only child my mother had given birth to years earlier wasn't his son, he had my true father killed, then a couple years later off'd my moms, then went on with his life thinking this deep rooted murder plot built on heartbreak and hated would forever remain a mystery."

The only thing that puzzled Capri was the place in which she was killed. As far as he knew Action had a slaughter house. So why kill her in the projects in which she was born and raised?

Stink ran his hand over his cornrows, then over his full stomach, then

consulted his watch. "That's some real ill shit, bee. Listen, I got a boardroom meeting in twenty minutes."

"A board meeting?" Zest quipped checking Stink out. He may've not cared much for the kid, but he damn sure respected Stink's function, and believed that if anybody had potential to rise above the malevolence of Harlem, it would be Stink.

Stink grinned, loving the fact that Zest was loving his style. He smoothed down his Polo rugby and said, "Yeah, once a week. I'ma let my boys know I'm shuttin' shit down in Mass, and putting them back in tow trucks. It's gonna cut into revenue. But fuck it, feds ain't trappin' my body."

"Tow trucks?" quizzed Capri.

"Yeah, random repossessions. That's how I got started. Before we found a way to take 'em off the lots brand new, we were hooking nigga's shit right up to pickups, repainting them then putting them right back on the streets."

"So y'all fronted like y'all was repo niggas?" Zest asked, bugging and thinking of what he'da done if some cat with gold fronts, gold chain, and red faced Rolexes tried to repossess his vehicle.

With that shrewd grin on his face, Stink nodded.

All Zest could do was smile back at that pretty black muthfucka. Stink was polished but still rugged. With that aura of improbable existence, he was the only cat Zest knew besides his cousin that made his bones on the streets without drugs being the main source of income. He tagged cars,

and ran his operation not only with an iron fist, but like it was a Fortune 500 company.

Stink said, "After that, I'm going down to Miami with my boys, get away for a minute, so if you need me, let me know now, scoob."

The wheels in Zest's brain started rolling. He knew once they caught up with Action, before the smoke cleared, Harlem would be infrared hot, and in order to maintain his lifestyle and elevate it to that of opulence, he needed to make some new connects. "You got peoples out there?"

"Wouldn't call them people, but I do have a constituent in the Pork & Beans. A couple homies in Carol City," Stink told Zest.

"We need some pies, and a whole lot of 'em," Zest replied, that bald head glistening more than the big diamond rings on his pinkies.

Stink peeking at his watch again said, "You got ten minutes." Zest replied, "That means the boardroom must be close?"

It was. A garage on Washington Height. But the next thing that came out of Zest mouth made Stink call and tell them he'd be late. Zest had made him an offer he couldn't refuse after hearing about a line for $10,000 apiece. But 100 was the minimum. After some negotiating, all three men agreed to meet in the middle.

For Stink it would be the easiest and most lucrative investment he'd ever made.

Capri was looking for security, answering the "what if's" in advance, concluding that if his retaliatory actions landed him in prison, Christine would make sure his bricks got moved and his bread made it to him.

For Zest it meant the next level! Ever since hearing the anecdotes of Rich Porter and his Mob Style cohorts, he'd dreamed of one day becoming a gangsta don of that caliber but on some new and improved shit. Princess would then have no choice but to forget the stories of the 80s and leave them behind along with everything else when it was all said and done. And he couldn't wait!

Listen I need another whip, this Hummer got me hot, I know it," Capri shot at Stink as Zest looked on.

Stink replied, "You seen the new 850s?" "Nah, but—" "I got one for you. Black leather, black paint, black BBSs.

Consider it a gift to the father to be."

The more Zest heard Stink speak, the more he was growing on him. But if he came through with those bricks, chances of him doing any wrong in Zest's eyes would be slim to none.

Stink rose to his feet saying, "We all deserve the good life. And just like all who oppose us will get everything they got coming to them, we'll get everything we got coming to us. Just gotta be careful because them alphabet cats come in all shapes, sizes, colors and creeds. They looking like us now. Nothing is sacred anymore."

As they were leaving the restaurant for their cars, Stink had a travel agent friend of his make arrangements for them at the Green & Blue Diamond Hotel overlooking one of Miami's livest beaches. After hanging up he informed them of the details, and told Capri where to pick the 850 up from, then jumped in his cherry Lex convert' and peeled off blasting

Ain't No Nigga. He may've had no priors, but he was as flamboyant as they come.

The Hayward cousins addressed a few more thoughts and concerns as Capri stared his Hummer down dreading the idea of getting back in it. When he looked again he noticed a chick in a tiny skirt and stilettos, her thick nipples penetrating the thin fabric covering very little of her lithe but curvy frame. Her lips had this sheer shimmering champagne gloss, and her eyes were all over Capri like he'd missed a child support payment or some shit.

"Who that?" Zest queried, eyes squinted. "Bitch name Daffany."

"Not cute as Christine, but so sexy, " Zest grinned as the watched her strut across the street like it belonged to her. As soon as she was close enough, Capri said, "What are you doing here?"

"My girlfriend called me and said she was riding down Amsterdam and she saw the Hummer, so I got dressed and jumped in a cab because I wanted to see you again after that work you put in the last time we were together." She shifted her bright eyes to Zest, purred, "I got a friend who like short, stocky niggas with baldies and goatees, who keep a lot of ice in their ears, on pinkies, and in the charm."

Zest and Capri looked at each other before Zest said, "I'm about to get married, shortie," and stalked towards his Benz.

Capri couldn't help but to release this utter of a chuckle as he dug in his pocket and handed Daffany a few bills. "What's this?" she murmured, hands on her shapely hips.

“Money for you to jump back in a cab.”

“Why? I thought—“

“I sent my wife home a few hours ago, and I didn’t have to tell her why, so I definitely ain’t gotta tell you why,” he said trudging towards his big black gas guzzler.

Daffany said, “You ever woke up with your dick in a bitch mouth?”

Hating to admit it, Capri slowed up and looked back, said, “Nah—not yet.”

STREET GENERALS 3
CAN'T STOP WON'T STOP

Iris Mena moves up in the ranks of her male dominant crew,

while at the same time trying to figure her sexuality. With

conservative parents, she also wrangles with other life choices. The

Street Generals crew are on course to even one last score, and then she's out—but the unthinkable happens. Between the car bombing, and an Amber Alert, a Special Crimes Unit's hot on their heels.

Will Stink's sudden philanthropy and desire to save his marriage come a little too late? And what about Capri??? Has his growth finally been stunted? Don't even try to predict this one.

Read on for a look at *Street Generals* 3

Excerpt from *Street Generals* 3, copyright 2014 by

Tysheem Crocker.

CHAPTER ONE

"Dave, I think somebody's following us, were the unwitting words of the driver navigating the dark Lincoln truck, his eyes glued to the rearview mirror.

From his slouching position in the passenger seat, Scarface Dave, an unsavory character, even in his own hood, replied, "Nigga's ain't crazy, bee. Keep driving! That is what I pay you for, right?"

Since the beginning of time, it had always been arrogance propelling bad judgment. It was no different today, especially in the mean streets. Lex, Alexander Merchant, the driver, knew this, yet he complied and veered off at the next exit, his temperature rising by the second. As of late, there had been a rash of shootings and carjackings with no solid motive.

Lex whipped the wheel though. He made a middle class salary driving for fools. $1500 a week which could double if narcotics were in the car. Benefits included free weed and premium liquor. There were risks that came with the gig, like today, but it would take much more to deter him. The money was too good, and so was the association.

As he maneuvered the vee, he recalled the first time driving for his employers. He was only sixteen, a speed demon with an affection for cars. Stolen cars. It was autumn 1996, he didn't recall the exact date, but the summer was over, and everywhere he turned someone had on Avirex leathers and Gortex boots. Anyway, his hood was under siege. As he cozied behind the wheel of a stolen Lex, he could hear all the gun clapping coming off of University Ave. and Feathered Lane, by the housing project raising him. Fearful inhabitants raced to safety as Lex crept to the danger, a war zone. He arrived to witness Lava and Dave taking on a kid with an

AK and another dude with some automatic shit. Three had died; the kid with the AK-47, and two boys his age from his projects. The House. Several others were wounded. It was like the scene from the movie Heat, broad daylight shit!

Sitting there amazed, Lex couldn't believe it when the danger came charging toward him. Prior to that day he didn't even know the two murderers knew he existed. More than willing, he assisted, getting them out the area; under major duress. Cops were everywhere, scouring and sweeping the streets for suspects. Even with checkpoints and dragnets, still Lex managed to evade the pursuit. He wasn't impressed with his own deeds, what struck him was that Scarface Dave nor Lava, his right hand man, did any hiding. They were back on the Ave. the very next night, while every DJ and radio personality worth his or her name was sending REST IN PEACE shout outs to the Homie 730. A member of the notorious Murder Gang.

Eight years later, Scarface Dave and Lava were still around, the governing body of Lex's neighborhood, a territory once run by long-dead Tackhead. And he was still their driver, eight years later.

That spring day, the Cross Bronx Expressway was undergoing its usual 4 o'clock rush hour traffic. And the Corvette tailing the SUV couldn't go unnoticed. Scarface Dave peeped the shiny two-door in the mirror on the passenger side of his brand new toy, told his baby faced chauffeur, "Hit a right at the first light on the Castle Hill exit."

The tailing sports car did the same, slowly pulling up as the light on White Plains Road, a main artery in the Bronx infrastructure, turned red.

Scarface Dave reached under his seat for his Glock 27, told his driver, "Next corner, pull over, and leave it in drive." Dave had the type of reputation goons made livings off of. The kind of rep less fortunate thugs dreamed of achieving. The kind that got the affection of all the hoodrats,

got him into the hottest clubs in New York's metropolis without being searched. The kind that got a muthafucka a six foot deep grave, or a five-by-nine cell if one wasn't careful. And over the latter half of the 90s, on into the new millennium, Dave had been beefing up his little resume whenever necessary and with little hesitance.

A busy bodega with a bright red awning that read GROCERY was on the corner, flanked by lots of alert people who could keep a witness box occupied, fingering them it a prosecutor needed it.

Lex noticed that and immediately wished he hadn't left the soft, warm flesh of the thick cutie he'd been spending lots of time with, early this morning. Wished he had ignored Scarface Dave's call. Made Lex think of the shootout again, then the gun battle at the bottom of Macombs Road that left a well known and feared gangster with a limp. Couldn't forget the fifteen-year-old boy he crushed, not far from where Nitty's body was discovered. And then the boiler room execution of Bornsavior "Bones" Quinnonez. Regardless of all the treachery and the potential retribution, Dave reveled in his glory. They were the many jewels decorating his reputation.

Lex could feel it, the beginning of the end, did everything he could to avoid Dave's mean eyes as his boss hopped down out the truck with furrowed brows and tight lips. Violence wasn't Lex's thing, which is probably why his unstable hands fidgeted as he tried lighting his cigarette. "Dave what if it's the police?" he stammered, after pulling on his cig.

"Since when police start riding solo in the city, stupido???" "Right," Lex replied, then under his breath added, "Might not'a been such a bad thing, if it was."

With his weapon tucked near his right hamstring, Dave approached the vehicle tailing him without caution. No one in eye shot could seem to mind their business, having caught a glimpse of the firearm, and Dave

didn't care, which made Lex even more uneasy. As he neared the driver's side door, the light tint began to descend giving Dave a clear view of the waiting driver.

"My bad, thought you was somebody else. He got a Navigator just like that one."

It was a woman, one he'd never seen. No malice in her eyes or demeanor. And her voice, it was dripping with the sweetness of a man's favorite confections. Sass!

An uneasiness suddenly overcame Dave, and the girl caught on instantly, which made her nervous for some reason. Slyly, Dave slipped his weapon into the back pocket of his jeans and planted his narrow ass against the Corvette. Not because he didn't want the juicy chick eyeing him to see the gun, but because a cop cruiser was bending the corner, a pair of icy blue eyes with a grueling glare maneuvering the car. The inhabitants of the residential neighborhood knew the pair of officers for their questionable tactics, and ogled more intently to see how things would now unfold. The shiny Corvette and the gleaming Lincoln truck caught the policeman's eye. Just the stare made her even more uncomfortable. But nothing followed. The cop cruiser continued north and she thought it be best she wrap things up.

Lex sparked another Newport and let out a sigh of relief just as Dave said, "You almost got yourself in some trouble, lil mama." The girl said, "Not by design. And I could say the same thing about you, carrying guns around."

"You saw that, huh?"

"Wasn't I suppose to?"

"Rather be caught with it than without it, ma."

"So you always breaking laws?"

Dave said, "No, I'm always protecting my interests."

'Well, you're not who I was checking for, so I guess I'll be going. I don't want no trouble."

Dave pointed to his truck. "There's not another Navigator on the streets that fuckin' hot." He was feeling himself, with both hands, figuratively speaking of course. "So I don't know how you got us mixed up, but it's your story so I'ma let you tell it. Go ahead."

"Only things I see different is the rims."

"Twenty-trays, babe!" he boomed, then directed her to his sound system which Lex was now blasting. "You hear that? Five grand in music. Nothing but the best, babe!"

She smirked thinking of this other cat he reminded her of. Young cat going by Five who was a fiend for attention, always causing attraction, and tried extra hard to be noticed by her. He was arrogant just like Dave, so full of himself, and not so good looking either. The only thing she found remotely interesting about Five was that a year ago no one had even knew who he was, almost like he'd come up overnight. But that wasn't important at the moment, getting in good with Dave was. He had what she wanted.

"Okay, well it was nice meeting you," she spat, smiling at Dave in a way he could easily find to be flirtatious.

"You're coming onto me right? Want me to ask you for your number and all that, huh?" he sounded off, the sunlight bringing attention to his choppy teeth, which also reflected an enamel deficiency. "Your tactics, I think it's interesting, sexy too I must admit."

She laughed lightly, her boobs bouncing purposefully.

"But I'm not going to ask, you're gonna ask for my number," he added.

"And why would I do that? I've never asked a dude for his number. I will ask where you are from though?"

"Right here in the Bronx. And you, where you from?"

"Queens, but I've been living uptown for a long time now. And you, I thought you were a Bronx dude."

"How?"

"I can tell. Real cocky, like Bronx niggahs," she told him while checking his style. He was dressed like a winner. But no fault of his, he just didn't have those features that would make a woman want to touch his face, or feel as though her soul was lit on fire, looks that would create immediate sexual tension. Even before he was scarred for life, ripped with a razor across the face, the mirror just wasn't something he paid close attention to. He was tall with lanky arms just like his gangly mother, and had gnome-like features he got from his pops. But those faces of death garnishing America's currency never ceases to elevate a man's confidence. If Flava Flav could find love, why couldn't Scarface Dave?

Prior to his change of fortune, Dave was just another insignificant, bottom-feeding, non-descript felon dwelling in the wells of society. He was putting holes in targeted individuals for petty cash, killings that wouldn't even produce lawyer money if prosecuted. He was fooling with females no true player would even entertain. All while holding residence on his mother's love seat in the Sedgwick Houses which he had to beat several felines to. And now he had the attention of women who could make money off their appeal, and no longer carried the scent of cat litter. No more chipping in for cheap weed, sharing 40 ounce beers, or eliciting the affection of rundown slut buckets. He now had a name substantiated by relevance, that was synonymous with rival gang leaders. Despair and desperation, hunger and harassment had been banished and replaced by an air of entitlement, and it showed when he said, "I'm taking you out tonight."

The girl said, "And how you plan on doing that if you don't ask for my number?"

Dave was confident he would have his way with her. One could ac-

credit that to the greed within. Or, he like most men, wanting everything in his path. Unable to avoid loving with the eyes. A common defect most successful men suffer from.

"I said I'm taking you out, now gimme your number."

She released this sensuous sigh that made her breasts rise and settle, and Dave's beady eyes become unapologetic. His orbs were now all over her. Her bosom, her thighs, toes and eyes. She was smooth, like the cool breeze drifting up Castle Hill Avenue. Dave began to think about his dark skin all over her vanilla body, them being so close he wouldn't be able to tell where she began or where he ended. Men with concubines weren't suppose to be having thoughts like that. But this chick had that star power, and she knew it. It made her somewhat aroused. Her nipples were now hard and erect, penetrating the thin white top she wore with no brassier beneath. Dave took notice and grinned, as her rich dark nipples, clearly visible, made his mouth water.

"You think I'm easy, don't you?" she asked, before flipping her hair back over her shoulder.

"Did I say that? I didn't say that," he stammered, again standing before her with his back to the street and passing cars.

"But your eyes did," she toyed.

"I can't help it; you're bad," he admitted, nodding.

"I would, if there wasn't someone in my life," she said, shifting into an upright posture that made her torso look longer and her camel-toe visible.

"We just hanging out," he shot back quickly.

"I know, but I have rules. One at a time."

Dave thought about her being from Queens, and figured she was on those suburban chicks, a trust fund baby, super ethical, with excessive parental control early on. To some degree, Dave was right. The 26-year-old making him anxious and horny was the product of two conservatives,

hard working folks, just as passionate about their country as they were about their pension plans and 401Ks. They were democrats who attended conventions. And they loved their daughter dearly, and had been praying for her more now than ever.

It was as if she could read his mind, and an exultant smile took form of her pouty mouth as she said "I won't give you my number, but I will take your's."

Dave took the pen she gave him, scribbled it on the post-it she too offered, then asked, as he handed her things back, "Who's gonna be calling?"

"How rude of me, Dave," she cooed, "it's Iris..."

$$$

There were thousands of Iris' in Queens, and tens of thousands in New York City. But there was no sign of the Iris on Myspace, or any of the dating sites and chat rooms Dave frequented. He had a still image of Iris in his mind, and everywhere he looked he saw her. Still, he was unclear about her ethnicity. Latina?, he wondered. She did have the twang. But her demeanor mirrored one of those strong willed sistahs; like she'd seen a lot with those eyes. The looks though, definitely exotic. Skin tone, texture of hair, body structure, the angle and color of her eyes. And her lips, full and succulent. Dave had been thinking about Iris since she left his sight, anticipating her call, and logging countless hours trying to locate her online.

In a haste, he shut his laptop and shot up to the rooftop where he could take in his entire neighborhood. The view was beautiful. Yankee Stadium, the George Washington Bridge, the close proximity of the East River which added much mystique as it was an alleged dumping ground for making people disappear.

It was never his dream to rule the world, he just wanted a piece. With that came peace of mind, and along the way several pieces of ass.

Dave was on the verge of being thirty, and the thing he feared more than dying in prison was not being taken seriously. It had been years since he faced any real dangers, or threw rocks at a prison. Lava, a man he'd killed with, had took on a sophisticated woman as his girl, one that made a brother want to do right. Dave secretly wondered could the girl he'd just met do that for him?

After 20 minutes of taking in the scenic view from the rooftop of his towering building, he took the stairs, two at a time, back down to the eighth floor where his decked out flat in the PJ's awaited him.

Inside, he leaned back in his Lay-Z-Boy and logged back onto the Internet, thinking Iris would eventually pop up. While surfing the net, in swayed his concubine, posting up barefoot on Dave's alpaca rug. Her toes were done French, as were her fingernails. This one, Dave had paid handsomely for. Not the rug, the pig eon toed babe he first seen in the eye candy section of a rap magazine, before finding out that she did music videos and could be seen up close at a local strip club called "Bada Bing." Turned out she was the Super Head of the Bronx, but Dave could never get tired of looking at her gyrate and writhe to any beat while blowing bubbles. No man could. She loved to chew gum while performing. It had been one of the things that attracted her first two regulars, two tax-paying cats, who came through just for her.

Her breasts were full of joy with honey gold nipples. Her ass wasn't huge, but pleasantly plump, and she had a flat stomach, no muffin top, with hips and thighs tapering right into her small waistline. Just five and a half feet, and 23-years old, her physical features were perfectly proportioned without any of the surgical enhancements dancers had began turning to for bigger profits. She patronized the city in expensive red sewn-in weaves just a little darker than her own henna hue which probably had something to do with her name being Scarlet the Red Bone.

One night while straddling Dave, a new regular she thought resembled Omar from the "Wire", she told him she was in the midst of some serious decision making. That she had considered giving up the pole, print modeling in scanty clothing, and video cameras, for something much more lucrative. And that if she took it she'd be moving to Atlanta.

"What?" he quizzed caressing her backside softly.

"It includes branding and merchandise," she simpered, popping her gum at the same time.

"What?" he poked, and she whispered it in his ear.

Dave said, "Fuck that, come home with me, be my personal porn star. I got money."

Her response had been, "I know you have money, but the deal is worth five figures, a high five."

"How many dudes coming in here trying to whisk you away to anywhere your heart desires?"

Zero! And neither was he, but it was close.

Scarlet could have become the Jenna Jamison of urban porn had Dave not beat Zest to the club that night.

She was thankful Dave had talked her out of porn, thankful he'd taken her in and listened to a heart that had been broken so many times she wasn't sure it would ever play another love song. Scarlet didn't love Dave though. But in the nine months of sharing time and space with him, strong feelings had developed. But she needed more, and the last few days it was feeling more like they were digressing instead of moving towards that place called love. And at 24 now, with more and more youngsters jumping the broom, Scarlet was beginning to have thoughts of more.

"You been on that computer for the last week, babe. What's up?

"And--?"

Scarlet said, "Look at me."

"I see you?"

"If you don't want to see me, I'm going to the club," she threatened, her provocative eyes cutting like claws.

"You wanna go to the club, go ahead! Just make sure you beat me home!"

Scarlet was startled. He never wanted her to go to the club. "Are you serious?"

After appraising his own words briefly, he said, "Hell no! But can't you see I'm, busy?" She turned on some music.

Her very first Club Mom at her very first strip joint, a lady from Harlem named Maliah, who'd also helped her through a hard time or two, once said, "Love is like magic, a whole bunch of illusions. So just focus on the fun, and maybe you'll create magic... but if you don't, at least ya had fun."

Scarlet was wearing boyshorts only, red lace, so tight her camel toe showed. She was now a few inches from Dave's face, and she was ready for some fun. Made Dave think of Iris again. A sophisticated sistah?

Scarlet went to his soft spot.

Dave could feel her tongue on his lobe as she perched herself on the arm of his chair. Then her hand beneath his laptop, caressing his member. That was it for the online search. Dave's face went left running right into Scarlet's sweet mouth. Kissing her deeply and fondling her a bit, she used her attentive hands to bring him to erection. Soon he would be penetrating her pretty little gash, and remembering he didn't need another chick. Just as he leaned the Lay-Z-Boy back, the screen on his phone lit up.

Everything stopped.

Both their eyes were on his Sidekick. He reached!

But she beat him to it.

"Hello!"

"Can ... I speak t o Dave?"

“Here! I knew it! I could feel the shit!” sulked Scarlet as she tossed the phone at Dave with some serious speed on it.

Dave already knew who it was.

THE UNGODLY PASTOR

By BOOG DENIRO & COUNTRY MCRAE

Darkness seemed to be his true companion. Doing dirt

behind the cross only leads to being revealed. When it came to

Reverend Earl Reeves, he had his own perception of scripture.

He chose to be in the light on Sundays before the 4,300 congregation of the JUBILEE BAPTIST CHURCH.

When it came to his personal life, he somehow fell short of His glory. Committing adultery within the church, and using his nephews to advance his sins, seemed to be the calling God hadn't chosen for him.

With an incident on the horizon, and a fatal attraction on his hands, the Reverend feels the walls closing in on him. Will he continue to travel this road of sin, see the inside of a prison again, or die at the hands of a scored woman?

Read on for a look at *The Ungodly Pastor*.

Excerpt from *The Ungodly Pastor* copyright 2019 by

Tysheem Crocker.

Chapter 1

Pushing his charcoal gray Lincoln Navigator through the busy traffic down Roxboro Road, 53-year old Reverend Earl Reeves listened intently to the "Greatest Songs" of Rick James cd, as it played from the speakers of his Yamaha sound system.

It was a Saturday and he was on his way to get one of his many tailor made suits from the Stacy Adams store. Located in the Northgate Mall, it was one of the O.G. stores in Durham, N.C. Most of the local preachers and pastors shopped there.

Making a left on Club Blvd, the Reverend could see the mall from a distance. Scanning the busy parking lots and decks as he continued to cruise, he couldn't recall the last time he saw so many people in one place.

"Daaaaamn...I should've came out here earlier," he mouthed, glancing at the gold and diamond Rolex beautifying his left wrist. It was 2:15 in the evening. In the south, anything after noon was considered the evening. At that time of the day, the mall was jumping, but never that much.

Slowing down, and taking the far right lane to turn up into the mall's parking lot entrance, Reverend Reeves noticed a woman in a 2016 gold Toyota Camry backing out of a parking spot close to the food court.

"Praise the Lord," he stated as he hurried towards the spot and watched the car back out. "God, you are good to me."

Reverend Reeves always praised God whenever a come up was involved. He had more game than LeBron James.

Once the car pulled off, the Reverend zipped his whip into the empty space. Taking his time as Rick James crooned "Super Freak", he turned the ignition off. Reverend Reeves did a thorough onceover of the inside

of the exclusive SUV. To hide the blunt that was half smoked, he closed the ashtray. Reaching into an open compartment that sat under the ashtray, the Reverend grabbed his old school Drakkar cologne. With his iced out pointer finger, he pumped the spray nozzle.

Sppppppp—he hit his neck.

Sppppppp—he hit his chest.

Reverend Reeves sprayed anywhere that he felt would hide the aroma of the killer exotic he had been puffing on.

Reaching for the door handle, he looked into the mirror. "Yeah, I better drop some Visine," he muttered to himself as he reached for the Visine that also sat in the open compartment.

He squeezed a drop of the clear solution in each eye. Reaching into the inside of his brown Tom Ford blazer, Revered Reeves pulled out a silk white handkerchief. Looking into the mirror, he examined his eyes and wiped the wetness from the corners. Feeling that he was now up to par, Reverend Reeves put the Visine and cologne back into the compartment and slipped from the driver's side door.

Reverend Reeves shut the door, and checked out his swag from head to toe. From his blazer to his feet, Reverend Reeves was a medium build with a little muscle tone to his stature. The bald head hid his receding hairline, and he kept his beard low and lined up to the max. To be 53, Revered Reeves was a handsome man who attracted women of various ages ranging from 25 on up.

Even though he sat in the pulpit with his wife, "The First Lady", the women of Jubilee Baptist Church threw themselves at the Reverend on a regular basis. Some did so by jumping up and down just so that their breasts would bounce to entice him, while other women fainted just so that they could fall to the floor in front of the Reverend with their legs

splayed showing their treat meat. All they wanted the reverend to do was lay hands, and he loved every single minute of it.

Walking in his signature stride, Reverend Reeves headed towards the mall. He could feel the adoration of women, and the envy of men checking him out as the Reverend waited for traffic to pass before crossing the mall's busy intersection, neither stronger than the other. Serving God was one thing, but that was what he really lived for. The Reverend loved the attention.

Moving quickly, his brown alligator shoes touched the other side of the street and landed on the sidewalk as he made his way towards the mall's entrance. His necklace and diamonds glistened once he made his grand entrance. Looking around at the busy food court, Reverend Reeves smiled. From Chic-Fi-la, The Wong Fe, and all the other eating spots, women were everywhere.

Out of the blue, he heard someone calling his name.

"Hey, Reverend Reeves. Over here!!!" the feminine voice chimed out over all the noise.

With his eyes, the Reverend searched through the crowded place to see who was seeking his attention.

Having surfed the crowd for nearly two minutes, he spotted the woman the lovely voice belonged to. It was Mrs. Marjorie Brown. She was a very beautiful woman who had just celebrated her 63rd birthday. Also, she was in charge of his usher board at Jubilee Baptist.

Marjorie had not too long ago became a widow. She was sitting at one of the dining tables in front of Baskin Robbins all alone. Since Marjorie's husband's violent death, and she being the sole beneficiary, Reverend Reeves knew that Mrs. Marjorie was a true candidate for a quick come up.

"Praaaisse the Lord!!" he bellowed with enthusiasm and made his way over to Mrs. Marjorie.

She sat in a position that flattered her pretty and thick legs that were extending from beneath a denim skirt that she wore by DOLCE & GABBANA.

Marjorie was a red-bone with brown naturally curly tresses. Her green eyes sat behind her gold rimmed Tory Burch frames. To be her age, Marjorie was thick to def. She could've easily been mistaken for Lynn Whitfield. Being so fine and thick, Marjorie attracted a lot of younger men in the church, and pretty much anywhere else she traveled.

Definitely, she was on Reverend Reeves' radar for quite some time. Being a retired Administrative assistant for Blue Cross — Blue Shield, and coming up on her husband's assets, ever since he preached her husband's funeral, Reverend Reeves was seeking ways to get into Marjorie's panties. She was sure enough good as a ton of platinum in Reverend Reeves' eyes.

"As I walk down the road of darkness and despair, suddenly I see the light of an angel," he said, as he extended his arms out for a warm embrace. "For some reason God has allowed for you to be that beacon of light. Because ... I was feeling weary, Marjorie."

"That's how the Lord operates," she replied in an understanding and empathetic tone, as she stood and hugged the Reverend. "He knows when his people are in need."

Rubbing his hands gently across her back, feeling the fabric of Marjorie's yellow blouse, Reverend Reeves could feel his Johnson rocking up.

"Let's have a seat," the Reverend insisted while releasing the embrace.

Quickly, he sat down at the table and slid the chair close to it. Reverend Reeves didn't want to stand and talk because now he was bone hard and Marjorie would've definitely taken notice.

The Reverend had a thousand things going through his mind, all of which he wanted to do in the bed with Marjorie.

"So what are you doing at this busy place on a Saturday, at this time of the evening at that? Shouldn't you be preparing for your sermon tomorrow?"

Looking into Marjorie's eyes, Reverend Reeves replied, "When God is doing the talking there is nothing to prepare for. His word flows and soothes our souls through me."

"Ammmen...to that!" she rejoiced as if Reverend reeves was preaching then.- "I can't wait to hear the word tomorrow."

To himself Reverend Reeves thought, Me either. You and the ushers just have them baskets ready to get that damn paper.

"Oooh...It's going to be an awesome sermon. I got to lead the flock to green pastures," he eventually verbalized, further moving Marjorie. "But to answer. your question; I came out here to pick up a suit that I had tailored."

"Really ...'m doing the same. Reverend Reeves, I got to pick up a dress from Macy's," Marjorie stated in a surprised tone. "J guess we can hang out together and have a shopping revival."

Reverend Reeves sat and thought to himself as he held a half smile, fs you paying for my shit???

The Reverend was straight with paper, on many fronts. He didn't need anyone paying his tabs. But entitlement was one of his character flaws he just couldn't shake.

Holding Marjorie's hand gently, he decided to say, "That sounds great. I'm going to the Stacey Adams store. That's right by Macy's."

Feeling the Reverend release her hand, and watching him rise from the table, she said, "I'm honored to be in your company. The only time that we normally talk is at church or the meetings. Reverend Reeves it's a blessing for us to be able to converse outside the church in our normal everyday life."

Marjorie then got up from the table also. "While we're shopping you can share with me what you're going through Reverend."

Reaching for her purse that hung on the left arm of the chair, Reverend Reeves was sweating Marjorie's thickness as she leaned over.

Yessss, Looord!, he mused to himself. God, no one does it like you!!

Throwing her purse strap over her sleek shoulder, Marjorie looked at the Reverend and said, "Today is my day of sacrificial offering. There is no Abraham or Isaac, but the sacrifice is money and I'm going to purchase your suit today. Because ... the Lord has ordered me to do so. Reverend Reeves, you're such a true man of God."

The Reverend would not have taken so kindly to the offering if he were privy to Marjorie's darkness. But he didn't know, so he said, "Glory...Praise the Lord. He's an on time God!" Then he and Marjorie began to march through the busy mall towards their destination.

The Reverend had blessings and plots severely mixed up. He now looked at Marjorie as if God had blessed him with a sugar mama. There was that entitlement again. Now in his life there was such a huge role for Marjorie to take part in.

Little did he know, the money being spent that day was just a slice of the fortune she had been cuffing from the church over the years. Her secret was safe, for now. Marjorie was as sharp as a tack. She was definitely on top of her game. Her husband found out the hard way, after she learned of his litany of infidelities. Especially the affair he was having with a young Instagram model name Monae—French for money.

Reverend Reeves didn't know that Marjorie possessed fatal attraction syndrome, and her feelings were not to be toyed with.' Paying a hitman to take her husband out, no one knew that Marjorie was responsible for his death. Not even the police. Yer/

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
A JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

Read on for a glimpse into his nightmare ...

The Veracity Of A Lion

The Humility Of A Lamb

At the conclusion of this publication's initial release in 2022, some things were unclear. Such as, who was who, and in what capacity. What was certain is, I had the very first defense investigation in my case underway, 22 years after my conviction. And if you already read this book, you know I like statistics and results. Now, if you were to line up 20 innocent people sentenced to life, and ask them: would you like your case investigated, pro bono??? Every one of them would say "absolutely". Just as I had in 2020. The longer a person is imprisoned, the farther we get from opportunity.

Under the guise of legal assistance, led to me by the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, a financial investor with a law degree put it to me straight like this: I'm going to get you exonerated.

What more could I ask for at the time? She had bought and read my trial transcript. And at the time, I was at my lowest. Six months prior, August 2019, I had a PCRA dismissed. Two years before that, my mother had passed away from stomach cancer. My mother answered my calls everyday, in which she regularly caressed my soul by assuring me that she believed in my innocence, and that God got me. So when this financial investor sent me legal mail in 2020, I heard my mother's voice telling me, "God got you". A man I resemble so much was rarely around. A missive here and there. When my tablet stopped working, he sent a Jpay to cover the cost of a new one. Thank you, father. I think his absence from my life is relevant to my story. Like most kids convicted of serious crimes,

affiliated with street culture, I was without a father most of my life. So my mother was supremely critical in my emotional survival. I still hear her voice today.

Okay, statistics again...

As of July 2025, studies estimate that 6% of U.S. prisoners are actually innocent. Yet in Pennsylvania, only 5% of appellants seeking relief from the state appeals court have had their convictions overturned. That leaves thousands hoping for help from Conviction Integrity Units (CIUs).

As of July 2025, Philadelphia remains the only county in the state with a CIU, responsible for dozens of exonerations, and over a hundred vacated cases settled with freedom, 95% of which involved individuals serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. The Unit was launched in 2017 under progressive prosecutor DA Larry Krasner. In his memoir, Krasner writes, "Prosecutors must exonerate and get people out of prison whose convictions lack integrity. " He also wrote, "When new information that undermines the key witness becomes available, the conviction is lacking integrity, and the conviction should be reversed and the individual should go free. Integrity and a just result requires it."

The results of Krasner's work is undeniable. So much that his success of getting innocent people and the wrongfully convicted out of prison encouraged then-Attorney General Josh Shapiro (now governor) to launch a statewide CIU in April 2020. When I read about the statewide CIU in the Associated Press, I immediately submitted a Pro Se application along with exhibits, hoping my 1999 conviction would

finally be re-examined, that someone in that office would see how I'd been fucked over and I could finally get justice.

"All convictions must be able to withstand scrutiny from secondary and outside sources," a state politician offered in support of the progressive move and newly formed statewide CIU.

The statewide CIU in Harrisburg, PA, recognized receipt of my petition in June 2020. Since then, I've heard nothing. Still, I stayed hopeful with a stubborn refusal to surrender, and that kept my soul from utter sadness.

During that time, that financial investor reached out to me with grand ideas on a page with a nice letterhead. Then we spoke on an attorney/client call. She came in the form of a woman with a sharp tongue and sweet words. I signed a contract that would entitle her to 40% of any future earnings I could possibly receive in a 1983 civil rights suit and settlement. I was desperate, brothers and sisters. I was tired of suffering. And her mentioning a connection to the Innocence Project, a revered nonprofit organization with such an impeccable reputation, I questioned nothing. In my mind, all those prayers I had made invoking help had finally garnered some answers, because the Innocence Project only agrees to representation in cases of provable actual innocence.

If one had systemically and diabolically tried to create mental illness, one could probably have constructed no better system than the American justice system. Here's why...

The system is vicious, especially towards poor Black and brown people. Historically too. We get the worse attorneys, no adversarial investigation, leading to unjust convictions. This deeply flawed system and its

destruction of lives has now created a new industry. See, race is like money. Created by people. This new industry I speak of is called: WRONGFUL CONVICTION. This new industry is necessary, Why? How? Because these thoughtful people who make up most of this industry I view as the modern day Abolitionists. In the same way white people in the mid-1800's made the conscious decision to help my enslaved ancestors; comparable work is being done today. They are allowing their humanity to override separatist ideals. We get justice, they make money. People who have been wronged by the criminal justice system, and diabolical prosecutors, with these investors' funding defenses, get a chance to litigate on an even playing field. We get the opportunity to have real adversarial approach, and not the "boys club business" that keeps corruption thriving and people like me imprisoned unjustly.

In the last 10 years these investors have emerged in droves, looking for indigent innocent prisoners who are unrepresented. Put some money up, put the right attorneys in place, the outcome could be tremendous.

My financial investor funded my investigation with a $12,000 check to have my conviction and case investigated for the first time since my arrest. I needed new evidence to even get back in court. That's when I met Kitty Hailey, an exceptional legal investigator, and an exceptional human being. Kitty Hailey spent nearly a decade working at the CHU, Capital Habeas Unit in Philadelphia, a highly skilled and federally funded law office that represents death row inmates in many states, including PA. Kitty has published several books on investigation, wrote countless articles for the PI Magazine, and was even featured in Forbes Magazine. (The Untitled Kitty Hailey Documentary is forthcoming, featuring none other than ya boy, Tysheem Crocker).

After nearly a year of investigation, interviewing witnesses, jurors, and reading documents, Kitty concluded: I am not just wrongfully convicted, but actually innocent.

The Director of the Capita1 Habeas Unit when Kitty Hailey worked there was an attorney by the name of Michael Wiseman. Amongst the men imprisoned in Pennsylvania, Mr. Wiseman is considered a legal luminary, a wizard with words, a highly regarded strategist focused on the win, and a post-conviction specialist. The lawyer convicts dream of having.

Driven by her investment, my financial investor pushed me to file a PCRA petition based on Kitty's discoveries. I was excited. Thinking of exoneration. But the petition was poorly written. And when I tried to voice my concern, I got no feedback. A detailed amendment to her petition was drafted by me in days and shipped (overnight) to her with one request: Amend petition please. Due diligence is a requirement under post-conviction law that must be addressed in successive petitions, and that was missing from her filing. Months went by with no communication, and right after Christmas 2022, a York County judge dismissed the petition for a new trial for lack of due diligence, never reaching the merits on a patent Brady violation

I never heard from the investor again, though she can be heard with me on the Wrongful Conviction Podcasts with Jason Flom (Episode #330). Listening to that interview one cannot help but wonder how I am still in prison. Lava For Good did an excellent job highlighting the flaws in my case and why the conviction should be vacated. If we could have just filed that interview instead of her shabby petition, I wouldn't have done another three years praying over prison food. But this is part of my story now.

No question I was devastated by the courts ruling, but even more by the abandonment. Lawyers who abandon clients should be banished from practice. Unvarnished, I moved on.

In Pennsylvania, a trial judge must issue a 907 Notice of its Intent To Dismiss, and the Defendant has 20 days to rebut. As soon as I got the bad news, I called the investor, and her assistant answered. I told the assistant who I was, she told me to hold on, then came back and told me the investor was not available, simultaneously hanging up on me. She knew before I did the judge's intent to dismiss and did not respond. She gave up on me, and her $12,000 investment. Left with only 2 days, I filed my own Reply, my own Motion to Amend the existing petition, and a motion To Rescind the Dismissal Order in case my filings didn't reach the courthouse before the 20 days expired.

By law, Defendant's with counsel-of-record cannot file motions on their own behalf. I knew this, but I had no choice. Right after I dropped those motions in the mailbox on my cell block, I prayed to God for peace, that's all I wanted was peace, then I left a voice mail asking my financial investor to please withdraw as counsel so that I could proceed Pro se (representing myself). And a new journey...

While all this was going downhill, the opportunity of my life was slipping away, Kitty Hailey had no idea. She didn't even know her Innocence Report had made its way to Jason Flom's office in New York City. That the contents of her report was the premise of my explosive interview with Jason. Kitty's job was done, and she was on to the next case needing investigation. From the time she turned her report in, with six witness declarations attached, three years would go by before we'd speak again.

I recall speaking with Lorenzo Johnson, one of my closest comrades, and him telling me that he had just spoken to Kitty at an event. Kitty Hailey was one of the investigators who helped spring him from a life sentence back in 2017 before becoming an independent investigator (which I didn't find out until 2023).

A few days later, he told me Kitty wanted to speak with me, and she had no idea things had foiled between myself and the investor who had hired her to investigate my case and conviction.

What kept me going through that dark time was work ethic, audacity, tenacity, resilience, my belief in God, and my love of the literary arts. I've long believed that with focused thought, I can attract the right people, energy and information into my life.

Lorenzo "Cat" Johnson and I met in the state pen during the 2000s while he was wrongfully convicted too. Lorenzo introduced me to Jason Flom during the 2022 Innocence Network Convention down in Phoenix, AZ. And we clicked. Over a short period of time, Jason became my big brother— welcoming me into his ever growing family of fighters.

If you didn't already know it, Jason Flom is the biggest dude in the Wrongful Conviction movement. A renowned music executive, justice warrior, and founding member of The Innocence Project, Jason entered my life at a pivotal moment. When things collapsed with the financial investor, I turned to him with my anger and my frustrations. And he respected my resilience.

Also, a genuine friendship developed between me and Kitty Hailey. One correspondence turned into many. Then in April of 2024, we finally met

in person. We talked, and once people meet me in the flesh, or hear my story from my perspective, I seem to always gain another alley. Today, Kitty is like my guardian angel. Only a few days go by without us speaking, not a few years. As I mentioned, work began on a documentary about her life, and how our lives crossed paths and would forever be intertwined. Being chosen to be part of an investigative documentary is one of the highlights of my life. We watched the (Sizzle) trailer together at a Zoom meeting in June 2025, then celebrated together in the visiting room for my 48th birthday. Kitty's one heck of a lady, and an excellent investigator.

But it was Jason's people that discovered my investor had no prior experience in criminal law or post-conviction work. She was a civil suit lawyer, specializing in wrongful death and slip-and-falls. Not wrongful conviction.

Talking to Jason was smooth. We spoke daily, trying to get the right attorney in place. So, no room for embarrassment, just strength and perseverance.

One of the things Jason said to me that stuck out was, "When people meet in person, a different part of the brain opens up..." And he was right. Prior to November 2023, a lawyer had never visited me at a state prison. Twenty-plus years served, umpteen dollars doled out, and not one of my prior post-conviction Esquires thought they needed to meet me in person to find out how I'd been railroaded. Roy Galloway ESQ visited me in county lockup in 2017, for possible retainment, but that was it.

Recognizing the injustice, Jason Flom connected me with an attorney by

the name of Caroline Heller, of New York City's famed firm GT Law. After a few phone calls, Caroline was able to express to me that the PA Innocence Project had never heard of my investor, nor had they given her any of my information as she had initially told me.

I don't know whether I was more shocked, or I had an "aha moment" invade my thoughts. Nevertheless, something good had come out of this deception and disappointment.

Spring 2023, with attorney Caroline Heller and some lawyers from her firm (GT Law), the Pennsylvania Innocence project agreed to review my case for the very first time. Finally! Something I'd longed for, for decades: Innocence Project representation. That is every innocent person's fantasy, but very few get to that reality. And again, the Project may review a case, but they only agree to representation in cases of provable actual innocence.

Now a pro se litigator once again, I was preparing an appellate brief to the appeals court, challenging the "due diligence" requirements for Brady violations using the government interference exception to give the trial court jurisdiction over the case once again. Exculpatory evidence had been withheld in my case by the York County DA's office that could have cleared me in 1998. Interviews and documentation.

Memorializing my lowest moments is the most potent form of catharsis. I am a writer. I put things down on paper. Some I keep, some I discard. The abridging of *It Could Happen To Any Of Us* began as me putting my feelings on paper. Tears were also on those pages. I just knew I was on the verge of justice. And to have that huge letdown. The disgraceful way the

investor had handled me. And, I had to convince myself again that: I am worthy, that I am going to win, that I will be successful.

Section 1983 roots can be traced back to the Reconstruction era and a Bill known exclusively as "the Klu Klux Klan Act." The government knew a certain kind of folk would get into power after the civil war and abuse that power to reek havoc on a specific race of people. Black people. To protect the civil rights and constitutional rights of Black and brown people, the Act allowed individuals to sue local government officials for violating those civil rights. This is extremely important, because today it is a path that wrongfully convicted people take up to be compensated. With this in mind, prosecutors are prone to protect a conviction at all cost, instead accepting the clearly established federal law governing a specific controversy, and supporting justice.

Because the Investor's sole concern seemed to be compensation by filling a 1983 civil suit, steps and actions that needed to be taken before we could even get to that point were skipped. Attorney Wiseman tried to remedy the debacle, asking the appellate courts to send the case back to the trial court because the clear statute does not require a Defendant to explain why he couldn't discover sooner that the prosecuting attorney failed to disclose favorable evidence prior to trial and during post-conviction litigations.

Here it is, about to be 2026, and I'm still fighting.

That Super 8 motel clerk I spoke of in previous chapters, the ghost I'd been chasing for decades??? Well, the prosecutor who framed me always knew about the clerk and had even interviewed her prior to my trial. She

gave favorable statements, and documentation that discredited the ut the PCRA judge could not adjudicate on the merits without a plausible explanation of why this exonerating evidence could not have been discovered sooner. SMFH!

Didn't want to, but I'd done it on my own before: file a legal brief. I would just do it again, keep the ball moving, until the attorneys were done vetting me.

Then comes June 12, 2023! A monumental day in my life.

Jason and Muhammad Ali's daughter, Khaliah, are on their way to iHeart Radio when I call. Jason appears on The Breakfast Club, where he speaks my name and shares my story with millions!

That same morning, within minutes, I'm on a call with the maestro Michael Wiseman.

You only get 2 minutes to shoot your shot with powerful people, less than that when you're in prison. So always be prepared. I was. Turned out Kitty Hailey had worked with Attorney Wiseman when he was Director of the Capital Habeas Unit. In under 2 minutes, I explained what had happened and where I was in litigation, and he agreed to come on as counsel. His argument to the PA Superior Court on the government interference exception to the time-bar and its lack of requirement for due diligence was brilliant. The facts of my case and the egregious acts taken against me to secure a conviction shined like a brand new car.

We didn't win the appeal because though the due diligence requirement

was not written into the post-conviction statute (Title 42, subsection 9541-9546), the Superior Court was bound by the 2007 PA Supreme Court ruling in Com. v. Abu-Jamal. The requirement did not exist until that case. And tough cases make bad law.

Shortly after Michael Wiseman filed my legal brief, he traveled from Philadelphia to Somerset, PA to visit me again. This time he brought along some company. Four attorneys from the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, and a new investigator. By the time they left SCI Somerset, they knew everything about me from the day I was born to the day I was arrested, and all the interesting and uninteresting things that grew me up while unjustly incarcerated for more than a quarter century. Most of which you read about in the earlier chapters of this memoir. It was very intense, reliving all the horror, and all the accomplishments that kept me alive. Tears of pain burst from my eyes with tears of joy mixed in.

July 2023, Michael Wiseman became my attorney. Less than one year later, and other investigation into my case and conviction, the PA Innocence Project also became counsel of record. I didn't reach this place by chance, I didn't secure defense of this level and excellence by happenstance. It took years of hard work, disappointments and deep devotion. It took asking questions, asking for what I needed, always standing firm on my innocence, being prepared at all times to explain the facts of my case at the drop of a dime. I am not out of the dark yet. But I can see light at the end of the tunnel. I am witnessing the beginning of the end of my nightmare.

Every moment mattered.

The investor led me to Kitty.

Kitty's report caught Jason's attention.

Jason used his platform to amplify my story.

And now, some of Pennsylvania's best legal minds are fighting by my side.

As far as the CIU goes, in January 2025, my attorneys have submitted a counseled petition with them, illustrating my innocence, requesting they join the fight to exonerate me. As for my pro se petition, from 2020, it is still there without resolution. Where is the urgency, right???

I thought this part of the journey was worth sharing with my supporters, my fans, my readers, and the many lifers and wrongfully convicted people I stand in solidarity with. Maybe these words describing my cries, my strength, my little victories, the abandonment, my indomitableness could inspire someone to keep fighting the corrupt system that shows no mercy and avoid the pitfalls of the charlatan private investors with the wrong intentions.

With hope being the true sustenance to life, I'm hopeful my legal team is successful with the successive petition they've filed November 2025 asking the courts to exonerate me based on a claim of "actual innocence" that may be cognizable and free-standing basis for relief under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. The continued incarceration of an individual who is actually innocent would "shock the moral conscience of the community" and thus is an unconstitutionally cruel punishment under the Pennsylvania

Constitution. That along with more exonerating evidence is where we stand today.

I pray for truth, justice, peace, freedom and love for all who have been wronged and all who are on the right path.

I became an author and entrepreneur while serving a life sentence in Pennsylvania. This was not my path, had I not been arrested and convicted of a crime I did not commit. Yet, I enjoy my place in the literary world, and instead of constant PTSD, I am experiencing post traumatic growth. Level five leaders move with the veracity of a lion, while displaying the humility of a lamb.

Check out my new novel about love and injustice and redemption on Amazon.com and my website tysheemcrocker.com, entitled: *Love Ain't What You Say, It's What You Do*.