

Smoke D

M'FAMOUS

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DEDICATION

To my brother Darrell. Gone but never forgotten. Ever. RIP.

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TERRANCE

"You sho' you trying to be down wit this set?" Quack asked Terrance in his deep voice as the black Dodge Charger they were in pulled away from the curb, "cause once it's time to put this work in ain't no turning back."

Terrance just nodded looking into Quack's eyes through the rear view mirror even though he wasn't halfway sure himself. All he knew was that most of his friends were banging and that they had mostly been for a while. He mainly wanted to be down because they were and repping would give him street cred. That was very major to him since he'd just been signed as a gangster rapper with M'Famous Entertainment. He'd heard stories of C-Note wilding and shooting niggas at the club, and he wanted to be seen as the genuine gangster he portrayed in his raps for C-Note's approval.

Terrance took the blunt from Gizzle, who was riding in the back seat with him then took a long slow pull from it, and held his breath until the weed started to make his chest bum. Gizzle was the o.g. Quack's nephew, and though he was only four years older than Terrance at twenty-two he already had enough rank to put Terrance down himself. The only thing that had stopped him was the fact that Quack had said that he'd personally put Triggamane, as Terrance was called on the streets, down himself, which still amazed him. From the stories his friends had told him no one as high ranking as Quack had put either of them down, which also gave him a huge ego boost seeing as that a real o.g. had seen him as a gangster and wanted to be the one who blessed him in.

The car pulled onto the expressway following a black Nissan Maxima full of other already affiliated with the radio turned up to the max. Terrance took another pull from the kush they were

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smoking and then passed it to Quack. Though he could feel the potent weed his mind wouldn't let him relax as he wondered what they were about to do. He'd been told by his friends that all he'd have to do was fight a few of them for a few minutes and that was it. They'd mostly done that in Gizzle's backyard so he didn't have a clue where he was going or what he was about to be put through. All he knew was that Quack had told him that he wanted him to be his "lil gangsta" and that he'd have to pass a real gangster's test in order to prove that he was worthy and that he was a real soldier.

After about ten minutes on the expressway they got off and made their way through a few side streets. It was just getting dark and Terrance also wasn't familiar with this part of Memphis, so he wasn't sure of where he was exactly as they pulled up in front of a red brick house with a cocaine white Dodge Challenger on 26" deep dish Asantis in the driveway beside a new model Chevy Malibu. Just looking at the car made Terrance hope that his record deal worked out and that he could soon have something like it. Quack told Terrance to hold up before he was able to get out so he sat back and watched as the others from the car ahead of them got out and made their way up to the porch. Terrance took a quick glance out the front windshield and saw that there was no one out on the street. He looked out the window on his side too and by the time he'd looked back at the house the front door was wide open and all of the men from the other car were inside. A moment later, one of them came to the doorway and waved for Quack and the others to come inside.

"Ai'ight lil partna come on," Quack said looking at Terrance through the mirror again as he got out of the car.

Terrance's heart began to beat so hard that he thought someone would actually see his shirt moving as he made his way inside the house behind Quack and Gizzle, with Big Ball, the driver, behind him. They followed the man who'd signaled them inside to a bedroom. Terrance's heart almost dropped through his stomach

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when he saw all the blood that was on the floor and leaking profusely onto the bed from the young dude who was holding his leg while tears rolled down his face along with sweat. A young girl in a thong and no top sat on the bed whimpering as she watched her boyfriend moan in agonizing pain.

“Lil partna you stand there and take notes since this yo’ first mission,” Quack said to Terrance, “the rest of ya’ll know the drill. Big Ball, get the door, and ya’ll niggas hurry up and find my shit so we can roll.”

The men slowly filed out of the room to search the house for money and drugs.

“Well, well, well, ol’ Yella,” Quack taunted, speaking to the bleeding man for the first time. “Long time no mothafuckin’ money. You could’ve called, text, or sent a damn postcard or something, but naw fuck me right? Just take that nigga shit and don’t pay him, he ain’t gon’ do shit. I bet that’s what you been thinking ain’t it. Or he ain’t gon’ do shit long as he fucking my aunt, she gon’ protect me.” Quack reached under his shirt and pulled out a nickel plated .357 causing the girl to let out a wail as more tears ran down her face.

Quack waved the gun around as he continued to speak. “Went and got you a new car, twenty sixes and shit. Hell I can’t even afford all that shit, but you can off the shit I was good enough to give you, cause you asked for it. You brought ya’ lil girlfriend a new car too, but I couldn’t get a second thought. See lil homie this what happen when you try to show love to a sucka ass nigga who ain’t on the set,” he said to Terrance who stood there stone-faced with knots in his stomach unsure of what he may have been about to witness.

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Quack turned back to Yella with a menacing scowl on his face. "I should've know you wasn't a real nigga when you had yo' aunt step to me bout something a real nigga would've been man enough to step up and ask for himself. I can't be mad at nobody but myself though, cause I always give her ass what she ask for when she sucking on my dick."

"Mane I swear Quack I was gon' pay you double cause I knew I'd fucked up the pack and the money. I just need some more time," Yella finally spoke with broken words in a shaken voice. "I wanted to have all the money at once mane, that's on everythang."

Quack let out a sigh. "You know what , if you'd have told me that a while back I might've thought about halfway believing you, but nigga it's been over two months and I ain't even heard ya' name no mo'. And it really sound like you tryin' to run game right now mothafucka, and I know you ain't got the audacity to be in my mothafuckin' face lying and shit nigga," Quack growled through clenched teeth pointing the pistol at Yella sideways with his palm up.

"Nooo, Puh-leeesse don't hurt him. He'll pay you double, I promise," the girl whined barely above a whisper, "puh-leeessee."

"Shit you gon' pay me too," Quack said to the girl. "Ain't no point in you tryin' to play innocent 'cause you been living off my shit too. And you know where the money come from 'cause you was with this nigga when he got my shit. So you definitely owe too and you gon' pay me ain't you?"

The girl quickly nodded her head.

A mischievous and knowing smile spread across Quack's face. "As a matter of fact, you can pay me back yo' part right now. I'mma even let you keep ya' lil car," he said as he made his way around to the side of the bed where the girl was. "You finna suck my dick for a few minutes while I wait on these niggas."

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“Puh-leessee, nooo!”

“No my ass bitch!” Quack barked. “Either you gon’ suck my dick as payment to me, or you gon’ suck a mothafuckin’ bullet!”

He grabbed the girl by the hair with his free hand and told her to pull his dick out through the zipper.

“Get it hard first, and then suck it,” he instructed her as she held his dick in her hand. “Ohh that feel so good baby girl. What’s yo’ name wit yo’ lil pretty ass, and you betta not lie.”

“Kamisha,” she said barely audible.

“You know what Kamisha, I ain’t even gon’ make yo’ lil ass suck my dick. You remind me too much of one of my nieces, so this shit might fuck with my conscience next time I see her ass. Don’t get too excited though, yo’ lil ass ain’t getting away that easy.

“Lil homie come over here,” Quack said to Terrance.

“Lil homie hold the room down while I go through this closet real quick,” he told him as he handed him the .357, which Terrance thought he’d drop because of how bad his hands were sweating.

“Kamisha, you need to give my homie the best head he gon’ get in his life,” Quack ordered over his shoulder as he opened the closet door.

With her head down Kamisha reached over to Terrance and pulled his dick out and started sucking it. He couldn’t help but to grab her head because it felt good the way she was flicking her tongue as she sucked it and she’d even grabbed it with both hands as his erection became harder.

Though she was scared out of her mind the length of the man’s dick she was sucking excited Kamisha and she dared to look

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up into his eyes as she secretly began to give him head like he was her man. Not to mention she kind of liked the fact that Yella had to sit there while she ate a stranger's dick since she thought he was messing around on her. She said to hell with it and went for a nut since she was told to make it the best he'd ever get.

"Aahh yeah, suck it bay, suck it harder and make me come," Terrance called out getting caught up in the moment.

Kamisha did as she was told and sucked harder and faster as she felt the man tense up and knowing he was about to come had her pussy getting wet. Moments later she felt his hot fluids filling her mouth, and she didn't even think of stopping she'd gotten so into what she was doing. She just swallowed the nut and kept sucking figuring she'd justify it to Yella by saying that she wasn't going to just sit there with a mouth full of cum and that she didn't want to aggravate the gunman by stopping too soon. Plus, this was all Yella's fault from the start.

"Okay, shit that's enough," Terrance said having to tug his dick to get her to let go.

"Damn, she got you to nut that fast?" Quack asked as he came out of the closet with a shotgun in one hand and what looked like a pound of weed in the other. "Girl you got some skills don't cha. Yella you don't mind if I get these gifts do ya'?"

Just then Gizzle came into the room with a shoebox full of large bills. "Yogi found some dope in the freezer and he still looking through the rest of the kitchen. Ain't nobody else found shit so far," he told his uncle.

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“Ai’ight, we gon’ take what we got, we out this mothafucka,” Quack said. “It’s just one mo’ lil thang I got to have before I go.”

Quack walked over to Terrance and put his large arm around his slender shoulder leading him back around to the foot of the bed to where Yella still sat bleeding.

“Now dig this lil homie, when you got into the car to come over here I asked you was you sho’ you wanted to be down and you said you did. I also said that once it was time to put work in it wasn’t no turning back. Now we’ve had a few discussions before and I like ya’ spirit, it’s a lil gangsta in you and I want you down with the right team. Ai’ight then, you say you gon’ rep the set to the fullest and I believe you, but see we got a problem, cause this nigga here don’t respect our set even though he know what it is. He calls his self taking somethin’, which means he said fuck us. Fuck me, fuck you, and fuck everythang we stand for, and I know you ain’t going for that is you gangsta?”

Terrance swallowed hard before shaking his head and trying his best not to shiver and show that he was actually scared of may have been about to happen. He looked back over his shoulder and saw Gizzle and the man he’d called Yogi, who was holding two large zip lock bags that had large knots of what looked like frozen biscuit dough. Terrance looked over at the girl who was balled up with her knees to her chest with her head down on them. He could hear her sobs as she begged God not to let her die, and swore that she’d do whatever He wanted her to if she could just live. Terrance then looked back to Yella who was visibly shaking. Suddenly he felt the weight of the gun in his hand as though he’d just picked it up and it felt as though he’d drop it.

Quack continued talking. “I know you ain’t going for it, cause the set ain’t going for it lil gangsta. The set got principles we live by and we gon’ die by, and any violations by niggas like this is punishable by death and homie this nigga got to die, today! Like I

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said before, you said you'd ride for the set and now it's time. Triggamane, you gotta kill this nigga. This yo' test to see if you can be my lil gangsta, and I know you gon' pass it. So gon' down this nigga so we can roll and get you put down proper like you supposed to be."

Since Quack had his left arm draped over Terrance's shoulder holding the weed in his hand, he used his right hand, which still held the shotgun to raise the pistol, which was still in Terrance's right hand, up towards Yella. "Go head homie and show this nigga yo' set ain't soft, and that this nigga can't just run over us," Quack said hyping him up.

Trying to buy time so he could think, Terrance swallowed hard and then cleared his throat before speaking hoping that his voice didn't crack. "O.G., you ain't got to kill this nigga, look at 'em, he scared as fuck. This nigga said he'll pay double, so let this nigga pay you,' cause I know you bout yo' paper, and I'll personally make sho' the nigga pay every penny, nickel, and dime," he said hoping Quack would see his logic and spare him from doing something he wasn't nearly ready or willing to do.

Quack stood in silence as though he was giving the suggestion serious consideration before shaking his head no. "Naw, not this time. This nigga went too far, and this ain't 'bout the money no mo'. And anyway I could've flipped the shit he had all this time and made double 'bout three or four times already. Like I said the set got principles we live by and this nigga don't respect that, and disrespect will not be tolerated, period! See niggas either all the way with us, or they on the other side wit' niggas like this and they end up like this nigga and they get what he got coming. Now all you got to do is simply pull the trigger. They call you Triggamane for a reason don't they? It's not like you gotta cut the nigga body up or somethin', just squeeze three times and it's over. You said you'd do it and AIN'T NO TURNING BACK!"

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Terrance felt like he was trapped, and the menace in Quack's voice and words had his heart fluttering and his stomach in knots. With his breathing becoming more labored, and Quack's patience seeming to grow thinner by the second he took a deep breath, after which it felt like he'd already been holding his breath forever. He squeezed his eyes closed and pulled the trigger three times as he'd been told to do.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Once Terrance reopened his eyes he almost threw up at the sight of all the blood, and the sight of Yella's blank stare at the ceiling with lifeless eyes shook him. Terrance's mind and body felt numb as he watched Quack take the gun from his hand and give him the shotgun and weed. He watched as Quack made his way over to the girl, who had yelped with each bark of the gun, and was now shaking as she mumbled incoherently. He watched her eyes bulge out when Quack grabbed her by the hair and pulled her head back exposing the tears and snot that both ran freely down her pretty face.

"Now miss Kamisha," Quack said coolly, "when the police show up you ain't gon' know why we was here, are you?"

She quickly shook her head.

"Good," Quack said now stroking the girl's hair. "And we all had masks on didn't we, and you don't remember any names being called do you?"

Again she quickly shook her head now looking down at the stain under her from her pissing on herself.

"Kamisha, where's yo' i.d.?"

Unable to get any words out her mouth, she pointed to her purse sitting on the dresser.

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After Gizzle fumbled through it and found what he was looking for and a pack of Winterfresh gum, the men all left. Once they were back in their cars and on their way, Quack praised Terrance for putting in work for the set.

“My lil mothafuckin’ gangsta, Triggamane,” Quack said as he lit a blunt and took a pull from it before handing it back to Terrance. “Bout to get put down, got stripes, and got a record deal. You really are gone be infamous!”

2 MONTHS EARLIER

SMOKE & C-NOTE

Smoke watched his cousin, C-Note, walk out of the door of one of his own regular weed customer's house followed by a short, dark skinned girl, who filled out the white cat suit she wore. She had enough ass and hips to match Buffie the Body or any other video vixen. He lit a cherry Black & Mild as he watched his younger cousin shoot game at the cutie, then pull out his phone and apparently got her number. After another minute or so of talking, C-Note held out his arms and the girl stepped into his embrace. C-Note turned his head towards Smoke and smiled, showing the four gold teeth at the top of his mouth before he winked as his hands slid down over the girl's ass. After letting her go he walked the short distance over to Smoke's black Chevy Tahoe with the smile still plastered on his face. He pinched the inside collar of his wife beater and flicked his wrist out as if to say he'd popped his collar. C-Note never had a problem getting women-Smoke either for that matter- he was a borderline pretty boy with a peanut butter complexion covered in tattoos. The wife beater let most of the tats show along with the lean muscular frame he'd still had from playing both point guard and corner back the two and a half years he'd stayed in high school. At 5'10 and 180 pounds, he gave up 7" and 50 pounds to Smoke, but his hazel eyes and gold teeth along with his swag kept more panties around ankles than diarrhea. C-Note got in the truck and pulled a twenty dollar bill out his pocket, which he handed to Smoke.

"I bet yo' ass serve yo' own sack next time. I know you saw what you missed out on and I'm gon' beat that pussy down," C-Note said holding his hands in place in front of him like he was holding a girl's waist.

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"I ain't miss nothing," Smoke said nonchalantly. "It's plenty mo' like that and I can probably hit her if I catch her over here again. Pimpin' ain't neva been a issue. Plus, these twenty eights get a nigga mo' ass than toilet seats."

Both men laughed before C-Note reached to turn the volume up on the stereo as Playa Fly's classic album "Moving On" blast through the speakers as they pulled out into the streets of Memphis.

They pulled up to a gas pump at the Exxon gas station on Chelsea street and Danny Thomas Blvd. Smoke went inside to pay for the gas and grab a few of the lottery tickets he loved to play. On his way back to the truck he noticed his cousin yelling into his phone and waving his hand around. Smoke waited until the twenty dollars worth of gas he'd paid for finished pumping then got inside, where C-Note was no longer on his phone, but was visibly upset.

"Wassup nigga, you ai'ight?" Smoke asked with genuine concern.

"Naw cuz, shoot me to my car. This dumb ass bitch done let my son get burned some kind of way. I know you ridin' dirty, so I won't ask you to take me. Plus, I'm gon' haul ass to see bout my lil nigga mane," C-Note replied with a scowl on his face the entire time.

Since C-Noted turned the stereo back up Smoke could see that he didn't want to talk, so he left him alone and quickly drove him to his apartment in New Chicago. Smoke turned the stereo down as he pulled up behind C-Note's car to try and gauge where his cousin's head was since he knew how he could get once he was upset.

"I know you tryin' to see bout yo' lil boy, but be careful heading up there, and don't get too crazy. Yo' ass still on probation, and you know you ain't trying to be off the streets," Smoke said.

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C-Note nodded his head slowly taking in his older cousin's words. They sank in all the more since C-Note's baby mama drama was the reason he'd ended up on probation in the first place.

"I'm cool mane. I'm just gonna make sure junior cool. Nothing more, nothing less," C-Note said in a low tone as he climbed out the truck.

The truth was that he and his cousin both knew that he didn't know how he'd react until he got there, especially since his baby mama, Vera, could agitate the smallest of situations. He was about to open the door to his car when he heard Smoke blow his horn.

"Hit me and let me know wassup once you get there mane, ai'ight," Smoke called out leaning his head out of the window.

His cousin only nodded before opening the car door and getting in.

Smoke could only shake his head as he watched the taillights of the car come on. He knew his cousin would probably drive the 96' Impala to its limit racing up the highway to Huntingdon, Tennessee, where Vera lived. The car could have been his and initially it was. The two cousins' dead unde had left him the car and C-Note the truck. Seeing as though C-Note had always loved fast cars and he the commanding feel of trucks, the switch was easy.

Smoke sat in the truck and reminisced on some of the time he'd spent with his unde before he died from lung cancer shortly after retiring from the military. He thought about the day when his uncle, Andre, introduced him to his first cousin, Corey, for the first time when they were sixteen and fourteen. Andre had told them

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what had happened to both of their fathers, who were both his younger brothers, who had never been in either boy's lives. Around the time that Smoke was two years old, C-Note had just been born and both of their fathers had been running in the streets. Smoke's father, Sean Sr., had been robbed and shot multiple times during a drug deal gone bad. He'd died three days later, but not before he'd told C-Note's father, Corey Sr., what had happened. A week later Corey buried his younger brother with a small sense of closure since he'd been able to tell the former shell of his brother that the men responsible for his death were already dead themselves, one to never be found. Unfortunately the same couldn't be said for the other body. In his initial emotional rage upon learning the identities of the robbers from his brother, Corey had caught one man at his mother's home where he kicked in the front door and gunned down his former childhood friend right in front of his family. Since the man's entire family knew Corey's own, the police knew exactly who they were looking for and maliciously arrested him as he exited the church carrying his brother's casket.

The judge handed down a life sentence for a crime he said was cold and heartless and to which Corey showed absolutely no remorse whatsoever. It was a sentence he would never finish since he was killed in a riot around the time his only son was going on three years old.

Their uncle had told them how upset he was that he'd been overseas and missed both of his brothers' funerals, and a difficult point in the lives of the rest of his family. He said that he was upset with himself for years because he'd been able to fight for an entire country, but not his own family. Years later he'd been permanently stationed at the base in Millington, TN right outside of Memphis, and he made a vow to find both of his brothers' children and help raise them as best as he could. Both boys were being raised by their mothers, who were more than happy to have help with their sons, who were both being drawn into the streets at a young age. Though he'd never been able to pull either out of the streets completely,

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he'd always try to help guide their decisions and treat them like the sons he never had himself.

Smoke was snapped out of his daydreaming by the sound of C-Note's horn as he pulled off headed towards his son. He thought about how he and his cousin clicked as soon as they'd met and how they came to be as brothers as they grew and spent time together. Since the day they'd met and the fate of their fathers had been revealed, Smoke had truly grown to believe that their lives were truly meant to be tied together. Smoke blew his horn in return, but he didn't pull off behind C-Note. He relit the Black & Mild he'd put out before going into the gas station. He then reached down and pulled up the floor mat on the passenger's side where he kept his lucky penny, which he'd used to scratch on every lottery ticket he'd ever played. He grabbed the tickets from the center console and sat them on his lap and began to scratch off each and won only sixty dollars off the twenty dollars in tickets he'd brought earlier.

Even though he considered the lottery tickets a loss, Smoke mellowed out since he knew he had a week worth of money to count at home, which always made him feel good. He let down his windows to let in the late August air since it had cooled off as the sun began to set. The dear sounds of his Alpine stereo system thumped as he made his way to his home in Binghampton. He stopped at the nearby McDonalds' to grab a bite to eat, and to see if he could sell a few more sacks of weed like he usually did before he went in for the night. After getting his food, and selling three twenty dollar sacks, he made his way to his duplex apartment on Eastview Street. As he pulled into his driveway, his neighbor, Solo, came out of his apartment and began speaking once Smoke made his way up to the porch.

"Smoke, wassup mane? You got a quarter on you?" the heavy set, light skinned Solo asked as he sipped from an alcoholic beverage inside a brown bag.

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"Yeah, I gotcha right here," Smoke said as he pulled the last quarter ounce of the weed they called sour diesel from his pocket.

Solo put the weed to his nose and inhaled, savoring the enticing aroma. "Be on yo' Ps and Qs too mane, them people been riding through all afternoon," he informed Smoke.

"Damn what done happened now, a nigga got hit up or somethin'?"

"Naw mane, it ain't go down like that. The police was chasing some niggas in an Explorer. Tuck told me he saw the shit, and them niggas was jumping out shooting at the police and running in different direction. The credit union over by the board of Education building got robbed, and most likely it was dem niggas."

"Damn that sound just like that shit that Ken-Ken them tried to pull in Arkansas. I can't knock a nigga though, cause the way I'm starting to feel that look like the only way a nigga can get ahead."

"When you put the plan together come holla at cha boy, 'cause this Techni-color shit ain't 'bout to get a nigga nowhere no time soon. Fuck the feds and fuck this supervised release shit. But look mane, let me get back in here, by baby in the tub," Solo said then dapped Smoke up after passing him his cash then made his way inside.

Smoke grabbed his mail then made his way into his own home, where he headed straight to his bedroom and emptied all the cash from his pocket, then pulled the small knot from his right sock and tossed it onto his bed. Then he reached under the foot end of his mattress and pulled out the paper bag that was full of the money he'd made through the rest of the week. Thursdays were count day since he may or may not hit the clubs on Friday and Saturday. After lighting another cigar he sat down and counted out the money in the bag and then what he'd had on him and

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altogether it totaled to four hundred and seventy dollars. Smoke could only shake his head at the small change he'd made from a week of hustling, but even that was eighty dollars more than he'd made the week before.

"I might be better off getting a damn job, at least ain't no risk of jail in that shit," he said to himself.

Smoke left two hundred on the bed and took the rest to his other bedroom, where he pulled the back off an old floor model TV. He pulled out a thick wad of bills, which he knew was just over five thousand, and added the two hundred with it. After putting it back he pulled out a smaller knot, which was the re-up money, and added the remainder of what he'd brought in. Once he replaced the money and the panel he went back into the master suite and picked up the two hundred, shaking his head once again as he placed it on his dresser. H knew the reality of his situation was the same as many other hustlers, and that was that unlike books and movies showed, there were hardly ever Bentleys and mansions gained for the majority of them. Some had been fortunate enough to stay alive and out of jail long enough to get ahead, but most of them were just maintaining and keeping their heads above water. You could get nice things here and there, but a lot of times it could all be a frustrating headache.

Smoke hadn't been to jail in almost two years and all he'd managed to stack was five thousand. It was true that he had to pay an attorney eight thousand six months earlier, but that shouldn't have been an issue because he felt that he should've earned that back by now and then some. He kicked his shoes off and then lay back on his bed looking at the ceiling. After a few minutes he sat up and pulled a rolled blunt from his nightstand.

"Damn, if something don't give I might need to plan a bank job for real," Smoke thought to himself as he lit the blunt and took a deep pull from it. After smoking half the blunt, he put it out and lay back in deep thought before drifting off to sleep.

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C-Note mashed the gas in his Impala, loving the power of his souped up engine as it pushed him back in his seat and also towards his destination. He took Chelsea Street down to Danny Thomas, where he turned left and sped towards downtown Memphis. After a brief drive, he turned into the parking lot of the Poplar Tunes record store. He parked and made his way inside, where Smoke was already waiting for their weekly meeting at the store on Fridays to check out new music and to see if and which clubs they would hit.

“Wassup nigga, I though yo’ ass was gon’ hit me up last night to let me know what was up?” Smoke asked as C-Note walked up and gave him dap.

“Nigga I did, but yo’ ass didn’t answer. You was probably high, you know how yo’ ass get,” C-Note replied.

Smoke could only chuckle at the truth in his cousin’s words. “You got that,” he stated nodding at C-Note. “But what happened to lil man, he cool?”

C-Note really couldn’t help but to shake his head as the craziness of the whole episode came back to him. “Yeah he good. That bitch was just trying to get me up there. When she called she was talking ‘bout some scalding hot water fell on him, but when I got there the real story came out that it was just some hot water out the damn faucet. I checked him out where I got there ‘cause the dumb bitch didn’t take him to the hospital, but he was only red where the water hit ‘em. It wasn’t no bad burns or peeled skin.”

“Damn. What happened to him though?” Smoke questioned with genuine concern for his godson and nephew.

“One of Nisha’s bad ass kids was standing in a chair to get some hot water to make some cocoa or some shit and spilled it on him trying to get out the chair wit’ it. Like I said she exaggerated the shit, when I get there and see that it ain’t that serious, I cussed her

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ass out and she tried to flip the script talkin' bout I need to come up there more. You know her nosey ass momma tried to get in the convo, so I drug her ass outside to my car and cussed her ass out some mo'."

C-Note took a moment to scan the songs on the back of a 70's greatest hit album.

"After a while she got to apologizing and shit, and the next thing I know she sucking my dick. I end up nuttin' in her mouth, and she got to talkin' bout spend the night wit' my son and the shit worked cause I felt a lil guilty and shit. Staying wit' him turned into fucking her and I ain't get back home 'til at this morning. I'll be glad when I can stop hustlin' and get my son from her sorry ass, but I need my paper all the way straight first."

"While we talkin' bout money, mane somethin' gotta give cause this nickel and dime hustlin' shit getting real old real fast," Smoke said with exasperation. "Shit I ain't even got ten stacks saved up."

"Shit, me neither. What you tryin' to do hit a lick or somethin'?" C-Note asked rubbing his hands together.

"That ain't what I was thinking, but I ain't saying naw to it either though. I'm talkin' bout something that's goin' keep bringing in money like a club or something. Shit we might need to get a record store all the money we spend up in this mothafucka."

Smoke eyed the price on the c.d. in his hand thinking of how he could get his hands on some cash.

C-Note's face lit up as an idea flashed through his mind, and Smoke knew his cousin was good for thinking on his feet.

"Fuck a record store, we can get a record company," C-Note said as the vision formulated in his mind. "I know you

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remember that nigga Larry that used to be over there fucking wit Solo's cousin Skip before he got popped last time right?"

"Yeah, the nigga wit' the white Infiniti we used to smoke wit'," Smoke confirmed.

"That's him, but the last time I saw him he was in a red S600 on twenty sixes. I holla'd at the nigga fo' a minute and he said that he'd just started a record company. You and me both know that nigga ain't know shit bout runnin' no record company, so I know damn well we can do that shit together."

"He might didn't know shit, but you know that nigga got back on ever harder once he got out, so he had somethin' we ain't got much of at all right now."

"What the fuck is that? Some how-to books or some shit?"

"Naw, Theodore Huxtable lookin' ass nigga. Money. That's somethin' missing in my life right now. Plus, who the hell we gon' sign?"

"Don't yo lil brother still rap?"

"That nigga in jail again, but I guess it's plenty of wanna be rappers so our issue is the money if we gon' do this for real."

C-Note used his left hand to rub his goatee. "You still got that house unc left you in south Memphis right. We can use that, the cars, and some other stuff as collateral. So all we gotta do is Google a business plan and go where everybody go for money. The bank."

SMOKE & C-NOTE

Smoke, or, Sean Styles, as the banker would call him in a few minutes, pulled his truck into a parking space at the Regions Bank in downtown Memphis. He turned off the engine and sat for a moment as he sprayed on extra cologne to cover the smell of the cigar he'd just smoke. He reached over to the passenger seat and grabbed the jacket to the new suit he'd brought just for the meeting. He then eased out of his truck, straightening out his slacks after he'd put the jacket on. After he was satisfied with his appearance he opened the rear passenger door, and grabbed the briefcase he'd gotten from C-Note as a gift for their new business venture.

After a month and a half of reading, research, and planning, Smoke was finally making his way to the bank. Along with C-Note, who'd mostly just skimmed through everything, Smoke had scoured the internet for information on bank loans and procedures, and also putting together solid business plans for new projects. They'd also researched lots of information on running an independent record label, not to mention talking to anyone they knew involved in the music industry in any kind of way.

Once inside, Smoke made his way to a receptionist's desk where he asked for Thomas Geslack, the banker he'd spoken with a week ago. The meeting was really a favor set up by their late uncle's oldest daughter, Patricia. She had spoken with the branch manager and explained to him how her father had an outstanding relationship with the bank for over thirty-five years, and that her family wished to extend business with the bank through a business loan. The manager agreed that the bank had good history with her family since she and her two younger sisters also held accounts there. Considering those things, he said the bank would be happy to help with a new chapter for the family, if the business seemed sustainable. He'd personally have a meeting set up he'd told her,

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his main reason being that after looking through his computer files, he'd learned that the girls kept most of the two hundred thousand inheritance from their father's life insurance at the bank. The bank manager had no intentions whatsoever of letting that much money walk out of his bank. He had set up the meeting with one of the best loan officers he claimed, but he'd also told her that he couldn't make any promises, and that they'd have to make a good sales pitch.

After asking his name, the receptionist made a quick call and after hanging up informed Smoke that Geslack would be with him momentarily, also mentioning that he was the first scheduled meeting for the day. Moments later, middle aged, a medium built, white guy with horn rimmed glasses on approached Smoke with his hand extended.

"Mr. Styles, how are you this morning?" Geslack asked as his hand was swallowed by Smoke's large palm.

"I'm okay," Smoke said in a cordial voice. "Thanks for asking and hopefully I'll be doing better before I leave. I have to apologize for my business associate, Mr. Ayers, being late. I just spoke with him and he got caught in traffic behind an accident."

"It's alright Mr. Styles, there's no reason to apologize. We could just have some coffee and talk; the meeting can wait a while."

"I appreciate the offer, but there is no reason to delay the meeting. I've spoken with my partner and we're on the same page. He'll pick up where he comes in and I'll fill him in on the rest myself."

The mild mannered banker nodded slowly. "Okay Mr. Styles, if that's what you think is best," he said and then led smoke back to his office.

Smoke D

After pouring two cups of coffee and handing one to Smoke, Geslack gave him a moment to finish what appeared to be him reading a text message. The banker looked over the large black man before him as he sat down behind his large oak desk. He'd already been instructed not to make it easy for them, but to let them down as gently as possible, and most importantly to make it look good.

"Thanks for your patience Mr. Geslack, and for the coffee," Smoke said with a nod. "I just sent an email letting my partner know we were beginning."

"Yes, yes, that's fine, and please, call me Thomas," Geslack said as he intertwined his hands and placed them on his desk. "So then Mr. Styles, let's get this meeting started. I'm sure you brought along a business plan. So let's look and see what we have."

Smoke pulled out two copies of the business plan, one for the banker, and another so that he could use it to answer questions as they went along. After reading the first few lines on the first page Geslack looked up at Smoke.

"Mr. Styles, I'll be honest enough to say that this isn't usually the type of thing we make loans for, but hey, business is business. I would like for you to tell me your vision and then we'll go through the plan as we go along. How's that sound?"

Even though Smoke had been preparing for what he'd say if asked a question like that, in the heat of the moment he couldn't get it out as good as he wanted it to sound and stumbled through his rehearsed lines.

Sensing his uneasiness, Geslack began to bomb Smoke with rapid questions as he seemed to randomly flip through the pages of the business plan. Smoke could feel where the banker's decision was leaning by his mildly belligerent tone and his questioning, along

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with little sly remarks. He could see that the banker was attempting to exploit any and every reason to reject them.

"Mr. Styles, one of the larger hurdles is repayment resources, and what you have listed...", Geslack began before he was interrupted by the ringing of the phone on his desk. "Excuse me one moment Mr. Styles, that's the receptionist," he said and sat the business plan down. "She knows I'm in a meeting, so most likely it's your business partner."

Geslack picked up the phone and listened briefly. "Yes Betty we're still in. Bring him back here if you don't mind..., lunch on me," he said bribing her.

A few moments later there was a light tap at the door. Geslack stood to greet the man he knew was about to enter, but stopped dead in his tracks once the door swung open. "Excuse me sir, can I help you?" he asked the strange looking man walking into his office.

"I'm here for the meetin' mane," C-Note drawled out.

"Meeting?" questioned Geslack, still not sure of the situation at hand.

"Yeah, the meetin'," C-Note said then stepped in the office and extended his hand to the banker. "That's my partna, Mr. Styles."

Geslack looked to Smoke then turned back to C-Note with his brow furrowed. "You're Mr. Ayers?" he asked incredulously, then looked over the man again, his black jeans and t-shirt with a picture of Scarface a stark contrast to the man he'd been in the meeting with.

"Yeah, that's me," C-Note said with a knowing smile.

Smoke D

After finally shaking off the stupor that had fell on him, the banker hesitantly met C-Note's hand with his own. "I'm Geslack, Thomas Geslack," he said solemnly then offered C-Note a seat and coffee, the latter which he refused.

The banker's response had been exactly what they hoped it would be. C-Note had showed up late, as planned, so that the meeting would already be underway. Smoke was the one who was good with the details, so he'd started the meeting with the banker to feel him out. C-Note's trump card on the other hand was spontaneity, and together they felt like there weren't too many situations that they couldn't walk away from in a favorable position.

Now undeniably certain that he'd refuse them, Geslack picked the business plan back up and cleared his throat.

"Well Mr. Ayers, Mr. Styles has informed me that you two already have an arrangement concerning anything discussed prior to your arrival, so I'll continue where I left off. Mr. Styles and I were just discussing your ability to satisfy a loan repayment in the event of its approval. Mr. Ayers, your current employer at," Geslack paused as he glanced at the papers in his hands. "Techni-color, and your current wages, not to mention Mr. Styles' current unemployment, leaves us looking at a huge risk with little to cover them with. Yes, both of your credit scores are outstanding, but as I explained to Mr. Styles, loans the size of the one you seek aren't usually given for a start-up hip-hop label. Guys it would take a more than sound plan, an optimistic view for chances of success, and repayment and also a lot of luck to get this passed through."

"So you don't want to give us the loan," C-Note stated more than asked. "We got money, our family got money, and all our shit together, but we can't get a loan?" he said with his voice now low and menacing.

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Clearly stunned Geslack stuttered out a response. "It's not that we don't want to, there are just too many unknowns," he said trying to regain his composure. "Neither of you have any industry experience, not to mention surety for the down payment, as well as other things."

"Thomas, as I said earlier, the house is collateral for the down payment and we have an acquaintance, who currently owns a label, who's promised to help us out. He's listed in the appendix," Smoke spoke up.

"Okay, the house covers the down payment, but what happens afterwards?" Geslack asked looking at C-Note for a response.

C-Note's response was him staring at Geslack, then standing up to stretch, which exposed the handle of the pistol in his pocket. He stayed that way until he was sure the banker saw it, and then he sat back down and reached over to the desk, where he picked up a picture.

"Nice family," C-Note said. "Yo' son 'might' grow up to look like you."

On cue Smoke chimed in. "Thomas, the house's equity covers double the down payment and by the time another payment is due we'll be making money, trust me. All we want is a chance, that's all."

The banker nervously looked at C-Note, who still had this family photo and now his own cell phone in hand, wiped his now sweaty palms on his slacks, and began to go through the business plan again.

"The...the amount, two hundred thousand," Geslack stuttered out a few minutes later. "I can't justify this much with what you guys have as resources. My supervisor will just change the loan once he reviews it."

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"But you gon' make sho' that don't happen though right?" C-Note asked from behind his phone, which kept Geslack from seeing his face completely.

Geslack shifted in his seat and then repositioned his glasses. Though he could hear and see the menace from the man, Mr. Ayers, he could also sense it in the calmer Styles but still wanted to feel as though he had a grip on the situation. He then sat back in his chair and crossed his hands.

"Well gentlemen, as I'm sure you know the financial system isn't what it used to be, and like I said it before, this loan would be hard to justify as is. With that said the most I can do is a hundred thousand, seventy in credit and thirty in cash."

"What?" C-Note bellowed. "We asked for two hundred, so you offer us one. It ain't like we came in here with guns and robbed this mothafucka. We tryin' to do business. But you know what, if we can't get the two hundred, we ain't taking no less than one seventy-five."

"Please Mr. Ayers, let's be reasonable, you asked for my help, and I'm trying to give it to you," Geslack pleaded and then looked over at Smoke. "One fifty, c'mon guys, meet me in the middle at least."

Smoke and C-Note exchanged glances and C-Note began to shake his head.

"Naw mane that ain't what we came here for. We put a plan together and we need to stick to it," C-Note said.

"Calm down," Smoke said then looked back at the banker then to his cousin, "Thomas doing all he can to help us out, right? We can at least meet the man in the middle like he asked, but T, we gon' need one hundred in credit and fifty in cash."

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The banker quickly agreed, feeling as though he'd taken a small victory since he'd talked them down by fifty- thousand. After hastily and uneasily getting all the paperwork together and handled, Geslack stood to usher the two racketeers from his office. He still couldn't fully believe they'd had the audacity to do what they had, but he wasn't willing to find out if they were as serious as they looked and sounded.

On his way out behind his cousin, C-Note turned back to the banker and placed his left hand on his shoulder while extending his right for a farewell shake. "Thomas, you looked out for us today, and I'mma personally make sho' you don't regret it," he said and walked away leaving the banker even more perplexed.

A few days later, the funds were made available and the first thing the cousins did was meet a contractor to have their studio built from the ground up. Since the site was near in the hood, the property and labor had only set them back eighty thousand. The fact that the contractor was a friend of their uncle's had helped them get a rock bottom price. Once that meeting was over, they both went out car shopping. After arguing for over thirty minutes, Smoke got C-Note to look at the situation as business instead of personal convincing him to get a truck instead of the Ford Mustang GT he wanted. C-Note ended up agreeing with Smoke's logic of using the trucks as rolling billboards, but he also wanted to fulfill his need for speed so he got a white Dodge Durango SRT8. Smoke on the other hand got a black GMC Yukon Denali. Since they were only leasing the trucks at the time it had only cost them ten thousand for both, which they had delivered to a customization shop to be fitted with custom rims. The trucks would also be lettered with the name they agreed on for their label the day they'd left the bank with the loan approval papers, M'Famous Entertainment. They also brought a used Chevy

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Avalanche along with an H2 and H3 Hummer to help lure their potential artists, and they had the additional trucks customized and lettered as well.

They spent the next two weeks figuring out everything they would need once their doors opened for business and ordered and returned everything from microphones to staplers trying to find the perfect fit for their tastes. Due to constant monitoring, pressing, and subtle legal threats from Thomas Geslack, the contractors finished building in eight short weeks. The electricians and interior carpenters took another three weeks to do their work and afterward all of the studio equipment and office supplies were installed within the next seven days. All told they had a record label built from the ground up in less than twelve weeks.

Even though they didn't yet have an artists or had sold one album, both men felt a sense of accomplishment as they walked into the building together both with their custom M'Famous Ent. Chains dangling from their necks. Their building had four levels; one basement, and three floors above it. The basement held four recording booths, the first floor held two more booths and a receptionist area, while the second floor had meeting rooms and an executive lounge. The top floor was solely offices for all the positions they'd have to fill with their own two offices positioned at opposite ends of the hallway. The entire building was wired with a state of the art telecommunications and intercom systems.

C-Note lit the first of many blunts that would be smoked in the building as they sat in the largest meeting room for their first official meeting.

Smoke walked over to one of the floor to ceiling windows and looked down to the streets below. "We got us a brand new record label, now all we need is some records coming out this mothafucka," he said.

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"Mmm," C-Note mouthed before swallowing and then exhaling the smoke in his mouth. "Aye look, I got this demo from this young nigga I bumped into the other day, he rapping ova mixed beats. The lil nigga go in on damn near everything. Call his self Triggamane."

"Triggamane?" Smoke repeated. "He cut like that?"

"Naw, he just on some rap shit, but look, let's go downstairs. I'll go get his demo out my car. I actually been listening to the mothafucka. I got a few mo' demos from some niggas and bitches, but this nigga probably sound the best."

"I got a few in my truck out there too. It's 'bout four of 'em in the center console, grab them joints too. I'm gon' be downstairs waiting."

C-Note met Smoke in the engineering booth a few minutes later with seven different demos, and they messed with the equipment until they figured out how to get the c.d.s playing. After smoking more blunts and listening to all the demos they began to make decisions.

"I like that Shay the Shocka broad; she got that old Gangsta Boo sound. She did ai'ight, but she went in for real on that first song," C-Note said rubbing his hands together.

"That's what I thought, she sound like Boo on 'Don't Stand So Close to Me' on that first song, but the rest was only okay," Smoke said in agreement. "Shit we probably need to find Gangsta Boo and let her groom her ass.

"So what you think 'bout that Triggamane nigga? You like that shit?"

"Hell yeah. We gotta hurry up and sign that lil nigga before him and somebody else figure out this lil mothafucka can really rap," Smoke said enthusiastically. "Catch up with that lil nigga

Smoke D

tonight if you can. Give ‘em the keys to the H2 and a chain, tell ‘em we got some cash when he sign a contract. I’mma put that part together tonight, so bring him through tomorrow around one.”

“Shit, we doing all that we might as well put the nigga right to work. Look, I’mma holla at Larry later on and tell ‘em to hook us up wit’ a producer and shit. Since the nigga rap so good on other nigga’s beats we might as well do a mixtape. We just add two or three original cuts and push that shit like that. Save time and money.”

“Bet,” Smoke said fully agreeing with his cousin. “Well start with five thousand copies and sell ‘em ten bucks a pop. We’ll get a few people to sell ‘em at clubs and salons or whatever. You get the nigga up here, I’mma pull all this other shit together, and tomorrow we gon’ be selling records.”

They gave each other dap to a plan coming together and then headed out, locking up the building as they left.

Around twelve thirty the next day C-Note pulled into the parking lot of M’Famous Ent. riding shotgun with their first artist, Triggamane, in his Hummer. He talked to the young rapper the night before, but had decided to wait until they were headed to the studio to give him the truck and chain. He figured he’d cut out any chance for bullshit coming from giving a young nigga a chain and a car, then having to track him down.

Since they’d spent most of their credit line having the building constructed, they only had one recording booth on the first floor operating, which was where the pair headed. Smoke and the sound engineer Larry had hooked them up with were already there listening to Triggamane’s demo. One C-Note had explained what they were trying to do, Larry had told them that they didn’t really need a producer yet, just the engineer and a c.d. with some beats. After Triggamane had eagerly signed a contract and they had talked for a while, they started to pick beats from current hit records and

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a few originals from the c.d. the engineer had brought. Triggamane went into the recording booth with five large notebooks and began to flow over other rappers' beats like they were his own, but when he began to rap a song called 'Thugs in Here' on one of the original beats, Smoke and C-Note looked at each other and nodded, both knowing they had a real club banger. No one left for five hours until the entire mixtape called 'Creep to This' Vol. 1's fourteen songs were done.

After they gave Triggamane five thousand in cash and watched his eyes light up like a Christmas tree before he hurried off, the cousins addressed their next issue, which was to have five thousand copies of the mixtape made. They made a few calls and after some small bribes, they were told that if they only put words on the front cover and delivered the c.d. in the next thirty minutes that they would be able to pick up the albums by eight forty-five that night. Smoke hauled ass with the c.d. and stayed at the distribution company until the copies were done. In the meantime C-Note had the members of their six man street team get together at the label.

At nine twenty one Smoke showed up with the records and ten minutes later the street team was headed out and their first record was on its way to the streets.

MARCELLOS

Marcellos left his parole officer's office as agitated as he was every time he'd ever showed up. He was tired of hearing the old white man trying to tell him how to live his damn life, and he would be glad when his last year of supervised release, as the feds called it was over in the next ten months. He was tired of the annoying old prick showing up at his spot at random for piss tests even when he knew damn well Marcellos didn't use drugs at all. As he always did once he was sitting in his car after his meetings, he thought back to how the snitching ass nigga, Paris, out of Jackson, Tennessee, had set him up to get busted.

He'd only known Paris for a few months, so when the nigga called him out of the blue one day and asked him to sell him a pistol his street intuition should have kicked in and told him something was up, especially so, since the nigga wanted to meet at a carwash early on Thursday morning. Paris had played his role to a t though, because he didn't seem nervous at all, as he brought the gun and then held a twenty minute conversation. Marcellos would later find out that it was because he'd done the same thing plenty of times before. As they went their separate ways Marcellos had thought everything was cool, so when three trucks and two cars came from nowhere and surrounded him as he was about to pull off, he didn't have an idea of what had just happened until it was too late. He spent the next three years in prison thinking of what he'd do to the man who had taken his freedom if he ran into him again. But to that day he'd never even heard the name again and hoped it was because the faggot was dead.

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As Marcellos rode through the city streets listening to the radio station K97.1, he heard the announcement of the large concert tour being headlined by a hot new rapper out of Chicago called Young Yayo. The tour had passed through Memphis, but he'd missed it because he'd been out of town. The next show was in Atlanta in two days and he figured that since it wasn't too far and he wanted to get out and enjoy himself, that he'd make the trip. He stopped at a corner store and grabbed a pack of cigarettes and two beers. As he walked back to his car he heard someone call his name just as he opened his door. He turned around to see two teenagers with clothes on that he thought had to be at least a half a size too small approaching him. One was his girlfriend's cousin, Kourtney, the other he didn't know.

"Aye mane, you got some mo' Jordans mane?" Kourtney asked, "I'm trying to get another pair of them TRU Religions too, in black though."

Marcellos popped his trunk and let the two boys rummage through the shoes and clothes for ten minutes until they both had picked out two pairs of shoes and jeans apiece. From the small wads of money they pulled out. Marcellos knew the two youngsters had to be selling drugs, and while it wasn't his trade he didn't hate. The truth was Marcellos was a hustler by nature, selling any and everything he got his hands on. He sold everything from clothes to radios and once he'd even managed to sell a prosthetic leg. Even though he knew he could probably be a decent drug dealer and make lots of cash he didn't like the risks that came along with it, especially after he'd been to the feds and heard of all the time men were doing because of it. He had played middle man to a few deals, but his main hustle was clothes, which he got from his older cousin, Erica, who basically ran a boosting ring.

After collecting his money he headed out to Westwood in southwest Memphis to pick up his girlfriend, Katrina, who had been

Smoke D

babysitting his sister Nicole's children. Riding down the expressway listening to Dru Hill's old hit 'Beauty', Marcellos couldn't help but to think back to the day he'd met the woman he'd been with for the last two years. He had literally picked her up off the streets crying because she'd walked in on her boyfriend with another girl. Marcellos had only seen all ass jiggling as she stormed by just as he walked out of Erica's hose. He rushed up behind her calling out to her, but she didn't even turn around. Once he finally caught up enough to grab her arm, which she snatched away, she had finally turned around, exposing the tears and grief all over her face.

"Leave me the hell alone!" she yelled out while still in stride.

"Damn baby girl, I ain't know you was up here crying," Marcellos said in a sincere voice. "Tell me what's wrong."

Without responding she continued to march, so he walked along with her.

"It's a beautiful black woman marching down the street crying, so I should be able to figure this out," he said now walking backwards in front of her. "It got to be a nigga. I know a nigga ain't put his hands on you, 'cause we bout to go back right now and I'm finna beat his ass."

He looked in her face for acknowledgement, but she still didn't respond so he went on. "Naw, he ain't crazy enough to hit you 'cause you woulda beat his ass yo 'self. Naw, you too emotional. What then ya'll just broke up or you caught that fool wit somebody?"

She never said a word, but she finally looked him in the eyes, which answered his question.

"Shit he should be the one crying, he done lost something," Marcellos said trying to butter her up. "Look, I know ya' feelings hurt and all right now, but if that nigga can't appreciate a woman as

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beautiful as you, he don't deserve to be wit' you no way. Plus, everything worked out for you like it was meant to cause yo' nigga in shining armor here."

That finally got a smirk from her which she quickly tried to hide. After walking for five more minutes, he noticed that she'd finally stopped and when he looked around they seemed to be at a random corner. The he realized there was a bus stop sign on the pole they were standing near.

"Where we goin'?" Marcellos asked her.

"Ain't no we. And why is you worried about where I'm going," she spat with frustration and anger in her voice.

"Because I ain't going anywhere 'til I know yo' as is straight and feeling better. I told you I'm yo' nigga in shining armor, so I gotta make sho' you get to wherever you goin'. You probably rushed out so mad you ain't even got bus fare. Where's yo' purse?"

She went back into her silent mode as they stood there for another five minutes before Marcellos felt a few rain drops hit him.

"Katrina," he said reading the name off the gold necklace charm she wore. "It's bout to rain, and as pretty as you is I don't want to stand here and get soaking wet, so come on and let me give you a ride to wherever you tryin' to go. Even if you just want to ride around and not talk to me, I'm cool wit' that."

Her response was her crossing her arms and looking the other way and letting out a deep sigh because that was exactly what she was about to do, just get on the bus and ride around.

"You standing here actin' like the ol' wicked witch and shit, so if yo' ass get too wet you gon' melt, so come on. Plus, I know you ain't trying to sit on no bus wit' strangers watching boogers run out 'cha nose."

Smoke D

That got a real smile from her so he grabbed her hand to lead her back to his car. She didn't snatch away like she did before, but she didn't move as he started to walk off. "Katrina," he said in a calm voice, "I wish yo' pretty ass would stop acting like that and let me take you where you tryin' to go, cause I'm not letting you stand in the rain."

She finally gave in and let him lead her back to his car holding her hand the whole time. Once they were in the car and she still hadn't said anything about where she wanted to go, he simply turned the radio up and that was when Dru Hill's song came on. Marcellos just sat there in the driveway until the song went off then he turned the volume down.

"Girl even the radio station know you was supposed to be wit' me today," he said which made her roll her eyes at him, but also smile again.

She still didn't tell him where she wanted to go or say anything else, so he just began to drive around the city listening to the radio. They rode around for a few hours, and then he convinced her to eat something, so they went to Applebee's for dinner. The entire conversation while they ate was basically him talking with her laughs and smiles between his stories and jokes.

It was after nine p.m. when they left the restaurant and Marcellos was ready to go home, so that's where he went. After he cut off the engine he looked over at her and was happy she was still with him, but still wondered what was going through her mind and why she still wouldn't talk to him.

"Katrina, as much as I like ridin' around wit' you, I'm tired and I'm on papers, so I'm 'bout to call it a night. I'll chill on the couch and maybe after you get some sleep you'll feel like talking or just feel better period, but I'm goin' in. You coming?"

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She simply turned in her seat, but didn't make an attempt to get out. Marcellos wasn't about to keep bending over for a woman no matter how good she looked. He got out without another word, not caring what she did at that point, and went inside his duplex apartment, leaving her in the car.

A few minutes later Marcellos heard a knock on his door and when he opened it she just stood there with her arms crossed. At six foot one and two hundred and ten pounds, Marcellos wasn't small at all, so when he grabbed her, pulled her inside, and took her back to his bedroom, there was little she could do but go along. He pushed her down on his bed and told her to go to sleep then walked back to the living room where he lay on the couch and closed his eyes. Just as he was dozing off he felt her body press against him as she lay down with her back to him then took his arm and pulled it around her waist.

"I thought I told you to go to sleep," Marcellos said.

"Make me," she answered with attitude.

Taking that a certain way he reached down to her thighs which he found exposed.

"Whoa, I ain't say do all that," she said grabbing his hand.

"Well watch yo' words then," he whispered in her ear lustfully, his erection coming on from feeling that she didn't have any panties on. "And you got yo' lil stuff out, pressed all up on me."

"I just wanna be next to somebody, and I don't sleep with underwear on, so go to sleep."

They lay there in silence for a while before she rolled over towards him and placed her hands under his shirt. Marcellos quickly grabbed her soft ass and pulled her up to his face, then gave her a long passionate kiss. She let out a soft moan as his hand found its way between her legs where he began to massage her clit,

while occasionally easing a finger inside her moistening hole. He sat her up on top of him and pulled her shirt over her head exposing the prettiest set of C cup breasts he'd ever seen. He firmly grasped both in his hands, taking the left one into his mouth, sucking and licking it like he would never see it again, while she rubbed her hands over the waves in his low haircut. After alternating between both breasts, he stood up with her and gave her another deep kiss while he walked her back to his room, with her legs locked around his waist as he palmed her ass. He dropped her on the bed and began to slowly undress himself, while watching her gyrate on her hand as she pleased herself.

“Hurry up Marcellos,” she called out. “Please come and get this pussy.”

Hearing that, he made his way over to her and kissed a trail from her neck down to her clean shaven pussy. He was glad to smell the soap he used as he clamped his mouth over her pearl tongue and sucked it causing her back to arch up as she instantly climaxed.

“Oohh yeah, ooowww,” she moaned grabbing his head and humping his face.

Marcellos pulled away after flicking his tongue at her clit a few more times and went back up to her face with it sticking out. She met him with her tongue and began to suck on his.

“Yeah, I’m a freak,” she said with a smile as he pulled away.

Finding out what he wanted to know he spread her legs wide open and went back down on her, this time easing a finger in her butt as he licked and sucked at her clit again. The orgasm she had minutes later was one neither of them would ever forget.

“Ooowww, it’s coming, it’s coming,” Katrina wailed as she felt the tingle pass from her chest, through her stomach and down further. Her toes curled so hard they cramped and she snatched the

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sheets off the bed as she came so forcefully she saw colors when she squeezed her eyes shut. She made all kinds of indescribable sounds as her body convulsed uncontrollably, bucking up and down on the bed. Marcellos had his mouth clamped on her through her entire spasm, even as she tried to push his face away with her hands and tried to pull away from him. He simply wrapped one arm around her thigh and held his head down even as she began to beg and cry.

“Ohh gawd, stop, stop, please. I can't....”

Her words were cut off as she tensed up and he held on like his life depended on it as her body shook violently from another orgasm. After her bucking slowed and without giving her a chance to react, he quickly slid his rock hard dick inside her soaked pussy and pinned her legs back to her shoulders. She could only continue to cry and come as he plowed into her for the next twenty minutes before he emptied his seed into her. Afterwards, he cradled her in his arms until they both fell asleep and she had been his woman from that day.

Marcellos pulled up in front of his sister's house then called Katrina's phone. A few minutes later he watched as she strutted out to the car with effortless sexiness. At five foot eight and one hundred forty two pounds, Katrina's frame and redbone complexion were flawless, with enough ass and titties to make any video vixen jealous. She leaned over and kissed Marcellos once she got in the car.

“Yo' sista said you could've came in,” Katrina said in a nasal voice imitating his sister. “Actin' like you don't know nobody.”

Smoke D

“So she can find a reason to need five or six hundred dollars? She’ll be ai’ight,” Marcellos said then blew his hom at his young nephew before he pulled off.

“Boy yo’ niece is getting’ fast as she wanna be. The video to that Travis Porter song “Make it rain’ came on, and she started to dance like she work at the club herself.”

“That come from her momma and her friends doing that shit in front of her. All of ‘em need they ass kicked, but I ain’t on that right now. I got something you wanna hear about. It’s mo like something you wanna know, or better yet, you wanna do, so guess where ewe goin’ Friday.”

“A Caribbean cruise? Hint hint,” she said playfully.

“A Caribbean cruise, hint, hint, naw. You know my parole ain’t over yet, so hold ya’ horses. You know that concert you kept buggin’ bout, we goin’ to it.”

“Yeah I *remember* the concert I was buggin’ you ‘bout ‘cause it was last week. It’s too late.”

“I told you to go by yo’ self, so miss me wit’ cha attitude. But anyway, smartass, it’s gon’ be in ATL Friday. We gon’ leave at ‘bout five Friday morning and come back up Saturday. You know how my p.o. is.”

“Yes, yes, yes!” Katrina exclaimed bouncing up and down. “Ooww, I gotta get me somethin’ to wear. You know I gotta look good.”

“Yeah, I know, and since you all excited I know I can get a thank you, so gon’ hit a nigga wit’ that hurricane Katrina,” Marcellos said then unzipped his pants. He called it hurricane Katrina because she spit, blew, and pumped when she gave him head, and moaned and groaned while her head bobbed up and down while they rode home.

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They hit the Atlanta city limits at eleven thirty Friday morning and checked into a room at Holiday Inn. Katrina had a cousin named Pebbles who lived there, so they met up with her and spent most of the day riding around the city since it was the couple's first visit. After seeing the sights, shopping, and getting a bite to eat, most of the day had passed so Marcellos took Pebbles home and they went back to their room to get ready for the concert. The show would begin at seven thirty, and since they didn't want to be stuck in traffic in an unfamiliar city, they left their room at five-forty to pick up Pebbles and head downtown. Katrina and Pebbles excitedly bopped to a song on the radio as they rode, and while Marcellos didn't know the name of the song, or the rapper's name, he knew it was a new rapper out of Memphis.

Once they made it to the arena and then inside they were surprised by how many celebrities they saw and got as many pictures as they could as they waited for the event to begin. A local rap group opened up the show with two of their songs followed by a female rapper out of Texas, who performed her popular song from a year earlier. She followed her performance by doing the remix with The Dream and Young Dro and one more song. The crowd vibed with the opening acts, but when Young Yayo hit the stage they went wild before he uttered a word. Feeding off their energy, Yayo was extra turned up the entire show, and for the next two hours the pack house was amped.

Marcellos hadn't noticed that Pebbles had eased off, but when he and Katrina made it to the lobby after the show she called out to them from behind. It seemed like she was skipping as she made her way to them, smiling like a school girl with a crush.

"Aye ya'll, I got tickets to Yayo's after party. I know ya'll coming right?" Pebbles asked them.

"Girl, how in the world you get them tickets?" Katrina asked elatedly.

Smoke D

“Don’t worry ‘bout all dat,” Pebble’s said and snapped her finger, then looked at Marcellos. “Is ya’ll going?”

“I’m trying to lay down,” he replied flatly. I been rippin’ and running all day, and we gotta leave early.”

“Baby I know you tired, but please let’s go, just for a while,” Katrina begged as she grabbed his hand and batted her eyes. “I wanna take some pics with’ some real celebrities, not just them big booty hoes we got ‘em wit’. Please just one hour.”

Marcellos just shook his head as he gave in. “One hour.”

One hour easily turned into two once they began to drink and vibe with the party. They danced and took plenty of pictures and Marcellos decided that after one more round of drinks he and Katrina were leaving. They hadn’t seen Pebbles for over forty five minutes, so he figured whoever she was with would take her home. It took him ten minutes alone to get to the bar and order the drinks, and by the time he made it back to the table they were at Katrina was gone. He waited there for here figuring she’d went to the bathroom, but after ten more minutes he got up and started looking for her on the dance floor. After weaving through the large crowd and not finding her he headed to the bathrooms thinking she may have gotten sick. He stuck his head in the bathroom door and called her name, but got nothing but stares and grunts. He was hoping that he’d only been missing her so he didn’t want to call her phone yet and began looking for her again starting at the bar, then going through the dance crowd again.

Still unable to find either woman, he pulled out his phone to send a quick text message as he walked back towards their table and just happened to glance up to make sure he didn’t bump into anyone. Out of his periphery he notice a lot of movement to his right and turned his head where he saw a group of people seem to all stand up at the same time. He realized it was one of the club’s VIP sections and since he was only twenty or so feet away he could

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see inside clearly. For no particular reason he scanned the room from right to left, where he saw Pebbles, who was letting one nigga rub between her legs while another squeezed her breasts. His eyes continued to the left and stopped on Young Yayo, who stood out because of the dyed tips on his dreads and all the chains around his neck. In front of Yayo, and leading him through a door with exit above, was Katrina, who had her right hand on one of Yayo's medallions as she disappeared out the club.

Marcellos pushed his way through the crowd and to the VIP entrance, where he was stopped by two security guards who looked like Shaquille O'Neal clones.

"Hold on partna," the darker one said as Marcellos tried to rush inside. "Whatever it is, you gon' have to let it go tonight."

Seeing that he wasn't going to get past the two he called Katrina's phone, but got no answer. After fuming for ten minutes, he went back to the hotel, where he called and text both women for the next hour before giving up.

At four forty five Katrina tried to ease into the dark hotel room and was startled when Marcellos turned on the small lamp by the bed.

"Bitch I ought to beat yo' ass right now," he growled through clenched teeth.

"Baby what's wrong? I tried to send you a text and tell you I was in VIP with Pebs and to come over, but you ain't answer. And when I tried to come find you I couldn't so I thought you left or something. I stayed with her, and her friend took us to her house and only bought me here cause he was leaving this morning and I told him we was leaving early to go home," Katrina said giving him her planned lie.

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Marcellos just looked at her with a blank expression. “You tried to text me, so why didn’t you answer my calls?” he asked seeing how much lying she’d do.

“My battery died.”

“Pebbles battery died too?”

“She lost her phone.”

“Bitch you really think I’m stupid don’t you? I saw yo’ trick ass wit’ that nigga.”

As a silence fell between the two he heard her stomach growl loudly.

“Dumb ass ho’, you done’ got fucked all night and couldn’t get shit to eat,” he said shaking his head.

He walked up to Katrina and pushed her by the face as hard as he could causing her to fall over a chair. Without another word he left the room and went out to his car to go home alone.

2 ½ YEARS LATER

SMOKE

Smoke still relished the feeling he got every time he walked into the company he owned. Even after they'd come as far as they had, everyday seemed surreal and unbelievable when he thought about where they started and where they were now. The building still smelled the way he remembered from the very first time he walked in and he couldn't help but to feel proud as he headed to his office. He stopped by his secretary, Felicia's, desk as he usually did.

"Any messages?" he asked after greeting her.

"Aaron's new manager called and wants to set up a meeting. Jag and Calico were just arrested for assaulting some man who tried to grab Jag's chain at a show last night," Felicia replied in her carefree tone.

"Again?" Smoke asked exasperated. "Niggas still think cause them niggas sixteen they can run over 'em. This the third time this shit done happened. Look, have Marik go bail 'em out, and next time they do a show make sho' our security, and not just theirs is there."

"Okay and I already sent Marik out. Your mother called and she wanted to have lunch with you today."

Smoke could only shake his head. "Why she always call when I done ate lunch already? Send any important calls through, anything else, take a message. Thank you Felicia."

Smoke went into his office where he checked his e-mails, and gathered everything up he needed for a meeting with some of the executive staff, and then a one on one with C-Note. After

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twenty minutes had passed he grabbed everything and headed back out his office and to the meeting room a floor below.

“Sean,” Felicia called out to him as she approached him with what looked like a bundle of mail. “This just came in a sec ago.” She handed him several articles.

Smoke glanced over a few letters addressed to him, stopping to examine the one package he’d been anticipating for a while. He eyed the package with interest before he looked back up to his secretary.

“Wait about twenty minutes and then start sending everyone in for the meeting.”

“You da boss,” Felicia replied then made her way down to C-Note’s secretary’s desk, handed her some mail, and began to chat.

Smoke made his way to the meeting room and redined in one of the large comfortable chairs that encircled the oval table. Smoke sat the letters and everything else to the side and then sat the long awaited delivery in front of him studying it once more with even more thoroughness than he had in the hall. He looked up and around the meeting room at all of the plaques and awards hanging on the walls, which acknowledged all their accomplishments. He then looked back down at the simple package on the table before him. The XXL cover read: The M’ Famous Issue, in bright, bold type with a picture of the two CEOs and the labels two premiere artists, Triggamane and C-Lo Chainz, and it showed the page numbers that held the interviews and an article on their label. Smoke sat back with the magazine in his hand and looked over it once more, and couldn’t help but to reminisce over how everything fell into place as if it were all meant to be.

In only two years and nine months the cousins had come from the ground up and now had a label worth over one hundred

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fifty million, not including the tens of millions in Smoke, C-Note, and several others at the label's bank accounts. Triggamane and C-Lo Chainz were the biggest money makers, with Triggamane building a loyal following with his first mixtape. They released his debut album five months later and it ended up selling over one and a half million copies with several club bangers and what turned out to be the street anthem of the year. His next two albums both stalled around eight hundred thousand copies, but that was more than enough in Smoke's eyes considering how little they had invested financially in each album. The latest album was slowing down at just over six hundred thousand records, but Smoke planned to push it for another two months, even though it had already been out for eight. The streets had love for Triggamane's gangster persona, so he could book shows to keep attention with no problem and they exploited that in every way they could.

Their other premiere artist, C-Lo Chainz, had actually been a chance happening, and his meteoric rise to fame had stunned everyone and started rumors of the label's new dynasty. C-Lo had recorded one song, "Chain Hang" that went on to become a commercial hit, and when he actually put an album out six months later it sold five hundred thousand the first week off the one single. C-Lo's first album went on to sell over two million records and his follow up had also gone certified platinum. He was one of the industry's favorite artists for collaborations, which helped M'Famous Ent. establish a lot of relationships and contacts. C-Lo's larger than life image and boisterous swagger kept the spotlight on him, especially the women's.

Even though C-Lo had the bigger albums, sales wise, Triggamane had sold more records overall, and could easily sell one hundred fifty thousand mixtapes every quarter. This all led to a friendly competition, which kept both on their toes and Smoke liked to use it to motivate them and the other twelve artists and six producers at their label. Triggamane had the streets on lock, but C-Lo had crossover appeal that had even led to an international tour

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for the entire label. Hell, even Smoke and C-Note had put out an album that went gold easily leading C-Note to want to have a part-time rap career. They'd been in the studio high as a kite from smoking weed one day during one of their artist's recording sessions, when Smoke started bullshitting and rapping to the instrumental that was playing. He kept going as C-Note and the producer gassed him up. C-Note jump in with his own off beat freestyle, and once he finished he said, "Fuck it, we doin' a album." And that's just what happened.

Smoke could only shake his head as he thought of his crazy ass cousin and his antics over the years. Smoke and C-Note knew that the real strength of their label was their team of ingenious producers though they weren't on the cover of the XXL, and rarely got a lot of media attention. Their star was DJ Eternal, who had also been a chance happening. Shortly after they signed Triggamane he began to bring them demos from people he knew, and one day the cousins sat around and listened to a few. The rapper they were listening to had a mediocre flow that was mostly inconsistent and they were on the third track when Smoke paused the c.d. and went back to the first song.

"Listen to this. I just really paid attention on the last track," Smoke said.

"Mane ain't shit he said so far worth hearing again," C-Note quipped.

"I know, I ain't talking 'bout that though, listen to the beats."

They ended up going through the six songs on the demo again. They tuned the words out and listened to the instrumentals, noting that they were all original and really good, thought the sound quality was off, likely due to the equipment. They called the young rapper up and told him to bring whoever did his beats with him. When the two showed up later that day, the cousins had tried

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to ditch the rapper and sign the young and talented producer, but he refused, saying he'd only sign if his friend got signed too. To their chagrin, they gave in and signed the rapper for two albums to snag the phenom, and weren't surprised when the half-ass rapper couldn't sell a hundred thousand copies with two albums combined. They figured they had given him a chance, so it was what it was.

The very next day after they signed the duo, Eternal showed up with two more producers and informed C-Note that they were a team, whom called themselves Dope Trax. One was a girl who called herself Mizz Robyn, and C-Note immediately renamed her Robyn Hood Hitz, was a good producer in her own right though not the same caliber as Eternal. She could hold her own though, and be trusted to put out a solid effort on any project, but her trump card was her ability to put together the best mixtapes in the entire industry. Her ear for just the right sound for any particular artist made her a label favorite, especially with the new artists. They all usually wanted to build a buzz with mixtapes, but the veterans loved to work with her just as much. The other producer was a little older than Robyn and Eternal, and called himself DJ Flame, and talent wise he fell in between the other two. Flame was as good as Robyn with the beats, but not with the mixtapes though he hung his hat on the fact that he helped Robyn and Eternal, and most of the other producers fine tune their sound. The other producers all heeded his advice and loved that he never asked them to share the credit for a production.

The talent of the producers along with some of the better artists had led to M'Famous Entertainment selling over twenty million records in the short time they'd been in business. They were now one of the premiere hip hop labels in the industry and everyone knew that everyone aligned with their label was on their way somewhere. The parking lot looked like an exclusive, top line car lot and any employee emerging from the building looked photoshoot ready.

Smoke D

There had been plenty of hit records, plenty of cash blown, plenty of partying, and a good share of bullshit that had come along with the wild ride called M'Famous Ent. And Smoke wouldn't trade any of it for anything else. He loved the power and financial freedom the label gave him and didn't plan on giving any of it up anytime soon. Smoke considered some of the other successes of their label, like their new male R&B group, Fell. They were making big splashes in the industry and were being considered something like a new Boys II Men, whom they were currently touring with, along with the surprise sensation Reign. The frail ass white boy had run up on Smoke at a gas station as he got out his truck and Smoke had been a second away from blowing his head off, when Reign just started singing and then rapping like the white version of Drake. Smoke could only nod as he eyed the scrawny seventeen year old kid in front of him as he chimed with a catchy flow and lyrics that made sense. Smoke took him back to the studio that day and after Reign had worked with Flame, who was the only producer he worked with now, he and C-Note listened to the three tracks they'd done and signed him that same day. Though he didn't have an album out yet, he was on tour because the three songs he recorded went on to become popular, especially with young girls. All this happened in less than four months. M'Famous Ent. also had other up and coming stars, like Jag and Calico, and had several endorsement deals on the table, from sneakers down to the proposed clothing deals they had just begun to receive lately. Smoke finally began to flip through the magazine, checking out a few pictures and headlines as he made his way to the section dedicated to their label. A large double paged picture showed Smoke and C-Note in the center, with C-Lo Chainz to Smoke's right and Triggamane to C-Note's left. Most people believed that each rapper reflected either of the CEOs with C-Lo being the calm and confident one, while Triggamane was the wilder of the two. All of the men were dressed in all black, with t-shirts that read M'Famous Ent. and large iced out chains with the company's logo hanging from their necks. Though they'd done the photo shoot indoors, the background was set up with a black Porsche Cayenne slanted

toward Smoke and C-Lo, and a black Porsche 911 Turbo behind C-Note and Triggamane, against a white backdrop. It had been Triggamane's idea to add the cars, which were both his.

Smoke began to read the article, which basically summed up the accomplishments of their label and touched on some of the darker stories that emanated from it

It went into depth on some of the stormier days early in the label's rise, particularly, on an artist named Mecca, who began to get popular for drug raps. But Mecca had begun to lose control due to partying too much and his insatiable addiction to coke. He'd been caught once with an ounce of powder in his car and got off with probation. It seemed to calm him down for a while, but then he just spiraled downwards, partying hard and then adding alcohol on top of his coke problem.

One day the police attempted to pull him over because he was swerving from lane to lane in traffic and he leaned out of the window of the Corvette he was in and opened fire on the officers. In a matter of minutes cop cars swarmed from everywhere and Mecca jumped on the expressway, leading a high speed chase that was being shown on TV across the city. The chase led across three counties, with twenty-six police cars in pursuit, and reached speeds of over one hundred-fifty mile per hour. Two good Samaritan driving semi-trailers decided to ride side by side to block both lanes in hopes that they could slow Mecca down, but he simply darted around to the outside shoulder and went around them. By the time he made it to the front of the trucks there was a police cruiser right in front of it and the driver was trying to slow down enough to keep Mecca on the shoulder. Mecca tried to quickly maneuver back to the inside lane, but jerked the wheel too hard and spun out of control, crashing into a rail barrier several times before coming to a

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stop. Mecca emerged from the car bloodied and dazed with his gun in hand. Furious with the particular car that had made him crash, he upped the extended clip nine millimeter and let off a barrage of shots at the cops, who cowered away. He turned around at the sound of screeching tires behind him and opened fire on the first door he saw swing open, striking a state trooper in the neck.

The news helicopter got all of this on camera and used their sophisticated equipment that recorded even the sounds of shouts and gunfire be exchanged below, over the rotors wail. Back in Memphis everyone watched as several shots struck Mecca, but he stayed on his feet. "I'm M' Famous bitch!" Mecca screamed then emptied his clip.

After Mecca stopped his shooting all the cops raised up and finished him off, sending him falling face first to the pavement, dead before he ever hit it.

Days later, after Mecca's chant before death became media fodder, and a kilo of cocaine was found in the Corvette and another at his apartment, the police had swarmed the label and questioned everyone. It went from questioning on to borderline harassment over the next few weeks, all because of the three words Mecca had spoken.

Smoke clearly remembered those days and was relieved once the investigation was closed and they got back to running their budding empire. The article then went on to a more positive line, noting how the label had emerged from that ordeal stronger than ever and truly began to take off. They recalled the dual emergence of the two stars in Triggamane and C-Lo Chainz, and the perseverance and determination to succeed no matter what of the two CEOs, also noting each one's particular management style. They touched on Smoke's more executive lean, in his controlling the things that happened in the office and things of that nature, then of C-Note's handling of the artists and other things that required more hands on sometimes.

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After thumbing through the rest of the article Smoke got to what he really wanted to read, which was the interview. It was the first one he'd had that was in major syndication, and he wanted to see how his words, all theirs in reality, would be viewed by the rest of the world. Smoke checked his watch and saw that he had just over thirteen minutes to read the interview he and C-Note had done together. With intrigue, as though he hadn't been the one interviewed, and thereby knowing what to expect, he began to read.

XXL: "Smoke and C-Note, What's up guys? Congrats on make the cover. How does it feel?"

Smoke: "What's up mane, it feel good, cause you know this one of them magazines anyone in the industry would love to be in let alone be able to see they self on the front."

C-Note: "Yeah, he right, it feel good 'cause , you know , this one of the mags I read for years and would have never thought I'd be anywhere near associated with it , so to make the cover, it just seem crazy."

XXL: "Speaking of crazy, how does it feel to have come to the forefront of the industry so fast, and when did you feel as though ya'll had really made it?"

C-Note: "Mane you look back and it seem like just last week we was pushing a mixtape from the one artist we had. You look up and we are where we are. I knew we'd finally made it over the top when C-LO did five hundred thousand the first week."

Smoke: "You know what, for real, after Triggamane's first batch of mixtapes sold out, I knew it wasn't no going back from there, and I still can't believe how far we've come from that. It's crazy for real."

Smoke D

XXL: "I understand neither of you had any prior experience in the industry, so what led you to start a label from the ground up?"

Smoke: "It kinda just happened for real. We was at a point financially that wasn't what either of us wanted and we was having a conversation 'bout it. We just happened to be in a record store and the idea just came up."

C-Note: "I looked at it like it was just another type of hustle, so once we came up wit' the idea, we just figured out how to do what needed to be done and did it our way."

XXL: "Rumor has it you guys definitely got it your way. The word is there may have been some form of coercion or intimidation for your seed money from the bank."

Smoke: (Laughing) "You really believe that two black men could just walk into a bank and demand money?"

XXL: "Uh, yeah. It happens all the time."

Smoke: "I don't mean like that. (Laughs) We went in armed with a good business plan and refused to leave without what we went for."

C-Note: (Still smiling) "Why is it that every time young black men find a way to become successful they gotta be don' did something illegal to get there? Plus, Tommy G (the banker) is a good friend of ours."

XXL "That's a good point about the black men thing, and both of ya'll went around the question, but I'm gon' let that go for now. I want to ask a serious question. I'm sure you both recall the ordeal with Mecca. Tell me what you guys thought of him and how that entire episode played out."

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Smoke: "Rest in peace, Mecca. Mane, I had a lot of respect for dude, especially as an artist. I think he fell right between Triggamane and C-Lo with his style and content and really believe he could have been alone on top of the game right now. I think the fame consumed him before he really had it."

C-note: "Yeah, the fame and money. Even though he never released an official album, they went to his head, and it was too much for him. On top of that, the people around him was pulling him down from the jump."

XXL: "I hear everyone signed to M'Famous Entertainment gets the star treatment, with a new expensive car, purchased by the company, at least one chain, and large amounts of cash. Do you think that overwhelmed Mecca, and how do you think that affects your new artists, especially the younger ones:

C-Note: "You know what, we do give everybody the star treatment at M'Famous, 'cause that's what we look to sign. We believe it sets the up to want more of the stardom, and we think that gets the best from them, as artists. What happened wit' Mecca was sad, but we use it to show the youngins how not to go out."

Smoke: "Wit' Mecca it was more of the fame and surroundings more than the money. He was twenty-six, so he wasn't young, and the Corvette he was in when he crashed was his before he got signed, so he tasted money before. True we gave him more, but money didn't make him do what he did. He was high, so if anything, that's what's to be blamed. So the young artists should check they self on that tip and who they keep around them. Those are the most dangerous pitfalls they can face, not having cash."

XXL: "Point well made. On a brighter note, how'd you two end up putting out an album, let alone selling over half a million, or did you plan on doing a record all along?"

Smoke D

Smoke: "I still can't believe it sold that many records. Mane we was hanging out during a session and was just fucking around rapping. I wasn't halfway trying for real, then this spontaneous ass nigga here blurt out let's do a record and we said fuck it and made it happen. I still can't believe people liked that shit that much. It was ai'ight, but five hundred thousand?"

C-Note: "I'on know 'bout this nigga, but I know I can rap, so five hundred sound bout right. (Laughs) For real though, we been able to do whatever we set out to, so I felt like fuck it, if it can be done we can do it. Plus, you know we got that Midas touch at M'Famous baby. That secret sauce!"

XXL: "Yeah, ya'll definitely got the recipe for success. So what's next for the infamous M'Famous E.N.T.?"

Smoke: "Right now we working on a clothing line and we got a big surprise coming for ya'll."

C-Note: "We gone' make some mo hits, get some mo' cars, and mo' money."

Smoke: "And mo' problems."

XXL: "Problems? Like C-Note wilding out in the clubs? I've heard plenty of stories."

C-Note: "I plead the fifth."

XXL: (laughs) "I can't knock that. So, any final words?"

Smoke: "Shout out to M'Famous E.N.T, the whole M-Town, and everybody that got love for M'Famous."

C-Note: "I'm M'Famous bitch!"

C-NOTE

C-Note punched the gas in his Lamborghini Reventon, causing the twelve cylinder engine on the million dollars plus car to roar as he sped down the freeway headed back to work. Whenever he drove it, he always wondered if he should've and still should get a Bugatti Veyron, which he still thought about getting, and usually came up with the same answer. No. There had only been twenty cars like his build, unlike the Bugatti, and some of them had been wrecked already, which made it even more exclusive. And that's what C-Note felt like, an exclusive ass nigga. He pushed the Lambo to an easy one hundred sixty miles per hour before he began to slow down to catch the off ramp. As usual horns blew, people yelled, gave thumbs up or nods of approval, while some, mostly women, just stared at the futuristic looking car trying to figure out what it was he was driving. C-Note turned up the volume on his custom Rockford Fosgate stereo system, letting the bass from the three fifteen inch subwoofers garner him even more attention. He knew he was overly flashy, but he loved the limelight. "What's the point of having money if you can't show it off?" he always said to others questioning his attention seeking attitude.

Due to all the extra drama that had come with M'Famous Entertainment's success, which brought about countless groupies, stalkers, and pissed off boyfriends, they'd had the parking lot enclosed. C-Note pulled up to the security gate and punched in his passcode then pulled inside to one of his three parking spaces. Two were already filled, holding his Ferrari F12 Berlinetta and Nissan GTR, so he pulled up next to Smoke's fully customized Ram 1500. The truck had been a birthday gift from C-Note, and had been upgraded by adding a 600 horsepower Dodge Viper engine, a custom interior, sports rims, and a custom exhaust system.

C-Note made his way inside the building, speaking to various staff members and artists as he headed up to the second

Smoke D

floor and straight to the meeting room. A few executives were making their way out of the room, where C-Note knew they had just met with his cousin. C-Note sat in on some meetings, but if they weren't major, or Smoke specifically asked him to show, he'd rather not attend. He figured Smoke could make good business decisions and he always kept him on top of everything going on.

"Mr. CEO, what's good?" C-Note said as he sat in a chair and kicked his feet up on the large polished table. "These tricks getting our money right?"

Smoke could only laugh. "Yeah, the quarter report looks good, 'cept Terror last video went over budget."

"If his ass made it happen, I'm takin' that shit out his next royalty check!"

"I know, that's why I ain't sweatin' it. Jag and Calico don't caught another charge. Marik went and picked up they grandma to get 'em out, but we'll have to see how this play out."

"You know my lil niggas go hard in the paint, but check this out, you know they aunt right?"

Smoke nodded. "She they new manager ain't it?"

"Yeah, and you know we had meeting, and after we rapped and everything, she looked over the new contract..."

Smoke cut him off. "Wait let me guess, you fucked her." Smoke knew his cousin all too well and could read his body language and tone of voice.

"You always ruining shit. But anyway, I got her to sign the contract, so that's one thing that's done."

M'Famous

“That’s cool, but you know 'bout mixing business and pleasure.”

“Yeah, it becomes pleasurable business,” C-Note quickly shot back, which made both men laugh.

“We got two mo’ pieces of pleasurable business that need to be took care of. First up, we need ya’ boy, Triggamane, to sign this contract,” Smoke said then slid a folder across the table. “We need ‘bout three mo’ albums out of ‘em. I figure he’ll been done burned out by then, but if not we’ll worry 'bout it then. Since he yo’ protégé, I figured I’ll let you holla at ‘em. He love whatever bullshit you feed him, so it shouldn’t be too hard.”

“Don’t be talkin’ bout my lil nigga like that. He just wanna be down, and you know the rumors so watch out.”

“Whatever, that nigga better know his role.”

“Ai’ight, ai’ight, let my nigga make it, but you said two thangs. What’s up with the other?”

“That bitch ass nigga K!” Smoke yelled, his whole demeanor flipping in a heartbeat.

This was the side of Smoke that few saw, and most who did wished they hadn’t, or at the least that it wasn’t directed at them.”

“That faggot ain’t showed up once since he got his signing bonus, and if he do come in this mothafucka I’mma break his jaw.”

“Ai’ight nigga, I got it cause if I let you find ‘em yo’ ass’ll get mad and probably do more than that. We can’t have that though, cause I ain’t trying to be doin’ all this paperwork and shit. I know a few of the spots he hang at, so ain’t nothing to it,” C-Note said and stood up.

Smoke D

“Ai’ight. Call me and let me know how everythang play out.”

“Ai’ight. I’mma handle the pleasure first and then the business.”

C-Note headed to the basement to see who, if anyone, was in the booths recording. Then he went into the lounge area, where he found two members of their street/ security team, which they called the Shock troops. Scoop was about six foot four and two-sixty, and he’d played three years in the CFL before coming back home to Memphis. And then there was Buck, who was all of five foot seven and one forty five. Buck would fight, but he’d pull a gun and use it even quicker, while Scoop was all about muscle and intimidation.

“Muscle and a shooter. Perfect,” C-Note thought as he walked in and gave both men dap.

“Aye mane, I want ya’ll to roll wit’ me real quick. Let’s go visit one of our old friends,” C-Note said to them in an even voice.

Everyone at M’Famous knew how C-Note got down, especially the Shock troops, so the two only nodded and then raised up off the overstuffed loveseat and followed C-Note back up the stairs and out of the building.

“C, we ridin’ wit’ you or what?” Buck asked when they entered the parking lot.

“Naw mane. Ya’ll know I do the two door thang, so ya’ll just jump in one of the trucks and follow me,” he responded without looking back.

M'Famous

Every Shock troop had a key for a car or truck, so they only had to decide which of them would drive. C-Note decided to take his Ferrari since it had the plushiest ride of the cars he had on hand, but was still fast as hell. Not wanting to give K a heads up, C-Note chose not to call him or his manager, and would only check his mom's spot or anyone else who might let him know he was being tracked down last. He got on the expressway and headed toward K's apartment in southeast Memphis and if he wasn't there he would try his main girl's house, which wasn't too far from there. Fifteen minutes later he was happy to see the alpine white Porsche Boxster he'd helped K pick out parked in front of his building with the convertible top down.

C-Note checked his Glock forty and stepped out of his car and waited until Buck and Scoop walked up to him. "Ai'ight this that nigga K the Kutta spot. I'm here to get an understanding and to repo some shit, so ya'll know what it is."

Both men nodded in unison and then they all headed towards K's door. Once they reached it they could hear a Young Jeezy song playing loudly from inside the apartment. C-Note tried the doorknob and wasn't really surprised to find it unlocked. He twisted it and let himself in. He walked in to the strong, pungent scent of weed mixed with the various other smells, and the eyes of three men and four half-dressed women fell on him. He knew one of the women was a stripper, and she and the others looked at him and the men with him realizing they weren't anyone they expected to show up.

C-Note calmly walked over to the entertainment center, where the radio was, but no one else in the apartment moved a muscle, unsure of what may happen next. He turned up the volume louder and began to bob his head and move his shoulders like he was about to start dancing, leaving everyone unsure of what exactly might happen for a moment. When the song came to the chorus, he turned the radio off but kept singing.

Smoke D

“You think you ballin’ ‘cause you got a block. He think he ballin’ ‘cause he got a block, whaatt. You know you niggas love to see me ball, whaatt. It’s Kutta baby, think they seeing me they hallucinating.”

C-Note stopped moving around and gave K an ominous scowl.

“But nigga I see yo’ ass, and I’on like what I’m see K. But you lucky I ain’t Smoke ‘cause he taking this shit real personal. The nigga say he wanna break yo’ jaw, but you’d probably get a arm or leg to go wit’ it. I ain’t on all that right now, cause I’m the one put yo’ ass on in the first place,” C-Note said now flexing his hands in and out of fists.”

“You just got our money and shit, and couldn’t show up for one fucking session, but you rocking my chain and ridin’ dean. You took somethin’ huh?”

“Naw mane, you know it wasn’t nothing like that mane, C. I had strepped throat for like a month and shit, then I was in a car wreck with my cousin. My whole damn mouth been wired up ‘til last week, wasn’t it Rell?” K asked one of his partners in a voice calmer than he actually was. He resisted the urge to wipe away the small beads of sweat forming on his forehead, knowing C-Note would home in on his behavior.

“My manager, you know Bird right, he said he was go’ holla at ya’ll to make sho’ everything was cool, and ya’ll knew what was up. He was ‘sposed to been done it, but he out of town. I thought he been done it. I ought to fire his ass, that nigga keep fuckin’ up.”

The thin veil on K’s bad lying flew off when the front door opened and Bird obliviously stepped in with a large box filled with several different kinds of liquor.

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“Mane, who fuckin’ Ferrari...” Bird started before he realized that C-Note and the others were there.

“C-Note, wassup?” Bird stated nervously. “I ain’t know ya’ll was coming through.”

C-Note didn’t respond to Bird, but gave K a cold glare, which caused the already nervous K to sweat to the point that it was running down his face.

Drumming up the drama as he always did when someone was being put on the spot, Buck looked over to K. “Aww shit,” he snickered. “Damn you gotta have the worst luck any nigga ever had. You got caught dead in the middle of a lie.”

Unable to think of anything to cover his ass, K could only look from Buck, hating his fucking guts, to a looming and very volatile C-Note.

Looking from the visibly shaken K to a menacing C-Note, Bird only then realized how much tension was in the room. It was also then that he remembered that his friend hadn’t even been to a recording session since he’d gotten the car and a check from the cousins, even though Bird had told him several times that they’d be upset. He recalled how K had arrogantly brushed off his warning, saying how he didn’t give a fuck about the cousins and they could get it how they live. Now he looked at the nigga as he sat as quiet as a church mouse and sweated like a pig at a barbecue. All Bird could do was shake his head subtly.

“I’on know what it is wit’ you punk ass niggas. A nigga try to fuck wit’ yo’ punk ass an ya’ll get to actin’ like bitches. You get my money and call yo’self running off and then you sit yo’ faggot ass here and lie to my face, like I’m the sucka,” C-Note said finally breaking the momentary silence.

C-Note moved from the stereo to the middle of the room and pulled his pistol out. He watched as K's eyes bulged, and the others in the room began to squirm nervously and inch away from K.

"I was gon' just embarrass yo' ass and take my shit back, since I'm the one that put yo' lame ass on cause I thought you was gon' keep it real. But since you don' sat here and tried to play me for a fucking clown, yo' bitch ass 'bout to look like the real one ol' soft ass nigga," C-Note said and watched with satisfaction as K was visibly shaken.

C-Note could clearly tell that K was trying to find anything to say, but obviously couldn't. Little did K know he was in for a lot worse. He looked over to Bird and motioned with his gun for him to move closer to the couch where the others were gathered.

"Bird, for real, you need to find a new friend 'cause that nigga just tried to put all his shit off on you," C-Note said with a smirk. "I'm talkin' 'bout, this nigga threw you under the bus, had me thinkin' 'bout fuckin' you up."

He looked over to Buck and then to K. "Buck go in this bedroom back here on the right and look in the closet, you should see a speaker box or two. One of the mothafuckas only got two screws in it. Take 'em out and get my money and whatever else you find in that bitch."

C-Note only smiled as he watched K's look of bewilderment as his eyes followed Buck past him and to the bedroom. K's confused gazed found its way back to C-Note, who decided to humor the situation.

"Yeah nigga, pillow talk a mothafucka," C-Note said nonchalantly. "You stroke a bitch the right way and she'll tell you the secrets of the universe."

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That got a little chuckle from Scoop and caused a mischievous grin to spread across C-Note's face, while K's face showed shock and then contempt.

"All righty ya'll, this 'sposed to be a party, so it's time to play a game," C-Note said then scanned the people in the room, his eyes falling on a tall girl with hazel colored eyes and a large pair of tits. "You, Tittylicious," he said, which actually made the girl blush. "I want you to take everything worth anything from everybody, and put it in that box of liquor that Bird refuse to put down. Make sho' you get everything, cause if we go behind you and find a quarter, you gon' answer to me, you understand?"

The girl nodded and then slowly began going from one person to the next, despite their protests and moaning, and removed everything from wallets to rings. While she was still collecting items from the small crowd, Buck walked back in with a pillowcase clutched in one hand and a clothing store bag in the other.

"Yo' this this nigga got a PlayStation and X-Box, I gotta get this shit," Buck said as he walked up to C-Note and handed him the pillowcase. "I did a quick count and it look like 'bout twenty five stacks, it's some jewelry in there too. At least the trick didn't spend it all, and he got plenty of clothes and shit back there too."

C-Note shot another look and snarled at K as he saw the M'Famous chain around his neck and the watch on his wrist. "He 'bout to wish he did," he said almost to himself.

Just then the big titted girl was moving to K to get the things he had when C-Note stopped her. "Ai'ight Tittylicious, you don' did enough. I get his shit myself. Take they stuff and put it in that box, then hand the box to that big ass nigga over there. And Tittylicious, write yo' number down on somethin'."

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The girl did as she was told and then moved back to where her friends were. No one in the room moved or made a sound as they waited to see what C-Note's next move would be, though everyone could sense that whatever came next would be the worst of it. They all knew they wanted no parts of whatever was apparently a moment or two from happening to K.

C-Note rubbed the point of his gun against the side of his head and made a face like he was trying to remember something.

"I know I'm forgetting somethin'," he said as he absentmindedly waved the pistol around, causing the already nervous crowd to tense up even more.

C-Note squinted his eyes in thought and then pointed the gun towards K. "That's what it is," he said to no one in particular. "Aye nigga, where the fuck is my car keys?"

K paused a moment as this overt nervousness made it hard for him to process even the simple question. "Damn, I hope he don't shoot me," he thought. He had to clear his throat just to speak. "They on a counter in the kitchen," he finally mumbled.

"Well get yo' ass in there and get 'em, and hurry up nigga, I got other shit to do," C-Note yelled impatiently.

Though he had been drinking and had smoked a few blunts, the adrenaline tinged with fear in him had him almost completely sobered and he scrambled toward the kitchen as if his life depended on it. In the back of his mind K knew there was a chance that it did. The quicker he got C-Note's crazy ass out of the apartment, the better, he told himself, so he moved as quickly as he could. For some reason he tried to look somewhat casual as he found the keys and headed back to the living room. A thousand thoughts were passing through K's mind, so when he walked back into the room, where he heard C-Note talking to the girl he'd named Tittylicious, he had no idea of how to gauge the crazy nigga

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holding a pistol. K had managed to slip the key to the Porsche off the ring with his other keys and slowed as he neared C-Note. He stretched the key out in front of him, trying to seem unthreatening.

C-Note held out his left hand, which held the pillowcase, as though he simply wanted K to drop the key inside. He watched K's eyes as they shifted to the bag he appeared to be holding out to him, and once K was in range, he viciously swung the pistol in his right hand catching K on the temple of his head and sending him crashing to the floor.

"This nigga really thought this shit was gon' be that easy," C-Note asked more than said to Buck and Scoop, who both simply shrugged.

C-Note tucked the pistol deep in the front pocket of his jeans and walked over to where K was just pulling himself off the floor and to one knee. By the time he looked up, C-Note's fist was connecting with his face, sending him tumbling back down. K was now only half conscious, so as C-Note rained a dozen punches on his unguarded face, all he did was moved whatever way the powerful blows moved him.

After adding a few good kicks to the ribs, C-Note was mildly satisfied, even though he had the urge to shoot the piece of shit below him. As he stood for a moment to catch his breath a little, he watched K return to semi-consciousness and ball into a fetal position, which made him add another three kicks for good measure. C-Note, and everyone else, watched a dark spot spread between K's legs, and he became even more disgusted by the wanna be who'd been accepted among them.

C-Note reached down and snatched the chain from around K's neck. "Take that fuckin' watch off," he barked as he placed his food across K's neck.

Smoke D

With shaky hands, K did as he was told, and began coughing up blood as he felt C-Note rip the watch from his outstretched hand.

The longer C-Note looked at the pissy fraud on the floor, the more contempt and malice he built for him, and in one final act of anger he looked over to Scoop and Buck. "Aye, since I'm in repo mode, I want everything but the couches out this bitch. Clothes, TVs, I even want the blender out this mothafucka," he said to his two goons and then looked over to the small crowd gathered around the couch. "Ya'll broads help, but you niggas bet not cough."

The girls quickly scrambled to do as told and twenty minutes later the Tahoe that Scoop and Buck had rode over in was filled with K's former belongings. C-Note had even taken the dishes.

C-Note had ordered everyone out of the apartment leaving only himself and K inside, and K was certain now that C-Note was about to kill him. Why? Was he really about to die because he wouldn't go record a few fucking songs when he was supposed to be a rapper?

K had thought about that and a lot of other things as the five minutes that felt like an hour passed before C-Note finally left without another word. K had laid still for another five minutes after that waiting for C-Note's return and bullet before pushing himself up to his feet. He staggered as pain shot through his body, and his head felt as though it would explode with every beat of his heart. After a few more minutes he felt like he could move and instinctively as most people did after a fight, he headed for a mirror, all the while wondering why no one had come back to check on him, not even Bird.

K had to blink back stars as the light from the bathroom sent fresh pain stabbing through his eyes. Then he blinked back

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tears as long as he could once he saw his swollen, black and purple face.

K, at that moment knew he'd never be the same until he killed C-Note. Even though he'd never shot a gun at someone, let alone killed, the cousins could not get away with emasculating him to the point that he'd been that day. They had to pay.

MARCELLOS

Marcellos walked up to the door of the red brick townhouse and let himself in knowing that it would be unlocked already. He could smell the sweet and spicy odor of incense mixed with the strong musky scent of what he knew was expensive weed. The two contrast blend into a pleasant aroma, and Marcellos breathed it all in with deep slow draws of breath. He could hear Trey Songz singing from deeper inside the house and started to head towards it before changing his mind midstride and turning in the direction of the kitchen. Ecstasy pills had become one of his few new vices, a habit he knew he needed to get control of, and they always kept him feeling thirsty. He pulled opened the refrigerator door, looked around, and saw that he could have a canned Sprite, bottled water, or a half a fifth of Smirnoff. He took the Smirnoff and then grabbed the Sprite just in case. He pulled the top off the Smirnoff and drank from the bottle as he once again headed toward the music. The sound led him to a candle lit bedroom and even though it was early in the afternoon the candles were the only light other than that coming from the attached bathroom, the door to which was half-closed. He walked over to the queen sized bed, which was covered in satin sheets, and sat the soda can on a nightstand, then picked up the remote to the stereo system and changed it to a song that he and Trey Songz had done together. After a few moments he heard the toilet flush then the bathroom door opened partially with Jaylene sticking her head out then ducking back in with a wide smile.

Jaylene's parents were from Barbados and had moved to Memphis when the company her father worked for had opened a

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new office. In the years since then they'd opened several businesses of their own, which were all successful, so their youngest child and only daughter had always lived a privileged life. She'd gone to school and earned two degrees that she'd never used and likely wouldn't have to. And like many girls who grew up like her she was infatuated with thugs, but she only wanted a thug with money to blow. The fact that he was a rapper had her open, but he knew that if it wasn't for that she probably wouldn't have paid him a second thought.

"What a damn chain can do for a nigga," he thought as his mind began to flash back to the way they'd met, but his thought was interrupted by Jaylene's emergence from the bathroom.

The red camisole Jaylene wore hugged her large breasts and left exposed that he had no panties on. Somewhere along the line during his rise to stardom Marcellos had become critical of a woman's figure numbers, and he knew Jaylene's by heart. 36D-24-39, 5' 8" and 143 lbs. Though in his heart he only held her as an executive class groupie, he couldn't or wouldn't try to deny the fact that she was bad and could put on like a motherfucker.

Though he'd been kicking it with her for the last nine months, they both knew what he was there for, and without any more hesitation she walked around to the side of the bed where he was and began to undress him. Once all of his clothes were off and piled in a chair, she opened a drawer on the nightstand next to the bed and pulled out a rolled blunt and a lighter. Jaylene lit the weed and took a deep pull then stepped in front of Marcellos, pulling his mouth to hers with her free hand and giving him a long, deep, passionate kiss, while his hands roamed from her ass to her breast then down between her legs. As the kiss began to become even

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more passionate, he suddenly pulled away and looked into Jaylene's green eyes. She let out a slight sigh and hit the blunt again before handing it to Marcellos then placed an ashtray on the bed for him. He laid back on the soft sheets as she began to kiss and lick from his neck to his chest down to his semi-erect dick and took half of it in her mouth and slowly slid back up to the head just how he liked it. Marcellos took a pull from the blunt and felt its effects begin to kick in just as Jaylene caught her rhythm, giving him the euphoric combination of high and sexual stimulation.

Marcellos slowly smoked the rest of the blunt while Jaylene deep throat him, and he knew by then she'd began to rub on her own pussy, getting more anxious with each passing minute, and her soft moans on his dick increased the sensation. Marcellos sat up and took the last pull from the blunt that he could and then put it out, then grabbed a handful of Jaylene's microbraids to guide her tempo. A minute later he let her head go and she took it as the signal that it usually was that he was ready to fuck. He handed her the ashtray to put up, afterwards which she stood back in front of him still rubbing her pussy which turned him on so much he felt his dick throbbing. He unloosed the camisole and eased it open, taking one of her full breast into his mouth

"Oww-ooww," she moaned and began to grind on her hand harder.

Marcellos had never had a woman whose breast were as sensitive as Jaylene's, and he loved the way she squirmed and moaned whenever he touched or sucked them. He lay back still holding the breast he was sucking and pulled her on top of him while he palmed one of her ass cheeks. Jaylene used the hand she'd pleased herself with to guide him inside her and worked her

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pussy muscles as she eased up and down the head of his dick, taking the rest in every few strokes. Unable to take her teasing any more Marcellos grabbed her other ass cheek to force her down on every stroke. Knowing exactly what he wanted she dug her hands into his chest and began to ride him harder, working them both into a light sweat.

Marcellos sat up still guiding her up and down as he kissed her on the neck, tasting the honey dust she had on, and then stood up with her. She loved it when he picked her up, so she wrapped her legs tight around his waist and bounced up and down on him. In stride, Marcellos eased over to the nightstand where the canned Sprite was, picked it up, and ran it down the small of Jaylene's back, causing her breath to catch from the cool sensation, and goosebumps to pop up on her caramel brown skin. He stepped over to a long dresser where he sat her while still holding the can to her back and grinding inside her. He sat the can down and grabbed Jaylene's legs spreading them wide and with each long deliberate stroke he began with he ended by grinding inside her.

"Ohh yeah baby," Jaylene moaned as he began to speed up still grinding at the end of each stroke.

Marcellos stepped back and pulled out of her in one motion, picked up the Sprite can, opened it and took a long gulp, then walked over to the bed and lay down across it. With a smirk he looked over at Jaylene, who was still sitting where he left her.

"J," Marcellos said. "You want some mo' dick?"

"Nope," she teased and walked over to him and took the Sprite can from him and drank what was left. "Now all I need is something sweet to eat," she said then climbed on the bed and

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began kissing Marcellos from the chest and down his waist before taking him in her mouth again.

He loved how she could read exactly what he wanted sexually without him having to say anything. She then climbed on top of him, easing down on all of him in one motion, then began licking his neck as he grabbed her ass and controlled the tempo, until they both climaxed in unison. They pulled a blanket over them, and listened to music until they both drifted off in to a light sleep.

Marcellos woke up an hour later and got dressed, leaving Jaylene asleep in bed. Just as he was about to walk out the front door his cell phone rang. He checked the caller i.d. and saw that it was his sister then answered the call.

“What’s up Ke-Ke?” he said.

“Los are you on your way?” his sister asked him.

“On my way where?” he asked, confused by the question.

“Boy you ain’t forgot yo’ nephew birthday party is today.”

“Aww that, naw I’m at the store right now,” he lied.

In the midst of everything he had going on the party had completely slipped his mind. He was his young nephew’s idol and he didn’t intend to let him down.

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“Hurry up, these lil monster are ready to party and Rome ready to show off his favorite rapper.”

“Ai’ight, I’m just gone grab a few more gifts, and then I’ll be on my way over.”

“Okay then, hey pick up some mo’ ice cream from somewhere. We want to make some grown folks punch.”

“Ai’ight ol’ drunk ass girl, make sho’ yo’ fine ass friend Mykesha show up. I need to get to know her. Bye.”

Marcellos tried to remember what his nephew had wanted as he walked out to his car. Any Aston Martin drew stares, but with its customization, his burnt orange Vanquish was a true showpiece. A group of females had stopped in front of it and were taking pictures of themselves sitting on the luxury car. Marcellos had to admit to himself that his new lifestyle had made a little jaded, but he would still indulge in the women, who came from all walks of life.

“Ya’ll like this car?” he asked when he walked up to the group.

The women all looked over to him and one of them recognized him instantly.

“Oh my god!” she exclaimed. “You C-Lo Chainz! Oh my god, I love yo’ music.”

The other two women’s’ eyes lit up once they realized who they were with.

Smoke D

“Ya’ll wanna take some pictures?” Marcellos offered always happy to make his fans day.

“That ain’t all I wanna take,” one of the bolder ones said.

After giving her the look over, he thought the thick dark skinned girl was good enough for what was being entertained.

“I’ll tell you what, we can take a few flicks and exchange info,” he said. “I got somewhere to be, but maybe later we can get together and hang out at my place or somethin’, if that’s cool wit’ ya’ll fine ‘selves.”

Marcellos drove to the nearest mall since he wanted to get his nephew some quality clothes and toys in one stop. He was just getting ready to leave out when a young boy ran across his path. He stepped in front of the toddler, who looked no more than two years old, stopping him.

“Oh my goodness, thank you,” a young woman said as she rushed out of one of the stores behind the boy. “Every time I put this little thing down he runs his butt around.” She scooped the boy up and extended her hand to Marcellos.

“Good manners,” he thought as he accepted her hand in his own. He then took the time to really look the woman over. Her hazel brown eyes and dimples, accentuated her round face and pretty brown skinned perfectly.

“I need to thank yo’ son for letting me see you,” he said flirting.

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“Thank you, but this little rascal is not mine, thank god. I’m just watching him while his momma is in the restroom. As matter of fact, here comes her slow butt now.”

Marcellos turned around and saw the last person he expected to, his ex-girlfriend Katrina, and mixed emotions flooded his mind as she walked up. She was still an eye catcher, and some of their better times came to mind, but he quickly recalled how things had ended between them. After all the time that had passed, that day still came up here and there.

“What’s up Katrina,” Marcellos said coolly when she walked up.

Even though he had on an iced out Rolex and two large, flawless diamond earrings at the moment he wished he had on at least one of his large chains. He knew it was small minded, but he wanted it to send a subliminal message to his ex.

“Hey Marcellos,” she responded meekly not really wanting to look him in the face.

“Ya’ll know each other?” the other girl asked.

“Yeah, we were together before I moved to Atlanta,” Katrina said.

“Oh well,” the girl said to Marcellos. “I don’t do seconds, no matter how fine you are.”

“Baby girl, you should really rethink that policy,” Marcellos said refocusing on the cutie.

Smoke D

“Hell you probably right, but that’s my girl, so I’m straight. Ya’ll two can catch up or whatever,” the girl said, gave Katrina her son, and walked back into the store she had come out of.

“Congratulations,” Katrina said breaking the silence between them. “I didn’t even know you could rap, and now you’re everywhere.”

“Yeah, I should really thank you though,” Marcellos said. “That night in Atlanta is what pushed me into it and changed my life.

Katrina looked down at the ground at nothing in particular. “I made a mistake and I tried to talk to you and apologize, but you wouldn’t answer the phone.”

“Answer for what? What could you have possibly told me after that shit you pulled?” Marcellos asked and became upset about the incident all over again.

“For one thing, I would have told you about him,” Katrina said motioning her head to the boy she held in her arms.

Marcellos now looked the boy in the face searching for a semblance of himself. The child looked so much like Katina though that no other facial features were clearly evident. Though not much, he did think their skin complexions were similar.

“Once I found out I was pregnant I didn’t just want to show up at yo’ doorstep, especially after what happened, so I stayed with my cousin,” Katrina said now looking him in the eyes.

M'Famous

“So I’m ‘sposed to believe this my son because you said it. That ain’t gon’ cut it, cause yo’ word don’t hold a lot of weight right here.”

“Marcellos, the reason I came back was to let our families meet him, and that’s real. I haven’t been asking you for anything and I won’t start. I can raise my son on my own.”

Part of Marcellos was unbelieving, but another part of him remembered growing up wondering about his own father. He was told that the man had moved down to Florida when he was young. Marcellos remembered seeing him once when he was about five years old, but never again, and he didn’t want to be that type of man.

“You know what Katrina,” Marcellos said evenly, “I’m not gon’ stand here and go back and forth with you ‘bout whether or not he’s mine ‘cause I got somewhere to be. So what you can do is go head and give me yo’ number so we can get together and get this figured out as soon as possible.”

Marcellos took down Katrina’s number and left the mall preoccupied with thought of how the mere possibility of him having a child could change things. He hadn’t actually considered having one since he mandated that any woman he sustained a relationship with was on a contraceptive, and he used condoms on randoms and groupies. He wasn’t sure of exactly how he would feel when he found out whether or not the boy was actually his, but he definitely wanted to find out. Marcellos made the trip to his nephew’s party with his mind wrapped in his chance encounter.

Katrina walked around the mall with ambivalent feelings about her run in with Marcellos. Part of her felt guilty about what had happened that night in Atlanta as well as the fact that she had no idea whether or not Marcellos was her son, Kaylin's, father. True enough that she had slept with him around the time she came up pregnant, but she had also had sex with Yayo. She had stayed around and continued to see him for a while and he accepted the child, but now the two were on bad terms. That was mostly because Yayo had stopped bringing in money like he once had and therefore he had begun to treat her differently, especially money wise. At the same time though, she felt as though her son deserved the best upbringing she could manage, and she didn't really care who provided it as long as it was there. If that meant playing on Marcellos or Yayo then so be it, she would take whatever she could.

Marcellos had seemed adamant about getting a blood test, which could go either way, but she was hoping that she could simply be around him enough to possibly rekindle some type of romantic relationship between them, which wouldn't be an easy task. More so, she wanted to try and get Marcellos to bond with Kaylin, which would make it harder for him to pull away.

"We gon' be good one way or another baby boy," Katrina said to the boy and placed a kiss on his cheek. "We just gotta work together to corner daddy, whoever he is. But for now, it's big time Mr. C-Lo Chains."

Katrina and her friend walked through the mall to finish their shopping and her phone vibrated, showing a message from Yayo, who was still in Atlanta.

Unbeknownst to the members of M'Famous Entertainment, at various times they were being watched by both federal and local law enforcement agencies. There had been entirely too many incidents involving their artists, who were mostly former drug dealers or other types of criminals, and there was the prevailing thought that the cousins were probably using the business to launder illicitly gained funds. Though there had been a few incidents involving M'Famous members going to jail for drug charges, most of them had been for minor possessions. They had taken down associates of some of the label's artists, but currently had no direct links to the cousins who were a major point of emphasis.

With C-Note's rapid and random movements, he was also a suspect in trafficking drugs. His movements in the streets of Memphis, in various neighborhoods, and with the myriad associates of M'Famous Ent., provided him the opportunities to move drugs and collect money. The other cousin, Smoke's, moves were more subtle, and he was seen as more likely being a coordinator or orchestrator. After the major incident with their deceased artist, Mecca, they had begun their scrutiny of the label's dealings. And even though they had closed that particular investigation, with the rising amount of arrests with their artists and associates, there was a renewed focus on them.

Things were going too slow though. The superiors wanted something solid to justify the continued use of resources and manpower for the extensive surveillance of a presumably

Smoke D

legitimate business. They needed results and they needed them fast. There was one of the more useful police tactics at their disposal, though it would be just a little while longer before they were able to utilize it. It had proven an effective tool time and time again, and soon it would be used to expose the inner workings of M'Famous Ent. and it's close knit members.

Several leading members of the task force targeting the label met to discuss any new developments, and it was decided to let the wild card C-Note's most recent assault and robbery blow over. When they took him down he'd be gone for fifteen years or more. That was the task force's aim for everyone at the menacing M'Famous Ent.

TERRANCE

Terrance Palmer, also known as Triggamane, still couldn't believe how his life had changed over the last few years. He'd went from recording demos using low budget laptops, to selling millions of records worldwide, and had made a small fortune for himself. He knew that he'd been lucky to fall in with M'Famous Ent. There were plenty of stories in the music industry about people coming out and selling lots of records only to be fucked around by a thirsty ass label. C-Note and Smoke had held him down though. They had kept it real and gave him every dime he had coming, and kept him and other label artists involved in some kind to tour regularly. Between that and the steady diet of mixtapes that he put out, he had done pretty damn good. His custom built, two and a half million dollar home sat on some of the most exclusive real estate in the Memphis area, with almost that much worth of cars sitting in the driveway outside. His entire family now had nice homes and cars and his entire entourage shared in his lifestyle as well. The only issue that there was the fact that he had become the sole provider for many of the people around him, which kept the pressure on to get more money by whatever means. There was a lot coming in, but there was also a lot going out, and at some point the rap career would come to slow down or even end. He was aware that his latest album hadn't yet reached the sales of the one he released before it, and in the cutthroat music industry, slipping sales numbers could easily lead to you slipping off a label and off the map.

But the money or anything else wasn't a concern for Terrance tonight, because he was throwing another party for himself. His birthday was coming up Saturday, but he had decided

to party everyday of that week and then have a major party at one of the city's premiere night spots. It was Thursday, which meant party number five and he was loving every minute of it. His home had a large pool, which led to him throwing a pool party each day. There were beautiful, scantily clad women who walked about everywhere. There were women of every race and background and most of them would have loved to be the one to blow the birthday boy's candle out. Terrance had got so may lap dances he thought the skin might start peeling off him. The loud thump of the music mixed with the drinks had put him in a mellow mood, which was how he loved to be. Though most times he had to try and live up to his name, and the echoes of the rumor that he'd killed someone, Terrance really enjoyed just hanging out with his friends and family.

Terrance was flirting with yet another group of half-clothed women when he saw C-Note approaching.

"Wassup baller?" C-Note said when he walked up. He showed Terrance love with dap and a brotherly hug. "Birthday boy, got it live up in this bitch, we might need to shoot a video or somethin'."

"C, the cameras come out later tonight," Terrance replied with a boisterous smile. "Wassup though mane? I 'preciate you swingin' through to holla at 'cha boy."

"You know I gotta show you some love regardless partna. We started at the bottom together remember. And birthdays was the worse days."

"Now we pop Ace of Spades when we thirstaay," Terrance finished and the two shared a laugh.

M'Famous

“The big party still on for Saturday right, ain’t nothing changed?”

“Yea, it’s still on, and you know I gotta put on, M’Famous style. You and Smoke coming through right?”

“My nigga, you know we coming. We might even hit the stage. I hear you got some heavyweights coming through too, and I know it’s gon’ be ass and titties from wall to wall. They might even be hanging off the ceiling fucking with you.”

“It’s gon’ be tight fa sho’, but wassup on the home front? Everythang good at the camp?”

“Yeah, yeah, you know same ol’ shit. A few minor bumps in the road, but you know we ride right over that shit and keep it moving.”

The two were interrupted by a group of women who wanted to take a few picture with the two celebrities before they left. The two stars agreed, with C-Note making the stipulation that at least one of them had to take off their top for a least one picture. He told them they could cover up with their hands or let him do it for them and two of the five girls agreed with mischievous smiles. One girl was bold enough to take a bare chested pic in a few of the shots.

After finishing up with the women C-Note was ready to get down to business.

“Say bruh, let me holla at ‘chu ‘bout some business real quick, somewhere where we ain’t got to yell and everybody ain’t in our mouths,” he said to Terrance.

Terrance knew that C-Note stayed in all kinds of shit and would pull just about anything, so he didn't know what to expect as he led the man he considered to be a mentor to a quieter part of his house. With the alcohol he had consumed, a few darker thoughts crept into his mind and he wondered if it was about the album sales.

"What's up bruh?" Terrance asked once they were by themselves.

"Aye, you think it's been a good run over these last two and a half years?" C-Note asked.

The question only fueled Terrance's worry about where the conversation might be headed.

"Hell yeah it's been good. We don' sold plenty records and made plenty money and we did it together, with no extra bullshit in the game," Terrance replied making sure he put emphasis on the word together.

"Yeah, and you got this fly ass crib, boss whips, and bad bitches at yo' beck and call. You getting' it, yo' family and yo' homeboys straight, so yeah, I'd say it's been pretty good. And like you said, we did it all together, with no shit in the game at no point. Ain't nobody tried to fuck you out no money or put you in a bad deal or nothing like that right?"

Terrance nodded his head agreeing with C-Note's statement.

"So M'Famous been showin' you love and doin' you right then ain't it?"

M'Famous

"You already know the answer to that my nigga, that's why I fuck wit' ya'll so tough," Terrance responded still unsure of where the conversation was going.

C-Note reached behind him and pulled out an envelope. From it he pulled out and unfolded a small packet of papers.

"Me and Smoke don' gave it a lot of consideration, and we think for right now that the best thang for both our financial and other relationships, we go 'head and handle this," C-Note said then handed the papers to a now nervous Terrance.

Once he scanned a few lines and realized it was a contract, an immense sense of relief washed over him. "Aww, this another contract bruh," Terrance said.

"Yeah, lil nigga, what you thought it was? You getting money, we getting' money, so l'on see a reason to break up a money matrimony. So is Triggamane on deck and rockin' wit' the notorious M'Famous E.N.T. or what?"

"Hell yeah, l'm rockin' wit' the team baby. l'on need no new friends, just the niggas been holing me down from the start."

"Dig that. Well lil nigga what 'chu waiting on, gon' sign that thang so you can keep these parties poppin' and we can get back to this live ass thang goin' on out there."

"Ai'ight bruh, l'm down. But at the same time, what's in here?"

"Shit to be straight up wit' you l'on know. Cuz handle all that paperwork shit, but you know we ain't been playing games so

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ain't no point in us starting now, ya' feel me. I did peep at the advance thought and it definitely got two commas in there."

Terrance took a moment to thumb through the papers. He wasn't really too good with technical things and legalese. He'd blindly signed his first contract out of the sheer excitement of actually being offered a deal. He had been around a little since then and he'd seen a lot of raw deals take place, and thought he had love for C-Note and somewhat trusted both cousins, he knew it was better to be safe than sorry.

"Bruh, check this out, I'm all the way on deck and down to sign back up for another round, but I need you to let me have my people look over it mane. Don't take it the wrong way though."

C-Note merely looked at Terrance consideringly, and then a smirk spread across his face. "Lil nigga growing up to be a good business man. You been hangin' round Smoke ass too much, but that nigga would probably laugh at this shit too. I respect yo' play mane. Business is business, so do what you need to and have whoever check it out. Don't take too long though, we tryin' to get this squared away. You still in the car though right?"

"Nigga I told you wassup. M'Famous all day, you see the chain, you know the business. I just want to be sure ain't no mistake in it. As a matter of fact, if everythang check out, I'll have it ready for you at the real party."

M'Famous

Terrance's party kept going strong and everyone kept enjoying themselves. Around eleven thirty, C-Note had finally took off with a couple of women after he had reminded Terrance to have the contract at the party as planned, on Saturday. About another hour passed before the party began to wind down and Terrance began to single down who he would sleep with for the night. But with all the alcohol in his system, every woman looked about the same. He was about to pick one or two of the women and have his entourage clear the place out when his cell phone began to ring. With all of the distractions around him Terrance answered the call without paying attention to the blocked out number on the screen, which he usually didn't answer.

"Aye wassup," he said in heavily slurred words.

"My lil gangsta. What's up baby boy? Or should I say birthday boy," a mildly familiar voice said, but Terrance struggled to remember who it belonged to.

"Who is this mane?"

"Boy you gon' tell me you don't remember yo' o.g. voice? You been partying too hard, it got to be the liquor. It's me nephew, the one and only big homie, Quack."

Even through the liquor, the name hit home like a sack of bricks. It had been so long since he had seen or heard from Quack that the man had been the farthest thing from his mind. That was partly because of the thing that had went down that day they took the ride out to Yella's place. That day still haunted him from time to time and he had been hoping to actually put it all behind him, and Quack's absence was a part of that. The last he had heard, Quack and his nephew had returned to California, where Quack was

Smoke D

originally from. That was all back a few months before Terrance's first album dropped. He had heard that Quack had went to prison for a robbery, but there was also a rumor that it was murder, and one that he was dead himself.

"Damn o.g., wassup, cuz. It's been so damn long since anybody heard from you," Terrance said. He was now far enough from the party and music that he could hear clearly.

"Yeah, I got knocked for a lil situation, but they kicked me out early for bad behavior, lil gangsta," Quack said coolly. "What's up tho' boy. I been seeing you on ya' videos and shit, doing it up. You don' came all the way up, Mr. Platinum selling artist. You been holdin' the set down?"

"Come on mane, if you seen me on the box, you know I been reppin' the right way."

"Dig that. So yo' big homie back on the scene and I know you gon' look out for ya' o.g. one time.

Terrance knew that was coming up sooner or later, and he was hoping that he could throw Quack some cash to spend and that would be enough to keep him out of his hair for a while.

"You already know I got you, so don't even sweat that part. It wouldn't be right if I didn't bless you properly. I'm gon' get wit' chu tomorrow and we can kick it and hang out, catch up on all the crazy shit that been going on. Damn Quack it seem like it been forever."

"I know exactly what you mean cuz, and I been waiting to touchdown like a mothafucka. I got some plays to make, and I'm tryin' to put some thangs in motion ASAP. It's time to get some real

M'Famous

chips and take over out here, and I know I got some solid soldiers who got my back.”

Though Terrance still had a lot of respect for Quack, he didn't really feel the way he was talking, especially since it sounded like he wanted him mixed up in whatever schemes he had that concerned his takeover. He wasn't looking to change up anything he had been doing too much, and he definitely wasn't looking for any drama, most definitely not the kind that Quack could get into. He had a lot to lose and Quack would have to understand that. Plus, their gang had more than enough goons who didn't give a fuck about anything, and were ready to do any and everything to make a name for themselves. He knew because he kept a few of them around him. In Quack and his nephew Gizzle's absence, Terrance, or rather, his alter ego, Triggamane, had become a central figure in their gang, though it was mostly due to the money he was bringing in. Either way they were down to protect their own best interest, which meant protecting and appeasing him. He hadn't moved up any in rank, but was still prominent enough to call shots, though he avoided as many problems as he could.

“Ai'ight, you know I'm wit' cha. We'll get up tomorrow,” Terrance said trying to shake his newest issue, at least for the night. “I'll bring some chips through then.

“Naw, lil partna, this here kind of- naw, it is important, and I need to see you tonight, as soon as you can get here. Them lil hoes can wait, they ain't goin' nowhere,” Quack said in a tone that signified that he wouldn't accept anything less than what he wanted to hear.

Smoke D

Though Terrance wanted to refuse, Quack's position made him adhere to the man's request.

"Ai'ight bruh. But damn you fuckin' up the vibes right now. I'll come through though, but where the hell you at anyway?"

"That's what I wanna hear from my lil nigga," Quack said. "I know you remember Gizzle's sister, Amesha, she got a spot off Chelsea."

"The one in New Chicago," Terrance said. "I know where it's at."

The only reason he did was because he had been over there several times and had fucked on both of Gizzle's sisters who stayed there.

"Aye Triggamane, I know you been getting yo' swerve on and might be lit a lil bit, but I'm gon' need you to sober up a lil for this tonight, so stop and get you some coffee or some shit," Quack said.

"Mane I'on drink that shit," Terrance informed Quack.

"Well you gon' have to tonight," Quack shot right back. "Don't show up so fucked up you don't understand what's goin' on, and don't wreck the damn car on yo' way over. I'll see you when you get her cuz," Quack said and then hung up the phone before Terrance could get in another word.

Terrance e already had an uneasy feeling about meeting Quack before he ever set foot out the door. He remembered all too well what happened the last time he got too involved in Quack's

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dealings, and he was still hoping to this day that somehow that didn't catch up with him.

Terrance told his right hand man, Kain, to make sure everybody left and that he had a run to make. Kain offered to ride with him, or have someone else go, but Terrance didn't want to get anyone more involved with Quack than need be at the moment. He had been driving his new Lamborghini Aventador for his birthday week, but for this particular outing he wanted to take his Mercedes Benzes S600. It had enough speed to get him out of a bad situation quickly and it was bulletproof. He hadn't even left his own house yet and his heart was beating rapidly already. He cursed himself for even answering the phone in the first place, though he knew that Quack would have caught up with him sooner or later.

Terrance stopped at a convenience store and got coffee, now hoping that it actually would help clear him up because he would need to be able to do some kind of thinking if this turned out to be anywhere near what in could come to be. When he finally arrived at the place where Quack was, both he and Gizzle were standing outside.

"Get out cuz. We just want to talk to you for right now. We ain't goin' nowhere," Gizzle said which actually made Terrance feel a lot better.

"You ain't got to put in no work tonight Triggamane," Quack said then embraced Terrance and then Gizzle did the same.

"Ya'll niggas ain't missed no meals I see," Terrance joked.

"Naw ain't no reason to. The real gon' eat regardless. They gon' make it happen," Quack said.

Smoke D

“True story. What happened out there that got ya’ll jammed up?”

“Cuz we can talk about that some other time, we here for business tonight,” Quack said cutting him off. “Cuz I need a little loan. I’m trying to start a label of my own, get this music thing poppin’.”

“I told you I got you, just let me know what you need,” Terrance responded, sure that whatever Quack needed would be within his means, especially since he had a new deal coming up.

“I’m glad you said that nephew, cause when we open up, Triggamane gon’ be our premiere artist.”

SMOKE

Smoke stepped out of his twelve thousand square foot home and surveyed the collection of cars and trucks that all sat in pristine condition as they glimmered in the day's sunshine. He knew that heading to the official party of one of M'Famous Ent.'s biggest stars was an event in which everyone who showed up would bring out their absolute best and he wasn't about to be outdone by anyone. He was wearing an outfit that was soon to be revealed in their upcoming clothing line, which had been co-designed by Michael Kors, and he had on enough jewelry to feed a small village for months. He was a walking bank roll tonight with the various items he was wearing worth well over a million dollars. He was the CEO of one of the most successful businesses in Memphis, and tonight everyone who didn't would know that without a doubt he had paper. He chose to drive his million dollars plus, heavily upgraded, Porsche 918 Spyder, one of the fastest and most expensive vehicles in the world. He knew that he was going to shut the parking lot down.

Smoke left home and decided to cruise through the city before he reached the party, just to do a little extra flexing, and he let the convertible top down so everyone could see who he was. He knew how the streets of Memphis were though, so he had his Desert Eagle .45 laid across his lap. Smoke had been riding around the city for thirty minutes, when he saw the lights of a police cruiser flashing in his rearview mirror.

"Hatin' mothafuckas," Smoke said to himself and looked for somewhere to pull over.

Smoke D

Due to the current nature of relations between police and black men, Smoke didn't pullover until he reached the parking lot of a gas station since it was a public space that would have cameras to record whatever may unfold. He put the Desert Eagle out of sight, hoping that this would just be a bullshit harassment stop as usual. Two officers approached him, both happened to be white males.

"What seems to be the problem this evening officers," Smoke asked nonchalantly.

"We'll ask all the questions here, sir," said one officer, who had his hand rested on top of his handgun, "Whose car is tis?"

Though he was heated by the way the cop was trying to handle him, Smoke knew he had to keep cool in order to get out of the situation as smooth and as soon as possible.

"It's my car," he said.

"What are you some kind of drug dealer or somethin', selling that good good," the other officer said and the two cops laughed.

"Mane what do ya'll want? I got somewhere to be," Smoke said beginning to become impatient.

"Whatever you got goin' on that you want to leave so fast to get to can wait. You'll leave when we say you can, sir," the one with the itchy trigger finger said. "We'll need your license and registration, and I hope you got insurance on this here fancy dancy automobile."

Smoke moved to reach to the glove compartment, where he kept the documents for his vehicles.

M'Famous

“Hey! Goddamnit, what the hell are you doing?” Trigger-happy yelled and stepped back from the car.

Both officers were now holding their guns in their hands and had them pointed at Smoke, which drew the attention of people moving in and out of the gas station.

“What the fuck?!” Smoke said and raised his hands. “You asked for my insurance and registration, they’re in the glove box.”

The officers slowly lowered their guns, but didn’t put them away.

“Reach slowly and use one hand,” Trigger-happy’s partner said.

Smoke only shook his head as he reached for the documents. He had just nearly become another statistic in a stop by police, for no reason other than his appearance. He handed Trigger-happy’s partner the requested documents and sat back while the officer left to run his information.

“You boys sure like putting yourselves in situations to get good and shot. Then everyone wants to blame us for your stupidity,” Trigger-happy said.

“You know what, I would waste my time and breath telling you something, but boys like you are too stupid to understand,” Smoke said in response, though he wanted to say much more.

“I’m gon’ need you to step out of the car now, sir,” Trigger-happy said.

Smoke D

“No,” Smoke replied flatly. “I know my rights, and if you want to go through this, I’ll call my lawyer, Timothy Carson, to come and clear up any misunderstanding.”

The officer’s face scrounged up at the mention of the attorney’s name. Timothy Carson was notorious throughout the ranks of the police force. He had taken the cases of many who had accused the police of overstepping their authority and excessive force, and had several of them either fired or incarcerated. What was the worst part was that he mostly represented African American and the fact that he himself was white.

“You motherfuckers think you’re so smart, but you and that piece of shit need to remember who’s really in control,” Trigger-happy all but screamed.

At that point Smoke began to ignore the petty rants of the officer while he waited on the other to return with his license and other things. About five minutes later the other officer finally returned, and he was about to say something when the microphone on his shoulder sounded and he spoke with the dispatcher on the other end. There was a call for assistance by another unit that was nearby, and the officer threw Smoke’s license and other things into his car and the two cops walked away quickly to their cruiser, got in, and sped off the lot.

Aggravated, Smoke got out of his car and went into the store to get him something to drink. Once he reached the cash register he grabbed a couple of scratch tickets just for the hell of it.

M'Famous

He scratched off the tickets and the second one showed that he had won an hundred thousand dollars. Smoke could only laugh to himself. Even when they tried to knock him down, he just kept on winning. As he walked out of the door he saw an older black couple and he handed them the ticket and kept walking.

Smoke made his way to the party, which was at one of the hottest night clubs in Memphis. It was owned by Legend, another major figure in the city, who also owned a successful record label. The parking lot was already live, with hot cars and sexy women walking around trying to catch a baller. Just as he expected, all eyes were on him as he pulled into his reserved parking space. Most people didn't really know what he was driving other than the fact that there was Porsche sign on it, and that its futuristic design was captivating. Smoke stepped out and immediately the cameras came out as well. There were several hip-hop and other entertainment media publications on hand to record the event for their respective companies, and they all wanted a piece of the flashy CEO. And for the night Smoke would let them eat their hearts out. He took his time making his way to the entrance, stopping to speak with several familiar faces from the streets. He was swarmed by many half-dressed women, some wanting pictures, other trying to hand him pieces of paper that held phone numbers, which they had been handing out well before he showed up.

Dusk had begun to set in, and it was time for the party to shift to the inside where the real ballers were, and M'Famous Ent.'s finest were all gathered. Smoke stepped inside to more camera flashes and adoring women, and he greeted various members of his label and others of Memphis' social elite. He made his way to the back of the club where there was a section reserved for him and the other M'Famous VIPs.

Smoke D

Triggamane's latest club banger was blasting from the club's stereo system and Smoke caught the vibe as he met up with his cousin C-Note, Triggamane, and others. There were already drinks and bottles all over the tables and the strong pungent smell of expensive marijuana permeated throughout the air. M' Famous Ent. was definitely ready to party hard for the night.

"Wassup boss man," Triggamane said as Smoke took a seat.

"What's happening birthday boy. You ready to turn up or what?" Smoke said as he gave him dap.

"You already know it. I gotta let 'em know I still got it on smash," Triggamane said and then took off his Gucci sunglasses revealing red, half-closed eyes.

"Boy yo' as it lit."

"I'm just a star trying to reach the moon."

The party really started jumping then, with more liquor flowing and multiple lap dances from the hired dancers.

After lots of drinking Smoke had to piss, so he got up from the table with a couple of Shock troops tailing him. When he stepped back out of the restroom, Smoke bumped into a woman as she came out of the women's bathroom walking backwards as she talked to someone still inside. When the girl turned back around she flashed the most dazzling smile Smoke had ever seen. Make up wasn't piled up on her face like most of the other women at the

M'Famous

party. Her clothing was also more conservative, a long black dress with an open back.

“Oops, I’m sorry,” the woman said when she turned around and looked up at the taller Smoke

“You should be sorry,” Smoke said which caused a confused look to cross the woman’s face. “Cause I know I am. I should’ve met you a long time ago, with that beautiful smile,”

The woman’s initial expression gave way to another smile, which Smoke returned with one of his own.

“How many women go for that line,” the woman said.

“I’on known. It’s only one I hope it work on tonight. What’s your name?”

The woman studied him consideringly for a moment, looking at the jewelry that draped him. “What are you, a rapper or something?”

“Who named you all that, they had to be trippin’.”

The woman gave him another look. “You know that ain’t my name, while you trying to be funny.

“Ai’ight, ai’ight, I’ll play twenty one questions tonight just to get yo’ name. No, I’m not a rapper.”

“A drug dealer?”

“What, you got some kinda checklist of who you’ll deal with or something?”

Smoke D

“Yes I do. And if you want my name you’ll have to make it through it.”

“Yo’ lil bossy ass. You lucky I got a good feeling 'bout you. Naw, baby girl, I’ on sell drugs.”

“What do you do then, because I know a regular nine to five won’t pay for a Dewitt Napoleon.”

Smoke was impressed that that the girl knew what the exclusive watch was. “You know what this is, you been around some money then. You dated somebody in here before?” he asked knowing some of the women were there to catch up with one of their exes who may have been there that night.

“No. I don’t date rappers or drug dealers, and that’s pretty much all that’s in here tonight.”

“You ain’t see Z-Bo over there in V.I.P., he don’t sell drugs,” Smoke shot back enjoying the exchange.

“Wow, one person.”

Smoke definitely liked the woman’s confidence and what seemed to be her genuine demeanor. “So what is yo’ name Ms.?” he asked her.

She stood for a moment just looking at him. “Alicia,” she finally said.

“Are you sho’, cause you look like you had to think about it,” Smoke said back to her questioningly.

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"Yeah, I'm sure. I just had to be sure I wanted to tell you. You lucky I got a good feeling about you," she said returning his comment from earlier and they both smiled.

"So what is your name, and what do you do that got you with all this expensive stuff on?"

"Errbody call me Smoke, and I'm the CEO of a record label that I co-own with a partna."

Alicia eyed the large M'Famous medallion on the chain around his neck. "This ya'll party then huh? It's nice."

"Nice?" Smoke thought. The party was live as hell and she had made the semi-offhand remark and called it nice.

"Where you from Alicia, cause I'm starting to get the feeling you ain't really from round here."

"I am from Memphis, thank you very much, but I just came back from college in California."

"California. I love it out there, but I could never get comfortable knowing the ground might start moving at any time. Anyway, what school you go to?"

"University of Cal-Berkley. I studied communications. I want to work in media in some kind of way, I just haven't figured out how yet."

"Just waste yo' momma and daddy money and party it up, huh," Smoke said teasingly.

"For your information, Mr. CEO, I got a full academic scholarship on my own, and, I graduated already. I'm just trying to

Smoke D

find a job back her at home so I can be close to my momma and daddy. Plus, I don't like knowing the ground might start moving on me."

Smoke just looked at Alicia's pretty face and tight body, and he like the whole package.

"You know what Alicia, I can't even front, I'm really feeling you already, so wassup wit' me and you really getting to know each other. Maybe I can take you somewhere sometime. I would ask you to hang out tonight, but my partnas gon' be wildin' too hard. I don't want it to start off like that cause I get the feeling that ain't really yo' thang."

"Don't get it twisted; I will get a lil ratchet and crazy too, but naw, wilding not really my thing. I just like to have a decent time when I'm out."

"And I want you to, so let me get yo' info so we can get up."

"How you know I don't have a man?"

"You just got back from California. You ain't got no man, so don't play games."

"If I give it to you, yo' baby momma won't start calling me at three in the morning asking where you are, will she?"

"Ain't nobody calling you but me, so stop stalling and come off them digits."

A small group of women came through and they asked Smoke to take a few pictures, with one asking him to autograph her breast with a Sharpie. Smoke eyed Alicia, but she seemed to have a

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neutral expression the whole time. Once the women walked into the bathroom, Alicia stepped back up to him.

"I don't want to be another horse in somebody stable, so either you in it to win or, don't waste our time, Mr. CEO," Alicia said now with her arms crossed.

"You sound like you just holding me up right now, Alicia. If you want me to keep you company a lil bit longer, just say so," Smoke replied casually.

A big smile spread across Alicia's face. "You wouldn't really know if I didn't say so, but I am. My friend is still in there on the damn toilet, and I don't really want to be out there by myself. I don't really know nobody up in here."

"Oh so you slick too. This a bad way to be starting a relationship Ms. Alicia."

"Oh, now we starting a relationship?"

"As a matter of fact, we just did, you mine now."

"I am not a possession. I'm not anybody's."

"Maybe not before, but it's a first time for everything. And I read something about women who say they don't want to be possessed, they usually possessive, is that the case wit' chu?"

Alicia remained silent, but didn't look away from him. "Maybe I am, is there something wrong with that," she said after a moment.

"Apparently not when it's goin' yo' way. You know what, come on and let me buy you a drank and let's talk for a minute."

Smoke D

“What about my friend?”

“Just stick yo’ head in there and tell her you at the bar.”

After considering it for a moment, Alicia went into the restroom and Smoke noticed the sensuous curves of her body in full view for the first time as she walked away. She reemerged shortly.

“Before we go, what is your real name, cause I’m not about to be saying Smoke all night. One of these fools might think I’m selling something or trying to buy it,” Alicia said.

Smoke could only shake his head at her cynism. “Girl ain’t nobody on that. These people got all the smoke they looking for already. And my name is Sean, so come on and let me get you somethin.”

The two went over to the bar and had a few drinks while they got to know one another. Smoke told Alicia about how they had begun the label, and some of the highs and lows of the company. She also wanted to know more about his private life outside of the music industry, and about his family, which was something that he wasn’t used to from the women he met. Most of the ones he had met over the last couple years were really after his celebrity and hopefully a come-up, with a baby or some other sort of scheme. He relayed to her his vision of expanding their burgeoning empire in other areas, and he was impressed by some of the ideas that she offered up.

Alicia then went on to tell him how she grew up on the eastside of Memphis. Though she and her family were far from well off, they had a small corner store that they had been operating for

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some years. She had two older sisters and one younger brother and her parents were still together. Alicia told him that she wasn't really interested in running her family's business, which was one of the reasons she had chosen the field that she did in college. Regardless of that, she said her parents were still insisting that she get involved, seeing as that she was one of the more responsible and intelligent of the children. Smoke asked her about her last relationship and she said that she didn't want to talk about it then, but that she'd tell him eventually. Smoke left it alone because he didn't want to disturb the good vibe that they had going.

Several people stopped by to greet Smoke and the new beauty at his side. At one point one of his former girlfriends came up and flirted with Smoke as though Alicia wasn't there. Smoke could tell that his ex, Camille, was trying to agitate Alicia, who only sat calmly on the side, which made Smoke love her demeanor all the more. C-Note also came by, and Smoke introduced him to Alicia. Shortly afterwards Smoke was called to the stage, after Triggamane had given a performance. He and C-Note ended up performing a song as well, and when he left the stage he received a text from Alicia telling him that she was leaving but hoped to hear from him soon.

MARCELLOS

Marcellos had to bond his younger brother, Fred, out of jail Saturday afternoon before he was able to even get ready to head out to Triggamane's party. To top it off, his brother insisted that he get him in too. All kinds of girls that he had been with over the last few months had been trying to get him to get them in as well, and all the fussing was starting to bother him. He bumped into Katrina again earlier that day at the mall, where he was looking for something to wear to the big party, and she had the boy with her. Marcellos spent most of the time trying to determine if he could see any resemblance between him and the boy...eyes, nose, ears, anything, but he couldn't readily place one.

"That doesn't mean anything Marcellos," Katrina said somewhat defensively. "I know plenty of people who didn't start to look like their parents until they got older, and he's not even two yet! Plus, he already act like you. He just gets his way whenever he wants with the lil stunts he be pullin'. He wouldn't even let me pick him up the other day 'cause he call himself being mad, and it worked."

Everything Katrina was saying sounded good, but Marcellos wasn't really going for it. He wanted hard proof before he even considered investing himself in any kind of way with the boy or Katrina. He had enough other things going on around him.

"Are you goin' to be at the party for Triggamane tonight?" Katrina asked him.

He wondered why she was trying to get in his business like that, when the only thing he'd showed her so far was that he was

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only interested in finding out whether or not the boy was actually his son.

“Why you need to know?” he responded in a short manner.

“I’m not about to ask you to get me in, so you can keep the attitude Marcellos,” Katrina said returning his smartness with her own. “My friend is getting me in, so I don’t need you for that. I was just asking. So don’t be surprised if you bump into me.”

“Do you Katrina. I wouldn’t be bothered one way or another.”

Katrina’s phone rang and she pulled it from her large purse. She looked at the screen, but didn’t answer, letting the phone ring for a minute before it finally stopped.

“You ducking yo’ nigga?” Marcellos asked.

“You don’t want me in yo’ business, so don’t get in mine,” she retorted. “As a matter of fact this a new phone and you don’t got the number to it. Let me see yo’ phone so I can put my new number in.”

Without really thinking Marcellos reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone. When he reached over to hand it to Katrina she handed him the boy, who had grabbed on to him before he had a chance to react. He looked down into the boy’s face, who reached for his face as he laughed and giggled for no apparent reason. Marcellos felt much more comfortable with the boy than he thought he would have. It felt like it was natural, which was very surprising since he wasn’t big on picking up and holding other people’s children at all and that included his own nieces and nephews.

Smoke D

Marcellos began to think back to how he and Katina had met again, and a few of their better times together. They had once talked about children, but had never gotten around to really trying to have one. He wondered what it would have been like if they would have stayed together and had a child, and would things have ended up differently. The boy tugged at his chain and Marcellos couldn't help but to smile.

“Just like yo’ damn momma, all on a nigga chain,” he said to the toddler.

“I heard that Marcellos,” Katrina said drawing his attention back to her. “And it was not funny.”

“Yes it was, wasn't it lil mane,” Marcellos said jokingly to the boy, who actually nodded his head.

“Ya'll are so damn cute together,” Katrina said and she used her phone to take a picture of the two together.

“Ai'ight Katrina. Don't let me see no shit on Instagram or somewhere, talkin' 'bout this my baby,” Marcellos said quickly, knowing something as simple as picture like that could stir up all types of rumors and drama.

“This just for us, and don't act like somebody ain't tried to put a baby on you before. But unlike them, this one is actually yours Marcellos, so save the drama for all them other borads. You need to have my baby on yo' Instagram anyway, he'll help you sell more records. We'll call him Baby Chainz.”

Marcellos couldn't help but laugh. He had always enjoyed Katrina's sense of humor, and time hadn't changed that much.

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“Whatever ‘ol crazy ass girl. For real though, we need to get together and get this DNA thang done as soon as possible, cause if this my son I want to spend time with him as much as I can.”

“You can spend time with him while you waiting to find out the answer to a question you already know the answer to. You just don’t want to see pass what happened with us, which isn’t fair to him.”

For some reason, a twinge of guilt passed through Marcellos because there was at least some truth to her accusing words. It would be somewhat hard to spend a lot of time around her with their history, but he would have to for the sake of his child, if it was his.

“We’ll worry ‘bout spending time once I know something. We can get one of those home DNA kits, and get that part out the way. From there we can figure everything else out.”

Katrina became hesitant as she tried to think of something, anything that could divert him from a test so soon. She could see that Marcellos just holding Kaylin was having an effect on him, and if she could put them in a few more situations like that then maybe she could get a test put off indefinitely.

“I don’t know why you trippin’, but just call me sometime, and I’ll ty to meet up with you or let you come by my place,” Katrina said.

“Where do you live anyway?” Marcellos asked since it was something that he wanted to know.

“I was over to my momma’s house, but I just moved into my own place. I’m still in the process of getting some furniture

though . You ought to come by and check it out, make sure it's up to the standards yo' child should be in."

"If you got yo' own place it's okay anyway 'cause I know where you will and won't live. But anyway how you paying yo' bills? You and ol' boy still got ties?"

Katrina paused again because there wasn't a direct answer to that question. She and Yayo still talked and sometimes they fucked, but they weren't together at the moment, though he sometimes acted like they were. The main reason she still put up with him was because he still provided for her since he was under the impression that Kaylin was his son and hadn't asked for a DNA test. He was so far under her spell when they first got together that he never even thought that it could be anyone's but his, and she let him believe so. Yayo had never known about her dating Marcellos and she played on that, and so far she had been lucky enough to keep the charade up and the money coming. She had to admit to herself that a part of her truly wanted to know who had fathered her only child.

"I wasn't just sitting on my ass when I was in Atlanta, remember I use to date a hustler, and I picked up some game. So I took advantage of some opportunities that came my way and stacked up some cash of my own."

The truth was she had managed to put away some of the money that Yayo had been giving her since she knew one day the record sales would slow down, and if she was still around and he fell apart, she would be able to carry on. Even though Yayo wasn't exactly broke yet, he wasn't at his high point, and his records definitely weren't selling like before. She had about seventy

thousand put to the side in addition to what Yayo still kicked out every now and then.

“I’ve been thinking about starting some type of business to keep enough money coming in for Kalyin and me to be comfortable,” Katrina lied, just saying something she thought would sound good, and because she had learned something about men. They were much more willing to give to a woman when they thought they didn’t depend on them than otherwise. She had seen it in her relationship with the man she was with before Marcellos and others.

“I probably need to find a job though to keep the money up before I go through too much of it. You know anybody with a good job they need filled?” Katrina said.

Marcellos looked at her sideways. “Katrina, what the hell can you do? I can’t think of nothing other than you being able to cook just a bit, unless you tryin’ to put that hurricane Katrina up for sale. Shit I might have to get some of that myself, but mine got to be on the house at least once,” he joked.

“You got me messed up Marcellos,” Katrina said and playfully hit him in the arm. “I ain’t never been no straight up ho, and I ain’t ‘bout to start. Talkin’ bout some hurricane Katrina. If I did sale it couldn’t nobody afford me. Then if they could, they’d all go crazy fighting each other and all types of stuff, and I don’t need all that drama right now.”

For some reason Marcellos zoomed in on Katrina’s lips, and he actually wouldn’t have minded having a shot of what he knew she did so well. He then realized that the whole time they had been talking he’d held Kaylin. To someone passing they looked like they

Smoke D

were all together as one big happy family, joking and spending time together. He knew he needed to leave soon, before Katrina pulled something and he ended up back at her place, and who knew what would happen from there.

“Aye, I gotta get my clothes or whatever so I can roll out,” he said.

He tried to hand Kaylin back to his mother, but the boy clung to him.

“Come on baby, let’s go get some French fries,” Katrina said trying to coax the boy back into her arms. She looked Marcellos in the eyes the whole time hoping that it was having an emotional pull on him that she could play on. “He know where he supposed to be Marcellos, that’s why he acting like that. Come on baby, let’s go. We’ll see Marcellos again.”

The boy finally let go and went over to his mother.

“Wave bye-bye, baby,” Katrina said to the boy as Marcellos began to tum away.

When Marcellos watched the child wave another twinge of guilt passed through him, though he wan’t exactly sure why this time. He walked through the mall and got everthing he wanted and left, and then he went over to pick up his brother, where he got ready and headed out to the party.

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The parking lot was packed just as Marcellos expected it to be, but there were parking spaces reserved for M'Famous artists and executives. He went inside with his brother, where they met up with Triggamane and other label mates in the back of the club, after they pushed through all the cameras and questions.

"Where Smoke at? I know he ain't missing this live ass party," Marcellos asked Triggamane.

"Lover boy over at the bar with a nice lil piece of work. He been over there for a minute too. I guess he trying to get her home and she ain't making it easy," Triggamane replied. "You know we just like to chase sometimes, make it a lil betta when you get the prize between the thighs."

Marcellos sat down with the crew, and began to knock down shots and get lap dances with the rest of his partners. One of the girls got extra live and took one of the three M'Famous Ent. Chains from around C-Note's neck.

"Ya'll want me to put on for M'Famous?" the girl asked rhetorically, and then got completely undressed. She climbed on top of the table and began to dance to the song playing which happened to be one of C-Note and Smoke's. She had the body of a stripper in her prime with no stomach and ass and hips for days. She twerked and popped like she was trying to win an award, and everyone who could see was completely occupied by her performance. All cameras were also on her to record the show. Near the end of the song she did a move that really drove the crowd wild. She dropped down on one of the beer bottles that was on the table until it disappeared completely inside of her, and the men began to rain dollars down on her for the show. Applause erupted for the girl as she stepped down from the table and

Smoke D

casually put her clothes back on before taking a bow. She returned C-Note's chain, and then melted into the still mesmerized crowd with her new notoriety.

Marcellos wanted to at least speak to Smoke before the CEO took off with the girl he was with. On his way over to the bar he once again ran into Katrina, who looked as good tonight as he had ever seen before. She was wearing a leopard print catsuit that showed off every curve of her sexy body, and left little to the imagination. She smiled at Marcellos when she caught him staring at her.

"Do I still look good?" she asked once they met up. She even turned around to give him a glimpse of her full voluptuous ass, which had only gotten bigger since she'd had the baby. He wasn't the only one looking either, because he noticed several men who quickly snapped pictures of her shapely body.

"You ai'ight, but don't get the big head cause I said so," Marcellos responded. "Where's Kaylin?"

Katrina was so excited that he was asking about the baby that she smiled, but she didn't want to seem too exuberant.

"He's over to my mamma's house. She asked about you too, you know she always did like you.

"Just tell her to turn on her TV and she'll see how I'm doin'," Marcellos responded boastfully.

"Whatever, Mr. Big Shot. I want to talk to you about something. Can we go somewhere real quick?"

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Marcellos instantly became suspicious of her intentions, but he didn't let on. He decided he would see what she was up to and if it had anything to do with anything other than a DNA test she would be playing herself.

"I'on know what you up to, but let me holla at my partna over here at the bar, then we can find somewhere, to talk," he said emphasizing the last word.

"Cool, I'm gon' get me a couple of shots anyway, so I won't be too far away. Just come down whenever you finish, and don't yo' ass forget about me either."

After he went over and spent a few minutes talking with Smoke and the woman with him, Marcellos walked down to the place at the bar where Katrina was. There was a man talking to her, but she appeared to be ignoring his advances.

"Wassup?" Marcellos said as he walked up to the side of Katrina opposite of the other man.

"Nothing at all. Here, take this shot with me. I know you still love Patron."

"You ain't drop nothing in here did you?" he said as he took the drink.

"You think I'm trying to drag yo' heavy ass somewhere? Nigga please," she said and they both laughed.

"Damn girl, you buying niggas drinks when it should be the other way around. Let a real nigga buy you a drink," the dark skinned heavy set man beside Katrina said.

“Nigga do I look like I need you, or anybody, to do anything for me? Go sweat another bitch. I’m not interested, damn,” Katrina barked at the man.

“Well fuck you then ol’ sweaty pussy ass bitch,” the man said trying to salvage his pride from being dissed then got up and walked away.

“Is that what it’s like to be a celebrity?” Katrina asked Marcellos.

“Yeah, that times three. You get used to it after a while though,” he replied.

An old song that the former couple used to love when they were together came on and Katrina began to gyrate in her seat.

“Nigga you gotta give me a dance, and I ain’t tryin’ to hear no shit. We ‘bout to talk anyway, so this will just be a stop along the way.”

The last shot of Patron, on top of the other liquor he had been drinking, had him buzzing good so he went along since he had no plans of giving in to any advances on him Katrina might try to make.

“Ai’ight just this one, then we gon’ have this talk about whatever you tryin’ to say,” he said frankly.

Katrina bit her bottom lip as she grabbed his arm, and led him out to the packed dance floor. The song playing was exactly what she liked. It was up tempo, but not too fast. As Usher crooned ‘That’s What It’s Made For’ the two danced off each other, each one’s mind in two completely different trains of thought. Katrina

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then turned her back to him, her hips swinging in seductive motions that Marcellos couldn't help but to stare at. She then backed up and slightly pushed her ass up on him several times before finally just pushing up on him and grinding on his dick. With the thin Gucci sweat suit on that he was wearing, he could feel the softness of her ass as she danced. Going along with the moment, Marcellos grabbed her waist, and pressed harder up against her, his dick starting to become somewhat erect.

Out of nowhere a strong hand grabbed Marcellos by the shoulder from behind.

"Nigga get the fuck off my bitch!" Yayo yelled and spun Marcellos around to face him.

"Nigga don't you ever put yo' hands on me again," Marcellos barked as he squared up with Yayo ready to punch him at any moment. "Yo' bitch on my dick."

Katrina quickly jumped in between the two men trying to diffuse the situation, but neither was trying to back down. Several members of M'Famous Ent.'s entourage quickly showed up to stand beside their partner, and a disheartened Yayo finally left the situation alone and left the party altogether. Katrina tried to talk to Marcellos, but he was so upset by what happened that he ran her off as well.

TERRANCE

Terrance sat in the dub and tried his best to enjoy the party and not let his new predicament with Quack mess up his night, but it was proving to be next to impossible. Even after all the drinking and all the smoking and all the other distractions, that nights events still plagued the back of his mind.

After Quack initially made the statement about Terrance signing up to whatever idea of a label he was thinking of starting, Terrance laughed it off at first. But once he saw the man was serious, he tried to explain that the move wouldn't make any sense for him, but Quack definitely was not agreeing with anything other than what he wanted to hear. After a few minutes of going back and forth Quack pulled a move that had not only blindsided Terrance, but had him off balance every since. Quack had pulled out the gun that Terrance had shot Yella with years ago. Terrance had never wondered what happened to the gun, but he would never have imagined that I would show back up like this. Quack had the gun wrapped inside of a large zip lock bag, which made the idea that his fingerprints were still on it very believable. He was now being black mailed and extorted by the very people he thought would support him most. He could still remember Quack's words as though he had just stood before him and heard them moments ago.

"See I got love for you, but on my set I control everything, one way or another. So either you gon' get down with the program and bring that money home where it's supposed to be, or you goin' lay down on some hard ass bunk for the next fifty two years of yo' life," Quack had said.

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Terrance had tried to convince Quack that he was already stuck in a contract, but Quack didn't buy it. He told him that he had been following him very closely, and he knew his last contract had been fulfilled with his last album. Then Terrance tried to tell him that he had already signed a new contract, but Quack told him he would have to buy his way out of it or else. Quack had threatened that if he didn't have the money and a contract ready and signed in the next week, that he would be sure that some detective got a package with the gun and a suspect delivered to his desk.

All the lap dances and drugs were only providing momentary mental breaks from his situation. Terrance couldn't decide whether or not to just go through with it or involve C-Note, who he knew had his back, and would want to protect his own best interests if nothing else. He couldn't turn to the gang to expose Quack's treachery because most of them feared him to the point that they would turn their backs on Terrance, or make some excuse as to how he should go along with the scheme.

"Yo' Trigga, you good?" C-Note asked him. "You look like you spaced out in this bitch. Yo' ass still got to hit the stage, so don't get too tore down. You still got to put on for the home team."

"I'm good, just some shit on my mind that happened earlier. Kind of got me preoccupied," Terrance said. "I got it though, when the show start I'll be ready."

Around midnight it was time for the show to begin, and Terrance took the stage to perform some of his biggest hits. The entire crowd was rocking with him even though he was barely sober enough to go through his entire routine. There was a large commotion in a part of the club, and he could see that a lot of members of M'Famous' entourage were heading in that direction.

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The crowd broke up a few moments later without much more confusion and Terrance finished up his show.

Coming off the stage he saw someone he couldn't believe was there, and it made him even more uneasy. It was the girl who was at Yella's house the day, but he couldn't remember her name. He was sure that she had seen him on television or somewhere and knew exactly who he was. His first mind told him that Quack was behind the girl's sudden appearance, and he now had the feeling that he was being set up to be used from the very beginning. It was no coincident that Quack had taken a sudden interest in having him tied to his set right around the time that word had gotten out that he had signed a recording contract, though no one could have predicted that he would have the type of success that he did. Apparently Quack had planned for just such a thing and had devised a way to control him in the event that he couldn't cash in the way he had planned to. With the murder weapon and the girl now mysteriously showing up, Quack definitely had enough on him to carry out this threat. Terrance now felt as though he was running out of options and he only had five days or so to meet Quack's demands. He considered approaching the girl and trying to scare her out of town, but he was sure Quack had thought of that and had someone watching her. He now hated the day he even met Quack, let alone got in the car that day. He would have to make some kind of move fast because it felt like the walls were closing in on him quickly.

As he moved through the crowd backstage on his way back to the VIP section everyone was telling him how good his performance was, but in his mind all he could see was the girl, the gun, and a prison cell. He had never even been to jail, so the thought of going to an actual prison was terrible. If he just walked

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away from M'Famous and did as Quack wanted all his problems would go away. But he also knew that some kind of way, Quack would try to fuck him out of as much money as he could, like Suge Knight and Diddy used to do their artists. Terrance had gotten so used to his new lifestyle that to just have it dry up seemed like a nightmare before it even happened. Is right hand man, Kain, noticed his distress as they were making their way through the hall.

“Mane is you straight? You been looking bugged out all damn day, and it ain’t the drugs ‘cause you looked the same way early today.”

The pressure on Terrance was now beginning to feel so great that he was now willing to tell his problem to his partner, which he had hoped to avoid. He didn’t want to involve anymore people than necessary in anything dealing with Quack, and though Kain wasn’t affiliated, that wouldn’t keep him from enduring whatever Quack had to dish out as retaliation for not following his wishes. Even so he pulled his friend to the side.

“Mane you remember when I left the other night? I went to holla at this nigga Quack, who put me down a few years ago, and the nigga on some foul shit,” Terrance said frustrated by his predicament.

“What could that nigga have done that bad that you letting it fuck up yo’ big party?” Kain asked.

“Look, don’t say shit to nobody, because I’m still trying to figure out how to handle this shit and I don’t need no mo’ distractions. Back when he put me down he got me to do something, and now he trying to use the shit to blackmail me. He want me to sign a contract with a record label he want to start, but

Smoke D

this nigga ain't got a clue how to run a label, and he want my fucking money to start the shit."

"Damn, what could you have done that was that bad? What this nigga tryin' to do expose a old secret?"

"Yeah, and if he do I'm going to jail for a long ass time man, and I ain't trying to go through that shit."

"What the hell did you do nigga? I've been knowing you, and you couldn't have done shit that bad."

"You know the rumors that was out about me a few years ago?"

"What about you killing somebody, nigga ya'll started that shit to boost yo' record sales didn't it?"

"Naw, I wish that's all it was. This nigga made me do it though. He acted like if I didn't he was gon' do something to me. Now this nigga show up the other night with the damn gun from way back then."

"How you know it was the same one? The nigga might just be trying to spook you into this shit he on."

"I can't take the chance. Plus, it was a witness and some kind of way she ended up in here tonight. I saw her when I was on stage, and I know that nigga behind the shit."

"So what we gon' do?"

Terrance was happy to hear his friend say we. It made him feel like he was going to ride with him no matter what happened. He knew he would need someone on his side who wasn't tied to

M'Famous

either Quack or the label to help him through this. He had met Kain in the studios when they were hanging out one day. Kain was there because he was the cousin of another M'Famous artist that Terrance was doing a feature for. The two clicked and started hanging out, and by them being around the same age they had a lot in common. Though neither could really be considered from the streets, Kain had grown up around rougher surroundings and therefore his mindset would lean more towards a street way of handling things, though that wasn't exactly what Terrance was looking to get into right now.

"You gon' tell C-Note them?" Kain asked.

"I really haven't figured that part out yet. I don't know how it will play out; you know C-Note kind of crazy. I be thinkin' that nigga on pills or somehin'," Terrance replied. "He came over the other night with a contract and I hesitated a lil bit. So if I come to him with this, he might think I'm trying to come up with a way to bail on him, but that ain't the case."

"Mane you know my cousin Debo just got out the pen. This type of shit right up his alley. I can get him to go by and try to scare the nigga or somethin'. He got plenty of niggas to ride wit 'em too, so don't trip 'bout him being outnumbered. I know you said the Quack nigga affiliated, so he probably keep some do boys around."

"Mane I don't think trying to scare this nigga gone do nothing but make shit worse, cause then he'll have even more reason to tum the shit over to the police. Kain I ain't tryng to go to jail mane."

Smoke D

“Mane if you talk to the right people and throw a few dollars around you can just get the nigga killed, and all this shit will go away.”

“I don’t think it will be that easy man. His nephew in on the shit too, and ain’t no telling who else. So even if we do get the nigga killed, we won’t get the gun back and anybody else could get it and try the same shit.”

Terrance had never really considered having anyone killed as an option. He wasn’t trying to get in any deeper than he already was and he knew the more he talked to Kain now the more he would hear plots that would get him more entangled.

“I might have to play along with this shit for awhile, cause I can’t think of nothing else,” Terrance said dejectedly.

“Bruh we got to come up with something else cause this nigga don’t know how to run no damn label, and he ain’t goin’ do nothing but pinch off you until he drag you into the ground,” Kain replied. “You can’t lay down for no nigga like this, ‘cause he just goin’ walk all over you as much as he can.”

Terrance knew that his friend’s words were true, but he didn’t feel like there was much he could do.

“Mane let’s talk bout this shit later cause it’s fuckin’ my groove up right now. Let’s get back to the party.”

The two made their way back to the VIP section where there was a bucket with three bottles of Rosé with fire works candles lit and sparkling all over the table.

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“Yeah, this just what I need,” Terrance thought to himself as he walked up to the table, which also had a new group of women around it as well.

His hope for a little respite from his problem was short lived, because before he ever made it to the table he was tapped on his shoulder and when he turned around there was Gizzle.

“What’s up birthday boy,” Gizzle said and grabbed him in a phony embrace as though there were still good friends.

They had been tight at one point, but Terrance had no love at all for him now that they were plotting against him.

“This party turnt the fuck up, and we gon’ keep the party going when we start putting it down for Hardhittaz Music Group. It’s gon’ be the same thing for us. Hell we’ll do it bigger than this for our number one star,” Gizzle said.

He was actually talking as though Terrance was down with the way they were handling him. They were taking him for a pushover, and so far they were doing that.

“Gizzle, you know this shit ain’t right mane,” Terrance said hoping to plead his case to the seemingly less threatening and calmer man. “I ain’t got no problem throwing ya’ll the paper to get somethin’ off the ground, but me jumping on board don’t make no sense money wise. Ya’ll don’t even know the business like that.”

“Don’t worry ‘bout what we know, cause we know enough. And what we don’t know, our new partner will fill us in on ‘cause yo’ best interest is ours too.”

Smoke D

“Ya’ll trying to spin me up in some shit, but remember ya’ll niggas was there too. If I go down, you know what I’m gon’ do.”

“We ain’t worried ‘bout nothing you try, ‘cause you behind the eightball not us. I know you don’ seen ol’ girl walking around here by now. She the witness and she ain’t seen nobody but you. Any other ideas you got you can keep ‘em to yo’self cause this shit only playing out one way. I don’t know what you fightin’ it fo’ no way, nigga you supposed to trying to break bread wit’ yo’ brothers first.”

“Brothers,” Terrance said incredulously. “You niggas can’t be my brothers trying some shit like this. Ya’ll probably set this shit up from the start, hoping ya’ll could leach off a nigga.”

“To tell the truth that ain’t even how it started, shit just fell in place the way it did and created the situation to where if you wasn’t on board we had a back up plan. Just bad ass luck. But nigga stop acting like you ain’t gon’ make no money, cause as long as yo’ albums sell errbody gon’ eat. You ain’t got but a few days left, so stop bullshitting and start lining shit up so you can come home cuz.”

Terrance wordlessly started at Gizzle, who continued to talk as though everything taking place was normal.

“Look mane, stop dragging this shit out. If you don’t do the right thang it’s a lose lose situation for errbody when it don’t gotta be. Fuck these niggas, you letting them eat off you and it’s cool, but when it’s the niggas who was around before any of this you want to act shitty,” Gizzle said accusingly.

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Terrance couldn't believe his audacity to try to spin the shit around on him.

"I ain't gone hold you up birthday boy. I'mma let you get back to ya' party, but remember, you got until Thursday to show up with the money and the contract, or Friday morning that package will be at 201 Poplar, and you'll be on your way too," Gizzle said. "Party up my nigga."

Gizzle walked away and Terrance walked over to the table and picked up one of the bottles of wine, opened it, and took a big gulp before sitting it down.

"Was that the nigga there?" Kain leaned over to Terrance's ear and asked him.

"Naw, that's the nephew, I used to run wit that nigga a few years ago and now this thirsty shit got him tripping."

C-Note walked back up to the table from somewhere and sat down beside Terrance.

"Aye boy you rocked that stage, but everybody can tell yo' ass good and high," C-Note said. "Look ya'll ain't know cause me and big cousin been keeping this shit on the low so word wouldn't get out before tonight, but we got a announcement to make that's 'bout to have the whole industry buzzing and the streets on fire. We bout to eat like it's Thanksgiving round this bitch."

In Terrance's mind all he could see was that whatever C-Note was about to say he would miss out on it stuck with whatever bullshit Quack was trying to run.

Smoke D

“Yeah that sound good, a nigga can always use some mo’ money,” Terrance said trying to make everthing seem normal. “But what’s the big move? Do a nigga need to get ready to duck some shots or something fucking with you?”

C-Note laughed. “Naw, not this time, but what a nigga need to get ready to do is duck all the bitches he been fucking wit’ cause it’s ‘bout to be a whole new pack of ‘em. Even better than that though niggas gon’ be needng some new safes cause the old one’s ‘bout to overflow. Speaking of that what’s up with that contract? You bring it wit’ you cause I want you on board fo’ this. You been M’Famous since day one.”

C-NOTE

C-Note headed to the party with two things on his mind, money and menaging, in that order. He planned to leave with at least two or more diferent women and he didn't plan on taking anyone home he'd had before. He made it in early since he was one of the more party crazed members, and he also like being around while there weren't many people to share the spotlight with on his entrance. He had pulled up in his new Buggatti convertible and drawn so many looks and pictures that someone would have thought it was a photoshoot. When he made it inside there were a few local celebrities there and he made his rounds, speaking to each of them to make his presence known.

"You ain' gonna get too crazy tonight is you?" Zach Randolph asked him.

"Aye, I'm goin' try to play it cool tonight. I'm here on business too, but shit, whatever happen gonna happen and I'm gon' roll wit' the punches. I'm really just trying to ball like I play for the Grizzlies, you feel me," C-Note responded.

He saw a lot of the women who usually showed up at the city's major events looking for ballers to pick them up. He spoke with some of the one he's been with, but turned down all requests to find them before he got ready to leave. He wanted the new booties tonight, some that hadn't been passed around so much already.

In the section that was designated for M'Famous, he saw that Triggamane and his entourage were already there and they had started their smoking and drinking early.

Smoke D

“Ya’ll ready to turn up I see,” C-Note said to Triggamane.

“This just a lil warm up, we ain’t even got started yet. We got some dancers and sluts supposed to be coming through in a lil bit to start the entertainment off. That’s when it’s gon’ get live in this bitch fo’ real,” Triggamane responded.

“I feel you on that, I know I’m trying to leave with ‘bout three or four freaks tonight.”

“Come on nigga, gon’ get you a shot to start yo’ night off right,” Scoop said.

C-Note sat and took the shot, which soon led to another. He knew he had to slow his roll because there was also business that needed to be tended to tonight. One part of which was to get the contract with Triggamane taken care of since it played a part in their plans for the immediate future. He was sure that it wouldn’t be an issue, but it was still something that would be better to go ahead and get out of the way. He was about to pull Triggamane to the side and bring it up, but just then three women in skin tight outfits walked up. One had breast so large they looked like they would pop out of her too small shirt top, and they had his undivided attention. A smile spread across his face before either of them said anything, and all of the women it turn blushed, then one of them final spoke up.

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"Can we take some pictures wit' ya'll. We came all the way from St. Louis just to come to this party," the one with the large breast said.

"Did ya'll really, or is you just tryinto run game to get yo' way?" C-Note asked flirting lightly.

"We did, look," another one said and turned around to show the large St. Louis arch tatoood on her back.

Everyone's eyes zoomed in on the girl's large ass and there were a few comments that came out too. The whole crew knew that the girls only wanted to take pictures with the stars, but they all jumped up to be in a few shots as well. The girl with the large breast reached down and grabbed C-Note's dick while no one was paying attention, and when he looked at her she looked in his eyes lustfully and licked her lips. C-Note got her message loud and clear.

"Come on let's go somewhere we can talk real quick," he whispered into her ear.

"I'm following you," she said back to him.

C-Note started walking and the girl grabbed the hand of the girl with the large breasts and they followed C-Note to where the dressing rooms were backstage and eased into one.

"You got bad luck tonight C-Note," the large breasted woman said as she began to take C-Note's belt off. "You would've had all three of us, but TT ass on her period, so no dick for her."

She pulled down C-Note's pants and held his flaccid member in her hand then turned to her friend. "Bitch I win, pay me my money," she said.

Smoke D

“Ughh, bitch you pressed all up on the nigga before I got a chance,” the other girl said and pulled a roll of bills out of her bra, then handed a few to her friend.

The girl dropped the money on the floor in front of her. “I’ll get that later, I ain’t got nowhere to put it, and I’m ‘bout to be ass naked in just a minute,” she said.

She took C-Note into her mouth as her friend watched and then began undressing herself.

Big Booty got naked and came back over to where the other two were and dropped to her knees. The first girl pulled his now hard dick from her mouth and let her friend suck on it for a while before taking it back for herself.

“Gurl where yo’ phone at?” Big Titty asked.

Her friend walked back over to her pile of clothing and pulled out her cell.

“Record me eatin’ this dick. I want this for my greatest hits collection,” Big Titty said.

C-Note just sat back and enjoyed the good head he was getting from the two fine freaks. He didn’t care about it being recorded, but he couldn’t believe how freaky these women were. Actually he could, but usually he was the one suggesting the camera. The girls took turns sucking on him and recording for each other, and after a few times of going back and forth they told C-Note to hold the phone while they both sucked him off together. The girl with the bigger ass then pulled her friend’s tube top shirt off. She then placed one in her mouth, causing the other girl to moan passionately. C-Note was definitely into it now, though he

hadn't suspect they were actually bi-sexual. The girl then reached under Big Titty's skirt and began to play in her pussy.

"Ooww, this big fat pussy soaking wet, she ready for some dick," Big Ass said to C-Note.

Big Titty stopped sucking on C-Note and pulled her skirt completely off, then laid on the floor and held her legs open and began rubbing her clit as she looked up at C-Note lustfully. He finished undressing, and then lay down on top of the girl and she guided him into her. Her pussy was tighter than he thought it would be, and she moaned as he spread her open. He started off with slow strokes until he could move in and out of her with ease, and then he picked up the pace, causing her moans to become louder.

Big Ass was holding the camera at first, but then she put it down and got down on her knees with her back facing C-Note, then bent over and began to play in her own pussy. This only turned C-Note on even more and he began to fuck the girl he was on top of even harder. He watched as the bent over girl came all over her hand then moved it up to her face. She looked back at C-Note with her fingers still in her mouth, then she began to move back and he rose to meet her as she pressed her ass up against him. He pushed his dick up inside in one stroke her and began to pound her as hard as he could

"Aww yeah, fuuckk meee!" she called out looking at her own ass as it jiggled.

The girl under them had eased down and was trying to lick his nuts, so he slowed down his pace to accommodate her. She then crawled back up to her friends face and began to kiss her and both women moaned as though they were both being fucked. Big

Titty crawled up even more and then pulled her friends face between her legs. After a few minutes the two women switched positions and C-Note pumped hard in Big Titty, and her screams became louder as she would sometimes come up from between her friend's legs.

"C-Note, I want to watch you come all over this bitch face, so tell me when it's coming," Big Ass said.

Her words were right on cue, because he could feel it swelling up and on verge of release. "Well she betta come and get it," he replied and pulled out of the girl.

He stood up so that she would be able to get to him. The girl quickly turned around and grabbed his dick, taking a few licks as she pumped with her hand. The the other girl now had the phone again and recorded as C-Note explode all over her friend's face. Big Titty took the head of his dick into her mouth again and pumped a few times, then looked up into the camera.

"I'm M'Famous bitch!" she said and all three of them broke out laughing.

After cleaning themselves up as best as they could, the three made plans to meet up before leaving and getting a room for the night. C-Note went back to the VIP section, where the crew started to haggie him over the details as to what had happened. He gladly gave them the play by play. More stories of various exploits with women came from various people around the table and

shortly afterward the dancers showed up. Smoke arrived a little later but then disappeared after heading to the restroom, and the next time C-Note spotted him again, he was at the bar with a woman. C-Lo Chainz showed up a little while later when the party was in full swing, but he also left the table soon after he arrived. Being that he had been gone with the women while some new faces were showing up, he left the table again to speak with a few people he recognized .

Eventually C-Note ended up at the bar and checked out the woman who his cousin was with.

“You got that lil business wit’ ol’ boy straightend out?” Smoke asked him after he had introduced C-Note to the woman, Alicia.

“Not yet. I had a couple of distractions earlier right when I was about to, but I’ll get that took care of fa’ sho’,” C-Note responded.

“Good ‘cause for this thang to work like we planned it, we need ya’ boy on deck.”

“You know I’m gon’ handle that so don’t even sweat it. Matter of fact let me get to it before this nigga get too drunk. He already looking half crazy.”

“You right, he do, but that’s ya’ boy. I’m surprised he ain’t took after yo’ ass and started wildin’ over the last few years.”

“Even if he did he couldn’t do it like me baby,” C-Note retorted before he got up and took off back towards the VIP section.

Smoke D

As C-Note walked, one of the party planners pulled him to the side and told him to let Triggamane know that it would be time for his onstage performance soon. Since it would do him no good to try to rush through the contract part, he decided it would be best to at least wait until Triggamane had finished his set. He walked back to the table and delivered the message, and then sat back down for another shot.

When Triggamane finally left to hit the stage a little later, C-Note got up and walked out to the dance floor because he liked being in the mix of things at any performance he attended for M'Famous' artists. During the song that was still playing while Triggamane got ready to perform, he heard a man yell nearby as he made his way through the crowd. When he turned around he saw C-Lo Chainz and another man squared up and having words and he pushed his way through the crowd to stand beside his label mate. There were other various members of M'Famous nearby who also made their presence known, and the man wisely left the situation alone and walked away. C-Lo said he was cool so C-Note went back to check out Triggamane's performance, which had just began. He gauged the crowd as the show went on and liked that everyone was still rocking with Triggamane.

After the show ended C-Note went back to VIP and got a lap dance from one of the new women who had showed up, while he waited on his protégé to return. Just as the girl had finished up her dance, he looked up and saw Triggamane talking to a man who he didn't recognize. Triggamane came over to the table with the same spaced out look that he'd had all night, but C-Note just shrugged it off as the drugs. He was about to start talking to Triggamane when he heard his name called on the P.A. system to

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come to the stage. He was slightly surprised at first, but when he looked on the stage he saw Smoke was already up there.

“Aye we need to talk ‘bout that lil issue. I’ll be back in a minute, don’t go too far,” C-Note told Triggamane before he took off.

Once he made it to the stage, Smoke told him that there was a request that the two perform at least one of their songs and C-Note was always more than happy to put on a show. They asked the audience which song they should do, and after one had been chosen they put on like it was their own shat that night.

After that the two decided it would then be a good time as any to make their surprise announcement.

“Wassup ya’ll,” Smoke said into the mike. “I know ya’ll lovin’ this party, this how M’Famous do. I want everybody to show some love to my nigga Triggamane tonight. Let my nigga get another round of applause.”

The crowd obliged the request with lots of clapping and yelling.

“Aye, we love you boy, but we ain’tbout to sing happy birthday in this mothafucka though. But we do got somethin’ to tell ya’ll that’s gon’ make you want to sing yo’ damn self. Tell ‘em what’s up C-Note.”

“Yeah, ya’ll know M’Famous been puttin’ it down for a minute now, and we one of the biggest labels out here,” C-Note said proudly. “A lot of niggas have come and left, but we still here standing strong, and all our niggas who been here we still holding down like family ‘sposed to. That’s niggas like Trigga and C-Lo and

Smoke D

all our other artists. Well it's been another label around that's been putting on for the city, ya'll know 'em, Legendary Ent. Wassup Larry Legend, I see you baby. Later this year, M'Famous and Legenday 'bout to start dropping a series of collaboration albums and mixtapes for ya'll."

The entire crowd reacted to the news as expected and the cousins knew the anticipation for albums would already start building.

"We also 'bout to start arranging a world tour for both labels together, so ya'll can get ready for some mo' live ass shows like we been givin' ya'll," Smoke added.

The two left the stage and went back to the VIP section where a huge birthday cake had been brought out on a cart for Triggamane, with a large M'Famous Ent. chain design on it. The crowd sang happy birthday, and Triggamane blew out the candles, and the party went on from there wilder than ever. Everyone took more shots, and some of the women started doing any crazy thing that they could think of for attention and recognition. All of the ballers were stunting as hard as they could trying to one up each other.

C-Note and Smoke went over to speak with the owner of Legendary Ent., Larry, to have a few words about the announcement, and when they would start working on singles for album promotion.

"Yeah, we just got Triggamane another contract, and everythang else tight, so we can get started ASAP," Smoke said. "But I'on think we gon' be able to start tomorrow, 'cause just about everybody here is gon' have a hangover."

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The mentioning of the contract made C-Note remember that he hadn't got it from Triggamane. He excused himself and headed back to VIP, to finally get things squared away, but once he got there Triggamane was nowhere to be found. C-Note waited around for a while, but there was no sign of his protégé over the rest of the night.

C-NOTE

K and two of his cousins sat in a car outside of C-Note's house around two a.m. waiting on him to return from the club, where they had known he and everybody else would be. Their plan was to catch him coming in since he would most likely be drunk and off balance making him an easy target. They had initially considered going to the club and waiting on both C-Note and Smoke, but they weren't certain they would be able to get them at the same time anyway. There was also a greater chance of them being identified by one of the numerous people who would be there. On top of that there were sure to be a lot of cameras recording, something that could definitely give them up as well. K was willing to wait as long as he had to outside of the house, and he was sure that it wouldn't be too much longer until C-Note showed up. He was high himself, and listening to hardcore rap to boost his courage to do what he had on his mind. Though he would rather have been alone to better cover his tracks, there was always the chance that someone would be with C-Note when he got in. He didn't give a damn if C-Note showed up with his momma and a car full of children he would empty the dip of his Tech-nine.

The night continued to pass with no sign of C-Note's Buggati. K knew he was in the car because they had someone that they knew at the club that night specifically to watch C-Note, and they had spotted him getting out of it. They had received a call nearly an hour ago letting them know that C-Note was leaving the club alone and he was moving like he was drunk, just as K wanted him to be. The thought had been crossing his mind to jump out and snatch C-Note up if he was slipping hard enough. If he could get

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him like that then he would beat C-Note like he had done him only worse, and there was also the chance he could hold the nigga for ransom. He'd still kill him after he got paid, but Smoke wouldn't be the wiser to his plan. Around four a.m. there was still no sign of C-Note and all but K had fell asleep. For some reason they hadn't considered the possibility that C-Note could end up at a hotel or some other place. K gave up for the night, but he wasn't done, he would have his revenge one way or another.

C-Note awoke around two o'clock in the afternoon with a light throb in his head from all of the smoking and drinking the night before. He thought last night's party was one of the better ones he'd ever been to and it had definitely set a high bar for the M'Famous parties to come. As fun as the party was though, it was at least equaled by the ménage a trois he had with the three women still asleep in the bed. He wouldn't have believed he could come as many times as he did if it hadn't happened. Each one of the women had made up their mind that they would swallow a nut from him and they all worked together on him to make sure they each got what they wanted. Before it was all over he was so tired that he just lay on the bed and let them have their way with his dick. He felt drained like never before, but he would definitely do it all over again in a heartbeat. He got up and got dressed leaving the women laid in the bed huddled up with one another.

"These bitches in a come coma," he said to himself as he left the room.

Smoke D

C-Note saw various celebrities and others from the party as he walked through the lobby of the famous Peabody Hotel. Knowing he smelled like sex and sweat amongst other things C-Note was headed straight home, but first he wanted to stop and grab something to eat. While he waited in the drive-thru of the Backyards Burger more thoughts of the women and their antics passed through his mind again, along with the fact that some of it was on camera. There was a chance that he would be on TMZ, or some other publication before the day was over, but he didn't give a fuck. It would all just be more publicity for M' Famous and free publicity at that. Publicity meant more attention, and that was exactly what they wanted, especially with their big project about to get underway. After getting his food he jumped on the expressway and went home, showered, and decided that after the long night he would spend the day relaxing there.

C-Note's cell phone rang and he picked it up and saw Smoke's name on the screen. If it had been anyone other than family they likely wouldn't have got an answer that day.

"Wassup cuz?" C-Note said into the phone.

"Ain't too much. I was just making sure them broads left some of you around," Smoke joked.

"Barely, I feel weak as shit and my head spinning. I'm thinkin' 'bout chilling on this partying shit a lil bit."

"Nigga please, you couldn't stop if you wanted to. How long you been up?"

"Shit it ain't been a whole hour yet. What about you? You get up wit' that girl from last night, her lil ass was kinda fine."

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“Naw. I ain’t leave wit’ shawty. She don’t seem like that type of girl, but shit I’ve been fooled before. Time’ll tell though. I ended up hooking up with that girl from the mall I was tellin’ you ‘bout.”

“Yeah, she was ai’ight, but nigga let me tell you ‘bout the three swithchin’ bitches I had.”

Smoke cut him off. “Some other time nigga, cause I know it’s gonna be a long story.”

“You damn sho’ right.”

“We’ll get to that later. I’m trying to get some last few details squared away with Legend.”

“Nigga ya’ll in the office on the weekend, after a party like that?”

“Naw, we was just on the phone, and I’m goin’ talk to him again a lil later on. But look, on some real shit, you get that contract from ya’ boy yet?”

“Naw mane, the nigga left early, and I ain’t get to catch up wit ‘em before he did. We was talkin’ ‘bout it though and I’m sho’ he signed it. Matter of fact, I’m goin’ call him to see if I can shoot through later to pick it up. You know he take after me a lil bit, so he probably stayed up a lil late.”

“Ai’ight, that sound cool, we just need to be sho’ he in, cause if not we gon’ have to switch up some of the collabos we got planned.”

Smoke D

C-Note hated the fact that he had been letting this issue drag out without really having a handle on it. The truth was that although he thought Triggamane was on board, the man never actually said that he had signed the contract. But at the same time, he also didn't say that he hadn't signed it, so there was really nothing to stress about. He just had to get with Triggamane to actually get his hands on the document.

"Yeah I'm gon' call as soon as we hang up," C-Note said to reaffirm that he would handle the pressing matter. "Is everythang else cool though, we ready to green light this thang?"

"Everythang set up and we can get started tomorrow, but we want to start with the biggest guns first," Smoke replied. "We can go 'head and get a big single out and build up our steam from there, just like we planned. Aye, I talked to ya' grandma this morning too, and she say she need some mo' bingo money. I told her you had a pocket full of cash last night too, so you can go 'head and stop by there and break bread."

"For real her ass need to stop gambling 'cause she ain't won shit yet, and that's fucked up that you told her that shit like that. You know today Sunday, and she gon' try to preach to a nigga."

"You'll be ai'ight, she might say something you need to her, especially' bout all them hot ass girls you chasin'."

The two shared a laugh and agreed to talk later after C-Note had spoke with Triggamane about the contract situation.

C-Note dialed Triggamane's cell phone number, but he didn't get an answer, so he sent a text for the two to talk as soon as

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possible about the contract. After an hour passed with no response, he tried calling again, but still got nothing.

“I know this nigga ain’t ducking me,” C-Note said to himself and got up and got dressed.

He went and jumped in his Cadillac Escalade since he was getting in the mood to run a nigga down. As he drove towards his destination, C-Note dialed the number a third time.

“This nigga could at least answer the damn phone,” C-Note thought increasing his speed as his temper began to flare up.

He didn’t believe that anyone could be asleep this deep into the day, so the only logical conclusion was that he was avoiding him, and the more C-Note thought about it the more it made sense. Even on the night he had given Triggamane the contract, he had been acting cagey about renewing it.

TERRANCE

As Terrance unwillingly made another trip to meet Quack, he had a bad feeling about what may happen. He wondered why the man had called him again in the first place, since he had already set a deadline for Thursday. Terrance tried his best to get Quack to just tell him what he wanted over the phone, but he wasn't going for it. Quack said that he like talking face to face to be sure everyone was on the same page.

Terrance had gotten a text from C-Note but he didn't answer because he was sure it was about the contract, which right now was the source of his problems. He definitely wanted to sign one with M'Famous, especially after the announcement the cousins had made the night before. Albums and touring with Legendary Ent. would be big, and would bring in a windfall of cash, though the way things looked he would miss out on the opportunity.

Terrance pulled up to the same house he'd met Quack at the first time, but he didn't see anyone standing outside so he blew the horn. A few moments later Quack emerged from the house with a wife beater on. He had gained weight and muscle while he had been locked up, and now that Terrance could see how big he looked he was even more intimidate. He expected Quack to get in and say whatever he had to, but instead he motioned for Terrance to get out of the car.

Terrance reluctantly got out and followed Quack to the back of the house, where Gizzle and two more men were shooting basketball.

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“Wassup cuz,” Gizzle said with a smirk on his face that sent a wave of uneasiness over Terrance.

“Oh you can’t speak my nigga?” Gizzle said making an issue just because he felt like he could.

“Wassup,” Terrance grudgingly said trying to make his forced visit as least complicated as possible.

“You stuck wit’ me, you might as well fuck wit’ me,” Gizzle said still taunting him.

“Ai’ight ya’ll can work on ya’ll friendship shit later,” Quack said ending the remarks. “What’s up wit’ that business we talked about? I know you don’ got started on working on that contract business. Where you at wit’ it and when you gon’ have it in my hand?”

“Umm, I got my lawyer trying to put something together, but it’s gon’ take him a lil longer,” Terrance lied just wanting to buy more time before he gave his livelihood away. “He said it’s a lot of technical stuff that got to be worked out because of the situation wit’ the label and shit.”

“Good, good, I like how that sound. I think yo’ ass lying, but it sound good so make sho’ I got what I want by Thursday. Yo’ ass got four days, nigga, and I ain’t playing.”

Quack called for the basketball from Gizzle and when he got it he threw up a long range shot, knocking it down. He then pulled out a cigarette and lit it before turning his attention to an apprehensive Terrance, who stood in silence.

Smoke D

“I don’t know why you dragging’ yo’ feet no way,” Quack said. “You gon’ be the only star starting off, so the focus just gon’ be on pushing you, and not a bunch of other niggas at the same time. But from some of the shit I heard you said last night you don’t think we the right team for you. Wassup with that cuz?”

Terrance looked over at Gizzle, who had started back playing basketball with the other two men and he now hated him about as much as he did Quack. He should have known that their conversation would get back to Quack, and should have limited what he said.

“It wasn’t like that mane,” Terrance said.

“What was it like then?” Quack asked. “Cause I know what it sound like, and you know that ain’t ‘bout to fly.”

“I just think you should slow down and learn the game first. I already told you, like I said to Gizzle last night, I ain’t got a problem wit’ giving ya’ll the money to get started. I even got an idea, I could sign as a member of a group, but if I sign a solo contract it still don’t make no sense to me,” Terrance said and hoped once again that his logic would somehow breakthrough to Quack, or at least get him to reconsider his plan.

“Look niggaa, I don’ told yo’ ass I’m not trying to hear none of that shit. I know exactly what I want and how I want it.”

Terrance could see Quack tensing up as though he would lash out at any moment and strike him, but Quack actually took a step back and put his hands behind his back.

“I just really called you over here so you can feel where I’m coming from, that’s it. Just want to clear up problems. It’s another

issue I got though my nigga," Quack said. "I hear that you said if you go down we know what you gon' do, and I don't like how that sounded, or what it's suggesting, so I think a little disciplin is in order."

Before he had realized it was coming, Terrance was blindsided by a powerful blow to the jaw, causing him to stumble back. Though he was dazed he attempted to turn and run but was quickly grabbed and held. A couple of punches to the stomach caused him to fall to the ground. Terrance tried to get back to his feet, but punches started to rain down on him and he fell down once again. The three men then started to stomp on him and he balled up into a fetal position to protect himself as best as he could. After what seemed like an eternity to Terrance, the attack finally stopped.

"Get yo' ass up!" Quack barked at Terrance and he shakily rose to his feet, his entire body throbbing with pain.

"Now I hope we got some understanding today lil nigga. You need to know ya' role, and stay in yo' place, and all that extra shit you got to say you can keep to yo'self. Now this shit gon' go down just like I said it would, and if it don't I'm gon' deliver on my promise fa'sho, and I'm gon' send you in wit' a lil gift. What just happened, or what you think just happened, ain't shit compared to what I'm gon' do if you fuckin' play wit' me."

"Aye nigga, you hear my homie talkin' to you?" one of the attackers said to the still dizzy Terrance. He could feel the side of his face, where he took the initial punch, swelling up, and the pain it was sending through his head was throbbing more with each passing moment. He tried to focus on Quack to avoid any further attack and he nodded his head simply to keep the goons at bay.

Smoke D

“Good, so now you know without a doubt that I ain’t playing,” Quack said. “Triggamane, I want one million dollars and a contract wit’ yo’ name on it sayin’ you gon’ do five albums for Hardhittaz Music Group by Thursday fucking afternoon. If you even show up late you gon’ get some mo’ of this, cause it’s definitely gon’ be discipline on my set. Behind that, we go and move some records, everybody get a little piece of money and everybody go home happy.”

Quack stepped up to Terrance, who quivered in anticipation of another blow, and started to brush some of the dirt and debris off of his clothing.

“Mane, we cant’ have our superstar walking around looking all beat up and shit my nigga,” he said then put his arm around Terrance’s shoulder. “Look my nigga, I kinda hate it had to go down like this, but you pushing my hand wit’ this lil bullshittin’.”

Quack turned Terrance around and led him back towards his car with his arm still around him.

“If you even think about getting some niggas and coming back over here with any drama, I promise you cuz, if nothing else happen I’m gon’ kill you Triggamane,” Quack said and opened the car door and when Terrance got inside he punced him in the face.

“That one was for me. Now get yo’ sucka ass on and get my business straight!” Quack yelled.

Terrance had never been so humiliated before in his life and he felt as low as anyone could as he watched Quack casually walk away without once looking over his shoulder. Terrance hated himself for not even getting out the car and confronting Quack

M'Famous

while he was alone. He looked at his face in the rearview mirror and saw that it was swollen and dark in two places, and tears welled up in his eyes. He hated himself even more because of the fact that he was actually going to have to sign a contract with Quack to avoid going to prison for the rest of his life. He finally closed the door to the car, started it, and pulled off, driving slowly back to his home, where he planned on staying as long as he could until he had to meet up with Quack again in a few days. Now he'd have to really get his attorney to put a contract together, and then give away a million dollars of his money. On top of all that, the cousins at M'Famous would want answers, along with everyone else, answers that he didn't have at the time.

As Terrance drove he tried to figure out how to break the news, but he could see no easy way to explain what was happening. He didn't just want to put out there the fact that he had actually killed someone to everybody because there was a chance that he could just as easily be placed in a similar situation by others. Not to mention that it wasn't something he was proud of. He had spent many nights tossing and turning about that day. He replayed that day in his mind, and even moreso than what he'd done, Quack hanging on his shoulder is what stood out the most.

At the time, to him joining up with a gang had seemed like the biggest thing in the world. He wanted to be seen as one of the cool guys and hoped to earn a little respect, simply from being affiliated. Now he was trying to figure out where it had helped him at any point in his life. He had simply found himself tied to a bunch

Smoke D

of guys who just wanted someone to help them with their numerous schemes and bullshit, which usually led them nowhere. It was either that or they wanted to borrow this or that for whatever reason. None of them ever wanted to pay for anything, even though he had given out enough money for those around him to do for themselves. Now he would spend the next few years of his life stuck with a bunch of conniving and thirsty men who would use one of the very men they had pledged to stand with.

The fact that he had once saw Quack as somewhat of a father figure only made things worse. Terrance's own father had never been around to teach him anything, and that include how to stand up for himself. All his life it was just him, his older sister, and his mother, and neither of them could help him in this situation, or give him advice on what to do.

When Terrance finally arrived at his home and saw the Cadillac Escalade parked out front he thought that it was Kain's. And even though he didn't want to see anyone, especially in the condition he was in, he would rather it be him than anyone else. He went inside and was headed to his room to get one of the blunts that he kept rolled up and ready to smoke.

"Aye bruh, C-Note in the den, he came through to holla at you 'bout that contract thang," Kain said.

He couldn't see Terrance's face because his back was to him and he was shocked when his friend turned around. "Mane, what the fuck happened to you?" he said as he walked closer to Terrance once he fully turned around. "It wasn't that Quack nigga was it?"

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Terrance didn't respond as he held his head down in shame.

"Bruh I told you we should've just got that nigga killed. What the fuck he jump on you for?"

"Mane look, I really don't want to talk about this right now. With you or nobody else," Terrance responded. "I'll tell you what happened later."

"I told you them niggas was gon' dog you out, and look at this shit. Even if you give this nigga what he want he still gon' treat you like dirt 'cause he fell like he can get away wit' the shit."

Those words stung Terrance to his core, moreso the truth in them than the words themselves. Quack had been pushing him around since that day at Yella's house. He had pulled the trigger more out of fear of what Quack might actually do to him than anything else. He had lacked the courage to walk away then, and had been suffering from that lack of courage for most of his life. Now that lack would cost him so much more than he ever imagined.

"Mane you can get mad if you want, but I already told C-Note what's been going on" Kain said. "The nigga act like he only halfway believe the shit cause you ain't said nothing 'bout it, but once he see you like this he'll take yo' side. Come mane, at least go holla at 'em. He might be able to think of some kinda way to help you out wit' this nigga."

Reluctantly Terrance agreed with his friend and followed him into the den though he didn't see much of anything that anyone could do as long as Quack had the gun. The girl could be

scared off easily enough, but as long as anyone had the murder weapon they had power over him. It didn't matter if it was Quack or one of the other members of the gang.

C-Note was sitting in the den smoking a blunt of his own while talking on the phone when Terrance walked in.

"Aye something happened let me call you back," C-Note said into the phone and ended the call. "Damn lil nigga, what happened to yo' face?"

"It was the niggas I was tellin' you about," Kain spoke up for his friend. "I don't know why this nigga went over there by his damn self no way when he know them niggas wit' the shit."

"Mane if you was in a fucked up situation, why you ain't just say somethin'. What this nigga really want with you anyway?"

Terrance looked at Kain thinking he had filled C-Note in on everything.

"I told him about Quack, but I didn't tell him everything," Kain said. "It wouldn't be my place to put that out there like that, but you might as well tell 'em now mane. You see he on yo' side, just like I am."

Even though he didn't see the point, he decided that after all the cousins had done for him he could at the least tell the real reason why he wouldn't be resigning. He knew that it would probably alter their plans in some type of way.

"I know you heard the rumors 'bout me killing somebody a few years back," Terrance said while looking down at the floor. "That shit happened for real, but the nigga basically told me to

either shoot or something would happen to me. I hate that shit to this day, but I pulled the trigger and the Quack nigga got the gun still.”

C-Note looked at Terrance stunned by the revelation. He would have never suspected there was any truth to the rumors. He also contemplated what it could mean to M'Famous Ent. and their plans.

“The nigga sayin’ that if I don’t sign a contract with him then he gon’ turn the gun in to the police,” Terrance continued. “I tried to talk him out of the shit a few times, but the nigga won’t budge, so I ain’t really got a choice mane. I got to sign it or I’m gon’ spend fifty two years in prison. I can’t do that mane.”

“Damn lil nigga,” C-Note replied to the bombshell. “That’s some shit to be into. I wish you would have said something a long time ago. We could’ve tried to track the gun down before this shit became an issue. Me and Smoke actually talked about the shit a few times, but we ain’t think it was for real. We thought it was something ya’ll put out there for hype or something like that.”

“I ain’t never think the shit would be an issue. I never thought these niggas woul try some shit like this. I was getting put down that day, so I thought I was just doing what he wanted. I figured he would have just as much to lose as I would, but the nigga even got to the witness already.”

“It’s a fucking witness!?” C-Note asked incredulously. “How the fuck ya’ll leave a witness. Ya’ll niggas ain’t have on no masks or something?”

Smoke D

“I ain’t know he was gon’ make me shoot the nigga, it just happened at the last minute. Then Quack disappeared for a while, and the broad never said shit, so I left well enough alone.”

“So she gotta know exactly who you are by now.”

“I saw her just yesterday at the party, but the Quack nigga was behind it.”

“Damn this nigga here’s a mothafucka. I ain’t never quite dealt with no nigga trying to extort me or no shit like that, so we gon’ have to sit down and put our heads together on this one. This nigga just want you to sign a contract?”

“Yeah, that and the nigga want a million dollars.”

“That’s kinda low-ballin’ to be extorting a rich nigga, but I guess the nigga just thirsty to get his hands on somethin’,” C-Note said as he tried to think of a way to handle the situation.

C-Note knew that he could easily call up a bunch of goons and have them pay a visit to the Quack nigga and whatever happened just happen, but that would still leave two problems. One, they still wouldn’t have the gun, and two, there could easily end up being a lot more people shot, which he really didn’t care about, but you never knew when it could catch up to you. Triggamane was now finding that out the hard way.

C-Note knew there was a lot on the line so things needed to be thought out in detail, and he knew who could help with that. “Aye, we gon’ get up wit’ Smoke, that way everybody’ll be in on the decision,” C-Note said.

MARCELLOS

Marcellos sat in the living room of his house mostly remembering the party from the night before, though he tried not to give too much of his attention to the incident with Katrina and Yayo. There was no way he would ever fight Yayo over Katrina, but he didn't like the fact that Yayo had touched him in the first place. After he had shaken that part off he recalled how the rest of his night had went. After getting into the party and having a few drinks he was having a good time and he eventually left with two women for a long lust filled night.

It was a pretty quiet day, but it usually was around his place, and he was deciding if he would stay in or get out for a while when his phone rang. The phone screen showed that it was his mother and he answered the call.

"What's happening momma," he said into the receiver.

"Boy you know better than to answer that phone like that, talkin' bout some what's happening," his mother replied. "I know what's gon' be happening the next time you answer my call like that."

"Momma it's Sunday, and you talking junk 'bout what you goin' do to somebody. I'mma tell Deacon Gerald."

"Me and Gerald are just friends, and he can't control what I say or do."

"Ai'ight we'll see."

Smoke D

“Boy I ain’t got time to be messin’ wit’ you, anyway, this Katrina girl is over here with a baby talkin’ ‘bout it’s yours and that she told you already.”

Hearing that took Marcellos for a loop. He thought he and Katrina were on the same page as far as getting a blood test before anything else took place, but apparently she had other ideas.

“I just saw that boy for the first time a few days ago and I ain’t know nothing ‘bout him before that,” Marcellos said. “I told you I left her in Atlanta and I just happened to run into her at the Wolfchase, and she claimed it was mine. I don’t know if I really believe her though because of everythang that happened.”

“Well don’t none of that change the fact that she said it’s yours and I’m not sure if she ain’t right,” Marcellos mother said. “He don’t look a lot like you, but I can see some of yo’ daddy in him.”

“So what you expect me to do momma, jump in and start playin’ daddy. I told her let’s wait until we got a blood test, then we could see what was gon’ happen from there, but right now I ain’t really tryng to deal with her or that situation.”

“That’s just like you negroes nowadays. If you want a blood test so bad why haven’t you went and got one already?”

“I planned on doing it soon ma, the right time just ain’t came along yet.”

“Well I don’t want to see it put off too much longer. If this is your son, and my grandson, we are going to be in his life, period. So you can go pick up one of those home DNA kits from one of

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these stores, Walgreens or somewhere, and we can get to the bottom of this right now.”

Marcellos didn't like the fact that Katrina had run to his mother with whatever ideas she had to pull her into her plotting, but his mother had a point. It would be better to go ahead and get the results to a test sooner rather than later, and although some people had disputed the accuracy of the tests, right now anything was better than nothing.

“Okay momma. I'm going to the store and then I'm gon' come over. Did Katrina tell you to get a test?” Marcellos asked wondering if Katrina has been so confident that he was the father that she had suggested a test to his mother.

“No, she didn't,” his mother said. “I'm in the bathroom and she's in the family room with Kaylin. That boy is so cute.”

“That don't make 'em mine momma.”

“Boy don't you think I know that. Get that test and bring yo' butt on here, bye.”

“Bye momma.”

Marcellos got dressed and went to several stores before he found the test he was looking for. He spent the entire ride to his mother's house wondering what the test would say and what the future could possibly hold for him if the boy was actually his. He started to become more and more anxious as he got closer to the house

Once Marcellos arrived his mother, Katrina, and Kaylin were all in the kitchen. The women were talking while Kaylin sat on

the floor playing with one of his toys. Marcellos could see the uneasiness that was in Katrina's face as the two eyed one another.

"Hi Marcellos," Katrina said in an unusually low tone.

"Wassup Katrina, hey mamma," Marcellos said.

"Hey baby what took yo' knuckle head butt so long," his mother said trying to lighten the mood in the room.

"I had to make a few stops."

Marcellos reached into the bag and pulled out the test. Katrina shifted uneasily in the chair, but remained silent.

"This the DNA test, let's go 'head and get this out of the way," Marcellos said.

"Ya'll know these things ain't always right," Katrina said, which drew sidelong looks from both Marcellos and his mother.

"They work fine enough, they're still selling them," Marcellos' mother said. "If they weren't any good no one would buy them."

Katrina took a deep breath and then let out a heavy sigh. "Let's go ahead and get this over with then," she said and then stood up, walked over to the boy, and picked him up off the floor. "How do the instructions say it work?"

"You just have to do a swab on whoever's being tested," Marcellos said as he read from the box.

He opened the test box and sat it on the kitchen table, then pulled the contents out. He swabbed both himself and Kaylin, and

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then followed the rest of the instructions on the box. The instructions said that it would take about thirty minutes before there was a conclusion and the adults all sat around in apprehension while they waited with hardly a word being said. With about ten minutes left Katrina's phone rang which broke a particularly long stretch of silence.

"Hello," Katrina said. "Oh my god, are you okay?...How long ago?...Is he still there?...Did you call the police yet?...Why not?...I'm on my way mamma...I need to be there. I'm on my way. I'll be there in a little bit. You need to at least call to report what happened so the insurance people will pay for the door...Okay. I'll see you in a minute.

Katrina put her phone away and walked over to gather up Kaylin and his things.

"What's the matter baby, is everything okay?" Marcello's mother asked with genuine concern.

"Some guy I used to talk to has broken down my mother's door looking for me," Katrina said. "He does crazy stuff like that when he's on drugs. He thought I was still living there, but I moved to my own place recently. I have to go check on my mother; we can do this some other time."

Marcello and his mother could only look on as Katrina got her things together and headed out the door.

"You need to go with her," Marcello's mother said to him.

"For what? They drama ain't my business ma, and I ain't trying to make it."

“Boy somethin’ might happen to that girl and more importantly that baby, and if he’s ours and you let him get hurt how are you going to live with that? Get past you and her for a minute and worry about the well being of that boy.”

Knowing his mother was right Marcellos couldn’t really continue to argue. “I don’t know why men always let ya’ll trick us into feeling guilty,” he said, which drew a smile from his mother.

“That’s just another one of our many gifts, now go ahead. I have to get ready to go to late services anyway. We can get to this later, it ain’t going nowhere baby.”

“Ai’ght momma, I’mma go. I’ll call you later.”

Marcellos took off to catch up with Katrina, but she was already pulling away.

“Shit,” he said and then jumped in his car to follow behind her. He called er phone and she quickly answered it.

“Yeah, what is it Marcellos?” Katrina asked.

“For one, you need to slow down with that boy in the car, and two I’m following you to make sho’ ya’ll ai’ight. Dude might pop up and start tripping or somethin’.”

“Thank you, ‘cause this nigga be buggin’ when get too high. He be snortin’ cocaine and pills, and that’s when he gets like this. I just try to avoid him then, that’s part of the reason I left Atlanta.”

M'Famous

"He be hittin' on you and shit?"

"He have before, but he only do it when he high, and I know he is right now."

With that Marcellos was glad that he had his gun, just incase Yayo wanted to flip out today.

"I thought ya'll two ain't have nothing going on?"

"We not in a relationship, but at first I would see him from time to time, but things just kept getting worse and worse. But that don't even matter right now, so I don't want to talk about it."

"Ai'ight, but slow yo' ass down. I'm just behind you. Do yo' momma still stay in the same place?"

"Yeah, she still there."

"Okay. We'll talk when we get there and get this shit straightened out."

Marcellos hung up the phone and followed Katrina, who would slow down for amoment, but then speed up again. Marcellos didn't like the fact that the boy wasn't in a car seat, and was even standing up from time to time. When they arrived at Katrina's mother's house the police were there, so Marcellos left his gun in the car, which by it being an Aston Martin still drew stares from the present onlookers. Katrina made her way inside with the baby closely followed by Marcellos.

"Momma," Katrina called out.

"In the kitchen," a woman's voice responded loud enough to be heard.

Smoke D

The three went into the kitchen, where two police stood, both writing in their note pads.

“You okay mamma?” Katrina asked.

“Gurl I’m fine. That fool just scared me and tore my door up,” Katrina’s mother, Kasandra, responded.

“Is this the daughter you spoke of ma’am?” one of the officers asked.

“Yes.”

“Ma’am, your mother has given us a statement of the events that have taken place, and not just today’s. We won’t tell you what to do on your own behalf, but could you tell us the name of this man who’s been over here?” the officer asked while looking at Marcellos suspiciously.

“Clarence Genkins,” Katrina said. “But he doesn’t live in Memphis.”

“Your mother has already told us that part ma’am. All we needed was a name. We’ll take it from here and put out a warrant for his arrest for aggravated burglary and vandalism, so if he’s still in the city he’ll go to jail no matter where he’s from,” the other officer said and then the two left.

Katrina’s mother attention then turned to Marcellos. “Baby it’s so good to see you. I see you on the televisoin all the time, and you seem to be doing pretty good for yourself.”

“Yeah, I can’t really complain,” Marcellos responded. “It’s been a pretty good two and a half years.”

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"I hate to open up a can of old worms, but I told this girl she was gon' regret messin' wit' that boy after ya'll seperated."

"Momma, now ain't the time for that," Katrina cut in not wanting the conversation to go down that road when she had at least a little compassion from Marcellos, for the moment anyway. "What happened?"

"Nothing girl, he just beat on the door for a while, and then the crazy nigga kicked it in. I had a good ol' butcher knife waiting on his ass too, and when he saw that he changed his mind. He might be crazy, but his ass ain't that stupid."

"I'm sorry my mess came over here momma."

"Girl we can't help it if some of theses niggas go crazy after they get a little of this Sanders goodness," Kasandra said and then laughed to herself.

"What I need to do now is get me another door put up, 'cause I ain't trying to go to bed wit' no damn door in front of my house," Kasandra said.

"What's broke on the door momma?" Katrina asked. "Is it more of the door or the wall?"

"Luckily it was just the door and the frame didn't tear up. I need to get to Home Depot or something real fast. I'm still waitin' on these sorry insurance people to show up, but they ass give you all types of hell if you late with the damn payments."

"How long have it been since you called 'em?" Marcellos asked

Smoke D

“Right after I called the police, and can you believe the police showed up in a reasonable amount of time.”

“Well then they could be here at anytime now,” Katrina said. “We can go pick up a door for you while you stay here and wait for them. I’ll pay for it, so don’t worry about that. I feel like this is partly my fault, so it’s the least I could do.”

“Hell I ain’t gon’ try to argue,” Katrina’s mother informed her. “Feel free to spend yo’ money. Get the same color as the one on there, and get a screwdriver to take it down, ‘cause ain’t none around here.”

Marcellos wasn’t really cool with being volunteered to do more than necessary, but he kept quiet and went along. They took Katrina’s mother’s Ford Explorer since neither of their cars was really large enough to carry such a large item with ease.

After they went and got the door and got it put up, they spent a while talking with Katrina’s mother before Katrina decided she was ready to go home. She asked Marcellos to follow her there to at least make sure she got inside safely. With both women’s urging, he once again went along knowing that his mother would say it was the right thing to do, at least for the boy.

The two left, each driving their own cars again, and during the drive Marcellos called his mother’s cell phone to ask her about the results of the test, but she told him she wasn’t back home yet.

When they made it to Katrina’s apartment Marcellos could tell she was a little spooked, so when she asked him did he want to see the inside he agreed. He told her he could only stay for a few minutes, even though he really had nowhere to be. Marcellos spent

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a little time checking out the mostly empty apartment, which had only one bed in the master bedroom as the only furniture.

"I still need to go shopping, but I was gon' do it tomorrow," Katrina said.

Katrina ended up dragging out a conversation for a lot longer than he planned on staying, but after a while he was ready to leave and did. As Marcellos walked back to his car his mind was mostly occupied with thoughts of making it back to his mother's house when he just happened to look back toward Katrina' apartment and saw a man banging on her door. He knew it was Yayo, and he went on to his car to get his gun just in case he needed it on hand.

As Marcellos approached Katrina' apartment, Yayo happened to look up at him.

"What the fuck you doin' ova here punk ass nigga?" Yayo yelled.

Marcellos could clearly tell that he was high, and that made him more wary of the man.

"Aye my nigga, you need to roll on. Shawty ain't tryin' to fuck wit' you right now, especially while you fucked up and lil dude in there," Marcellos said.

"Nigga don't tell me shit 'bout my bitch or my son, and get the fuck on 'fo I fuck you up."

"Leave Clarence!" Katrina yelled from behind the door, which Yayo responded to by beating on it more.

Smoke D

“Bitch open this door, you always playin’ fuckin’ games. If you don’t come out I’mma kill this nigga out here!” Yayo yelled becoming angrier by the moment.

“Aye nigga don’t be issuing no threats ‘bout what you gon’ do,” Marcellos said taking offense to the words though he didn’t pull his gun out.

That caused Yayo to turn his full attention to Marcellos, and he pulled a pocket knife out of his jeans and flashed the blade at him.

“Nigga you must don’t know where you at,” Marcellos said as he quickly upped his gun, which caused Yayo to stop in his tracks.

“Put that gun down and fight like a man,” Yayo said despite the fact that he drew a weapon first.

“Nigga if you don’t go ‘head wit’ that stupid shit I’m gon’ put yo’ ass down. I’m not ‘bout to stand here and go back and forth wit’ yo’ ass neither,” Marcellos responded.

Yayo only stood there eyeing him for a moment, and, becoming agitated, Marcellos fired the gun at the ground behind him, which finally got his attention.

“Ai’ight my nigga, you got that, but this the last time you gon’ pull a gun on me and not use it,” Yayo said and stepped backwards then walked off.

C-NOTE

C-Note called up Smoke and told him that they needed to meet up and Smoke told him they should meet at the office. Thirty minutes later C-Note, Smoke, Terrance, and Kain were all in a conference room together.

“Wassup mane, what happened to yo’ face. Ya’ll making me kinda nervous with this rush meeting shit,” Smoke said.

“You gon’ be a little past that in just a minute,” C-Note responded. “Triggamane, tell him everthang, from the beginning.”

Terrance did as asked and told the story about what happned with Quack, from that day he went out to Yella’s house, all the way up to the events that had taken place over the last few hours.

“So all this time the shit was true,” Smoke said referring to the rumors. “Damn boy you could’ve gave a nigga the heads or or somethin’.”

“That’s what I said,” C-Note chimed in. “He say the nigga ain’t budging off what he want, so we gotta figure out some kinda way to make this work.”

Smoke let out deep brerath. “Well it’s Sunday, and we still got a few days to figure somethin’ out, but I guess we can’t really afford to put this off at all.”

“The nigga really just after some money, but all he wanted to start was a million dollars,” Terrance mentioned. “He could’ve

Smoke D

got me for way more than that, and I ain't really in a position to say no."

"Well if all the nigga want is some money maybe we can work on 'em," Smoke said.

"The biggest thing is getting the gun from the nigga, cause that's the real issue like you said, at least for now. The best thing I can think of is we try to buy it off him," C-Note added. "He'll probably still want the contract, but without the gun at least this nigga here ass out the fire a lil bit."

There were times lately when Triggamane had thought the the cousins were only interested in their own benefit from him, but he now regretted ever doubting their loyalty. He wished he could get all of them out of this predicament now more that ever.

"Do you really think he'll give up the gun?" Kain asked. "That's really his only leverage right now, and without that you can just slip out of the contract.

"We won't know until we talk to him," Smoke said. "If we throw a big enough number out there, the nigga will at least have somethin' to think about."

"That sound good, but what about the contract part?"

"I think I can get over on him on that," Triggamane said. "I can put a backdoor loop in the fine print that'll let me get right out of it. This nigga talking 'bout a five album contract and shit. That's like a life sentence."

"Especially with a nigga who don't know shit," C-Note said.

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"Ai'ight, it sound like we got a plan together, so let's put this shit in action. You got a number on this nigga right?"

"Yeah, you want me to call 'em now?"

"Yeah I don't see no reason why not. He say he don't want to talk, but I bet when we get to talkin' money I bet that nigga listen."

Triggamane pulled the number up from his phone and put the call on speaker so everyone could hear how it played out. Since Smoke was usually the one doing all the negotiating in the office, it was decided that he would do most of the talking. Much to everyones surprise, Quack had been willing to part with the gun, but only if Triggamane signed the contract. He added that he wanted five million dollars for it in addition to the million he had already demanded. The group had at first balked at such a high figure, but they eventually agreed seeing that once Triggamane had back doored his way out of the contract they could recover the lost money. There was also the fact that they had made so much money already that the ransom wasn't something they couldn't handle. They had all agreed that Triggamane would show up with the money and the contract in two days, and that Smoke could come along, but no on else.

"You know ya'll gotta take some bumaz with ya'll just in case this nigga try some dumb shit," C-Note warned.

There was a unanimous decision that they would and that there would also be plenty of back up nearby just to be on the safe side.

Smoke D

After talking for a while longer, C-Note wanted to get back home and finish shaking off his hangover and he left though Triggamane, Kain, and Smoke stayed behind to discuss a few more things. C-Note had made it one block away from the building when the passenger side window of his truck exploded into pieces as a hail of bullets smashed through it. C-Note ducked down and punched the gas bringing on the full brunt of the powerful motor in the SUV. The shots continued to tear through the truck, and after risking being shot to look around, C-Note located the place where the shots were coming from. The black SUV was catching up and nearly beside him and he saw a man hanging out of the rear passenger side window. He instantly recognized K's face in the late day sunlight and quickly became more infuriated than fearful. He was finally able to get his own gun from his stash spot and returned the fire of K and the men with him. C-Note's returning shots discouraged the attackers and they turned off on the next street, but he was so enraged that instead of letting them go he turned his truck around and began to chase them.

Even though he was furious beyond all reasoning, he still had the presence of mind to call up Smoke through the system of the SUV.

"Wassup," Smoke said.

"This nigga K just shot at me! I'm 'bout to kill this bitch!" C-Note yelled unable to control his anger and adrenaline.

"Where the hell you at, you just left?" Smoke asked and C-Note could tell that he was moving quickly.

"I'm following these niggas. This nigga gotta die right now!"

“Nigga wait and let me catch up with you!” Smoke said now yelling himself. “Where the hell you at?”

C-Note never answered because he had gotten close enough to the fleeing SUV that he thought he could hit someone, anyone with a bullet, and he let off a barrage of them from the extended clip of his nine millimeter. The shots smashed through the rear window of the escaping SUV, which swerved in the street and sideswiped another car. C-Note then got even closer and shot three more times and this time when the driver of the truck tried to swerve out of the way of another car he ran up against the curb and then lost control of the vehicle. The SUV swerved into the street again before veering back on the sidewalk and into a pole.

C-Note stopped and got out of his truck to finish off his attackers when three men emerged from the opposing Explorer and started to shoot. He shot back and heard one of the gunmen cry out as a bullet caught him in the throat and he collapsed on the sidewalk. There was a momentary lapse in the shooting from the other attackers and C-Note used the opportunity to close in on the remaining men. As he approached, he saw the driver still in the SUV laid out dead. He eased around their truck and had his eyes on K when he was spotted himself, and then more shots rang out from both sides as C-Note tried to get himself back to safety. He took several shots to the body, but he never fell as he continued to shoot back. One shot caught K in the leg, and another hit the other remaining man. C-Note could only watch as the men took off and fled as he collapsed inside of his own truck's driver side door. His vision started to become cloudy until it eventually faded to black.

SMOKE

Smoke rushed out of M'Famous Ent. and to the parking lot as fast as he could, not even telling Kain and Triggamane what was happening or asking them to come along though they followed him anyway. A thousand thoughts raced through his mind as he thought about what could have happened to his cousin. He had listened on and heard a blood curdling scream, though he couldn't tell who it had come from. As he tried to figure what to do he could only recall that C-Note had said that he was going home so he went out in the direction that C-Note usually took to get there. As he drove he saw shattered glass in the street not far from the building and he looked around for more clues and saw a group of people standing on a corner and looking down the street and he drove as fast as he could to get to it. He found his cousin lying between the doorway of his truck with several wounds and he couldn't tell whether he was dead or not, but from the way he looked the chances of him being alive weren't good. Even so, Smoke picked him up and sat him inside of his car praying that he could get some type of response from his cousin to signal that he was still alive. He placed his hand over his cousin's chest, but his own heart was pounding so hard and his adrenaline pumping that he couldn't tell if he could feel anything.

"Damn nigga don't die," Smoke said.

"We got to get him to a hospital Smoke," Kain said. "We gon' follow you, but mane we gotta go now. The longer he out here the less chance he got to live."

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Smoke agreed, so he let the seat all the way back that his cousin was in hoping that it would at least somehow slow the bleeding, which seemed to be the biggest problem at the moment. He drove like he had never driven before as he refused to stop for anything even lights that were changing to red. They made it to the hospital and rushed C-Note inside screaming for help and soon the staff had taken C-Note off into the back and told Smoke and the other that they had to stay where they were. Hours passed without an update and Smoke and the others, which now included both C-Note and Smoke's mothers along with most of the other members of their family and various members of M'Famous Ent. sat nervously as they waited for word of any kind. Though Smoke wanted to try to keep a positive outlook as he hoped his cousin pulled through, his mind kept going back to all the blood that he had seen him losing and the condition he seemed to be in. Smoke had tried his best to explain to everyone what was going on though he didn't have all the details himself.

He knew one thing if nothing else though, and that was who was responsible. He had seen two men lying dead at the scene, and neither one of them was K, but in the back of his mind he knew that that wouldn't be the case for very much longer. Smoke had never actually killed someone before, but then again he had never really been in a situation where he felt as though he had to. It was much different now though, and he would definitely make sure K got what he tried to give his family. He had left the identity of C-Note's attacker untold because he had his own plans and telling everyone could compromise that.

After three hours of stress and anxiety for everyone waiting, a doctor finally emerged and asked for the family of Corey Ayers. Everyone stood up, though his immediate family were the

Smoke D

ones who stepped to the doctor. The short African American doctor looked young, but also looked weary as though he'd seen too much tragedy.

"Mr. Ayers is currently in critical condition, but we were able to remove all of the bullets from his body," the doctor said. "The wounds are pretty severe, and include a punctured lung and a shattered collarbone."

There were gasps as some of the people heard the seriousness of the harsh injuries their friend had suffered.

"There was also damage to one of his kidneys though it's still hard to tell if it will be catastrophic," the doctor added.

"Will he live?" C-Note's mother, April, asked.

"Ma'am, honestly, that's hard to say right now. So far he's been unresponsive, but his heart is still beating," the doctor said, which brought more gasps and whispers from the crowd.

"We will run some more tests later to check out his brain activity," the doctor stated.

"How long will that take to find out?" Smoke asked

"I'm not sure, we had to give him a lot of blood and we don't want to move him around too much too soon. If he stabilizes in the next few days we'll get around to it then, but I can't give you an exact time."

"What are his chances to make it?" Smoke's mother, Gloria, asked.

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"If he makes it through tomorrow there's a really good chance he'll pull through, but at the same time that doesn't guarantee anything."

"My baby goin' be just fine," C-Note's mother said trying to reassure the others, but moreso herself. "He strong just like the rest of his family, and we goin' all pull through this together and be stronger than ever."

"That's exactly what he needs from you all, strength and lots of prayers."

"Can we see him now?" Gloria asked. "Not everyone just a few of us."

"I'm afraid not ma'am. Policy is no one can see a patient in critical condition. If his condition upgrades, then you all can come, but not at this time."

"There's nothing you can do?" someone in the background asked the doctor.

"Sorry, there isn't, but it's for the best. What Mr. Ayers needs right now is rest more that anything else. We'll keep a close eye on him and if he comes around we'll contact you to arrange some type of visit."

Reluctantly, everyone accepted the news, but they were comforted by the fact that C-Note was alive and fighting for his life.

Smoke D

After standing around and talking for a while longer everyone started going their ways and Smoke headed home with one thing on his mind. He made several phone calls to gather up some of the people he knew were more than ready to get some type of revenge for what had happened to C-Note. After about an hour Smoke was at home with ten goons who were ready for whatever.

“Aye, the nigga who shot up my people is a nigga named K,” Smoke said to the room of men. “Some of ya’ll have met the nigga before. We signed him to a record deal, but the nigga started acting stupid. Anyway, the shit that happened today started with that shit, and this sucka don’ went and shot up my nigga. He got an apartment in east Memphis and his real name is Kenneth Dorsey. We goin’ by his house first, and I know at least one of the broads he fuck with so we goin’ by there. If you can help it don’t kill the nigga off top. I got something real special for his bitch ass.”

The group set out with malice in their hearts on their way to K’s place. When they made it they carefully approached the apartment and when they kicked the door in there was no one inside, which really didn’t surprise anyone. No one would wait around at home after something like what K had done knowing there might be people looking for them. They walked around the apartment complex looking for K and asking people had they seen him. They all then went to the girl’s house, but there was no one there either.

With nowhere else to look at the moment, they just decided that everyone would be on the lookout for him around town. Also Smoke would find out where his mother and other relatives lived to see if he was hanging out around there.

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Upset by the fact that there would be no way to release his frustration and anger on K that day, Smoke went back home alone. He sat up thinking about his cousin and praying that he pulled through this ordeal. He then remembered the problem that he had to deal with concerning Triggamane. Things were coming at him quickly and he wouldn't be able to get a break anytime soon now that C-Note was out of the picture. He would have to shoulder more of the load, running the label on his own. It was already a handful with the things he had to do on his own, so without his partner it wouldn't get any easier with everything happening on top of the pending project with Legend and his label coming up. Smoke knew that he could be easily overwhelmed. To make things even rougher he knew that the artists on his label were a lot of young and wild guys who would need hands on oversight and now he would have to step into that role, which would require much more moving around than he liked to do. He also knew that sooner or later the police would come sniffing around with their questions and so would the media, and all of that would fall in his lap.

Smoke went to his entertainment room and went to his bar to make himself a drink to calm his nerves a little. His phone rang and it was Alicia.

"You don't know about the three day rule I guess," Smoke said not wanting his somber mood to carry over into a conversation with Alicia.

"Yes, I know about ya'll men's three day rule," Alicia replied with her candor that Smoke had quickly come to like. "Ya'll can keep it. I need somebody to talk to."

"I'm glad you called me then 'cause I need somebody to talk to myself."

Smoke D

“From your tone, you sound like yo’ problems are worse, so tell me what’s going on.”

Smoke caught Alida up on the events that had taken place over the course of the day although he remembered to leave out certain details. Even though he liked her he barely knew her and was unwilling to tell her anything that he would regret later. As she had at the party, she shared her point of view on the situations and Smoke appreciated them as he had before. Alicia was wise beyond her years, and by the time the conversation was over Smoke had gotten an idea how he could handle things going forward.

His first mind though was to deal with K because he couldn’t stand the thought of him going around thinking that he had a chance to get away with what he’d done. Not to mention that there was a chance that K could be planning on attacking Smoke himself since he and C-Note were so close. And Smoke knew that his cousin had humiliated K in front of his own people. He would personally be out looking for K tomorrow as well, though he had to deal with the things happening at the label.

The next day Smoke spent most of the morning and early afternoon at the office and he had done some research on K since he had some of his information on his old contract. That allowed him to find other information about him on the internet and he found out where K’s mother and several of his other family members lived. Smoke left work left work early and got in contact with some of the people he’d had searching for K with the previous day. The word had gotten out in the steets that he had played apart

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in the attack on C-Note and that two of the dead men from the scene were his own cousins. The attack itself had been all over the news and Smoke had only managed the media by saying that he would hold a press conference on the events the next day and that he wouldn't answer any questions before then. For some reason the police hadn't showed up with any question, but Smoke expected that they could be showing up at anytime, especially with their history with M'Famous Ent. and it's rambunctious artists.

Smoke continued to ride around on his search when he got the call he'd been hoping for. K had been found out at the house of a stripper that he was involved with out on the edge of Memphis. The girl's house that K was over had sold him out for five thousand, and she was keeping him occupied until Smoke and his people got there. Little did K know that the girl had ties to C-Note as well, and saw it more in her best interest to give him up. Smoke called up all the men who he'd been with the night before and they all met in the parking lot of a store near the girl's house. It was set up so that they could get him out the house and somewhere where Smoke could carry out the agenda he had for K.

Dusk began to set in a while later and they called the girl to be sure K was still there and to see when and where would be the best time to come in. The girl told them to wait ten minutes and come in through the front door.

Ten minutes later they were inside the small house and could hear the shower running in the bathroom and they quietly made their way to it. Five of the men rushed into the bathroom, where they caught K in the shower with the girl who began screaming as though she wasn't in on what was happening. K kicked and screamed as he was overpowered and drug out of he

Smoke D

bathroom butt naked until he took several blows from pistols. He finally quieted down and once he saw Smoke's face he realized exactly what was going on.

Smoke looked at K's still swollen and bruised face with no sympathy. "Tie this nigga up with something. I don't need him trying nothing stupid," Smoke said.

They hadn't brought any rope along so they had to do it with bed sheets.

"What ya'll goin' do to him?" the girl asked.

"Don't worry 'bout that shawty," one of the men said. "You probably don't really want to know anyway."

K could only look on in disbelief that he had been set up again by a woman.

The men checked outside to be sure they could move without being seen and then drug K out and threw him in the trunk of a car and turned the stereo up to drown out any noise he might make. They drove K out to an old abandoned warehouse where they bound his wrists over his head. Smoke removed the gag from K's mouth.

"Let me go out this shit you mothafu-," K started to say before he was cut off by a vicious blow across the face with a pistol, which sent blood splattering from his mouth.

"Speak when you spoken to nigga," Buck barked at K.

Smoke walked up and punched K in the stomach with as much might as he could muster which knocked the wind out of K.

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"You thought you was just gon' fuck us over and wasn't nothing gon' happen to yo' ass didn't you," Smoke said coolly.

"Look what that nigga did to my face," K cried hoarsely in his own defense.

"You had it comin'. You lucky it wasn't me that showed up," Smoke said and delivered another powerful blow to K's body.

"Fuck all ya'll niggas!" K yelled defiantly.

Smoke looked around the room. "Damn ya'll goin' let this nigga talk crazy to ya'll," he said which got the crowd rowdy and the men all began to deliver a brutal beating to K until they were all tired.

K was covered in bruises and bleeding badly by the time the men finished with him and that was when Smoke stepped in front of him with a hammer and a long nail.

"You tried to kill my family, so you goin' get exactly what he got," Smoke said and slammed the hammer into K's collarbone.

MARCELLOS

Marcellos woke up the next morning and looked at Katrina, who was lying naked under the covers next to him. He had conflicting emotions about having slept with her now, but it was too late to change the fact that it had happened. One side of him truly enjoyed it since Katrina has some of the best sex he'd ever had. On the other hand, her betrayal still sat in the back of his mind and he wasn't sure if it was something he would ever get completely past. The fact that the same man who had broken them apart had brought them back together if only for one night was ironic. He got up and put his clothes on leaving Katrina asleep on the floor in the living room. They had left the baby in the bedroom the night before, after they had got rid of Yayo. They had started off smoking and drinking and one thing had led to another. Marcellos wanted to remove himself from the situation before he was drawn in too deep, and the first step was to get away from Katrina. He slipped out of the apartment locking the door from the inside as he left.

The office would be open since it was Monday, and C-Note and Smoke would be at M'Famous and able to give him more details on the announcement that they had made at the party Saturday night. He first wanted to get back home and wash the smell of sex and weed off of him. Though he tried to shrug it off thoughts of the sex that he and Katrina had crept into his mind. And along with it thoughts of how it had been with them before everything that had taken place in Atlanta that night two and a half years ago.

M'Famous

As he drove back to his house his phone rang, which he hadn't realized he had left in the car. He answered the call from Jaylene, though in his mind he had no intention of participating in what was likely a call for sex.

"Hello," he said.

"Where have you been, I've been tryin' to call you all night," Jaylene said.

"Aye don't be calling like yo' ass run somethin'. I go where the hell I want to when I want to and you need to remember that," Marcellos responded instantly becoming agitated by having to deal with any drama from a woman that he wasn't doing anything other than sleeping with.

"I'm not trying to fight with yo' ass. Whoever you fucking is yo' business. I was trying to ask you if C-Note was okay. I saw what happened to him on the news and just want to know how he doing."

"What are you talking about, what was on the news?"

"See yo' ass all holed up, and shit is going down. He got shot yesterday. They said it was really bad."

Marcellos mind scrambled as he thought of the repercussions of the event and how it could affect Smoke and everything that they had announced, which he was looking forward to.

"When yesterday?"

"I don't know, I saw it on the ten o'clock news."

Smoke D

“Shit. Aye, I’mma call you back, let me try to find out what’s going on.”

“You ain’t gon’ apologize for that shit you was talking a minute ago?”

“I might, if I come over later. You gon’ be at home all day?”

“I might. Just call when you think you’re on the way. Matter of fact I’ll leave the door open, so if I’m not home just come on in. I need some dick anyway.”

“I bet you do. I’mma holla at you later.”

Marcellos called Smoke, who didn’t answer, so he called Triggamane to find out what was going on. Triggamane had told him all that he knew, which really wasn’t much, and no one had an update on C-Note other than he wasn’t dead, which would have been on the news. Triggamane had said that he also had tried to reach Smoke but was unable to get an answer. Marcellos hung up the call and thought about what he should do next and nothing came to mind so he went home and got himself cleaned up then decided it would be best if he at least hung out at the studio or in the building, which would increase his chances of finding something out.

At the office he walked around asking questions until he got the whole story from one of the secretaries, which was all new to him. He’d heard of K being signed, but he’d never actually seen him in the studio, and he thought that was peculiar in and of itself. Marcellos had been hanging around M’Famous for over an hour before Smoke finally showed up. Marcellos went up to Smoke’s

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office, where the door was sitting open. When he walked in the look on Smoke's face let him know he had a lot on his mind.

"Boss man wassup," Marcellos said. "What's the word on C?"

"I just came from the hospital, and they said he might be in a coma 'cause he still ain't making no type of response. They got some test they said they goin' run in a few days," Smoke replied.

Marcellos hated to hear the sad news about one of the people responsible for helping him get to where he was.

"What's up wit' the nigga who did the shit, this K nigga. I know ya'll signed the nigga, what happened?"

"The nigga got a check and started bullshitting. C-Note went through to holla at the nigga and ended up roughing the nigga up a lil bit so the shit came behind that. But don't worry 'bout that it's goin' work out alright. I just need this nigga to wake up so we can all chill out. Him being in a coma making the shit way more stressful."

"Well he ain't dead, so he probably gon' pull through, he just needs a little time to heal up." Marcellos said as he looked on at Smoke who looked as though he wasn't so sure, and he could see that the more they talked about the situation the more down Smoke would likely get.

"So what happens now?" Marcellos asked trying to change the subject. "Do some of the things ya'll was talking about the other night get pushed back some?"

Smoke D

Smoke shook his head. “Naw, and if they do it won’t be much. This whole thing is pretty much mapped out, we just got to take off. It’s a few loose ends that need to be tied up first, but everythang gon’ be worked out real soon.”

“You gon’ be able to handle everythang?”

“Yeah, I got it under control dog. Aye, I ain’t trying to run you off or nothing but I got a phone call that I need to make. You can come back and holla at me later.”

“Ai’ight mane, I’mma let you take off then. Hit me up if you need me around.”

“Bet that.”

With nothing really to do Marcellos was ready to hang out in the studio and he had a few verses he wanted to put down, but he had left his note pad with the new songs in at home. He was headed to his house when his phone rang and he answered his mother’s call.

“What’s up ma?” he said.

“Yo’ knuckle head butt just refuse to answer that phone right don’t you?” his mother responded. “You lucky I’m feeling too good to be fussing at you right now.”

“I’m gon’ remember to thank the deacon next time I see him then.”

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“Boy I keep telling yo’ butt ‘bout playing.”

“Yeah, but how late was you at service for real?”

“I am going to hurt you so bad you ain’t goin’ want to see me no more, and I won’t mind neither, ‘cause I got me a new baby boy to love.”

Marcellos was nearly home when he hung up the call with his mother and he was contemplating what his mother’s revelation would really mean. He definitely had no plans whatsoever to restart a relationship with Katrina, but the fact the they had sex again would affect their interactions going forward to some extent. It would always be in the air between them. The more he thought about it he was actually becoming upset because she’d had his son all along and hadn’t she did what she had that night, they would likely have all been together all along. He wondered if at some point he would move his son with him although at this point he really didn’t think it was a good idea since he was likely about to go on tour in the coming months. And likely it would be that way for the immediate future, or at least as long as he was rapping for a living. He couldn’t shake the thought that he and Katrina’s relationship would only deteriorate as they spent more time around one another and he shot down her advances.

He got home and was stepping into the house when his phone rang again, but he ignored it because he had already sat it on the kitchen counter and was headed to the bathroom. When he came back he saw that the missed call was from Katrina, but he

didn't immediately return it because he had more thinking to do and didn't want to deal with her until he had a few more things figured out. He knew that once she was sure he was the father that he would be dealing with her almost daily, which wasn't really an exciting thought for him. Five minutes later the phone rang again, and again it was Katrina and he answered so he could go ahead and get it behind him.

"Wass-,"

"Marcellos help me!" Katrina cried frantically into the phone. "Oh my god, he's crazy."

Since Marcellos now knew that Kaylin was his son he was fully concerned. "What's happening?"

"He's chasing me. I got the baby. He's ramming the car. Oh my god, please stop. Help us."

"Shit. Where are you?"

"I'm driving down---"

Marcellos could only hear a sound of crashing metal, but he could also still hear Katrina and now Kaylin's cries. She had dropped the phone and obviously couldn't reach it. Marcellos could only listen on as Katrina screamed loudly and the phone went out. Marcellos wasn't sure what to think as he listened to the phone, which was now dead. He finally came out of his trance, wondering why Katrina hadn't called the police instead of him, and what had really happened to her and his son. He finally tried to call her phone back, but there was no service.

M'Famous

Marcellos stood and went back into the kitchen to get his keys and headed to his car though he had no idea where to go or what to do. He finally dialed 911 and told them what happened and the operator told him it would be difficult to find her location since cell phones were difficult to pinpoint a location for. He got in his car though he still didn't know where he was going. His first thought told him to go to Katrina's apartment, but there was no promise that she was anywhere near there since she had been in a car chase. Marcellos prayed that things weren't as bad as it seemed in his mind, and hoped that the wreck wasn't as bad as it sounded on the phone. Sitting in his car, which was now running, he still couldn't calm down enough to think clearly so he called his mother back and explained what he had just heard on the phone.

"Well, you don't know exactly what happened yet, so the best thing you could do is get to a police station, since an accident would have been reported by someone. If not, they have ways to find peoples' cars. Some kind of way I saw on CSI," his mother said.

Dealing with the police face to face was never something that Marcellos had liked so that was an option, but he didn't want it to be his first. He instead thought it would be better to go to the nearest hospital to Katrina's place. He thought that if the accident was as bad as it sounded they would rush her to the nearest hospital there was. He only hoped that Katrina, and more importantly Kaylin would be there and okay.

Marcellos continued to talk to his mother until he reached the hospital since he wanted to be able to clearly communicate with whoever he talked to. He spoke to one of the women at the receptionist station, but he found out that there hadn't been any accident victims reported as coming in within the last hour. He left

Smoke D

the hospital wondering what he should do next and the only thing that came to mind was his mother's suggestion.

Instead of driving halfway across town and then possibly getting the same response as he had received at the hospital, he instead found the number for non-emergency calls to the police station on his phone. After waiting ten minutes, he learned that a call had been reported about thirty to forty minutes ago and where that accident had been. Though the location wasn't exactly close to where Katrina live, he knew that she hadn't necessary been near her apartment, plus he couldn't be still if he wanted to his nerves were so bad.

With nothing else to do he jumped back in his car and sped to the scene of the reported accident, which was about six miles from where he was. When he arrived he was terrified to see a car that looked like Katrina's, but it was terribly mangled along with another car on the highway. He looked at the carnage of the scene and could see where the cars had crashed through a barrier from a bridge above and fell down some thirty or forty feet. He didn't believe that anyone could have survived the fall especially in the condition the two cars were in. He got out of his car and walked down to get a closer look and he was now certain that the car was Katrina's. Marcellos approached the crowd of officers and emergency personnel who were moving around the scene and he was stopped by an officer who was moving towards him.

"Excuse me sir, but you need to get back in your car and move along," the black female officer said.

"That might be people I know who were in the wreck. I need to know for certain," Marcellos responded. "Was there a woman and a small boy in the blue car?"

M'Famous

“Are you the father or the husband?”

That one question brought emotions to Marcellos that he hadn't expected and he only nodded his head.

“Yes, there was a boy and a woman in the car. We pulled them out, but I'm afraid they didn't make it sir. I'm truly sorry for your loss.”

Marcellos stood in disbelief that his life could have dramatically changed in a matter of a few hours. He had went from denying the boy and then was happy to find ou that he was actually his, and now he was gone in the blink of an eye.

“They're transporting both bodies to the Med, but that's just procedure,” the officer said. “You can go there to get a positive identification.

Though in a state of disarray emotionally, Marcellos grasped that the officer had said only two bodies were headed to the Med.

“What about the person in the other car?” Marcellos asked the officer.

“Some kind of way the he's survived though he's banged up really bad. They just finished prying him from his car and they're trying to stabilize him before they ship him to the Med himself.”

Marcellos had never understood his entire life how sometime the people who did the worse things managed to walk away from them. He left the officer and went back to his car and shortly returned and found the officer he had spoken to.

Smoke D

“Excuse me, I didn’t want to say at first, but we’re all related. Could I just let him see my face?”

The officer gave him a curious look, but then one of sympathy and motioned for Marcellos to follow her. Yayo was on stretcher with EMP’s working over him and the officer stopped Marcellos from getting any closer. Marcellos suddenly forcefully pushed the officer to the ground, then pulled his gun and shot Yayo.

TERRANCE

Terrance had been unable to sleep for most of the night as he wondered how things would go when he and Smoke met up with Quack, and how things would be for him going forward. Hopefully he would be able to get out of the situation as smoothly as they had planned and he would be through dealing with Quack. Even if he managed to wiggle out of the contract as planned he could only hope Quack would be satisfied with the six million dollars he had schemed up on.

Terrance was also preoccupied with thoughts of C-Note and how he was doing, because he had become more like a role model to him than anyone else. In reality, he consciously attempted to emulate C-Note at times, but had been hesitant to really open himself up to a true friendship beyond what they did together concerning the music industry. He hadn't wanted anyone to completely see through the image he had created for himself through his music. But after the latest incident with Quack and his crew jumping on him with no real fear of retaliation from him, he could hardly pretend to anyone, or even himself, any longer. He was just plain Terrance, and though his alter ego, Triggamane, had granted all of his hopes and dreams, and more than he could have ever imagined, he wasn't that person. He felt as though he owned the cousins so much now, especially since they had stood up for him when they could have stood down. Though they wouldn't have made any money off of him if he left, they also wouldn't have lost any.

A few hours after Terrance finally dozed off he was awoken by his cell phone's ringing. The call was from C-Lo Chainz who was

Smoke D

looking for Smoke, but had been unable to contact him. Terrance had also tried to call Smoke very early that morning, but that was mostly out of nervousness, and he wanted to talk to the person who would be with him that day.

After the short call, Terrance got up to go over everything and to try to mentally prepare himself for the day. He knew that even though everything had been planned out that he couldn't put anything pass what the treacherous Quack might try, like taking the money and keeping the gun. They had people who would be around for that, but there was no way to know what Quack had up his sleeve.

Kain had stayed over the night before like he did a lot of other times and he was hanging out in the den working on his computer tablet when Terrance walked in.

"Wassup mane, this kinda early for you to be up, even on a day when you got somethin' goin' on," Kain said.

"It's nine in the morning, the whole world should still be in the bed," Terrance replied.

"You ai'ight for today, with goin' and meeting with dude?"

"Yeah, we got this contract all put together and ready to go. And I already talked to the people at the bank, so I'm going to pick up my piece of the money."

"Since that shit happened with C-Note you gon' have to put up mo' money though right?"

"I ain't trippin', it's better than having to pay this fool all of the money and then having to work for this nigga on top of that."

M'Famous

“Shit. The way I see it even if you only pay the nigga half of it that’s still way too much damn money.”

“Shit, it’s either that or prison, and I ain’t going to jail. Plus, after this thang with Legendary, and a world tour, a nigga money gon’ be more that made up. We’ll be swimming in that shit. I just hate my nigga C-Note going through the shit he is and ain’t gon’ be round, but I’m sho’ he still gon’ get his cut.”

“I wish I had it like that, a nigga half dead and still making cake.”

“Yeah, that’s some shit ain’t it.”

“So when you gon’ head to the bank? I want to roll wit’ you. I ain’t never seen a million dollars cash, let alone three.”

For a minute Terrance became suspicious about the comment and the possibility that his friend could try something foul. He now knew firsthand that even those that you thought would be there for you no matter what would do scandalous acts for the sake of money. But he had to give his partner the benefit of the doubt since he had done nothing over all the time that they had been around one another that could make him question his loyalty. He had also spent money freely on his friend and figured that there was no point in Kain taking anything from him when he could simply ask and would likely get it without a problem.

“I’on know yet. It won’t be too much longer though ‘cause I don’t want want to be scrambling to do nothing at the last minute and then some bullshit hold me up,” Terrance said.

Smoke D

“You think Smoke might try something once ya’ll get the gun ‘cause the nigga ain’t got no more power over you then,” Kain said.

“I’on know, but I don’t think so, that nigga got a lot to lose. If he didn’t want to he didn’t have to get involved, and he damn sho’ didn’t have to give this fool all this damn money. I believe he would’ve said something too, because going in on that tip and I don’t know what’s goin’ on could get both our asses killed.”

“You right. It ain’t really worth it, just get this shit over wit’ and be through wit’ the nigga. And you don’t go shoot no mo’ niggas and just leave guns and witnesses and shit all around.”

Terrance knew that his partner had meant the last statement as a joke, but he found no real humor in it himself. There shouldn’t have been a gun or witness in the first place as far as he was concerned.

“I’mma go jump in the shower real quick, then we can roll out. We gon’ pick up the money and shoot straight out to meet Smoke at his office. He said he’d be there by ten thirty so we’ll have just enough time,” Terrance said then walked out of the room in deep thought.

Terrance finished showering and then he and Kain headed to the bank to pick up the money. Once they made it there and got the cash they had to roll it out on a cart because it was too heavy to carry by hand. Kain picked up one bag and Terrance saw a pistol when his shirt raised, something he had never known Kain to take anywhere before.

M'Famous

The thought of Kain robbing him crept back into his mind, and though he wanted to say something he wasn't sure what to. He wasn't trying to get robbed for three million dollars, that would be too big of a hit to his account, and then he would have to arrange another three million withdrawal for the slick robbery Quack was doing. Terrance didn't have a gun on him since he didn't think he would need it until he and Smoke met up with the shyster Quack. Even if he did, he wouldn't want to actually use it on his best friend, or anyone else for that matter. His mind remained preoccupied with suspicion as they got back into his Range Rover Sport and then headed towards M'Famous Ent.'s headquarters.

"Aye stop at this lil Asian restaurant up here on the right real quick," Kain said. "I ain't ate shit since last night."

Terrance mind went into overdrive as he tried to figure something out to defer the request as he became more and more wary of his supposed friend. It seemed like to much of a set up to try something and he knew that if Kain was about to rob him there wasn't much he would be able to do once he stopped moving.

"Mane, I really ain't tryin' to stop and hang out wit' all this money in here," Terrance said giving a good excuse to keep going. "I want to get to the spot as soon as I can."

"Nigga it ain't gon' take but a few minutes, they be having shit pre-made," Kain responded. "Come on mane, you want me ridin' round this bitch hungry all day?"

"I got a house full of food, why you ain't eat there?"

"I wasn't hungry then nigga, I'm hungry now. Come on nigga, don't nobody know you got truck full of money except me

and you, and if it make you feel better you can sit yo' ass in the car."

After giving Kain a sidelong look, Terrance gave in, unable to decipher where or not there was any deception in Kain's voice or expression. He pulled the truck in to the restaurant's small parking lot, but he never put the truck in park.

"I'm just gon' wait out here, go 'head if you going," Terrance said.

"If I'm going? Nigga it ain't a question, I'mma be back in a minute," Kain said and got out.

Terrance still didn't put the SUV in park in anticipation of someone running up on him from any direction. About five minutes after Kain had disappeared inside, four darkly dressed and rough looking men walked out, all headed in his direction. Terrance locked all of his doors and tensed up, ready to punch the gas and haul ass if he had to as the men got closer. He watched nervously as they walked behind his truck, and kept going climbing into a car a few parking spaces over. He turned around just in time to see Kain walking out of the restaurant with a bag, and let out a deep sigh. The stress of everything that was going on had him too on edge. He now saw a threat in everything and everybody. He knew that while he had to be cautious and wary of people like Quack, everyone wasn't actually out to get him. He unlocked the doors and once Kain got back in they pulled away without Terrance saying much, feeling guilty about his accusations.

"Here nigga. I got yo' ass somethin', even though you ain't hungry," Kain said.

M'Famous

“Who said I wasn’t hungry?” Terrance replied.

Kain didn’t respond, only shaking his head.

“Aye when ya’ll finish with all this world touring and all that shit we need to go on a vacation or somethin’, switch the scene up for lil bit,” Kain said.

“That sound like a plan, Memphis starting to wear on me a lil,” Terrance replied.

“I know, me too. I wish I could move the hell away from my baby momma, but then my lil boy’ll be on his own, and I ain’t trying to do my lil dude like that.”

“That’s real, but I’on think it would matter too much if you moved cause it wouldn’t take too long before you put another baby in somebody.”

“Mane don’t say that shit, I got a broad talkin’ ‘bout she pregnant now. I ain’t trying to have no mo’ babies wit’ hood rats.”

“Well stop fuckin’ hood rats dumb ass nigga,” Terrance said and both men shared a laugh.

The two arrived at M’Famous headquarters a little bit later and went up to meet Smoke, who was in his office smoking weed, which was something he usually didn’t do at work. Terrance knew it had to be the stress from what was happening with C-Note and the other things going on.

Smoke D

“Wassup Smoke, you ai’ight?” Terrance asked concerned about his boss.

“Yeah, I just needed to relax my mind a lil bit,” Smoke responded. “I got all this shit goin’ on at once.”

“Wassup wit’ C-Note, is he getting any better?”

“Naw, they said he still ain’t responding so he might be in a coma.”

“Shit,” Kain mouthed. “I hate to see that happen to good people like that.”

“Yeah, my nigga ain’t deserve that shit,” Terrance added.

“Naw, he didn’t but that nigga gotta be lil less careless, especially when he fuck up somebody the way he did K. Some niggas goin’ retaliate and he should’ve been ready for that shit, but it’s all good, he took two of them niggas out and the rest is in the bag. If he go some niggas beat him there so fuck it.”

“So what happened wit’ the K nigga,” Terrance asked, “Did anybody ever catch up to him?”

“Don’t even worry ‘bout that part. I don’t want nobody ‘round here really talking ‘bout it for real, so do me a favor and let it die down,” Smoke said. “Sooner or later the police gon’ show up asking questions, so the less talking people do about it the less to be said to them.”

“I feel you on that.”

“Wassup though, you got that piece of change ready so we can go deal wit’ this nigga?”

M'Famous

"Yeah, it's out in the truck and waiting. You ready?"

"Partna I was born ready. All I do is handle business, day in and day out."

Smoke's phone rang and he took a few minutes to deal with the call.

"Aye Scoob on the way wit' the burnas," Smoke informed Terrance and Kain. "When he get here, we gon' call this nigga up so we can go 'head and get this shit over wit'."

Terrance's heart began to beat faster just thinking about what could happen.

"Let me hit that blunt," he told Smoke, who handed it over to him.

"I'mma need you to stand up in there today lil nigga. If that nigga try a double cross and try to get my money and hold this damn gun that's causing all these problems, it's goin' down. I'm gon' start shootin' and I advise you to be ready for it."

"I'm ready, shit I ain't got no choice but to be ready."

They fired up some more blunts and about fifteen minutes later Scoob showed up. Terrance, Smoke, Kain, and Scoob all went out and took the money from Smoke's truck and loaded it into Terrance's Range Rover.

"Shit you probably had this shit layin' around the house," Terrance said trying to lighten the mood as he and Smoke climbed into the SUV.

Smoke D

“I got chips, but shit I ain’t excited ‘bout giving it away to no monkey ass nigga,” Smoke said. “But this did come out the safe. You can’t let them white folks have all yo’ money, too much shit happening nowadays. They got mothafuckas hacking into they computers and all types of shit. I could walk in the bank tomorrow and they tell me all my money disappeared and and a nigga got to wait for however long ‘til they get shit straightened out.”

“Damn, I keep a lil money at the house, but I never really thought about that. When we get this thang poppin’ wit’ Legenday, I’mma have to make sho’ I keep a lil mo’ of my own paper.”

“It work two ways though, cause money just sittin’ up ain’t making you no mo’ money. So think about that before you just throw it all under the matress. Me and C always lookin’ for lil investments to make our money work for us a lil bit.”

Terrance had never really been around Smoke like this before and never really held a serious conversation with him. So every thing Smoke said sounded like jewels. Terrance’s phone rang, interrupting their conversation. It was Quack, and he gave the location that he would be waiting at for the two to show up.

“Ai’ight Scoob and some mo’ guys already know the play and they waiting on us to pull out,” Smoke said. “Play it cool and let’s make this smooth, but be ready for anything.”

Terrance only nodded his head as they pulled out and made their way to Quack, who was waiting at Chucalissa Park on the outskirts of Memphis. Though it was still day time the park was secluded and was usually empty during the week, especially early in the day. All of that made it a good place to be if things went sour.

M'Famous

Terrance was just pulling into the park when Smoke's phone rang. He said nothing once he answered and only listened to the caller who Terrance could tell was excited about something.

"Okay, don't worry, I'll deal with it as soon as I can," Smoke said. "Okay, I'll talk to you soon."

Terrance parked and he and Smoke got out, and Smoke grabbed one of the bags of money and tossed it over his shoulder. Quack, Gizzle, and another tall, stocky man, who Terrance had never seen before, were all hanging around a table deep in the park when he and Smoke walked up. They stopped about ten feet short of the group and the looks on everyone's face were anxious and grimacing.

Quack's eyes were focused solely on Smoke, the unknown man and factor, who seemed unfazed by the situation at hand. Gizzle meanwhile, was locked in on one thing, the bag that held the money.

"I know ya'll ain't fit six million dollars in one bag," Gizzle said.

"Naw, this only a part of the money. The rest of it in the truck back there," Smoke responded ready for anyone to move the wrong way. "When we get the gun ya'll can get the rest of it."

Gizzle looked at Quack questioningly.

"It's cool, we got this," Quack said then looked at Terrance. "You got that contract?"

Terrance pulled an envelope containing the contract from his pocket. "Yeah, it's right here."

Smoke D

“Good, you can keep it though,” Quack said then a smirk appeared on his face. “I got my own one for you for five albums. On my terms.”

Terrance was disheartened by the revelation and all of his hopes of some good coming out of the day vanished. He looked to Smoke for some type of guidance, but he could only shrug.

“It is what it is, ain’t really no way round it,” Smoke said to him.

With defeat in his eyes Terrance walked over and took the contract from Quack and signed it without looking at a single word.

“Don’t look so sad cuz, we gon’ take care of you,” Gizzle said now smirking himself.

“Ai’ight, where the gun at, fuck all that playing,” Smoke said aggravated by Gizzle’s taunting.

“Let’s see if it’s really some money in that bag,” Quack replied.

Smoke tossed the bag right in the center of the distance between them and Gizzle stepped forward and crouched over the bag. He opened it up and moved some of the money around checking it, then he nodded back to his uncle.

“Yeah it’s good here, but we stil gon’ have to check the rest of it,” Gizzle said.

Quack reached behind him and pulled a plastic bag from his pocket and tossed it to Terrance who just eyed it in his hands.

SMOKE

Smoke's quick reaction was probably the one thing that saved his life in that afternoon meeting with Quack. The last thing he had expected was to have to shoot anyone after things were all going as planned. As he and Terrance walked beside the men he watched as Terrance distractedly eyed the gun he was holding, turning it over again and again in his hands. They were back within sight of the Range Rover when Triggamane just dropped the gun and quickly spun around shooting with the pistol Scoob had given him. By the time Smoke himself had spun around, Quack was falling to the ground, and the man who hadn't said anything was raising his gun toward him. Once he heard the first shot from Triggamane's gun he was pulling his own and he gunned the man down. The other younger man, Gizzle, had turned and ran, and by the time Smoke had pointed at him he was behind a tree. Triggamane was still shooting at a long dead Quack with a rage in his eyes that Smoke had never seen or imagine he would. He stood there pulling the trigger even after the gun clicked empty.

"Shit,shit," Smoke exclaimed at the situation that had unfolded before him. "Aye come on, we gotta go," he said and grabbed Triggamane to shake him out of his trance.

Smoke picked up the bag of money and headed towards the SUV looking around to be sure Gizzle or someone else didn't run out from behind the trees. The various men that had come with them were just arriving when Smoke told everyone to leave. Terrance had jumped into the truck and was slowly taking his time getting out of the park.

Smoke D

“Drive nigga!” Smoke yelled.

Triggamane then snapped back enough to get them away from the park and new crime scene.

“What the fuck did you do that shit for?” Smoke asked Triggamane whose knuckles were white from gripping the steering wheel tightly.

“The gun,” Triggamane simply replied, which didn’t make any sense to him.

“What about the damn gun? You didn’t leave it back there did you?”

“Yeah I did.”

“Shit! Turn this mothafucka around ‘cause I damn sho’ didn’t just go through that shit for nothing.”

“If I did it wouldn’t matter, that’s not the gun.”

“What you saying, he was tryin’ to switch guns and keep the real one.”

“Naw, that’s the gun he showed me the first time I met him the other day, but it ain’t the gun I shot back then.”

“I thought you had seen the gun before.”

“I did, but it was dark outside and it looked like it, but when I got a good look just then I knew it wasn’t’ the same one.”

“Nigga you better be sho’, if not ain’t nothing I can do for you.”

M'Famous

"I know, that wasn't it though, that's why I spazzed out. These niggas don' jumped on me and shit, and got me stressed the fuck out over some thirsty ass bullshit. That nigga deserved to die."

That was another surprise from Triggamane that Smoke hadn't been expecting.

"Aye let's go back to the spot so we can try to figure out what the hell to do now," Smoke said. "I don't know what that nigga who ran might try, and we need to be ready fro whatever."

Triggamane didn't respond to that he just drove along now lost in his own thoughts.

Once they arrived back at the M'Famous building all of the men who had been with them wanted to know what had happened and Smoke told the story. Everyone was surprised at how things had turned out, though no one more than Smoke himself. Though he didn't believe Triggamane to be more than another embellishing artist, he saw that anyone could be pushed to their limit. There was initially a call to just find out where the man who had gotten away was and get rid of him since he was the only witness."

"Naw," Smoke said. "By now he don' told somebody and they already on us, and if we get him now ain't no way it will be taken other than what he said already. We gotta come up with something else, at least for now."

Smoke had shot and killed someone, but he knew at the least he could claim self-defense, and maybe that would be the

Smoke D

best thing for Triggamane as well, if the one who'd ran went to the police. He then remembered the call he had gotten just as they were reaching the park and what it would mean to him and his business. But before he stressed himself out with that he had to know exactly where this thing was going with Triggamane.

"You think we can get in contact with that nigga who ran off, you seem like you know 'em," Smoke said to Triggamane.

"Yeah, I know the nigga. I used to run with 'em back in the day, and he that nigga Quack nephew," Triggamane responded. "I don't got his number, but I used to fuck on his sisters every now and then, so I can try to call on of them and see if I can get him that way."

"That's all we got right now so gon' make that happen. Maybe we can work something out with this nigga without having to kill him or him goin' to the cops."

Triggamane made the call, but Smoke could tell by the words he was saying that the conversation wasn't going good. Apparently the news had already reached them and they knew who was responsible.

"Yeah, I killed that bitch. Fuck him and fuck ya'll too," Triggamane spat into the phone then he ended the call and looked at Smoke. "Couldn't get pass go."

Just then there was a knock at the door of the conference room they were in and one of the secretaries stepped in.

"It's police everywhere downstairs and they looking for you," she said pointing at Triggamane.

M'Famous

All eyes fell on him and he casually stood up and walked towards the door.

“Smoke hit my lawyer up for me and don’t worry ‘bout that other nigga, I’mma take both shots,” Triggamane said.

That was the third time that day Smoke was surprised by the young rapper.

“Shit this nigga the trigger man for real now,” Scoob said.

Smoke wanted to walk down with him, but there was a chance that the man, Gizzle, was downstairs and could point him out, which would be too much of a setback to his operation. Smoke immediately got on the phone with his own attorneys and told them to be at the police station as soon as they could to deal with Triggamane, and to call up his own attorney, who worked at the same firm. While he was using the phone, he called the police station to get an update on the other situation he’d also be dealing with on top of all the other things that had happened over the course of the last few days. His biggest star was in jail on charges of attempted murder for some kind of shooting he was involved in. The call had come from C-Lo Chain’s mother, whose call had been forwarded to him. She had only given him the basics of what had happened and asked that he do something, though there wasn’t much he could do since he was already in jail other than help him deal with his lawyer. All of this was taking place at the worst possible time, right when the label was being positioned to climb to even greater heights than it had reached already, and on the verge of starting their pending projects with Legendary Entertainment. Smoke almost felt as though they had been set up to fail. He had to figure out his next move, and soon. He could only hope that the situation with Triggamane didn’t come back to haunt him because

Smoke D

then all he would be able to do was sit back and watch everything that he and his cousin had built up crumble right before him.

“Aye ya’ll I’m gonna slide to my office to handle a few things,” he said to the men who were still gathered around. “I ‘preciate ya’ll having our back out there today.”

“Shit ya’ll shot everybody up ‘fo we got a chance to do any damn thing,” Buck said.

“Don’t worry, I got a feeling it’s gon’ be plenty mo’ shit that’s gon’ give you a chance to pop off.”

Smoke went into his office and closed the door and lit another blunt. He remembered that he had a press conference planned for later in the day. As much as he wanted to cancel it, he knew that the media would be around with questions regardless. It would be better to just deal with them on his own terms rather than otherwise. He picked up his office phone and called out to his secretary to let her know that the conference would start in around two hours, which would give him time to prepare for the questions and to find out more about the situation with C-Lo Chainz. Another thing he needed to do right then was call Legend and let him know of the setbacks they were now facing. After spending an hour on the phone with Legend and trying to come up with the best alternative to the things they had planned, Smoke called C-Note’s mother to see if there had been any improvement in his condition.

“No, he hasn’t gotten any better, but they said the fact that he’s breathing on his own is a good sign and that’s all the hope I need. This knucklehead gone be fine, but you got to keep him and yo’self out of trouble when he comes out of this place,” she said.

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"I'll try my best, but you know you raised a wild child," he replied.

"Don't blame me, he get that from ya'll side of the family."

Smoke wouldn't argue with that since most of his family members were in the streets as he had been before he and C-Note had found a way out.

"I saw something on the news about one of them boys that rap for ya'll being in another shooting. Is everything alright there?"

"We ain't have nothing to do with that, as a matter of fact I'm still tryin' to figure out exactly what happened myself."

"I hope ya'll don't loose ya'll business. Ya'll two worked too hard to mess it up with a lot of nonsense."

"You're right, we aint' goin' lose it though. We gon' pull through all this stronger than ever."

Smoke ended the call and went out to prepare himself to deal with the press conference making sure everything was set up properly. He then thought that he should have an attorney sent over to shield him from anything prying that could jeopardize him and his company. The local and national newspapers and magazines all sent out their cameramen and journalists and Smoke spent an hour answering all sorts of questions, some of which were attempts to implicate the entire company in the plots of the recent incidents that had taken place.

Once the conference was over, Smoke went straight home smoking two more blunts to help him relax. He couldn't remember the last time he had smoked so much weed in so little time. At

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home he crashed on the couch and all of his problems took turns occupying his mind one at a time. Smoke called up the one person who he felt would be able to see something worthwhile that could help him through all of this.

“Hey you. I just saw the news and all the stuff that’s happened with ya’ll today,” Alicia said. “I’m glad that you’re okay and not tied up in any of it.”

“Well one way or another I’m tied up in everything that happens because it affects my livelihood,” Smoke said.

“Boy with all that jewelry I just saw you with yo’ livelihood is just fine.”

Smoke couldn’t help but laugh, he was glad as usual that he was talking to her. As their conversation went on it dawned on Smoke what he could do to alleviate some of the building pressure of him.

“Alicia did you ever find a job?” he asked her though almost certain that she didn’t in the last few days”

“Ha! You know I haven’t found a job in the day and a half since I met you,” she replied.

“If I offered you a job would you take it?”

“Do I have to duck any bullets, ‘cause it look like ya’ll trying to live up to ya’ll label name, and I am too cute to be all shot up.”

“You ai’right, but ain’t nobody goin’ be shooting at nobody, so do you want it or not.”

“Doing what?”

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"I need somebody on the executive side to help me manage things now that my cousin laying up in the hospital. So you would be like my executive vice president of operations or somethin' like that. I'll handle the artists."

"I don't know, that's not really my field. I don't know anything about running a record label."

"I'm goin' to show you everything you need to know. As a matter of fact, I think you should come over. I can dictate to you some of the requirements of you position."

"I bet you do want to dictate something," she said and laughed. "You ain't even took me out nowhere and talking 'bout dictating somebody."

"Girl, yo' ass is crazy, college education and all," Smoke said with a laugh of his own.

"I ain't crazy, you know what they say about mixing business with pleasure," Alicia said.

"Yeah, it becomes pleasurable business. Girl stop playing, is you goin' take the job or not?"

"I guess so. You gon' pay me to do something that I don't know nothing about, but that's on you. So tell me Mr.CEO, when do I start?"

"As soon as you come over and I dictate to you. I'm just joking, come out and meet me at the office tomorrow and we'll go over some of the things I need from you. From the conversations we've had I can tell that you are good at coming up with ideas and

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you can probably handle some decision making, so I think you'll be a good fit."

"Okay, I'll be down there early, as a matter of fact you can take me in yourself."

"I got to pick you up for the job I just gave you. This ain't a way to start a relationship with yo' employer."

"What if I just came over, will it still be too much trouble then or is that bad for a relationship with my exploiter, I mean employer."

"You real funny, I might be offering you the wrong job."

"So now you don't want me to come over?"

"Stop playing, as stressful as my day been ain't no way I'd turn yo' company down."

"You know since you sound like you need a hug I guess I can come by for a while."

Alicia showed up at his place and the two spent hours just talking, though they never came on to one another. Smoke didn't want to rush it, as he'd done with a lot of other women, and spoil the communication part of their budding relationship.

Smoke got a call from his attorney, who told him what had happened in C-Lo's situation according to C-Lo himself. C-Lo had shot a man once in the chest, but the shot didn't kill him. Ironically, the man himself was being charged with vehicular homicide and first degree murder for running a woman and a child off the road, which C-Lo had just learned was his own son. Smoke's heart went

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out to his partner for having to bear such a loss and he understood his actions and would stand with him through everything. The lawyer said that one defense to C-Lo's case could be emotional distress, and with the right argument his sentence could be as simple as probation and mandatory counseling. There would be more options when they found out what judge would be trying the case and worked on him a little bit.

Triggamane's case was just beginning to be investigated so there wasn't much to say, but the early defense would be to spin the story of an attempted extortion which ended in violence. There was no way to tell if it would hold up yet, but they would work to get the case in the hands of one of the judges their firm had a working relationship with; one who they had worked with before on murder cases, who would be somewhat agreeable. If things went sour though, at the most he would be facing a second degree murder or voluntary homicide. Smoke relayed the entire conversation to Alicia, and told her that she would need to start handling things with the attorneys beginning the first thing in the morning.

"Save the day for me superwoman," Smoke said.

4 MONTHS LATER

As Smoke sat at his desk he knew he was more lucky than anything because he could have easily ended up in prison, or at least going through legal proceedings with Triggamane for the killings in the park. Triggamane had stood solid and took both charges as he said he would though the man Smoke knew as Gizzle had made an attempt to implicate him. Fortunately it was two men's word against one and with a little money moved around Smoke made sure that his name never ended up on an indictment tied to the case. He also had to deal with intense police and media questioning in relation to the incident with C-Note. The police had caught word that K, aka, Kenneth Dorsey, was involved in the shooting, and in a subsequent search it was discovered that he had been reported as missing.

Things weren't going exactly as planned, but they were better than expected for Smoke and M' Famous Ent. in lots of areas considering all that had transpired. The planned collaboration with Legendary Ent. had more or less worked itself out, however there were still a few issues with the world tour due to the recent incidents. Alicia had been the perfect fit with her problem solving skills, and she had gained the confidence in herself that she could do the right thing and make good decisions for the business. She had also been the perfect fit for Smoke and their relationship was one of the better things in his life at the moment. Despite the fact that he still had other women on the side, she was his priority, and he would drop any side chick if she interfered with his relationship. He knew that he needed to just be with Alicia, but at the moment it was hard for him to just make the switch when he had become so used to multitude of beautiful women waiting on his call. He was

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managing to keep both his relationship and his business on an even keel and for the time being that would have to do.

C-Note's condition hadn't changed yet, and his extended coma had his mother beyond stressed and Smoke was using more and more drugs to keep his mind off of it. Thankfully his cousin wasn't dead, and that alone was enough to keep just a glimmer of hope alive in everyone pulling for him. Smoke looked down at the newest edition of XXL that sat on his desk and saw a cover caption that showed it would chronicle the most recent developments in M'Famous Ent.'s rising urban legend.

Marcellos sat at his home for what would be the last day for a while. His attorney, along with Smoke's, had managed to orchestrate a situation that had allowed him to only face a charge of aggravated assault, which could've led to him doing three years in prison. Instead he had an even better deal worked out to where he had the sentence suspended and was required to spend four months in in-patient counseling along with community service. After the emotional distress of losing the son he had just gained, he felt as though counseling could actually be good for him. He'd been out on bond while the case had moved through the court proceedings and that had given him the opportunity to work on the projects that M'Famous was doing with Legendary Ent., and they already had three top ten hits in rotation on the radio.

Marcellos regretted the fact that he would miss the world tour since he wanted a change of scenery and something to occupy his mind from the thought of never being able to raise his son the

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way he had envisioned. He began spending a lot of his time in the studio and had made two songs dedicated to Kaylin and one to Katrina. Lately things had started to get somewhat serious between him and Jaylene. They had even once talked about having a child, though he wasn't sure he was ready for that at the moment; he didn't want it to seem like he was trying to replace the one he'd lost. He turned up the volume of the television, which had the news showing, and watched a clip of himself walking out of the courtroom after his decision had come down. Marcellos had known that the judge and others had received money under the table and he was just fine with that. Smoke, and M'Famous Ent., were playing to win and Marcellos was more than happy to be part of the winning team. While he didn't know what the future held, he knew that as long as M'Famous was around he would be right there with them to the end, whether it was win, lose, or draw.

Terrance walked out of the courtroom to the thralling and yelling of dozens of reporters and flashing cameras. He almost couldn't believe things had played out the way they had and that he had gotten away with murder. There had been some haggling and a little money moved around, but all in all he wouldn't be going to prison for any charges whatsoever. The lawyers had been good enough to sell the story of a man being extorted and self-defense, and his initial condition from the beating that he'd take from Quack and his goons, had actually played in his favor. That combined with the fact that the two contracts had been at the scene, along with the gun from the man Smoke had killed, sealed the deal. Even though Gizzle had come through with his story, which was the truth

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minus the part about the extortion, due to his own criminal record, it was relatively easy to discredit him. The lawyers had been able to push for a speedy trial, which got him through the process a lot faster than usual.

Now that he was a free man Terrance had plans to make up for the last few months he'd spent in the county jail, and he was just in time to jump on the movement that M'Famous had orchestrated with Legendary Entertainment. To his surprise, and Smoke's, the sales of his last album had more than doubled while he was fighting the case from the boost of street cred that the case's notoriety had given him. In addition to that he had found his courage and self-respect, and no one would run over him ever again.

Terrance's security had to push the crowd to get him through the relentless media and their questioning.

"Do you think you got away with murder?"

"Was your CEO really there?"

"Was this all a marketing scheme set up to sell more records?"

"Will you fight the civil suits if brought by the deceaseds' families?"

"Are you sorry that you killed the deceased?"

"Do you think the verdict was fair?"

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Terrance didn't answer any of their questions as he walked towards his car with his head held high. One reporter pushed up through the crowd desperate to ask one last question.

"Mr. Palmer, Mr. Palmer. Is there anything that you want to say?"

The door to his waiting car was open, but Terrance finally turned around to face the expectant crowd.

"Yeah, it's something I wanna say. I'm M' Famous bitch!" he said and got into his car leaving the surrounding media buzzing and astounded.

Those words would reverberate through every media outlet around the country and dozens internationally.

"You mean to tell me that we are running a multi-agency investigation, and there are five men dead, and none of you, not one goddamn person knows what happened in either case?" the overweight white FBI Special Agent in Charge, Langton Revern, yelled at the agents and officers surrounding the table. "What happened to their tails?"

"Sir the tails rotate and they just happened to squeeze between the cracks," one officer spoke up. "Our resources are limited, sir, and we're all doing the best we can. They will slip up again sir, and next time we'll be there to take them down."

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“You’re damn right you’ll be there, or that’s someone’s ass. I want that goddamn sham of a business shut down. Now, your requests have been granted and you’ll have what you asked for soon.”

TO BE CONTINUED...

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Many of our people stand on the sidelines and watch life pass by, feeling as though it's useless to try. But the sadder thing is when those who can help due to their influence and/or economic position remain indifferent.

One day I hope that we can all realize tht our greatest strength lies in unity. Unity for a common purpose that sees beyond gang affiliation, what side of the city you're from, or your financial or social status. Unity that doesn't care about your age, or religion, or personal preferences. We have to stop looking for things to divide us and see all the reasons to come together. Only after we achieve this will we truly start down the road of our glorious Destiny.

M'Famous

COMING SOON

M'FAMOUS II

COLD GAME

BACK 2 DA BASICS

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