

Black Boys Cry

written by

Harold JAY Trotter

1570 S Diary Ashford Dr
Houston, TX 77077

www.1989dreams.com
Htrotter@1989dreams.com

ACT 1

SCENE 1

On a dark stage, a light shines bright on TORION (Mid 20's, AA, M), a religious and spiritual guy who is often described as the balance of the group.

TORION

(Singing)

ALL TO JESUS I SURRENDER. ALL TO HIM I FREELY GIVE. I WILL
EVER LOVE AND TRUST HIM IN HIS PRESENCE DAILY LIVE. I
SURRENDER ALL. I SURRENDER ALL. ALL TO THEE MY BLESSED
SAVIOR I SURRENDER ALL.

As the lights rise halfway we see MAGIC (Mid 20's, AA, M), a former all-star athlete who is kind of floating through life due to a career ending injury. He's sitting at a memorial service along with RONNIE (Mid 20's, AA, M), a well accomplished ivy league school grad. Across from them is CRAIG (Mid 20-Late 20's, AA, M) who is a ladies man and absolutely crazy for sex. Next to Craig is ZACH (Late 20's, AA, M) an alcoholic along with JOJO (Mid 20's, AA, M), a struggling entrepreneur, and ELI (Mid, 20's, AA, M) the more progressive younger brother of Torion. They're each holding a picture frame.

ALL

I AM A MAN!

MAGIC

And what I'm not about to do is cry.

RONNIE

The better question is should I and why?

CRAIG

To make you feel better?

ZACH

Cause to me that's just wack.

JOJO

It's pointless, it's stupid.

ELI

It's less than of a man.

TORION

I know you've heard it and you've probably said it too

ALL

But black boys don't cry and that's just the truth!

CRAIG

I'm not about to show any signs of weakness.

RONNIE

Or appear like less of a guy.

MAGIC

See I've worked too hard and I've been through too much.

ELI

Just to sit around and act like a punk.

JOJO

Real men don't sit, we stand and we fight.

TORION

We fight through hell and we do it with a smile.

CRAIG

A smile that's hurting.

JOJO

A smile that's broke.

ZACH

A smile that's crooked.

ELI

And hiding some real ugly dirt.

MAGIC

Day after day, year after year, putting in the work just to get here.

TORION

To make sure that I always appear like the strongest in the room.

ELI

Even if I know it's not always the truth.

MAGIC

You better believe I'm at least top two.

JOJO

Don't blame it on the ego or what society defines as a man.

TORION

This is what I know to be and this is where I stand.

ELI

Let's just be honest, this goes back way before me.

RONNIE

My old man, his old man and big unc had never even thought of a thing.

MAGIC

I can hear pops saying, "Get up and shake it off."

TORION

"Boy you ain't no girl. Wipe ya face and find ya nuts."

CRAIG

Moms wasn't much better because she use to say

ZACH

"Ain't nobody gonna want you if you acting all gay."

MAGIC

All because of a tear and showing a little bit of emotion.

ZACH

Now everyone's confused on why I don't know how to function.

JOJO

It's funny cause when we were younger everyone said big boys don't cry.

CRAIG

Now every time I meet a woman she say's,

ZACH

Show me your sensitive side.

CRAIG

But don't fall for that cause it ain't the truth either.

ALL

Keep that balled up inside, I'm telling you it's easier.

ELI

Yeah it might hurt.

JOJO

Stress the hell out of you at night.

TORION

Take some years off your life.

MAGIC

But man up you'll be alright.

ALL
YOU ARE A MAN!

RONNIE
A black man at that.

JOJO
The descendant of the enslaved.

ELI
The definition of masculinity.

CRAIG
The protector of the queen.

ZACH
The hardest nigga standing.

TORION
Yeah that's a lot of pressure.

MAGIC
To carry the weight of your world.

JOJO
Especially when society's already looking for you to fumble.

ZACH
Not just fumble but to lock yo ass up.

CRAIG
To break you down and tell you hold ya head up.

MAGIC
Don't forget my favorite, stand strong and be tough.

ZACH
But who the hell can stand when it feels like you're simply not enough.

TORION
I know the man upstairs said weeping endures for a night.

ZACH
But whose got time to weep when you're constantly in a fight?

ALL
YOU GOTTA BE A MAN!

JOJO
That's the voice I keep hearing.

ELI
The actions I'm trying to live.

CRAIG
The lesson that I'm learning.

JOJO
So I turn to what is there to discover who and how I'll be.

ZACH
The streets.

RONNIE
The movies.

TORION
The church.

CRAIG
The club.

MAGIC
The sports.

ELI
The bros.

JOJO
The culture, that's how I learned me. You know, it was Big Sean who told me I could be a one man can change the world man.

MAGIC
Salt-n-Peppa En Vouge told me I could be a Whataman man.

RONNIE
A Jidenna Kendrick Lamar Classic Man man.

CRAIG
A Missy Elliott Hot Boyz man.

ZACH
A 50 Cent Chris Brown I'm the Man man.

TORION
A Michael Jackson Man in the Mirror man.

ELI
A Village People Macho Man man.

ALL
(Except Eli)
A what?!

ELI
A MAN!

ALL

A what? A MAN! A what? A MAN! A what? I AM A MAN!

MAGIC

And what I'm not about to do is cry.

RONNIE

The better question is should I and why?

CRAIG

To make you feel better?

ZACH

Cause to me that's just wack.

JOJO

It's pointless, it's stupid.

ELI

It's less than of a man.

TORION

I know you've heard it and you've probably said it too

ALL

But black boys don't cry and that's just the truth!

The lights rise to a full as Zach pulls a small bottle of vodka out of his pocket and takes a sip.

ZACH

You want to know the truth?

ALL

(Except Zach)

Tell me the truth!

ZACH

I said do you want to know the truth?

ALL

(Except Zach)

Tell me the truth!

Tamela Mann's "Take Me to the King" begins to play.

ZACH

(Singing)

TRUTH IS I'M TIRED OF BEING BROKE
DOLF SAID GET PAID BUT IT AIN'T WORK
I'M ALL CASHED OUT HURT AND ABUSED
I CAN'T FAKE WHAT'S LEFT TO DO

ALL

(Singing)

TAKE HIM TO THE BAR
HE'S GOTTA RIDE IN YOUR CAR
HIS DEBT IS TORN IN PIECES
HIS DRINK'S YOUR OFFERING

TAKE HIM TO THE BAR

Music stops playing.

Zach picks up the picture he brought in.

ZACH

We spent a dumb amount of time together at the bar but that's not even where we met. We met way before that. I might've been about 12.

JOJO

What's that, 6th grade?

CRAIG

Sounds about right, elementary school huh?

ELI

6th grade is intermediate school not elementary.

MAGIC

What's intermediate? In the 6th grade I was in middle school.

TORION

Nahh, middle school is 7th and 8th grade, right Ron?

RONNIE

I don't know. I went to the same school from 3rd grade to graduation.

ZACH

Here comes private school Ronnie with a quick flex.

RONNIE

Could you please just finish the story?

ZACH

Now that I think about it, I know I was 10 cuz that was the first time I got arrested.

ALL

(Except Zach)

A what?!!

ELI

Ain't no way you got arrested at 10 years old Zach.

ZACH
 Don't let the cute face fool ya, ya boy's been to jail eight times.

Zach takes another sip of his bottle

ALL
 (Except Zach)
 Eight?!

Zach continues drinking.

RONNIE
 I know at least three had to be for drinking.

ZACH
 No! What do you think I am, a drunk? There was driving without a license.

RONNIE
 One.

ZACH
 They got ya boy for larceny.

RONNIE
 Two.

ZACH
 Twice.

RONNIE
 So three.

ZACH
 Another two times for disturbing the peace.

JOJO
 I see you Ludacris!

RONNIE
 That's five.

ZACH
 Once for loitering..

MAGIC
 You got arrested for dropping trash on the ground?

RONNIE
 He said loitering not littering. That's six.

ZACH

And once for possession of stolen property but the school dropped the charges if I promised not to come back. Together, we were savages.

RONNIE

That's only 7 though.

ELI

Man be quiet.

MAGIC

We were too but not like that. You know it's because of him I met Shauna.

TORION

The ex?

MAGIC

We're separated, not divorced.

ELI

Hasn't it been 2 years now man? Give that lady a divorce.

MAGIC

What makes you think she wants one?

TORION

(Cautious)

I don't know.. You cheating..

RONNIE

Her filing for divorce.

JOJO

Shoot I thought when she moved out.

RONNIE

Or that time she filed for divorce.

CRAIG

Ain't she like dating your old teammate?

RONNIE

She also filed for divorce.

ZACH

I saw on Facebook she was pregnant by him too bro.

RONNIE

Let's not forget her filing for divorce! You've got to let her go man.

MAGIC

It's not time yet. She's coming back to me. All I gotta do is rehab this knee, get cleared, picked up, and boom! One big happy family again.

Magic pulls a bottle out of his pocket and takes a pain pill.

JOJO

Your knee's doing better? It's lookin like you'll play again?

MAGIC

With my meds and a lot of determination, of course I'm gonna play again. Ball is life and life is ball.

CRAIG

When we were in high school bro. Now I'm saying girls is life and life is beautiful.

ELI

You still with Tiana?

CRAIG

Yeah.

RONNIE

I thought you were with A'Lisa.

CRAIG

I am.

JOJO

Bro you just told me her name was Rachael.

CRAIG

It is.

ELI

So unless her name is Tiana A'Lisa Rachael, ima need you to be Clarissa and explain it all.

CRAIG

It's all of em and a few more.

TORION

When are you going to settle down? It's about time you get married and have some kids.

ELI

I keep telling my brother, everyone's not ready to be married.

TORION

You think I was ready? Janelle told me we were getting married so I had no choice but to ask her.

ALL

(Except Torion and Magic)

Hell nah.

ELI

Please tell him that's not the flex he thinks it is.

TORION

What's the problem? Marriage is beautiful.

ELI

Nobody said marriage isn't beautiful, I'm just trying to figure out how a grown man lets his woman tell him they're getting married and he turns around and ask her. I love Janelle but she might as well got down on one knee and asked you.

TORION

(Coughing)

Best decision of my life and I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

MAGIC

I agree with you T, don't listen to these chumps, they don't know nothing. My therapist said..

ALL

(Except Magic)

Therapist?!!

MAGIC

Yes! I have a therapist. There's nothing wrong with that.

ELI

Shauna got you going out bad like that?

MAGIC

What are you talking about? I'm not going out bad like anything. I'm healing, both physically and mentally.

CRAIG

It's worse than we thought fellas. Code orange, code orange.

JOJO

Ohhh shoot, mass casualty incident.

ZACH

She not only broke his heart, she took his balls too.

MAGIC

Hahaha! Immature and stupid. You guys really need to grow up.

JOJO

If being grown means visiting Mr. Rogers Neighborhood with you, I'll pass.

ELI

Speakin' of being grown Jojo, how's business goin' man? Are you almost a millionaire yet?

JOJO

Business is business. When it's up, it's up, when it's down, it's down and right now it's down. Honestly been thinking about trashin' the whole idea and getting a j-o-b

ELI

The product is amazing, what's the problem?

JOJO

Amazing product is expensive, marketing is expensive, business is expensive, and life is expensive. At this point I got more expenses than Jesus had followers. I just don't have the capital to pour into a business, take care of Morgan, and live.

ELI

Stay with it Jojo, you can't stop.

RONNIE

Yeah don't quit. I really love the name you came up with, The Jo-renity Brand. It's catchy.

JOJO

Spreading my version of serenity one fit at a time.

RONNIE

Maybe I can connect you with Monica, she might have some funding options she could help you with. You know her father is extremely well connected.

JOJO

Yeah, hopefully so. Thanks man. How is Monica doing?

RONNIE

She sends everyone warm wishes well everyone except for Zach,

ZACH

What the hell does that mean?

RONNIE

Come on now man, don't play heedless. You know the relationship you have with Monica.

ZACH

I don't know what heedless is but I don't think it's good so tell her I said chi-at-tay la bocca.

RONNIE

How many drinks have you had today?

ZACH

Less than more. I may not know what it means but I know you'd probably be it if you spent one day on my block private school Ronnie.

RONNIE

Is that a threat?

ZACH

Nah, it's a threat!.... I mean promise.

RONNIE

I don't play with threats, cause unlike you, I have too much to lose. I'll just call the cops.

Everyone, except Ronnie, groans and moans.

JOJO

Really Ron? A black man calling the police on another black man?

RONNIE

What does race have to do with whose committing a crime?

ELI

A crime bro?? Come on now! This is petty as hell.

RONNIE

What am I supposed to do fight him?

MAGIC

Yeah.

ELI

No! But the police?!

ZACH

All I need is one good shot at him and it's on like Donkey Kong.

Zach tries to get to Ronnie but Torion holds him back.

TORION

Okay that's enough! Calm down man, both of you. Janelle said we need to act like we have some sense and not forget the reason we came here today. We're friends, we're brothers, we're here for him.

Beat.

Everyone stops and picks up their picture frame. They look at it in deep thought.

JOJO

Only he could get all of us here together again.

RONNIE

He was my first friend.

CRAIG

He loved me when nobody else did.

TORION

I am who I am because of him.

ZACH

I don't know life without him.

MAGIC

He pushed me to keep going and never quit.

ELI

He could see me.

TORION

Let's do a moment of silence.

The fellas agree and are quiet for a moment.

Zach begins humming a tune that's recognizable but the others aren't sure what it is.

ZACH

(Singing)

NANTS INGONYAMA BAGITHI BABA. SITHI UHM INGONYAMA.

TORION

What are you doing?

ZACH

I'm singing.

(Singing)

INGONYAMA NENGW' ENAMABALA.

TORION

But why?!

ZACH

Because that's what you do at a memorial... sing!

(Singing)

INGONYAMA NENGW' ENAMABALA.

RONNIE

I told you he was drunk, he's always drunk.

JOJO

Bro what are you singing?

ZACH

(Singing)
IT'S THE CIRCLE OF LIFE
AND IT MOVES US ALL
THROUGH DESPAIR AND HOPE
THROUGH FAITH AND LOVE

RONNIE

I was wrong... he's drunk as
hell!

TORION

You're gonna have to quit drinking one day Zach.

ZACH

What can I say, it was drinking that brought us close.

SCENE 2

Everyone puts their picture away except Magic.

MAGIC

It was sports that brought us close. He loved the game just as much as I did, maybe even more. He had the passion, I had the talent but it was Shauna who supported me the most.

CRAIG

What are you talking about bro, your whole family use to go crazy in the stands. Ya pops would be out there yelling,

Torion embodies Magic's dad.

TORION

Pay attention Magic, keep ya eyes on the ball son.

CRAIG

Ya moms would be going wild saying,

Zach embodies Magic's mom.

ZACH

That's my baby, I did that! I did that!!

CRAIG

Bro you even had the cheerleaders rockin' with you, remember that chant you had?

Eli, Ronnie, Craig, Zach, Jojo and Torion embody the cheer squad.

ELI

Go Magic, go Magic. You know you the best go Magic!

ALL
 (Except Magic)
 Go Magic, go Magic. You know you the best go Magic!

ELI
 M-A-G-I-C It's Magic yall, it's magic yall!

ALL
 (Except Magic)
 M-A-G-I-C It's Magic yall, it's magic yall!

ALL (CONT'D)
 (Except Magic)
 Go Magic, go Magic. You know you the best go Magic!

MAGIC
 I did use to have the stands going up huh?

The guys return to their normal self.

CRAIG
 Bro anytime you played everyone was lit.

MAGIC
 But it was just something different when Shauna would come
 and support me.

TORION
 I know the feeling.

MAGIC
 No matter where she'd sit, I'd always find her smile in the
 stands.

TORION
 Same thing with Janelle.

MAGIC
 The best part about it was she'd smiled when we won and loss.

TORION
 Sounds just like my baby. I remember when -

ELI
 (Interrupting)
 Noooo!

TORION
 Huh? I was just gonna say how -

ELI

(Interrupting)

Noooo, nope, and no! Bro, please just for today can you spare us a Janelle story. I know you love ya woman and I love sis too but let somebody else get a chance.

TORION

What's your problem Eli?

ELI

I just want to go 5 minutes without hearing Janelle's name, is that too much to ask?... Go on Magic.

MAGIC

My old man was tough as hell on me. It was his dream to play in the league and all that was shattered when moms got pregnant with me.

JOJO

Was he good?

MAGIC

Good?! Pops was an Allstar, an All-American, and consistently ranked top 3. No lie, he was lit and really could've made it but he gave all that up for his family.

TORION

(Coughing)

That's what men are supposed to do. Put their dreams aside and take care of their family.

ELI

On Leave it to Beaver. We live in that Turks & Caicos paint the town red era. People don't live like that anymore.

CRAIG

Nah, not even back then. My sperm donor knocked up my mom, kept it pushing and never looked back.

MAGIC

My dad did the best he could. Moms use to tell me he how happy he was when he found out I was a boy.

JOJO

It was like his dream didn't die after all huh?

MAGIC

He never just said those words but I could see it in his eyes. He literally named me Karl Deion Taylor after who he considered to be the greats.

RONNIE

Karl Anthony-Towns? Yeah, he's well polished.

CRAIG

Are you serious right now?? Karl-Anthony Towns a goat?
Karl's for Karl Malone.

JOJO

And Deion's gotta be Deion Mr. Primetime Sanders.

MAGIC

You already know it. And my dad swears we're related to
Lawrence Taylor but I ain't never seen him at no family
reunion or nothin like that.

ELI

So why do we call you Magic again?

MAGIC

Cause when ya boy gets the ball, it's just like magic.

Zach takes a sip of his drink.

ZACH

Well call me Magic too.

RONNIE

He said ball, not bottle.

MAGIC

Pops always reminded me

Torion embodies Magic's dad.

TORION

I named you what I named you because I knew you'd be great.

MAGIC

His theory was,

TORION

Ball is life and life is ball.

MAGIC

And he pushed me hard cause he really believed that.

JOJO

You were close to him?

MAGIC

Inseparable... but that was the power of the game. It kept us
close. It was really the only thing we ever talked about.

CRAIG

Bro I know yall had to talk about sex.

MAGIC

With my old man?!

CRAIG

I ain't never had one so I don't know what you do.

MAGIC

Anytime I even brought up girls, that man would say,

TORION

Girls are a distraction and will be the cause of your downfall. Worry about the game and the game only.

MAGIC

I'm telling you, that was the most important thing to him and nothing else. I remember once, I wanted to join the band and pops said,

TORION

Boy you ain't no Michael Jackson.

MAGIC

I asked to go to science camp and he said,

TORION

You're not book smart, you just need to focus on the game.

MAGIC

And once when he saw me cooking in the kitchen with moms, he bout lost it and said,

TORION

You ain't no Emerald! Get outside son and run those drills.

MAGIC

Every single day of my life we were either practicing plays, running drills, or conditioning. I mean yeah it was fun but I wanted to do other things too. My 10th grade year, pops had burnt me out so much that I lost my fire to play. I wasn't in love with it anymore. So I decided I was gonna walk into my parents room, look them in the face and tell them I was done playing for good.

CRAIG

My boy!! That's what I'm talking about.

MAGIC

I'll never forget. It was a Thursday afternoon and I was supposed to be at practice but to hell with practice, I'm telling my dad I quit the team. So I got my two homies, Squeak and Tussle, to walk me home that day.

Jojo and Zach embody Magic's friends.

JOJO
You got this bro!

ZACH
He ain't got no choice but to listen to you!

JOJO
So what if he yo dad?!

ZACH
He can't boss you around!

JOJO
It's yo life!

ZACH
Yo choice!

JOJO
If you don't wanna play

ZACH
You ain't gotta play!

JOJO
And if he gotta problem with that

ZACH
Tell him I said what's good?!

JOJO
What's good?! We got yo back bro!

Torion approaches Jojo, Zach, and Magic.

TORION
Why aren't you at practice son?

MAGIC
I got something I need to talk to you about.

ZACH/JOJO
Yeah!

MAGIC
And I need you to listen to me till I'm done.

ZACH/JOJO
Yeah!

MAGIC
My decisions made and there's nothing you can do bout it.

ZACH/JOJO

Yeah!

TORION

Beavis and Butthead has one more yeah before I stick my foot down their throat and out there -

ZACH

(Interrupting)

Whooooaa! What's that?? Here I come mom!

JOJO

Yeah me too! Gotta go Magic, see ya!

Zach and Jojo take off running.

TORION

Now I don't know what you want to talk about but it's gonna have to wait till tonight. I just got laid off again.

MAGIC

I'm sorry.

TORION

No time to be sorry son, be focused! Why do you think I push you like I do?

MAGIC/TORION (CONT'D)

To be the best.

TORION (CONT'D)

You're gonna do what I couldn't and be the reason me and ya mama get out the hood. All this struggling and suffering is temporary cause you're gonna change our lives. We're counting on you Karl and I know you're not gonna let us down. Now get to practice and we'll talk later.

The guys all return to their normal self.

CRAIG

So you never told him?

JOJO

How could he? He was his families plan to get out the hood.

MAGIC

So I pushed harder, trained longer, focused greater and became the best. Every school and scout knew my name.

ALL

Karl Deion Taylor.

MAGIC

Magic if ya nasty. It was starting to look like my pops dream was gonna come to life after all. Then injury number 1.

Torion embodies Magic's dad and Ronnie embodies the doctor.

TORION

What is it doc?

RONNIE

Rupture of the Achilles tendon.

MAGIC

You could see the hurt on pops face as they wheeled me into the surgery room. I remember waking up from the procedure and the first thing I hear is,

TORION

How long before he can play again?

RONNIE

He's gonna need around 6 - 10 months of recovery time.

TORION

Six months?! Do you know who this is? My son is gonna be bigger than Kobe, Manning, and Beckham. We don't have that kinda time.

RONNIE

If you keep him in rehab Mr. Taylor, he'll recover finely.

TORION

There's gotta be more you can do doc.

RONNIE

I'm sorry, no.

TORION

We'll do anything, we're desperate!

Beat.

RONNIE

Look, if you can come up with \$750 I'll give you these pills that won't only expedite his healing but have him better than before.

TORION

I don't have that kind of money.

RONNIE

Then 6 - 10 months it is.

TORION

No! I'll get it doc, I'll do whatever I have to do to get it.

Ronnie returns to his normal self.

MAGIC

And he did. I was back under the lights and making highlight after highlight... Until injury number two. Not as serious as the first but still an injury.

TORION

What the hell is wrong with you?! Are you stupid?! Do you know what me and ya mama sacrifice for you to be out there and this is the dumb stuff you do.

MAGIC

It was his way of motivating me.

TORION

I should've never quit playing and just let ya momma raise you on her own. I can't believe you. I never made such dumb moves when I was playing. Stupid, just stupid.

MAGIC

It was him pushing me to be better.

JOJO

It clearly worked.

MAGIC

Because of him I was a champion and was gonna finally complete the story... but injury number 3.

CRAIG

The big one?

MAGIC

The one that changed up the whole trajectory. I knew better, especially 7 days before combine. I didn't even make it to the hospital yet, and he was saying,

TORION

How could you Karl? How could you?!

MAGIC

Once we got back to the apartment he wouldn't even talk to me let alone help me. He just had this look on his face that said,

TORION

Everything I ever worked for gone down the drain.

JOJO

Ain't no way ya pops said that to you.

MAGIC

No.. But that's cause he wasn't speaking to me, he wouldn't look at me. The only thing he did do was make sure I had my pain meds.

Torion walks over and hands Magic his meds.

MAGIC (CONT'D)

I remember the night the combine ended, he literally came in the room and told me,

TORION

This place isn't big enough for all of us anymore. I'm headed out to look for work but I expect you to be gone when I get back.

Torion returns to his normal self.

MAGIC

And just like that he walked out of my life. You know, for a small moment I was honestly relieved. It was so stressful carrying the weight of world and when he left it felt like I didn't have to anymore but that's when the hurt sat in.

JOJO

Where did you go?

MAGIC

Shauna's. She supported me through it all, she really cared about me. At least I thought she did but afterwhile she changed up just like him.

CRAIG

What happened?

MAGIC

I was hurt and I was trying to get better, I still am but she preferred to watch me suffer and I just couldn't take it anymore. I just wanted the pain to stop.

ELI

Oh I got some weed for that.

TORION

He doesn't smoke Eli... It's Vicodin isn't it?

MAGIC

I really wanted to believe that she was different but she wanted me to suffer, she wanted me to be in pain.

TORION

That doesn't sound like Shauna man.

MAGIC

Well it is okay?! She wanted to be married to the guy who could touch the ball and send the crowd into excitement! She wanted the highlight reel and to be married to Magic but that isn't me anymore! That isn't me! But I'm gonna do whatever it takes to get my family back.

CRAIG

You aren't still on the pills are you?

Beat.

MAGIC

Believe it or not, I knew she was leaving before it happened so I prepared myself. I stopped talking to her, looking at her, I stopped leaving the room, I wasn't doing anything because if she was gonna walk out on me I wanted her to have a good reason to cause the one pops did wasn't!

TORION

Shauna didn't deserve that.

MAGIC

AND NEITHER DID I!! .. All I did was try and make that man happy and the moment he wasn't he threw me away.

CRAIG

She's not him. She didn't care about ball, she cared about you.

MAGIC

Then why are we getting a divorce cause I sure as hell don't want one.

TORION

You need to heal first Magic.

MAGIC

No! I need my wife!! I need my dad!! I NEED MY FAMILY!!

Magic begins to emotionally break down as the guys huddle around him.

CRAIG

We're your family man.

ELI

We're here for you.

RONNIE

We got you.

TORION

We love you bro.

MAGIC

You don't love me. You love Magic and without ball Magic doesn't exist. No, he's the only one who loved me. He pushed me to keep going and never quit but I can't, I can't.

JOJO

Believe me, I get it man but we gotta stand strong and be tough.

MAGIC

Who the hell can stand when it feels like you're simply not enough. I was supposed to be the savior, the one that changed everything for everybody and look at me.

JOJO

I'm looking at you and you're a king.

CRAIG

You're healing.

ELI

You're a warrior.

ZACH

You're a winner.

TORION

You are a man.

MAGIC

I've spent my whole life trying to be what others told me I was and trust me all that sound good in a Tiktok video but in the real world it's just words.

SCENE 3

Zach steps away from the group, pulls out his phone and begins recording.

CRAIG

Zach.... What are you doing?

ZACH

Don't look this way, just keep doing what you're doing.

RONNIE

Are you recording us?

ZACH

Recording you sounds bad, I'm creating content and that's good. He just said this sounds good on TikTok and I'm tryin to hit 50 followers.

TORION

(Coughing)

If you don't get that camera off us.

ZACH

Fine! I don't want you coughing in my video anyways.

Zach turns the camera to himself.

ZACH (CONT'D)

It's ya boy Zach, thanks for tuning into my channel. If you haven't done so already, be sure to like, comment, and subscribe. Also turn on your notifications so you never miss a video. I'm sitting here with my boy Magic, he's on opioids.

ALL

(Except Zach and Magic)

ZACH!!!

ZACH

What?! I'm an alcoholic. We don't judge on my channel. My boy was just telling us how his marriage and life fell apart. Ima get the full scoop for ya.

Zach and his camera phone walk over to Magic.

MAGIC

Come over here with that phone and I'm breaking both you and it into 311 pieces.

ZACH

Everybody wants to fight me today.

RONNIE

Technically you wanted to fight me.

ZACH

Semantigans.

RONNIE

Se-what?! Those 12 days of public school really failed you I see. The word you're trying to emit is semantics.

ZACH

Nah private school Ronnie. The word is se-man-ti-gans.

RONNIE

That's not a word, doh doh.

ZACH

Oh con-traire. It's semantics featuring shenanigans. So therefore what you just said to me was se-man-ti-gans, doh-doh! Now back to you Magic. I just want to ask you one question.

MAGIC

One question and one question only.

ZACH

Why weren't you leaving your room?

MAGIC

I told you, I was in pain.

ZACH

Nah, come on man why weren't you leaving your room?!

MAGIC

Because I was depressed.

ZACH

Okay, okay let me change it up. Tell us, why didn't you clean your room?!

Magic stops and thinks for a minute then it hits up.

MAGIC

(Singing)

I WAS GONNA CLEAN MY ROOM BUT THEN I GOT HIGH
I WAS GONNA GET UP AND FIND THE BROOM BUT THEN I GOT HIGH
MY ROOM IS STILL MESSED UP AND I KNOW WHY

ALL

(Except Magic)

WHY MAN?

ALL (CONT'D)

CAUSE I GOT HIGH
BECAUSE I GOT HIGH
BECAUSE I GOT HIGH

They all laugh at each other.

MAGIC

You dudes, don't take anything serious do you?

JOJO

You were right there with us.

ELI

Yooo we were kids singing that mug.

JOJO

Nah this one is worse, I was really a kid talkin about

(Singing)

HEY, HOW YOU DOIN' LIL' MAMA? LET ME WHISPER IN YA EAR
TELL YA SOMETHIN' THAT YA MIGHT LIKE TO HEAR
GOT A SEXY LIL BODY AND YA BUTT LOOK SOFT
MIND IF I TOUCH IT TO SEE IF IT'S SOFT?

ALL
 (Singing)
 WAIT TILL YOU SEE MY OOOOO
 WAIT TILL YOU SEE MY OOOO
 LIKE BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM

ELI
 No, no, no, no, no! For me it was
 (Singing)
 OOPS, THERE GOES MY SHIRT UP OVER MY HEAD

ALL
 (Singing)
 OH MY

ELI
 OOPS, THERE GOES HER SKIRT DROPPIN' TO MY FEET

ALL
 (Singing)
 OH MY

ELI
 (Singing)
 OOH, SOME KIND OF TOUCH CARESSING MY LEGS

ALL
 (Singing)
 OH MY

TORION
 Eli didn't care but I use to be afraid to get caught watching
 BET Uncut.

ZACH
 Not me! My jawn was
 (Singing)
 UGH, I LIKE IT LIKE THAT
 SHE WORKIN' THAT BACK, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ACT

ALL
 (Singing)
 SLOW MOTION FOR ME, SLOW MOTION FOR ME
 SLOW MOTION FOR ME, MOVE IN SLOW MOTION FOR ME

*The guys start laughing but realize that Craig is
 still in his own world singing the song.*

CRAIG
 (Singing)
 SLOW MOTION FOR ME
 SLOW MOTION FOR ME, MOVE IN SLOW MOTION FOR ME

RONNIE

Craig?!

CRAIG

(Singing)

SLOW MOTION FOR ME

SLOW MOTION FOR ME, MOVE IN SLOW MOTION FOR ME

RONNIE

Is he having flashbacks?

CRAIG

That song put me up on game but nothing got me more play than

D'Angelo's Untitled (How Does It Feel) begins to play

CRAIG (CONT'D)

(Singing)

GIRL, IT'S ALL ON YOU

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

AND IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN DECIDE

AND IF YOU'LL HAVE ME

I CAN PROVIDE EVERYTHING THAT YOU DESIRE

IF YOU GET A FEELING

FEELING THAT I'M FEELING

ALL

(Singing)

WON'T YOU COME CLOSER TO ME, BABY?

CRAIG

(Singing)

GIRL, YOU ALREADY GOT ME RIGHT WHERE YOU WANT ME, BABY I,

I JUST WANNA BE YOUR MAN

ALL

(Singing)

HOW DOES IT FEEL? YEAH (OH)

HOW DOES IT FEEL? YEAH, YEAH

HOW DOES IT FEEL? YEAH (HOW?)

HOW DOES IT FEEL? YEAH (YEAH, OH)

Music ends.

CRAIG

Broooo! The amount of cheeks I got based off that alone!

ZACH

I'd give a bottle of quesita migos to live one day in your shoes and I've never even afforded quesita migos.

RONNIE

It's pronounced casa.... you know what, never mind.

ZACH

I got a question for everyone.. I want to know how old you was the first time you got some?

TORION

Me and Janelle waited till marriage.

ZACH

(Like Kevin Hart)

DAMNNN!!... I'm sorry... I'm sorry... It was a thought and I blurted it out. I didn't mean it that way.

TORION

I'm fine.

ZACH

Just understand I didn't mean it the way it came out. I can honestly say that that was from a place of love like damnn.

TORION (CONT'D)

Just leave it alone Zach,
just leave it alone.

MAGIC

All I'ma say is I was an athlete.

ELI

So how old is that?

MAGIC

Like I said, just know I was an athlete.

ZACH

I was 15.

TORION

Damn!

RONNIE

I made it to college.

JOJO

Prom night for me.

ELI

Got ya beat, homecoming here!

CRAIG

I was twelve.

TORION

That's sick. I don't see how you guys do it. I've only been with one woman my whole life and that's enough.

RONNIE

I got more than one but probably less than ten.

ALL

(Except Ronnie)

Ten?!

ZACH

I didn't know you had it in you my boy.

RONNIE

Let's just say mine tend to stick around after they get some of ol' Ron Ron.

JOJO

I'm a little bit over two hands.

ZACH

I'm probably at a cool 22.

TORION

Do you just say yes to everybody?!

ZACH

Chill out Torion, that's good for our age bro. Tell him Eli.

ELI

I'm not judging anybody cause I know what I do and I do a lot.

TORION

Granny's rolling over her in grave listening to this.

ELI

Granny literally had 5 kids and 3 baby daddies, I think she understands what I'm saying.

MAGIC

All I'ma say is I am an athlete.

TORION

Okay now I don't get it.

ZACH

I do. How many you on Craig?

Craig is silent for a moment, building anticipation in the group.

CRAIG

I believe it was the great, philosophical Mother Teresa who I once heard say, "Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you." And that's what I've been doing ever since dawg!

TORION

That's disgusting bro. Twelve years old and always the person nearest you, I can't believe you don't have any kids yet.

JOJO

None that he knows of.

CRAIG

Oh, I'm never having kids.

TORION

(Coughing)

You'll regret it, best decision I ever made.

JOJO

Everything I do is for Morgan.

ZACH

Mine stole my heart.

MAGIC

I can't wait to be a dad but if my daughter is knocking boots at twelve, bro I'm killing the little dude doing it with her.

CRAIG

I still remember her name, Lakeitha Marie Jefferson. Tried to look her up on Facebook but couldn't find her.

JOJO

Yall went to school together or something?

CRAIG

Foster care. We lived in the same group home. Matter fact, that was actually the same year I met him.

Craig picks up the picture he brought in.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

He loved me when no one else did. Seen me through some of the darkest and and loneliest times of my life.

MAGIC

What was the deal with ya folks? Where were that at?

CRAIG

My birth mom had me when she was 13. Her dad was a pastor and there was no way his daughter was having a baby that young because what would his church members say?

Magic, Zach, and Jojo embody church members of Craig's grandfathers church.

ZACH

Chilleeee, you know what word on the street is?

MAGIC

You know I know.

JOJO

And you know, that I know, that you know, I know.

ZACH

Pastor must be ashamed.

JOJO

He's gotta be embarrassed.

ZACH

How could he?

MAGIC

How could she?

JOJO

How could they?

MAGIC

Horrible.

JOJO

Awful.

ZACH

Despicable.

RONNIE

I think you mean despicable.

ZACH

Oh... What he said. The congregation won't survive.

MAGIC

The family won't survive.

JOJO

The church won't survive.

JOJO/MAGIC/ZACH (CONT'D)

Scandalous.

The guys return to their normal selves.

RONNIE

So she gave you up for adoption?

CRAIG

Nah, she ran away to stay with a cousin and had me. For whatever reason that didn't work out though and we went and stayed in a shelter then foster care until she got pregnant again. She had a baby girl but I never met her.

ELI

Why not?

CRAIG

Apparently, you can't be pregnant in foster care and have a kid already. They moved me to a children's home, her to a girls home and we never saw each other again.

RONNIE

I knew you grew up in the system but you never told us this. There should be some records, something that tells you where she went, who she is.

CRAIG

You don't think I looked for her Ronnie? I lived in 6 group homes, 17 foster homes, and on the street twice. Every chance I got I was looking for my mom.

RONNIE

I'm sure I can make some phone calls. Monica's dad has major connections.

CRAIG

Only connection I need is a homicide detective. Once I was finally able to track her down, she had been dead for 4 years already. FOUR YEARS! And then they had the nerve to tell me the man they think did it was still free. He killed my mom and my sister and was free!

TORION

You ever try to find the church? See if her dad is still living?

CRAIG

For what?! I don't need them.

TORION

That's your grandpa.

CRAIG

No that's a murderer too. If it wasn't for him my mom and sister would probably be alive still.

TORION

That's not fair Craig.

CRAIG

And you think my life was?!... Strangers beat me and kept me so they could collect a check. I would go hungry for days and had to steal from whoever just to get a decent meal. I lost everything and everybody I loved and still made it.

TORION

And I'm proud of you, I really am but I wouldn't be your friend if I didn't tell you you're still holding on to that little boys hurt and projecting it on to the women you're dealing with. Me and Janelle were talking and-

CRAIG

(Interrupting)

Wait! You were talking to your wife about me?

TORION

Yeah.. We talk about everything and what she was saying is starting to make sense. You ever associated your birth mom having you at thirteen with you losing your virginity at twelve?

CRAIG

Leave my mom out of this.

TORION

You ever connect the fact that you don't want to have kids to you being abandoned by her and your dad for that matter?

CRAIG

Did you not hear what I just said?!

TORION

Your need for multiple women to a deeper desire of wanting to be loved by her? By a true family.

CRAIG

See this is why I don't open up. I'm trying to tell you about what I've been through and you're using it on me. I should've just kept it balled up inside.

ELI

Trust me it's easier.

TORION

I know you're hurt, I know it wasn't fair, and I know there's stories deep down in that heart of yours that you can't even find the words to share but it's not gonna heal hoping bed to bed, woman to woman.

CRAIG

I don't know what that means cause I'm healed if you ask me and most importantly I've learned to love myself because if I don't who the hell will?

TORION

Loving yourself doesn't consist of giving yourself away to any and everybody.

ELI

Hey that's enough T, let it go.

TORION

He needs to hear this!

JOJO

Yeah man just drop it.

CRAIG

No, he has so much to say, let him finish.

TORION

From the outside looking in it seems like you have it all together but deep down you're looking for someone to fill a void and as much as you believe you're free, you won't truly be until you heal that. I'm telling you this as your friend man.

CRAIG

Well fine time to tell me "friend".

Craig walks over and picks up the picture he brought.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

See that's what I loved about him. He's the one that told me to worry about me and only me.

Craig exits.

ZACH

Hold up Craig.. I got a bottle man, let's talk it over a drink.

JOJO

Dang Torion, you always messing up the moment.

Zach grabs his bottle and chases after Craig with Jojo.

ELI

What was that about T?

RONNIE

Yeah dude that wasn't cool.

TORION

I should go check on him.

MAGIC

He'll be back, he just needs a minute.

Torion notices Magic pulls out his pills.

TORION

Seriously Magic, you can't keep taking those.

MAGIC

You should probably start minding your business.

TORION

Right now my business is you.

Torion tries to grab the pill bottle from Magic.

MAGIC

Yo take your hands off my stuff.

TORION

I'm not letting you take anymore.

MAGIC

Get your hands off my bottle.

TORION

You don't need it man!

MAGIC

I said let go!

TORION

You don't need it!

MAGIC

Let go!

Magic punches Torion who falls to the floor causing the pills to spill everywhere.

Magic jumps to the floor and tries to gather them up.

MAGIC (CONT'D)

Look what you did!

Magic gets as many pills as he can and exits.

SCENE 4

Eli walks over to Torion.

ELI

If I didn't have mama's nose and you her big toe, I would wonder if we're really brothers.

TORION

How did we get here Eli?

ELI

I caught a plane.

TORION

I'm talking about here! How did he let us get here? Were supposed to be friends, brothers and look at us. Today should've been perfect. I gotta make it right.

RONNIE

You gotta relax T.

TORION

I can't relax when I see my brothers falling. We're supposed to be kings. Janelle told me this was a bad idea and I can't leave here till I get us right.

RONNIE

What's up with that? Everything is Janelle said this, Janelle said that.

ELI

I mean I didn't want to say it but since it's been said.. I'm starting to wonder if Janelle's the man of the house or you?

TORION

Interesting choice of words coming from the two of you.

RONNIE

I beg your pardon.

TORION

(Coughing)

I mean you're not married yet so you don't understand the relationship. Shoot me cause me and my wife are on the same page! What's wrong with that? You guys walk around here acting like having a happy and healthy marriage is a problem!

RONNIE

Is it a problem Torion? Are you really happy?

TORION

Yes I am! And would you be asking me that if I was married to a white woman or a Hispanic? You'd celebrate me being happy, but dare a black king be happily in love with a black queen and now it's a problem.

RONNIE

Here we go with the Ronnie dates a white woman trope.

TORION

Well since you brought it up, yes! Ronnie, you are a smart, successful, God fearing man, why can't you find a beautiful black woman to be with?

ELI

Why does it matter who he's with T, as long as he's happy.

TORION

I'm just saying why can't he be happy with a black woman?! There's plenty out there looking for men like both you.

ELI

I don't understand your obsession with my relationship status.

TORION

Because I want to see you happy.

ELI

Well fitting into some box that you've drawn for me isn't my definition of happy.

TORION

(Coughing)

I'm just trying to help.

ELI

Well I don't want your help! And do you need a cough drop?! Because you got two more times to cough and you're spitting in a covid test.

TORION

I'm fine but believe me when I say Janelle is the best thing to ever happen to me.

RONNIE

And I feel the same way about Monica. She makes me feel like nobody else in the world ever has and I don't have an issue that she just so happens to be white.

TORION

Does she just so happen to be white or is that what you sought?

RONNIE

I sought safety, comfort, and love... Something that's clearly not everywhere.

TORION

That's not what I meant.

Ronnie exits.

ELI

I'm not sure what you mean T, but you need to figure it out before any more of our friends walk out on us.

TORION

Am I wrong Eli? All I ever wanted was the best for you baby bro, for everyone.

ELI

You can't fix our lives for us T, we gotta do that. Some things are just out of your control and you gotta give it time to play out.

TORION

The problem is we think we have time.

ELI

The clock doesn't stop till it stops. Time is still running man, we got this.

TORION

(Coughing)

I'd like to believe you bro but that's just not the reality. I did everything I was supposed to do, how I was supposed to do it, and who I was supposed to do it with and yet I'm still here...

Beat.

ELI

Okay where are you at T cause it's clearly not here.. Hello, you gonna answer me?

Torion stands in silence.

ELI (CONT'D)

This isn't cool. Where the hell are you?

Torion begins to cough until he gathers himself.

TORION

I'm here Eli.. I'm just grateful to be here.

ELI

You should be. You have a beautiful wife, a big house, a great job as an engineer and you given me the greatest title I've had yet as an uncle. You got it all.

TORION

(Coughing)

I'm blessed man, truly blessed and the highest blessing is life.... I'm just grateful for life..

ELI

That's beautiful T, hope I find that kinda happiness one day.

TORION

There's no better time than right now.

ELI

Don't start with that no man knows the day or the time mess.

Torion starts to get up and goes into a panic.

TORION

We don't but you also never know the curveballs life will throw at you either. That's why I need to talk to Ronnie and Craig and apologize and convince Magic he doesn't need those pills and and help Zach stop drinking and see you get a family man, I gotta see you get a family! I gotta do these things today cause tomorrow isn't promised, tomorrow isn't promised.

ELI

I'ma need need those pills and that drink if you don't calm down. You're being weirder than normal and I'm not feelin' it.. I'ma go check on the other guys and get you some water. Something expensive like Fiji to move that cough out of you and hopefully calm your nerves. I'll be back.

Eli exits.

Torion pulls out his phone and calls Janelle.

TORION

(On the phone)

Hey babe.. No, it's going just like you said it would. I know, I know, I know. How's the kids?.. Tell them I miss them. Of course I miss you too.... No I haven't told them yet. I almost told Eli but it just didn't feel like the right time. I know.. I will... ok, love you too.

Torion hangs up the phone.

He picks up the picture he brought in and looks at it.

TORION (CONT'D)

This just isn't right... You promised we'd do this until our grandkids had kids. That we'd be the men of the next generation. That'd we'd be the old guy spitting all the knowledge and laughing at the young bucks. It was a lie! YOU'D LIED!!! Why?? ... Why?!!

Torion begins to cough again.

TORION (CONT'D)

Pull it together Torion. God is faithful. God is true. God is going to bring me through this. He's going to bring all of us through this. Yeah it might hurt, stress the hell out of you night but you gotta man up, you'll be alright. We just have to seek the Kingdom of God first and everything we need will be given to us. I'm trusting you God, whatever happens, I'm trusting you.

(Singing)

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL
 IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL
 THOUGH SATAN SHOULD BUFFET, THOUGH TRIALS SHOULD COME
 LET THIS BLEST ASSURANCE CONTROL
 THAT CHRIST HAS REGARDED MY HELPLESS ESTATE
 AND HAS SHED HIS OWN BLOOD FOR MY SOUL
 IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL
 IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL
 AND LORD, HASTE THE DAY WHEN MY FAITH SHALL BE SIGHT
 THE CLOUDS BE ROLLED BACK AS A SCROLL
 THE TRUMP SHALL RESOUND, AND THE LORD SHALL DESCEND
 EVEN SO, PRAISE THE LORD, PRAISE THE LORD, O MY SOUL
 IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL
 IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

BLACK OUT.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

As the lights rise Jojo is looking at his photo.

JOJO

(Singing)

I WAS BORN BY THE RIVER IN A LITTLE TENT
OH, AND JUST LIKE THE RIVER, I'VE BEEN RUNNING EVER SINCE
IT'S BEEN A LONG A LONG TIME COMING
BUT I KNOW A CHANGE GON' COME OH YES, IT WILL

Zach, Craig, and Magic enter unseen to Jojo.

JOJO (CONT'D)

(Singing)

THEN, I GO TO MY BROTHER AND I SAY, "BROTHER, HELP ME,
PLEASE" BUT HE WINDS UP KNOCKIN' ME BACK DOWN ON MY KNEES
OH THERE BEEN TIMES THAT I THOUGHT I COULDN'T LAST FOR
LONG BUT NOW, I THINK I'M ABLE TO CARRY ON
IT'S BEEN A LONG A LONG TIME COMING
BUT I KNOW A CHANGE GON' COME OH YES, IT WILL

CRAIG

You good Jo?

JOJO

I will be. Nothin' I haven't heard before.

MAGIC

What is it?

JOJO

Another no. Ronnie had Monica contact some people about me
getting a business loan but it didn't work out, again. Why I
gotta show people I don't need money in order to borrow it?

ZACH

Capitalism.

JOJO

Day and night bro, I'm working hard trying to make this
business happen and it seems every chance someone gets they
throw a monkey wrench in my plans and I'm ready to quit.

MAGIC

You can't quit Jo, you just gotta keep going.

JOJO

I didn't go to college like you, Craig, Ronnie and T. I don't
have a good trade like Eli and I'm not a... a... a Zach.

This is all I got and it's barely holding on. I was born in the wrong family man, opportunity's never knocked at my door.

CRAIG

You got Morgan.

JOJO

My princess is the only thing that keeps me going.

MAGIC

How old is she now?

JOJO

3 going on 41. I want to give her better but it's like I'm starting off too late.

CRAIG

You're already winning by just being there bro.

JOJO

Even that's hard. There's days I feel like I work so hard, give so much and still don't get anywhere, that I think she'd be better off if I wasn't here.

CRAIG

Nah don't say that. It's easy to quit when you're a black man. We're freakin' descendants of the enslaved but at the same time we gotta be the definition of masculinity.

MAGIC

Half the people in our life need us to be the protector of the queen while the other half want us to be the hardest dude standing.

JOJO

That's a lot of pressure man.

CRAIG

But that's why you can't punk out and quit! If that little girl see's her dad follow his dreams and succeed when all the odds were against him, imagine what she'll be able to do having the support system you didn't.

Jojo stops and walks over to pick up his photo.

JOJO

You're right. That little girl means the world to me. I'm telling you, being a girl dad changes you.

CRAIG

IF I had kids, I wouldn't mind having a girl.. You make it look fun.

MAGIC

When I have kids, I'm definitely having a girl.

JOJO

You know you don't get to choose right?

MAGIC

You definitely get to choose bro. If she rides it it's a guy if she throws it a girl is chosen.

CRAIG

Nah, nah it's doggy brings a boy mission brings a girl.

Craig, Jojo, and Magic laugh together.

ZACH

That's the dumbest thing I ever heard.

CRAIG

Nah man, I think it was Neil deGrasse, Bill Nye one of them science guys that proved it true.

JOJO

No.. no.. no.. It was Nick Cannon.

They laugh again while Zach is suspiciously quiet and drinking.

CRAIG

You good Zach?

ZACH

Yeah.. Just thinking about my baby girl.

JOJO

I thought you only had boys.

ZACH

My first born and only girl. Her names Lenora.

JOJO

That's a beautiful name, Queen Lenora.

CRAIG

Bro we've been friends, what, at least 13 years now and I never knew this.

MAGIC

Same man, we've been friends a good 9/10 years and this the first time I heard you mention niece.

CRAIG

I'ma have to meet her and hopefully she's anything like you.

ZACH

What's that supposed to mean? When you guys start having kids you better wish they turn like Uncle Zach.

JOJO

Nah king, I'ma pass on that one. What about you Craig?

CRAIG

That sounds like a question for Steve. We surveyed 100 people and asked them to name ONE great quality of Zach's they might want in their daughter. Top three answers are on the board.

MAGIC

Me first, me first, me first. Mr. Harvey if I had a daughter I would want her to be honest.

ZACH

Good answer, good answer.

CRAIG

You know damn well Zach's not honest but let's see if it's on the board..... ERRRRRR!!! That's only one strike though and three answers are on the board still. Let's go to Zach himself. Zach tell us, what's one great quality of yours someone might want in their daughter.

ZACH

I'm gonna say they'd want their daughter to be responsible and kind like me.

(To Magic and Jojo)

Say good answer!

JOJO

But it's not.

ZACH

I am responsible and kind.

MAGIC

Kind of lying!

ZACH

Just say it!

MAGIC/JOJO

Good answer!

CRAIG

ERRRRR!!! You got two strikes on the board and one more chance to get it right. Jojo, it's on you. Name one and I do mean ONE great quality of Zach's someone might want in their daughter.

Jojo, Magic and Zach huddle up to discuss.

JOJO

Okay I got it.. My boy Zach is overly friendly.

ZACH

I don't know if that's a compliment or not but good answer.

CRAIG

ERRRRR!!!

ZACH

Fake news, that game was rigged.

CRAIG

Take joy in knowing we accept you for who you are. The good, the bad, and the ugly.

JOJO

Hey I appreciate you guys cheering me up. I needed that.

ZACH

Yeah at my expense.

MAGIC

That's what brothers are for.

CRAIG

You guys really are brothers to me. The family I never had.

MAGIC

I always had my teammates and even my frat but this is different.

ZACH

Hella different, 'specially private school Ronnie. All my potna's were from the street but I love that dude.

They each pick up the photo they brought.

MAGIC

Thank you guys... I couldn't make it through this separation without you boys.

CRAIG

And we're still here.

JOJO

But you're gonna have to let go.

MAGIC

It's not easy man, I love her.

JOJO

I'm talkin' about the pills.

Magic is silent as Zach takes a sip of his bottle.

ZACH

You can do it Magic, I'm rooting for you.

JOJO

AND YOU GOTTA LET GO OF THE BOTTLE!

ZACH

Me no speaka da English.

CRAIG

He's right Zach. Would you want your daughter to date someone who drank as much as you?

ZACH

I don't drink that much.

JOJO

Seriously bro, you gotta be the man you want her to bring her home. You gotta bottle in your hand right now and probably one in your back pocket. If Lenora -

ZACH

(Cutting off)

Keep my daughters name out your mouth!!

JOJO

Wow dude, it was a joke.

ZACH

Keep my daughters name out your damn mouth!!

CRAIG

Okay, he's got it.

Zach puts the bottle down.

JOJO

My bad Will Smith.

ZACH

I just don't feel like talking about my drinking.

JOJO

Noted.

MAGIC

You know my therapist said-

CRAIG

(Interrupting)

Seriously Magic?

I want you heal man I really do but I don't want to hear what your therapist says every 5 minutes. Is she even fine bro?

MAGIC

She?! My therapist is a man.

ALL

(Except Magic)

A man?!

CRAIG

You're going and telling all your business to a white man?

MAGIC

My therapist is black.

ALL

(Except Magic)

Black?!

ZACH

Ain't no way I'm paying to tell another brotha my business when I can go outside and do that with the homie over a 40.

MAGIC

You can't heal in the same environment that made you sick.

ZACH

I ain't sick, I'm Gucci. You can keep all that.

MAGIC

It's not even what you think it is, we're not sitting on a couch talking. He uses different techniques to help me express myself. Matter fact, one I know you would like is free-thought. I tell him the color of how I'm feeling that day and he finds a song to match that color.

ZACH

What in the OWN channel are you talking about?

MAGIC

Then I take that color and I express my thoughts over music.

JOJO

Bro who is your therapist, Common?

MAGIC

It's really good, let's try it. What color are you feeling right now Zach?

ZACH

I'm feeling like you had one too many of those pills and gotta be high as hell right now.

MAGIC

Come on man just try it. You express yourself however you want. You can rap, you can do a poem, you can move. It's just gotta flow with how you feel right now and that color.

ZACH

This is dumb as hell.

MAGIC

It works. I'll go first, my color is yellow.

Magic turns on music to match his poem.

MAGIC (CONT'D)

I haven't heard your voice and I haven't seen your smile. Just to do them both I would walk a thousand miles. Even though it seems it's over and everyone says it's time to move on. Just know the thought of you and I makes it worth every test and trial. You'll forever be my cookie and I will be your Magic, so get over here girl so I can get to snackin'.

CRAIG

Nice man, that was dope. A little obsessed but still dope.

JOJO

Okay, okay, I'm next. My color is green.

Magic changes the music Jojo's rap.

JOJO (CONT'D)

(Rapping)

I'M ON A GRIND, CHASIN DOLLARS AND DREAMS, GOT A VISION SO BIG, BREAKING THROUGH SEAMS. BOTTOM TO THE TOP, EYES STAY ON THE PRIZE. DREAMIN' 'BOUT A BUSINESS, JO-SERNITY, BOUTA MAKE IT HAPPEN, FOR MY LITTLE PRINCESS QUEEN. STARTED FROM SCRATCH, NEXT TRYNNNA START COUNT STACKS, NO FAMILY FORTUNE TO RELAX JUST HUSTLE HARD AND STEP ON NECKS. CHASING DOLLARS AND DREAMS. CHASING DOLLARS AND DREAMS. CHASING DOLLARS AND DREAMS.

Zach is uncontrollably laughing.

MAGIC

Yoood that was lit, that was lit!!

ZACH

No the hell it wasn't. Man stick to ya day job and you ain't even got one.

JOJO

Well let me see you do better. What's your color?

ZACH

Red! From laughing at you two dummies.

MAGIC

I'm telling you, try it.

ZACH

Okay but if ima do this, im doing it my way. My color is bourbon.

Magic changes the music to match Zach's dance. Zach breaks out into a wild and crazy dance.

SCENE 2

Ronnie, Eli, and Torion enter.

ELI

Yooooo, let me get some!!

Eli joins Zach in dancing equally as bad while being hyped up by the group.

TORION

What's going on in here?

The music stops.

CRAIG

Magic had us in therapy.

ZACH

That was me expressing bourbon.

RONNIE

It looked like you drank too much bourbon.

JOJO

It was helpful man, releasing. You should try it. What color you feeling?

RONNIE

Whichever one doesn't have to do that.

ZACH

Private school Ronnie's color is white.

RONNIE

Really?! Nothing about me is white, I'm very black. Matter fact, I went to the recent Million Man March. It doesn't get any blacker than that.

ZACH

So did Kim K, that doesn't mean anything.

RONNIE

She has black children, she's understands the struggle. She's practically cooking at the bar-be-que.

Everyone groans at Ronnie.

CRAIG

Comments like that means it's time to play....

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Don't you even start it.

ALL

(Except Ronnie)

HOW BLACK IS RONNIE?

CRAIG

Everybody wants to know,

ALL

(Except Ronnie)

How black is Ronnie?

CRAIG

First question, in Lil Wayne's career how many Carter albums did he drop?

RONNIE

5 but a 6th one may be on the way.

ZACH

Very good. Trick question here, everybody has at least one cousin named what?

RONNIE

Man man, Pookie, Black or Red.

MAGIC

I got one for you. This question simply ask who loves Orange soda?

RONNIE

Kel loves orange soda.

JOJO

Is it true?

RONNIE

Mhmmmmmm I do, I do, I doooooo.

ELI

Okay Ron, approximately how long did Sophia have to fight?

RONNIE

All her life she had to fight.

ALL

I had to fight my daddy, I had to fight my brothers, I had to fight my uncles but I ain't never thought I had to fight in my own house!

Everyone laughs except Ronnie.

TORION

I'ma take him to church on this one. First giving honor to God, who is the

RONNIE

Head of my life.

TORION

I'd like to say I'm glad to be in the house of the Lord one mo' time. 'Cause he brought me from a

RONNIE

Mighty long way. I coulda' been dead, sleeping in my grave but God is good all the time.

TORION

And all the time.

RONNIE

God is good.

CRAIG

He's on it today ladies and gentlemen. Okay Ronald, we want to know if someone tells you to touch grass what do they want you to do?

RONNIE

Touch grass?..... Mmmm... I don't know, garden?

ALL

(Except Ronnie)

Wrong!!!!

CRAIG

Touch grass is when someone is doing something weird or dumb.

JOJO

And they need to come back to reality.

TORION

So you tell them touch grass.

MAGIC

Meaning go get some fresh air.

ELI

Get back to the real world.

ZACH

Black card revoked!

Everyone laughs at Ronnie.

RONNIE

It's not that funny.

CRAIG

Don't go being sensitive bro it's a joke.

RONNIE

If it was funny I would laugh but it's not. It's stupid. How come every time we get together I gotta prove myself to you guys?

TORION

What are you talking about?

RONNIE

It's like I gotta either be more of this or less of that. Why can't I just be myself and that not be the butt of every joke.

TORION

Maybe the black card was too much. Our apologies Ron.

Ronnie walks over and picks up the picture he brought.

RONNIE

Whatever, I probably am being sensitive. This is exactly why we were close though. He was my first friend. He saw every part of me and was fine with who I am and how I am. He saw me as a real person. Not private school Ronnie or Ronald Gregory Hampton the third or the black guy dating the white girl, just me.

ELI

I can relate.

RONNIE

It's so damn stressful always trying to be what everyone thinks a man should be. In one sector of life I'm too soft, in another I'm too hard. With one group I'm too black, with another I'm not black enough. Like the shit will drive you crazy. Why is it that it seems like everybody else can be who they are but we as black men are supposed to fall into one category.

ZACH

I ain't never thought we were the same.

RONNIE

But I bet you thought we should be. I bet you've thought why doesn't Ronnie like this, why doesn't he do that. I've been dealing with this my whole life and I'm tired of it! Guess what? I prefer Friends over Living Single.

Everyone gasp.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

I didn't think Sister Act 2 was as great as Sister Act 1.

ELI

Now you trippin.

RONNIE

I actually think America's team is the Patriots and not the Cowboys.

MAGIC

He doesn't know sports.

RONNIE

I think Tamera looks better than Tia.

CRAIG

Bro they're twins!

RONNIE

And yes I prefer white women but if I had to choose a black woman it would be Candace Owens.

ZACH

I stopped listening at Sister Act.

RONNIE

She says stuff that I disagree with but you'd be injudicious if you didn't admit her confidence and passion is attractive.

JOJO

You've lost your mind just like she has! You mean to tell me agree with some of the crap she says?

RONNIE

Well yeah... Her experience is still our experience.

JOJO

Nah that woman's experience ain't nothing like mine.

RONNIE

But it's like your mother's, or your sisters, or any other black woman you know.

JOJO

When a person like her see's me, they don't see their son or brother. They see a thug, a hoodlum, a good for nothing brother who they fear.

RONNIE

That's not what people see when they see me.

JOJO

You really think you're different? Just cause you got an ivy league education and date a white girl doesn't mean the world sees you any different from me.

RONNIE

I know I'm different because I bust my ass everyday to disprove the stereotypes assigned to me because of the color of my skin. I'm not a race, I'm an individual.

JOJO

You're a fool if you believe that.

RONNIE

Well then let me be a fool dammit!.. What do you want from me?! To apologize for my upbringing, for my exposure to the world and for the privilege my parents afforded me?! I'm sorry okay! There it is. Are you happy now?

JOJO

No! You talk about breaking stereotypes but the moment you get a chance to be the black man in the room you diminish yourself to be one of them.

RONNIE

It's called code switching we all do it. I do it when I come around you "bro".

JOJO

I don't fake it for no one. I'm me when I wake up and I'm me when I lie down.

RONNIE

Why are you attacking me Joseph? I've done nothing but try and help and support you. Is this because Monica wasn't able to help you secure that funding? That's not my fault. You have to take accountability for the choices you made that got you denied. It's not my job to pull the whole black community up just cause I made it.

JOJO

I don't need you to pull me up but I do want you to realize the opportunity you create when you love yourself no matter what anybody thinks.

RONNIE

I really wish you understood how hard it is to love yourself when everybody has something to say about you being you. Imagine being a grown man and still having identity issues, still turning to what is there to discover who and how I'll be. Trying to find yourself in the streets, movies, church, the club, sports, your "bros", the culture.

Ronnie goes to grab his photo.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

That's what I loved about him. He would just let me pretend that I was whoever I wanted to be in place where nobody cared who you were.

ELI

I get it Ronnie. Every decision I've made in life has been because society or someone has told me that's what a man's supposed to do.

TORION

(Coughing)

What's wrong with that? I mean there are some things men are just supposed to do.

ELI

At what cost though T? I have to sacrifice my happiness, peace, and freedom cause that's what a man's supposed to do?

RONNIE

I understand sacrifice but what I don't get is why we allow people who are living their own lie to cause us to do the same.

ELI

Only thing worse than telling a lie is living your whole life staying true to it.

CRAIG

Torion's got a point though cause had my birth mom's dad did that think about how my life would've been different.

MAGIC

My dad did that and look how he turned out.

ELI

Every day I intentionally try and be the man I think I'm supposed to be and every day I lie down disappointed as hell.

TORION

Life is full of disappointments Eli but that's also part of being a man. You get up and shake it off, wipe ya face, and find ya nuts.

ELI

I'm tired of shaking it off. Why am I giving someone else's opinion the power that I have to change that disappointment?

TORION

America wasn't designed for us Eli. Mommy and daddy had to go through hell to give us a different life than the one they had and we show our gratitude by doing the same for our kids. So what if you have a few disappointments, it's normal.

ELI

I've spent my whole life trying to be what people consider normal. I am depressed Torion and I don't want to be anymore.

TORION

Depression isn't real, everyone feels down, it's normal. Just pray and it will go away.

ELI

I pray my normal to be honest and true. I want to walk in a room and know that the Elijah I bring is genuinely happy and not faking it for everyone else in the got damn room!

TORION

Well what's stopping you cause it isn't me.

ELI

Everything's not about you!... I'm stopping me okay?.. I'm the reason I'm too afraid to get from under your shadow and be who the hell I want to be.

TORION

Well the shadow is gone! Live in your truth Eli, be who you want to be, do what you want to do, don't let me stop you.

ELI (CONT'D)

I'm afraid you won't love me. I'm afraid it's gonna be different. I'm scared you're gonna leave if I tell you

Beat.

ELI (CONT'D)

your baby brother is gay.

The group is silent.

ZACH

Not that truth fool, that ain't no secret. I been knowing that. Tell us the new truth.

ELI

That's it. I'm gay.

TORION

He's making it up Zach, my brother isn't gay.

ZACH

I been drinkin' but I think if the man says he likes mens, he probably likes mens.

TORION

Eli can't be gay. He's had plenty of girlfriends and he isn't a punk.

ELI

Day after day, year after year, I've been putting in the work just to get here and say those words to you and you turn around and call me a punk.

TORION

I said you weren't a punk.

ELI

What you said was some bullshit!

TORION

What do you want me to say Eli, we weren't raised like that. Do you know what this is gonna do to mommy and daddy? You've been lying to us, to them, to everybody who knows you.

Eli goes to pick up his photo.

ELI

I've been lying to me T and that hurts more than anything.

TORION

(Coughing)

You should've been man enough to live in your truth.

ELI

I was too busy being man enough protecting myself from hurt.

CRAIG

You know I love you right Eli? This changes nothing.

MAGIC/JOJO

Same here.

RONNIE

It takes a real man to love himself no matter what anyone thinks.

ZACH

Are we really acting like we didn't know this the whole time? This is the same guy that sang oops there goes my shir- you know what, since everybody else playing, I love you too Eli.

CRAIG

Torion?....

TORION
Of course I love him, that's my brother. I'm just-

ELI
(Interrupted)
Disappointed?

Torion in silent.

TORION
Surprised.

ZACH
So is this like a coming out party cause if so we should have a drink to celebrate.

Zach goes to pick up his bottle as Eli puts down his photo.

TORION
Right now that doesn't sound bad.

Torion starts to cough.

ZACH
T you last with that nasty ass cough.

SCENE 3

Zach starts pouring shots in each of the guys mouth.

CRAIG
What the hell is this?

ZACH
Paul Masson.

CRAIG
Geesh that's cheap. How do you drink this mess?

Zach takes another sip, puts the bottle down and goes to pick up the picture he brought.

ZACH
I been drinking a long time so it all taste the same to me. My drinking really ain't get bad bad until I was 14 and a high school drop out.

MAGIC
So the school really put you out huh?

He looks deeper at the picture.

ZACH

Yup. It was cool though cause that's when we got closer. Nothing but time, trouble, drinks, and women. Honestly, it sounds fun but it sucked.

MAGIC

You ain't do no regular stuff like play ball, join a team or something?

ZACH

Nah, going to jail was the only thing I did on the regular. Well there was this one time this shortie from the block named Jakayla, invited me to her school dance. Never been to one so ain't gonna front I was stupid excited.

CRAIG

Was she bad?

ZACH

Bro when I say she was looking beautiful that's a under report.

RONNIE

A what?

ZACH

A under report. You know when you describing something but you not describing it the right way.

RONNIE

We've come so far that I hate to correct you but that's an understatement.

ZACH

Nah dummy, a statement is on paper a report is what they do on the news. I'ma stop calling you private school Ronnie and rename you Know Nothing Ron Ron. Anyways, so my moms dude at the time, Big Tim, had this green 97 Ford Explorer.

JOJO

Tell me mans gave you the keys?

ZACH

Nope!.... but I took them anyways.

ELI

Aiite, aiite so what happened next?

ZACH

My potna up the street had this red Rocawear shirt he let me hold that night. I had the k-swiss on, the boot cut jeans and I smelt like a whole bottle of Axe.

CRAIG

Boy you was trying to get you some.

ZACH

Trying?! In my mind it was a done deal already.

ELI

So what happened next?

ZACH

So I pulled up to the spot, got out the car, and here Jakayla comes walking out the house. Baby had on a little black dress and some shoes that made her legs look extra long.

CRAIG

Okay, keep goin', keep goin'.

ZACH

So I'm walking up to her and then all of the sudden out of nowhere comes her brother, dudes name was Gorilla so you already know the energy he's coming with.

Magic becomes Gorilla, a early twenty year old crip who is the brother of the date.

MAGIC

Say cuz where you think you going with my sister dressed like that?

ZACH

I'm looking around at who he's talking to cause I'm wearing Jay Z.

MAGIC

Say cuz I know you hear me talking to you. Where you think you going with my sister dressed like that?

ZACH

I said "I'm taking her to the dance." Bruh was mad disrespectful cause he started laughing in my face.

Magic begins to hysterically laugh.

MAGIC

Nah cuz my sister ain't going to no dance with yo scrub ass.

ZACH

Scrub?! I didn't even know what that meant but I knew it didn't sound good.

ELI

A scrub is a guy that thinks he's fly and is also known as a busta. Always talkin' about what he wants and just sits on his broke ass.

ZACH

Oh.... Makes sense. Well I ain't know that then so I told him again, "I'm taking her to the dance!" So he says,..

MAGIC

Say cuz you already came up here looking like a slob, it's B.K. all day on gang so what you not about to do is take my little sister to no dance. We clear?

RONNIE

What did Jakayla say?

ZACH

What could she say? So I did what I had to do.

CRAIG

You told him you was taking her and there was nothing he could do about it huh?

ELI

Nah you waited till he went inside and yall snuck off when he wasn't looking?

TORION

They had a man to man conversation and came to a commonplace for his sisters special night.

RONNIE

He threatened you so you called the police and watched him get dragged off to jail.

ZACH

Is yall boys stupid? I got in the car and took my ass home.

Magic no longer embodies the brother.

JOJO

You let him play you like that?

ZACH

Hell yeah. I had been rejected before but that hit different. I don't even think it was about her as much as it was him.

ELI

So what did you end up doing?

ZACH

I said we had nothing but time to get in trouble together. Man we had so much fun that night, I hate it ended the way it did. You know back then 8 bucks could get you a handle.

RONNIE

What's a handle?

ZACH

Bigger than a pint smaller than a magnum. 39 shots to be exact.

JOJO

Ooooo tell me you didn't.

ZACH

Nah but if the night kept going I might've. We was just kickin it, having a good time when all the sudden something triggered me.

ELI

It was that cheap liquor yall was on.

ZACH

I went from being mad at Gorilla, to being mad at myself, to being furious with moms, to hating ol girl.

ELI

Jakayla? What did she do?

ZACH

This was her fault. Why did she ask me to her dance? Why didn't she keep her brother inside? Why didn't she just leave with me anyways?! I needed answers!

RONNIE

Arrest number 8.

ZACH

I wanna say he told me not to but if I was down, he was too. So we got in the car and drove to where the dance was and waited in the parking lot till she came out.

Craig becomes Jakayla.

CRAIG

Zach?! What are you doing here?

ZACH

What are you doing here and not with me?

CRAIG

First of all you need to chillax before my peeps come over and call my brother. Are you drunk?

ZACH

How you gonna diss me like that Jakayla?

CRAIG

Lower your voice!

ZACH
Get in the car, we're leaving!

CRAIG
I'm not going anywhere with you.

ZACH
I said get in the car!

CRAIG
I said I'm not going with you!

ZACH
I said get in the car!

Zach reaches over and slaps Craig who falls.

ZACH (CONT'D)
We dragged her in the car and drove off. Don't even know where, just driving and driving till finally he said stop. Bruh Jakayla was so strong man. She was crying and she was scared but the whole time she was telling me,

CRAIG
You don't have to do this.

ZACH
I was about to do the worse thing any man could do to a woman who trusted him.

CRAIG
I'm sorry Zach, I'm sorry. Please don't hurt me.

ZACH
I heard her but I couldn't hear her. All I saw was red.

Zach punches Craig who lets out a scream.

ZACH (CONT'D)
I messed up, I really messed up.

He punches him again causing Craig to scream.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Right when I could've walked away I heard him say do it. Everything I was mad at took over in that moment and it was like I was finally in control.

The lights go black as we hear sounds of a forced sexual encounter. As the lights rise, Zach is zipping up his pants as Craig is looking beat and shook.

It's silent.

ELI

Please Zach, tell me you didn't.

ZACH

I just did the worse thing I've ever done and I felt nothing.

Craig no longer embodies Jakayla.

RONNIE

So what was the final charge? Sexual assault, rape?

ZACH

She never said word about it. Big Tim reported his car stolen and I was charged with grand theft auto.

JOJO

Did you ever see her again?

ZACH

Once... She wanted me to meet her daughter.

CRAIG

Lenora?

ZACH

She said she just wanted me to know about her but that I'd have nothing to do with her.

TORION

She can't do that.

ZACH

Yes she can! I raped her and she did nothing about it! I'm lucky to be free let alone alive. If she wants me to stay gone I owe that to her.

TORION

You owe it to your daughter to be there. To make right your wrong.

ZACH

It's too painful.

Zach grabs the bottle and starts drinking.

SCENE 4

Torion starts to cough.

TORION

How did we get here? We're a mess.

CRAIG

WE are mess. You're just trying to keep us together.

TORION

That's not true.

MAGIC

Yes it is T. You really just want the best for us.

TORION

I do but that doesn't mean I'm perfect.

ELI

You're pretty close.

TORION

Nobody's perfect.

RONNIE

I look up to you.

MAGIC

I admire you.

JOJO

You inspire me.

TORION

I had a stroke!

ALL

(Except Torion)

What?!

RONNIE

How are you feeling now?

CRAIG

When did it happen?

ELI

Why didn't you tell me?

TORION

I was in a coma for 8 days. Doc said stress almost killed me. I've had this cough I can't get rid of since I woke up.

ELI

Does mom and dad know? Why didn't Janelle call me?

TORION

I wouldn't let her tell anybody.

JOJO

You know you didn't have to come here bro.

Torion walks over and grabs the picture he brought in.

TORION

Yes I did. He was the one always telling me to go help this person or go see about this person. He was noseey more than anything but I know it came from a good place.

ELI

Helping people doesn't lead to a stroke though Torion.

TORION

At some point it turned from helping to fixing to trying to control everybody around me's life. He had me thinking my way was the only way. I mean look at me now. I'm still doing it, I've been doing it all day with you guys. Stress and control almost killed me.

ELI

Enough is enough man. We almost lost each other trying to keep his secrets. When are we gonna let him go?

Everyone picks up their photo.

JOJO

Only he could get all of us here together again.

RONNIE

He was my first friend.

CRAIG

He loved me when nobody else did.

TORION

I am who I am because of him.

ZACH

I don't know life without him.

MAGIC

He pushed me to keep going and never quit.

ELI

He understood me but he's had enough power, enough control over each of us. We gotta take it back. I don't know about you but I'm leaving him here today and never looking back.

TORION

I don't know if I'm ready.

ELI

There's almost no such thing as ready, there's only now.

JOJO

It's time he be laid to rest.

TORION

So that we can finally live.

Beat.

MAGIC

I'm addicted to prescription pills.

ZACH

I'm an alcoholic.

RONNIE

I'm still discovering who I am.

CRAIG

I use sex to fill voids.

ELI

I'm loving and accepting who I'll be.

TORION

I judge people who don't live the life I do.

JOJO

I blame others for where I'm at in life.

ZACH

I did things no man should ever do.

ELI

I was afraid to disappoint other people all the while disappointing me.

RONNIE

I wasn't taught how to love me for me.

MAGIC

I hurt the person that loved me cause the one I loved hurt me.

JOJO

I was afraid of rejection so I quit instead of challenging myself.

CRAIG

I wasn't properly loved and cared for so I don't know how to love.

TORION

I tried to speak life and play God for others while killing myself and them too.

I need help. MAGIC

I need love. CRAIG

I need understanding. RONNIE

I need confidence. JOJO

I need support. ELI

I need forgiveness. ZACH

I need to let go. TORION

I NEED TO CRY! ALL

All of the guys let out a scream.

 JOJO
The sound of the ancestors who weren't allowed to show emotion.

 ZACH
The sound of the women who've birthed us, who raised us, only for us to hurt.

 CRAIG
The sound of a child whose still looking for his parents love.

 MAGIC
The sound of a man whose needs help but doesn't know where to turn.

 ELI
The sound of the silenced who inside are yearning to explode.

 ALL
I AM A BLACK BOY AND THIS IS MY CRY.

All of the guys let out a scream.

In the silence, they walk over, grab their photos.

Ronnie turns over his picture, revealing to the audience for the first time. It is a picture of him.

RONNIE

Today I give myself permission to accept my journey. To realize I am who I am and that I need to be happy with that person in every space I walk in. I bury disguise, conformity, and embarrassment and accept self love, self worth and feeling pride in my identity.

Magic turns over his picture revealing himself.

MAGIC

Today I give myself permission to live my life for me, to not make myself miserable trying to please others and to bury dependencies on outlets masking my depression. I accept that on the other side of every lost is a win if you persevere.

Craig turns over his picture revealing himself.

CRAIG

Today I give myself permission to respect and love my body, my temple, and mind. Permission to allow love to come in and go out. I bury the fear of being abandoned and the desire to run out and hurt. I accept that respecting my body means honoring my mind and honoring my mind means honoring the life I've been given.

Jojo turns over his picture revealing himself.

JOJO

Today I give myself permission to put fear aside and to know that I was created for greatness. To not compare myself to others but to walk in boldness and favor. I bury fear, thoughts of quitting and suicide. I accept that I have the power to change my outcome, environment, future, and life.

Zach turns over his picture revealing himself.

ZACH

Today I give myself permission to forgive myself of things I can't change, to change what I can, to make right what I've done wrong and to bury old habits that are keeping me stuck. I bury addiction, pain, and regret. I accept responsibility, accountability, and forgiveness.

Torion turns over his picture revealing himself.

TORION

Today I give myself permission to no longer portraying perfection and upholding societal norms that are causing me stress. I bury control, judgement, and ego. I accept that my way isn't the only way, that I'm not always right, and that taking care of myself and my home should be my priorities while supporting the people I love.

Eli turns over his picture revealing himself.

ELI

Today I give myself permission to unapologetically be me,
 love me, and accept me. I give myself permission to remain
 true to the man that I am regardless of perception, opinion,
 and belief. I bury the opinions of others that aren't of
 love. I accept acceptance and freedom.

ALL

I am he and he is me.
 Everything good, bad and in between.
 Today moving forward I'll be better than I was.
 I'll pick up where I left off to learn, heal, love.
 I'll be the man I was called to be
 Determined by no one else but me
 I'll be my ancestors wildest dream and my children's biggest
 inspiration
 I'll understand that perfection isn't me but simply a
 destination
 I'll treat my sisters with dignity, love and respect
 I'll do the same for my brothers but most importantly myself
 I'm throwing away norms and walking in my truth
 Because the easiest way to please God
 Is to close your eyes, have faith, and believe in him and you
 The next time you see us and we're hurt or hurting you
 Just know that were on a journey and were trying to push
 through
 Deep down inside we might still be healing
 Generations of being programmed and told who we are
 But we're the curse breakers and we're changing it all
 No longer just accepting it but reshaping it to gold
 Reclaiming our crowns and no longer being bought and sold
 This isn't an excuse or justification why
 It's our hope, our prayer, our black boys cry!

THE END.