



**Prison
Politics**

Mr. Maleficent

Prison Politics: Terrius McCord is an inmate at the Wellside Correctional Facility and is serving time for a statutory rape charge. When he learns of his best friend and cellmate's murder by another inmate, he begins to ponder whether a master plan has been set in motion with him as the main target. While somewhat investigating the murder of his friend, Terry gets paired with a slightly effeminate gay male and worries that his judgment has been impaired. This story takes a look at a prisoner's day to day life and the complexities of prison government.

Mystery | Thriller | Crime | Erotic | LGBT

Prison Politics

Chapter 1: The Beginning

The Wellside Correctional facility is a maximum security correctional facility located in Michigan City, IN. It was built to take the place of the Indiana State Prison. Wellside's population was about 3,000 inmates with 7 major gangs that most of the population belonged to. There was the Aryan Brotherhood, the Mexicans, the Asians, the Bloods, the Christians, the Muslims, and the Pedophiles; with the latest being the most recent group. The Pedos would get raped left and right, until they banded together and united under a serial child molester. He was a body builder before he entered the prison and the only reason that "gang" exists is because he took out a couple of Aryan's that whistled at him when he walked in. This prison is all about fear and strength, so when you show fear, the population will test your strength. One of the ways that they did it was through whistling.

Whistling at the fresh meat was typical in Wellside. If the gangs couldn't get along on anything else, it was on the days they brought in the new prisoners. The Aryan's and some of the bloods would be able to coexist just long enough to sit at the fence together and watch the boys get off the bus. I remember when they pulled that shit on me 4 years ago. I was a scared ass 20 year old kid, and when I stepped off the bus, I could hear the roars from the fence. Huge black men beat their chests and screamed, while the whites mocked jacking their dicks as we walked in.

Most of the dudes don't get down in the pen. That whole thing of making a scene at the gate is just to incite fear in the newcomers. It was a rite of passage, somewhat of an initiation into The Well. Everyone went through it, and it showed no sign of stopping anytime soon. I've been in for 4 years and never been punked. You see, most of the dudes that get punked are dudes that are seeking it, or dudes that fucked around and pissed another nigga off. And I, Prison #927943-Terrius McCord, am not interested in either one of those activities. I've always been a cool neutral type of dude. I don't fuck with the bloods, even though I'm cool with some of the members. And when I say cool, don't take that to mean we're good chums. We've only played ball together.

The good thing about Wellside, is that you can get by being a neutral. From what I heard, at other prisons, if you don't choose a team then yo ass is dead. But here, as long as you mind yo

business, you'll be straight. Me and My cellmate were both neutral. Prisoner #153985, Hakim Tucker, has been my cellmate for years. A really good friendship developed between us and we both have each other's back. Outside The Well, Hakim had a reputation for being maniacal when handed a weapon, and that is how he got here. When he was 21, he stole a machete from an antique parlor in Jackson, Mississippi. He, then, ran through the streets at 4 O'Clock in the morning and decapitated a woman getting off the bus after a long shift at work. That was 7 years ago.

Hakim's fascination with sharp, shiny weapons made him a great ally, an unwanted enemy and an untrustworthy son of a bitch. While we are cool, sometimes this nigga just gets a glaze in his eye. And you can tell he's relishing in the thought of murder. It was better to stay on his good side, which is where I was going to remain. Hakim stood about 6'2 and 180 lbs. He had a peanut butter skin tone with these dark and bulging eyes. He had one of those faces that screamed that he was dangerous. The Well was a good place for him to fit in because he looked the part.

The sweet lookin' boys were the ones that had to watch out for themselves. Back when I said that most dudes who get punked are dudes who want it, or dudes who pissed other niggas off, I meant it. But, those smooth skin type dudes tend to piss more niggas off. Why? That's easy. These niggas ain't gettin' no pussy in here. They see a nice smooth ass lil nigga and it fires up the desires of being with a woman. Some of the hard niggas provoke the smooth niggas. Then when the smooth nigga snaps, they beat his ass and fuck him. That was the story with Prisoner #927943, Elijah Grant.

Elijah was a Black and Asian mixed kid that grew up in an Asian household. At home, he was accepted by everyone around his neighborhood. The blacks thought he was cool and the Asian crowd took to him too. But in The Well, the shit just wasn't the same. Elijah's first day, was probably one of the worst first day stories in The Well's history. Coming in for the vicious murder of his fellow high school basketball teammate, Elijah was terrified about arriving. When he heard the whistles as he got off the bus, he knew that he was the target of all of it and that he would need protection. He immediately went to the Asian crowd, but they wouldn't accept him because he was too dark to fit in. It was a lot different from home.

Elijah, who was 18 at the time, didn't have much height and only stood at 5'8. He didn't have weight either and was about 140 lbs. And the dude had the smoothest Chris Brown complexion with chinky eyes and big ass nigga lips. When the Asians rejected him, he went to the bloods and those were some of the very men who terrified him when he stepped off that bus. Me and Hakim actually watched him walk all the way to The Bloods territory from our cell.

Hakim whispered in my ear, "This nigga's crazy."

I nodded my head in agreement.

"Don't he know he walkin' into the lion's den?"

If he did know that, then he was dumb as hell because he kept walkin'. The niggas spotted him when he wasn't that far away, and already knew what he wanted when he came over. And while he thought he was coming over to get protection, the bloods were already delegating who would get to have him FIRST.

"Wassup, bruh?" Elijah tried to give the appearance that he was "down." Even though you could tell that ole boy came from some private school out somewhere.

The bloods laughed at his thin voice, and went on back to playing spades.

"Can a nigga play?"

"Nigga?" one of the dudes asked. "You a chink, homeboi. Don't get it twisted."

Elijah gulped. "Aaight. Can a chink play?"

"Fuck nah," another one said.

"Yo, what you over here for nigga?" A deep voice called out from the corner. It was Prisoner #192509, Cypress Turner. He was in for life, due to a drive by shooting on a rival gang that killed 2 of the gang members, parents, and children at the local elementary school. You see, the nigga he was after heard the gunshots and took off running through an elementary school playground and Cypress went running and shooting after him, killing 2 kids and wounding a teacher. Cypress was 29 at the time. He stood about 6'2 and about 200 lbs. He had a crisp, dark golden skin color. And by merely stepping closer to Elijah, he stirred up a fear within the boy.

"I- um... I wanna hang with y'all niggas."

"Did you just call me a nigga, chink?" Cypress turned on him.

"Nah. I said, 'jiggas'," The boy regretted his previous comment.

"Nah, you didn't. You called me a nigga, right?" Cypress reached out and grabbed Elijah's head and pulled him a step closer. "Go ahead and admit it," he encouraged. Cypress's hand firmly dropped to Elijah's face, giving him a light but solid slap. Then, he held the boy's face and stroked it. The Bloods snickered at the scent of fear leaking out of Elijah's pores. "Did you call me a nigga?"

Elijah gulped. "Yes."

"Awwww," Cypress smiled. But of course, there was something unsettling about the smile that even Elijah's naïve ass could pick up on. "Is that because you want me to be yo nigga?"

Cypress's hand conveniently dropped to Elijah's neck. And if the wrong answer escaped from Elijah's mouth, his throat would be history.

On the other side of the prison, I ran up to the guard's station to tell them what the fuck was going on, but they already knew because they were watching it. You know how back in the 50's and 60's, the guards used to always rape the prisoners to keep them in line. At the Well, they let the prisoners rape each other and turn a blind eye to the shit. The code that Officer Tongis and Officer Melee operate under, is that, "it's consensual sex as long as it doesn't draw blood." If Elijah didn't fight back, they weren't going to help him.

"The kid is fuckin' new. He don't know how shit works around here."

"Well, he's about to find out," Officer Melee, the Middle Eastern officer, said.

"Y'all are feedin' him to the sharks! They are going to rip him apart."

"Good. He's 18 and murdered another young man in cold blood over a spot on the basketball team. Whatever they give him, he deserves."

"Y'all can't do this," I argued.

Officer Tongis spoke up. Tongis was the head officer of the block. He was the chief, a middle-aged white man who'd been working at the prison for over 10 years. "Terry, go sit down. You're not with the bloods so this really doesn't even concern you. We have the situation under control. You know that we give you guys as much freedom as we can in exchange for keeping the peace."

"I wonder how the warden would respond if he knew that you two were operating like this," I said.

"Are you making a threat?" Officer Melee spoke again. "You know we don't take kindly to threats. All I have to do is say the word, and I'll have you locked up with the Aryan brotherhood. They'll fuck you 5 ways to Tuesday and then brand White Power on your dick, and I will let them. Now, get out of here."

“Terry, just go back to your cell. If things get crazy, we’ll handle it. But do not do anything stupid,” Tongis interrupted.

I groaned, and walked back to my cell. When I got back, I asked Hakim what happened.

“Shit, they bout to fight over young man.”

I looked back toward the Bloods end of the cell, and he was right. Another Blood was up in Cypress’s face, challenging him.

“What happened while I was up there?”

“Yo, I think they already had a pecking order before he even went up to them. Jermaine was supposed to go up to the guards and get him transferred into his cell tonight so he could bone him first. But it looks like Cypress wants to bone first.”

“So now Jermaine’s trying to fight?”

“Yup, and that old ass nigga ain’t gonna win. He might used to run that group 10 years ago, but Cypress is making a power play,” Hakim said.

“Jermaine ain’t gonna go down like a punk.”

“If they fight, the boy might be safe for his first night in prison. Both of them would go to the hole.”

“But he’d get passed right on to the next nigga.”

“True,” Hakim agreed. Something happened over in the Bloods’ cell, and it wasn’t a fight. It was a contest. They were going to allow Elijah to choose who he wanted to take his virginity in an unconventional way. I’d seen this contest used by the Bloods before. They forced Elijah to stand with his hands pointed to his sides. Cypress interlocked his fingers with Elijah’s left hand, and Jermaine interlocked his fingers with Elijah’s right. At the count of 3, both of them bent Elijah’s fingers back. Elijah was supposed to scream out the name of the one who was inflicting more pain upon him, and that person would be the one to fuck him first. And no surprise, Cypress won.

“Hell nah nigga,” Jermaine disputed. “This shit ain’t fair, I had to use my left hand. Everybody knows I’m right-handed. Best 2 out of 3!”

“No!” Elijah yelled, frightened. And in his fright, he stepped away from Jermaine and closer to Cypress.

Cypress chuckled. “Looks like he chose me again.” Cypress tossed his head to Elijah, “Grab the tail of my shirt,” he told him. And Elijah did as he was told. Cypress gave daps to a few of his homies and then took his new piece on a stroll around the prison cells. He came around our way first. Cypress looked directly at me and Hakim as he walked past us. Elijah did too and you could see him trembling. The whole point of the stroll was to let everyone know that this ho was yours. Nobody else could step to him until you give him away or else they would answer to you and whatever gang you were associated with. Yeah, this was some Prison Politics for yo ass.

After strolling around the jail for everyone to see, Cypress stopped in front of the guard’s station so Officer Tongis and Melee could get a look at him. Officer Tongis, looked down at him and then pointed to one of the empty cells up on the top floor. Officer Melee looked over at me and shrugged his shoulders.

Before Cypress and his new bitch took to their suite, but there were materials that Cypress needed to get. He needed to get a spoon and two towels. In order to get them, he left Elijah by himself for a little bit. In the time alone, I made a bold move to go out and talk to him.

“Yo, nigga, what the fuck are you doing?” Hakim said, grabbing my arm.

I shook his hold off of me and continued with what I had to do.

Tongis could see me stepping to the boy. “Terry! You get back in that Goddamn cell before I beat the lights out of you!” Tongis knew that if I stepped to the boy, the Bloods would step to me and there’d be some kind of fight. Shit, I knew that too, but I was determined to tell this boy that he didn’t have to do this.

“Hey, you ok man?” I asked Elijah.

He didn’t say anything.

“God damn it, Terry! Get back in your cell!”

Tongis saw the Bloods stand from their seats.

“Look, all you have to do is fight,” I said. “If you fight, the guards are forced to protect you. And you won’t have to do this.”

“2 guards?” Elijah said. “2 guards versus all of them?” Elijah pointed to the Bloods and I could see his point.

“But they still can’t win. If something breaks out, the guards will win. They always do.”

“And I could still die in the process. Thank you, but no thank you,” he said.

The Bloods had made it all the way to us at this point.

“Yo, Terry,” Prisoner #112144, Khalil Jackson spoke. He was in for a bank robbery that’d gone horribly wrong and resulted in the killing of a teller and security guard. Though he didn’t pull the trigger, he still got life because he wouldn’t rat on the other parties involved in the robbery. He was also one of the Bloods that I was on decent enough terms with, and probably the reason why the Bloods didn’t run over here and start beatin’ my ass as soon as I stepped to Elijah. “You betta’ listen to the white cop, nigga.”

I turned my head and looked back at the guard’s station. Officer Tongis was coming down the steps and I could see Officer Melee loading his gun with these corks. The corks never pierce your skin when fired at you, but they hurt like hell when they plaster yo ass. Since Elijah wasn’t taking my advice, I backed down from the group, but not before Cypress could come back and see what was going on.

In his hand, Cypress held a spoon and two towels. He looked in my eyes.

“You stepped to my nigga right after I claimed him?” Cypress asked. “Nigga, are you crazy?”

In looking at him, I could tell I was staring in the face of evil.

“You been here longer than me, ain’t you?” he asked. “I still ain’t fucked you yet either. You a sexy ass lil chocolate drop too,” he licked his lips. The Bloods laughed. “You wanna take his place? You wanna hold my shirt tail nigga? You wanna be my bitch tonight?”

“I’m nobody’s bitch!”

I didn’t know for sure, but could have guessed that Hakim was behind me. And while standing behind me, he slipped one of his pencil-razors into my hand. I had my weapon, all I needed was for this bitch nigga to jump.

Officer Tongis banged his nightstick on the rail of the steps. “Terry, I’m not going to tell your ass again! Get in your cell!”

“Yeah Terry,” Cypress mocked my name. “Get in your cell and mind your business.”

I did, but not at the request of Cypress. It was at my own accord.

The tension settled down, and the Bloods returned to their card games. Cypress told Elijah to grab his shirt tail again, and led him upstairs into their cell for the night. It was 10 minutes until lights out.

You might be wondering why Cypress went out and got a spoon and two towels. It was for the sex act. What the niggas do is (and this is some wild ass shit) they force their bitches to lick on the spoon, and then force them to turn around and put it up their butts. I found out that apparently this is an ode to Oz, the HBO TV show. They put it up, and turn it around to force the nigga to release any “clogged pipes.” When Cypress felt that Elijah was clean enough to get fucked, then he would begin to fuck him. The wet face towel that Cypress had was for him. He poured the sweet smelling soap on that towel and to hold to his face. If the cell got a little smelly, he would hold it to his nose and inhale the much more pleasant smell of the soap. The second and much bigger towel that Cypress had was for Elijah, and for the common courtesy of the guards and anyone else who may use that cell in the future.

Cypress set the big towel on their bed, and after Elijah was “clean,” Elijah laid on his stomach on top of the bed.

“Get on yo knees nigga. Lemme look at that pretty ass pussy.”

Elijah did what he was told.

“Aww shit,” he said. “You got a pussy just like a bitch, you know ‘dat?’”

The boy didn’t respond, so Cypress slapped him on the ass so hard that it stung.

“Ahh!” Elijah screamed.

“Shut the fuck up!” If the guards heard screaming from their station, they’d be forced to enter the suite and break the session up. They allowed the prisoners freedom, but still didn’t allow them to get too violent with each other. “I said, do you know dat?”

“Yeah,” the half-asian agreed. “I know.”

“And you know I’mma fuck the shit out of you, right?”

Elijah had tears streaming down his face, but tried to hold himself firm.

“Yeah.”

“You want me to fuck you, baby?”

Elijah’s mind was screaming no, but he knew that he had to say yes.

“Yeah.”

Cypress began undressing. First, he lifted the wifebeater off of his chest. When he began to drop his pants, he noticed those slanted eyes staring at his waist.

“Oh nigga, you can’t even wait, can you?”

Elijah swallowed. “No,” he said. The truth is that Elijah wanted to see the size of Cypress’s dick. He prayed that it would be small, and that Cypress was one of those bullies that psychiatrists always post statistics about. He hoped that Cypress was below average because that spoon left his ass extremely tender. His prayer wasn’t answered.

Cypress’s pants dropped and his dick hung like a pendulum between his legs. Cypress got on the bed behind him.

“Wait,” Elijah stopped him. “I should suck it, right? Give you some neck. Would you like that?”

Cypress smiled. “Ok,” he agreed.

Cypress sat down on the bed and Elijah got up. Elijah only received head twice from his old girlfriend. So he attempted to reenact her position on Cypress. He kneeled down to the floor and put his hands on Cypress’s lap. Cypress held it up to his mouth, and Elijah went straight to work.

“You better be good at this shit, too,” Cypress said.

Elijah’s mouth drooled over the dick, and then slurped as it bobbed up and down on it.

“Mmm... Shit, you was feenin’ for the dick, wasn’t you?”

“Mmhmm,” Elijah hummed, without coming off of it.

“You like me, don’t you?”

“Uh-huh.”

“And you wanted to make sure that I was the first nigga to hop in dat ass too, didn’t you?”

“Mmhmm.” Elijah couldn’t play hard anymore. The rock hard dick banging at his throat was the last straw. The tears that had been sitting under Elijah’s tear ducts ever since he found out about his conviction finally began to come out. Not completely heartless, Cypress wiped them off of his face.

“Yeah, keep suckin’ dat pipe. Uza good lil’ ho nigga,” Cypress encouraged him. “Yeah yeah, lemme feel that neck on the tip of my dick.”

Elijah tried to go down deeper.

“Yeah yeah, nigga. I don’t want no fuckin head, I want neck.”

Elijah kept going. He even began to turn his head, so that Cypress’s shaft wouldn’t only get the up and down sensation, but the left to right sensation as well.

“Oh, fuck nigga. And dis yo first time suckin’ dick?”

“Mmhmm...”

“Damn, you do this shit better than all the hoes in here,” Cypress complimented.

Elijah had a plan. He thought, that if he could make the head better, then Cypress wouldn’t want to stop; Cypress wouldn’t want to fuck him. So Elijah sucked to no end. Anything he could think of that has brought pleasure to him in the past, he tried to do to Cypress.

He pulled the dick out and slapped himself in the face with it. He dropped low and sucked on the low hanging, hairy balls while stroking Cypress’s slippery and slobber covered dick.

“Yo, yo nigga. Ahhh...” Cypress exhaled.

Still tempting fate, Elijah dropped Cypress’s dick. He put his hands underneath Cypress’s legs. He lifted them up a little bit so he could encase the entire nut sac in his mouth. He allowed his tongue to pop under each of those fat ass nuts.

“Mmmm... damn you such a good bitch.”

“Mmhmm...”

“Come back to the dick,” Cypress said. Elijah’s lips did as they were told. He started sucking on Cypress’s King Kong thug dick.

“You want a nutt, baby?”

“Mmhmm...”

“Keep suckin’ that dick bitch. Pull that nutt up outta there. Make that motherfuckin’ dick good and fuckin’ wet.” Cypress was very pleased at the way the new Blood ho sucked dick. Bloods had only 2 hoes at this time, but Cypress didn’t care for either one of them. As far as he was concerned, this Blood ho needed to become Cypress’s regular. “You suck dick so good, bitch.”

“Uh-huh.” Elijah increased the speed by about a fraction of a second. He tickled Cypress’s balls too and Cypress couldn’t hold the shit. Cypress was on the brink of nutting, when he stood up and his dick came out of Elijah’s mouth.

Elijah looked up, and was about to stand up to.

“Don’t fuckin’ move,” Cypress said. Quickly, Cypress stepped behind, and kneeled behind Elijah. When he nutted a second later, the first stream fell right onto Elijah’s ass. Cypress pulled apart Elijah’s ass cheeks to expose his well tunneled out hole. The second stream of nutt

fell right into the hole. Cypress came like a madman. A semen river poured right into Elijah's ass. When the river ran dry, Cypress used that nutt that sat on Elijah's ass from the first stream to lube up his dick.

Elijah could feel Cypress's member, knocking at the backdoor entrance. His plan failed. Though Cypress nutted, and rather soon, he was still ready to go. The head of his dick broke the seal of Elijah's ass.

"Haaah!" Elijah said.

Cypress hurried up and put his hand over Elijah's mouth. But when he did that, he unintentionally pulled Elijah back, and rammed his dick all the way up the boy's ass. If Elijah's mouth wasn't covered, he'd have screamed bloody murder.

"Shut up, shut up," Cypress said. "Just relax."

Elijah felt like his head and his ass was on fire. Some tears fell while he was giving Cypress head, but they eventually ended. With that sudden thrust into his ass, the tears welled back up. The boy began sobbing.

"Shut up, nigga. Shut up!" Cypress whispered in his ear. Elijah wasn't listening, and Cypress understood why. "Fuck," he said. Cypress used his free hand to explore Elijah's body. He tried to rub Elijah's nipples and his stomach and his dick, just to see if there was any place that could sooth him and make him forget about the pain. None of the places he stroked worked. "Shut up, nigga, just man-up."

Elijah continued with what would have been loud sobs if his mouth wasn't covered.

Cypress made his peace with the fact that the boy wouldn't stop crying. He kept his hand over Elijah's mouth as he fucked. At one point, Cypress put both hands over the boy's mouth to weaken the muffled sounds even more. This shit started feeling real good to him. That fat ass load that he busted mixed around with the tightness of Elijah's asshole and body temperature made this shit feel like heaven. And the crying boy wasn't really a priority to him anymore.

"Yeah nigga, you givin' up dat ass now. You feel that dick?" Cypress merely pretended that Elijah said yes, because even if he did say yes, Cypress probably wouldn't have been able to hear him over the double muffle. "Ahh.... You got some good pussy. You like Blood dick? Huh? Blood dick is the best dick, ain't it?"

Elijah continued yelling and crying. He couldn't believe the pain he was in.

Cypress bit on the nigga's ear lobe from the back. Elijah's tears streamed down his face and onto Cypress's hands. His fingers began to get slippery, but he refused to let them unlock the boy's mouth. The last thing he wanted was for one of them officers to come up and interrupt this shit when it was feeling so good.

"Ahhh... I'm fuckin' this sweet, smooth, pretty pussy. Ahh, shit. You gettin' dat good dick right now, nigga. This the best dick in The Well. You know you likin' dis shit so stop frontin'."

Another tear came down Elijah's face.

4 to 5 more minutes went by with Cypress savoring the feeling of a tight boy pussy on his dick. He didn't even notice that Elijah wasn't screaming anymore. Sure, tears kept coming down, but Elijah wasn't actively yelling.

Cypress's hands were getting slipperier. They had actually slid further down on Elijah's face. Elijah's hands were planted on his thighs, but in one quick motion they raised and pulled Cypress's hands down.

Enflamed, Cypress was about to beat this nigga over the head until he realized that he wasn't screaming. In fact, Elijah put his hands right back on his thighs and began to move his own body to and from Cypress's dick.

"Oh shit," Cypress said. This shit kicked it up a notch. Now Elijah could validate him the way he wanted. He tested it at first. He leaned into Elijah's ear. "You like this dick?" he whispered.

"Yeah."

"Who got the best dick, baby?"

"Bloods."

"Fuck nah, nigga. Who got the best dick?" Cypress asked again.

"You."

"Oh, fuck yeah. Come on nigga, suck the babies out this dick again. Work 'dat ass," pleased at how quick the new ho learned.

Elijah continued forcing his body to move back and forth. He wanted this over with and as soon as possible.

"You love Blood dick, don't you?"

"Yes."

Cypress started losing the battle. His mind was locked on the sensation that his dick felt. He hunched over the boy, and his eyes closed. He imagined the sweetest female with the wettest pussy bouncing on his dick. The fantasy wasn't coming true, but this was an incredible simulation. And then he felt something so sensual, that it pleased him even further than Elijah had been doing. It was the kiss. Elijah turned his head, and saw Cypress hunched over his shoulder with eyes closed. The lips were pursed and ready for the taking. Elijah took the risk and kissed him. Cypress opened his eyes and snapped back. He never kissed a ho before, and never ever wanted to. But... this felt good. He went back in for a second kiss and played tonsil hockey with Elijah. This final act was the thing that sent Cypress over the edge.

With their lips locked, Cypress's genitalia began to strain. It emptied another solid shot of milky white Blood juice into Elijah's ass.

"You love me nigga?"

"Yeah," Elijah said.

Cypress's dick drained and he began to fuck Elijah at a slower pace.

"Say, 'I love you,'" Cypress told him.

"I love you."

"Tell me you love the Bloods."

"I love the Bloods."

"Scream it out nigga!!!!!!!" Cypress yelled so the entire block could hear him, startling everyone who'd settled in the darkness.

"I love the Bloods!!!!!" Elijah yelled, trying to match Cypress's volume.

"You love who?"

"The Bloods!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

The Bloods section of the Block began to hoot and holler. They roared in celebration.

"Shut up!" Tongis yelled at them.

Hakim laughed his ass off.

The next day, Elijah took a stroll around the jail with Jermaine. The next day, he took a stroll around with another blood, then another blood, then another blood. He was the resident ho for the Bloods, and after a few days, I really don't think he minded it. Anyway, all that happened

2 years ago. Elijah is 20 now, and isn't a ho for the Bloods anymore. After 11 days straight of getting' fucked by all the Bloods that wanted a turn at Elijah, Cypress kinda wifed him up. Elijah is more like... their queen. You see, after the unexplained death of Jermaine Watts (he "hung himself," *yeah, right!*), Cypress emerged as the front runner and became the head nigga in charge.

I normally, don't think the Bloods would accept a queen but Cypress forced it upon them. Within a week of their... courtship (*I guess that's the right word for it*), It was protection that Elijah was seeking, and now he had it in Cypress.

In present day, Elijah is probably the Blood that I'm the closest to, even though he's not considered a Blood. When the Bloods fought, Elijah didn't fight. He had the luck of being chosen by Cypress to be in his corner. And in returned, Elijah fulfilled those needs for Cypress that he couldn't get from a woman.

Khalil, the prisoner I mentioned before, is no longer associated with the Wellside Bloods. With the new dictatorship of Cypress, many of Jermaine's followers refused the new regime and dispersed. Some of them joined the Christians (such as the case of former blood, current prison pastor, Dijuan Chambers), one joined the Muslims (Aarif Jenkins, we'll meet him shortly) and the rest became neutrals. When Cypress began his reign, Khalil moved over to a cell right next to Hakim and I. Khalil was just as dark as me, and maybe just as tall but he was skinnier. The dude was massively athletic, flexible and a real good basketball player. He was a cool dude, but the real benefit of being near Khalil's cell was that the female night guard would come in and give him some every other night.

Khalil knew that Hakim and I would wait up and try to see as much as we could when they would fuck. So he helped us out by taking off all of her clothes so we could see her tits and shit. Yeah, the homies were down for each other in the pen.

It was Wednesday morning. The new prisoners were gonna be bussed in at noon, so me and a few of the homies busted out the morning in a game of spades.

"...fuckin' Monica," Khalil said. Monica was the name of the night guard.

"What happened?" Hakim asked. "I noticed y'all wasn't fuckin' last night."

"Y'all are some nosy ass so-and-so's," Khalil said. All of us laughed.

"She did sound like she was crying," I commented.

"Uh... she pregnant again," Khalil played a spade and took the pile.

"Again?" Hakim and I said in unison. Khalil's spades partner shook his head.

"When was she pregnant before?" I asked.

"She...uh... she's been pregnant 4 times since we started kickin' it."

"Wow..."

"I know we ain't got condoms in prison, but the bitch can't bring some from home?" Hakim asked.

"Shit, I don't like condoms anyway. But uh... bitch talkin' about she wanna keep the baby," Khalil confessed.

"And how you feel?"

"Man, Terry. I'm in here for life. If she wanna keep the lil' bastard ass nigga, she can. I don't know how much of a father I'm supposed to be from a jail cell."

"So what is she gon' do?"

"She said she was gonna have it. I hope she don't try to make me involved with it."

"Well she can't do that," Hakim said. "If she did, they'd know that bitch was fucking around with you. She'd probably go to jail or something."

Out the corner of his eye, Khalil saw a visitor that he didn't particularly like approaching us. He threw his cards. "Yo Roland, let's go."

"Light man," Roland and Khalil both stood up and walked away.

I looked to the north of the room, and saw the guy that was coming toward us. The half black/half Asian took the seat that Roland was in.

"Wassup Eli?" I asked.

"Don't call me that, I hate that name."

"Would you prefer Liah?" Hakim asked and chuckled at Elijah's expense. Liah was the name that he was called for his first 11 days in the pen. And the after Cypress's takeover, the rebel bloods began calling him Liah again.

"No. I hate that name too. But I needed to talk to you guys."

"About what? And won't yo man be pissed that you over here talkin' to us?"

"No. He still thinks I'm trying to get you two to join him. But uh... I need to talk to you about something private. Can we go in your cell for a sec?"

I looked at Hakim, who shrugged.

All 3 of us stood up and walked to our pod.

"So wassup Eli? Whatchu want man?" I asked.

"I need one of them pencil/razor things that y'all always got."

"Why? You plan on killin' the king or something?" Hakim laughed.

"No, he's got um... some new enemies. I'm trying to save him."

"Right, cuz if he dies, you go back on the market, huh?" Hakim laughed again.

"Judge me all you want Hakim. But I'm up for parole in 7 months, and I will still be HIV negative. I would rather make love with Cypress than to get passed around to somebody else."

Hakim snickered.

"What?" Elijah asked.

"You just said make love. Niggas don't make love in The Well. He banging you, he bussin' nutts in you, but y'all ain't makin' love."

"You don't know. Cypress would do anything for me if I asked. So can I get the razors or not?"

"Yeah," Hakim said. He pulled out a couple of the razors from the spot where he hides them, behind the sink. He gave Elijah 2 of them. "Now what am I gonna get for these?"

"What do you want?"

"20 bucks."

"For a razor with a pencil on it? You're fucking nuts." Elijah said.

"Then, you can spend the next week trying to sharpen a shank out of pencil or something.."

"Ok. I'll be back with it."

Currency was imposed by the warden. He thought it smart that we had some sense of economic value. So a buck was the equivalent of a green chip. 5 bucks was the equivalent of a blue chip. 10 bucks was the equivalent of a red chip. 20 bucks was the equivalent of a silver chip, and 50 bucks was the equivalent of a gold chip.

After a couple of minutes, Elijah came back with 20 green chips and gave them to Hakim, then he took the razors and left.

"Who the fuck do you think the new enemies are?" I asked Hakim.

"Probably the old enemies."

“We knew the Bloods would reunite sooner or later. They’re probably gonna try to overthrow Cypress.”

“Yup,” Hakim agreed.

“Then, Elijah’s right to be worried.”

“He’ll start all over at the beginning, and get passed around like a little ho. Oh, shit. That reminds me.”

“Whassup?” I asked.

“Imma kick it with Lil’ Billy tonight.”

I started laughin. “Lil’ Billy? For real?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m horny as a motherfucka’.”

“Hakim man, you fuckin’ dat nigga?” I asked. Hakim met up with Lil’ Billy a few times before. After years in here, Hakim finally broke down and chilled with another dude. He told me that he didn’t fuck the nigga. He said Lil’ Billy sucked his dick and he fingered him, imagining that he was fingering a wet, white pussy. Lil’ Billy was a puny little white ho that used to belong to the Aryans until some huge falling out that they had months ago.

“Nah, I ain’t fuckin’ him. He sounds like a bitch and sucks dick real good. I mean, come on. You know you gonna fall victim to the game in a lil’ bit too.”

“Nah nigga. Can’t no nigga do a motherfuckin’ thing for me. I’m strictly for the pussy and only the pussy.”

“Nigga, you got 6 more years in this bitch. I wouldn’t be surprised if you start goin’ for the dick.”

I put my arm around Hakim’s neck and we started play wrestling for a couple of seconds. I wound up with my hands locked around his waist with his butt sittin’ right in front of me.

“See nigga, I knew you was trying to do this shit,” Hakim said.

I dropped my hands and backed away from him as he laughed. “Nigga, I ain’t playing with you no more.”

Hakim continued laughing. “Nigga, let’s go out front. The bus should be comin’ in anytime now.”

“Nah, you know I ain’t with all dat. I need to go hit the showers. I don’t wanna be smellin’ like you when the new niggas come in,” I popped Hakim in the back of the head.

“Light man. I’ll see you when I get back.” Hakim left and I grabbed my shit for the shower.

As soon as I stepped in, I regretted it. I heard the water running, but then I saw them. The so-called power couple was showering. Cypress stood up straight with his hands to his sides. His muscles shined from the water coming from the shower head. And behind him, was Elijah bathing his man. Elijah was wrapping up the wash by cleaning Cypress’s ass cheeks. When finished, Elijah stood up and kissed Cypress on his back.

“You’re done,” he whispered in his ear.

Cypress walked over to the towel rails. He grabbed a towel and wrapped it around his waist, and then he left the showers. I was still undressing. When I was finished, I went for a shower that was far on the other side of the locker room. Elijah waited to make sure that Cypress was completely out of hearing distance.

“Terry!” Elijah shouted. “Come over here, boy.”

I sighed. Elijah was probably one of the coolest dudes, but I didn’t want to shower next to him. But I walked over to the shower on the right of where he was.

“Hey,” I said.

“Hey. Were you really going to walk by and not say anything?”

“Shit, I already spoke to you earlier today.”

“So? It’s a new setting. It’s so rude to walk by somebody and not say hello,” he said.

“Well, hello Elijah. It’s such a beautiful day here in the showers, isn’t it?” I said, sarcastically.

“Why, yes it is,” Elijah laughed. “So why were you about to go to the showers way over there?”

“No reason.”

He scoffed. “Cypress knows that we’re friends. Do he really got you that shook?”

“Nigga, nobody got me shook.”

“The first and only time I’ve ever seen you stand up to Cypress was when I first got here. Ever since then, you avoid him. You talk mad shit about him when you, Hakim, Deon and I are playing spades. But you never do shit.”

“I don’t need to do shit nigga, cuz he don’t do shit to me either.”

“And that’s because I asked him not to,” Elijah said.

“Don’t do me no favors nigga. If yo old man wanna go, then we can go. I ain’t afraid of dat nigga, dat’s you! Shit, I still can’t believe how you got punked out by that nigga. He got you in here bathing him like a lil’ fuckin’ boy.”

“You can’t believe it?” Elijah said, matter of factly. “Oh, Terry don’t act like you don’t know what it’s like trying to survive in this bitch.”

“I’m on my own two feet shawty.”

“Really? You really gon’ play like that?” he asked, hinting that he knows something more.

“Yeah, really! I don’t need a fucking gang. If I need to crack a fuckin’ skull, I will give it to any-fuckin-body who wants one.”

Elijah scoffed again and shook his head. “You gon’ sit up here and front for me?”

“Fuck you talkin’ about nigga?”

Elijah thought to himself, but then decided to go ahead and let the cat out of the bag. “I know,” he said.

“You know what?”

“I know. And so do all the other Bloods.”

“What the fuck are you talkin’ about?” my voice echoed through the showers.

“You’re really gonna make me say it?”

“Say what the fuck is on your mind, homeboi!”

“You may think that your secret died with Jermaine, but it didn’t,” he said.

“Shut the fuck up.”

“No! You wanna sit here and boast about how you’ve never been punked and shit. Nigga, the reason you’ve never been punked is because of the deal you made with Jermaine the first night that you got here. You know it, I know it, and the Bloods know it. I wonder if you’ve told Hakim.” Elijah shut off the shower after he finished rinsing. “The deal you made is so much worse than what I’ve been doing for Cypress in order to protect myself.”

“That nigga still don’t love you.”

“But I’m the closest thing he’s ever gonna feel to love again, and I know that for certain.”

“Son, you have a maximum of 7 and a half more years in this shit. He’s in here for life. When you’re gone, he’s gonna move right on to the next nigga. And he will get him, the same way he got you,” I said.

“He might, but for the time being, he is my nigga. If I ask for something, it’s mine. And he says that he loves me every night.”

“And if you believe him, you’re an even bigger clown than he is.”

Elijah scoffed once more. “The only reason the Bloods don’t fuck with you, is in memory of Jermaine. But know this; if I were to tell Cypress to overturn the law, you’d get punked out every night. And I would see to it.”

“So much for being friends then,” I said.

“I’m tired of you pretending to be so damn proud. You’ve done dirt too, bitch.” Elijah wrapped the towel around his waist and left. As he was leaving, Prisoner #821026, Aarif Jenkins walked in. He was in for killing a gang mediator, someone who patrolled the streets to quiet gang violence. Aarif obviously heard the conversation I was having with Elijah. And he was here, when what went down actually went down. He knows the story between me and Jermaine. Not only did he see it happen through his own eyes, but he was also a part of it. Aarif Jenkins was the Blood that became a Muslim after Jermaine’s death. He stood 6’5, 230 lbs of muscle, with a darkened caramel tone. He had this tiny mole on his cheek with slanted eyes and high cheek bones.

As he walked in, our eyes met. I could see the shame he felt for me, because of what I did. But I could also feel the remorse that he felt for himself, because of what he had been a part of.

Chapter 2: New Inmates

As I said, I came in 4 years ago at the tender age of 20. I knew I was at a huge disadvantage. Sure, I had height but that’s about all. At the time, I was 6’2 and maybe 160 lbs. I was a scrawny little nigga. And like I said when you step off that bus and all those niggas are yelling, it sends chills up your spine. And here I was, chocolate and baby faced with perfectly organized peach fuzz, since my mom dressed me up all nice for my trial. But unfortunately, I was going into prison, looking just as good as I did in the trial. I didn’t know a damn thing about prison except for what I learned on television. And one of the things I’d learned, was that pedophiles and cuties were preyed upon. That was 2 things against me.

There’s a reason I never said why I went to prison when I introduced myself. I’m ashamed of it. At age 16, I lost my virginity to a 13 year old girl. And for the next 4 years, I became obsessed with teenage girls. There were 5 girls who testified that they were at least under the age of 15 when we had sex. I never hit or forcefully raped girls. I always made sure that they were ok and that this was a place that they wanted to go, even if they were too young to legally consent. But I didn’t think that it would matter to these guys. They were still going to think that I was a child molester, and I guess I was.

Anyway, I walked into The Well shivering like crazy. In front of me, I was chained to some big burly ass Aryan skinhead with the Nazi symbol tattooed on the back of his skull. And in back of me was a thick middle-aged Mexican. I was petrified, and felt even worse when once I got inside. Back then, the guards used to make you find your own cellmate. They figured it would be better than randomly setting you up. So when they released us, I thought that the best idea would be to wait until lights out. Then I’d just find someone who was bunking alone.

On my first day, I found myself in everyone’s way. An Aryan punched me in the face for sitting at their table. A Blood screamed at me for picking up a picture that fell out of his pocket, and handing it back to him. And when I tried to read the Bible with the Christians, they asked

how I ended up here. I told them, and they shunned me. I sat in the center of all the cells and watched the television, fighting tears. And the Bloods knew it. Jermaine stared daggers at me throughout the whole day. Being a social outcast in The Well didn't last into the evening. At dinner, I took a seat and was joined by a neutral. Prisoner #458101, Nahid Cox, 28, was a built, muscle type dude. The dude wasn't fully black, as evidenced by his bright and pale skin color. He also had these big soft looking pink lips. Shit, I was only in for a day and I could already see how cute he was. Apparently, so were the Bloods.

"So where you from?" Nahid asked.

I looked around, because I wasn't sure he was talking to me.

"Indianapolis," I said.

"Oh cool. Chicago here," he said.

I knew the inevitable follow up question before he even said it.

"What you in for?"

I could lie or I could tell the truth. "I murdered my moms."

"Shit! Yo, I ain't expect that from you man," he laughed. "How you do that?"

"I just um... slashed her up."

"Damn yo," Nahid sat there thinking.

"What about you? What you in for?"

"Arson. I set my girlfriend's house on fire. It killed both of her parents. I wasn't trying to kill them. I mean, if you smart enough, you'd smell the smoke and get the fuck out the house. But I guess they got the memo too late. But damn, you slashed ya' moms up? What she do?"

"The bitch pissed me off."

"Shit man. You find a cell mate yet?"

"Nah, not yet."

"Why don't you come chill with me?" he offered. "I ain't been here long so I don't know many of these katz."

I wasn't sure about ole boy. I watched Oz, and knew that kindness came at a price. If I went with this big buff ass nigga, he was fo' sho gon' try to turn me out. I agreed to do it though, just cuz I didn't have a choice. But... I got a second offer later on.

Jermaine Watts, who had been staring at me all damn day long finally made his way over to me.

"Wassup young blood?" he asked.

I was shitting bricks. My stomach was flying all over the place. Jermaine Watts was a nigga that I feared on my first night in this bitch.

"I said wassup young blood?" he said again.

"Nun much. Jus' chillin'."

"Cool. So you new?"

I nodded.

"You know how da pen' work?" he asked.

"Nah."

"Tongis and Osama Bin Laden up there give us coins. They say that's our currency," Jermaine started. "But the only real currency is sex."

My heart jumped, and Jermaine responded like could literally see it moving quicker.

"Yeah, sex and protection. And I want to protect you. That dude you hooked up with, Nahid? Man, he's not good. The last nigga he shared a cell with, he had that nigga bleeding out

the ass like a motherfucka. Dude's in the lil nursing station and been there for about a week. They stitched up his ass, man. He may never walk the same."

"What you want from me?" I asked.

"I want to protect you."

"But what...what do you want in return?"

"Imma give you two options. Either you give me some of that sweet black pussy of yours, or you do me another favor. It has nothing to do with me having sex with you. And if you do the other favor for me, I'll make sure that none of the Bloods fuck with you."

The choice was obvious to me, but I still had to know what exactly this "other favor" was.

"What's the favor I'd have to do?"

"Tomorrow at 8 o'clock on the dot, come into the showers. Tell yo cellmate that you don't want to shower alone and get him to come with you."

"And that's it?" I asked.

"Yeah... das all."

"But what about tonight? What if- what if he tries to fuck me tonight?"

"He won't man. Don't worry about it. Just remember, tomorrow at 8 in the morning."

I went to bed with a lot on my mind. Mainly, I was worried about when Nahid would turn on me. He was on the bottom bunk, and let me have the top one. Every time I heard him turn on his bed, I was worried that I would find him standing over me and trying to dig into my ass in a second. I was happy when the morning came. And when the clock struck 7:55, I led Nahid to the showers like I promised. But I had no idea what was going to happen.

After we walked in, a couple of Bloods started jumping Nahid. Aarif was inside the shower room, but left to be the look out and make sure that no one else came in. Nahid fought them off as best he could, and even got to a point where all of them were down while he stood strong. The heartbreaking thing about this, is that after he fought them off, he was ready to come to me and help me fight them off because he thought that we both had been jumped. He looked over at me, and saw that I didn't have a scratch on me, and that I wasn't their target. He looked confused for a second, and that second was all it took for them to take him down. Somebody tackled him from the back and his face hit the hard tiles of the shower. Some of the dudes held his chest to the ground.

Jermaine came up behind him and pulled Nahid's pants down exposing his ass. Not long after that, Jermaine was inserting and began to really fuck the hell out of Nahid. Nahid screamed in agony, and still tried to get up. I was stiff. This was my fault, but I couldn't get involved now. If I did, I'd be face down next to Nahid. After Jermaine emptied into Nahid, the boys rotated in positions and another one started to fuck him. But Nahid got ahold of a shank. Somehow, he managed to get it out of Jermaine's pocket and slashed Jermaine's leg. Due to the sting, Jermaine dropped his hold of Nahid and Nahid got loose. Nahid stabbed the man who's dick had just vacated him right in the neck and he bled out.

Though Nahid appeared to be victorious, he wasn't. The third blood that was holding Nahid, unscrewed a metal showerhead from one of the showers. He put it in a sock and beat Nahid repeatedly over the head with it. And just to make sure that Nahid was dead, they removed the blade from their fallen brother's neck and slashed Nahid's throat. Then they put it back in the fallen blood, so that when the officer's saw the crime scene, they would think it was just a fight between the two of them. Jermaine stood up and limped out of the shower room with the other 2

bloods. I walked over to Nahid's body. At the rate the blood leaked out of his neck, he would be exsanguinated soon.

I got down and held his head in my lap. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry," I said.

The officers came to the showers after someone told them to check it. They saw the dead blood, the dead musclebound nigga and me with his head in my lap. They pulled me in for questioning as the bodies went off for autopsies.

"Terrius, I know it's scary. But if you saw something, you need to tell us," Officer Tongis said.

"I didn't see anything."

Tongis sighed. "I have witnesses saying that you and Nahid left your cell together to go to the showers. What happened?"

"I didn't see anything."

"Goddamn it, Terrius! I can protect you! We can protect you! But you have to tell us who we're protecting you from! We know it was the Bloods. Bryson Maxwell was dead right next to him. But I'm sure Bryson had help. Tell me who helped him!"

"I didn't see anything," I said once more.

Officer Tongis' hand stung against my face.

"They're running an autopsy on Nahid Cox," he said. "There was sperm on his shorts and you were in the showers the entire time. If DNA says that it belonged to you, I will lock your young ass up in territory you would never want to visit. You heard of the Aryans? The hate people like you. They hate niggers." The way the -er dragged off of the word when he said it made me cringe. "This is your last time to tell me what the hell happened."

"I told you, I didn't see anything."

I looked through the glass windows from the guard station. Straight ahead of us was the Blood's area. And they were watching me like hawks. I was certain that they were attempting to read my lips. And as long as Officer Tongis stayed mad at me, they would know that I didn't spill a secret.

Tongis brought his hand down against my face again

"Get the fuck out of here!"

I left, and went to my cell. I lay in my bed all day. I came from never seeing 1 murder, but now I witnessed 2 in one day. Before nightfall, Jermaine made sure to send a Blood by my cell. The Blood that he sent was Aarif.

"Yo, T-man," he called out to me.

I pulled the covers off of my head and looked at him.

"Jermaine wanted me to tell you that he's a man of his word. The Bloods won't fuck wit' you, we got your back if you get into with the Mex's or the Aryans or some shit."

I shook my head. Jermaine said there were 2 real items of currency. Protection and sex. But he missed something. It was actually the item that costs the most. Life. The events of my 1st and 2nd day in The Well, costs someone else's life. And yes, it still weighs on me. But I was about to receive even deeper news before the day was over.

Aarif didn't take off from my cell as quickly as I hoped he would.

"Is there something else?" I asked.

"Man... I'mma be real with you. And realness is something that many of the niggas in here can't really offer you. Jermaine said he was gonna rape you?" Aarif asked.

"He said it was either Nahid or me."

Aarif bit his lip. "It was never gonna be you," he said.

“What do you mean?” I was confused.

“Jermaine doesn’t like dark skinned kats. He only chases the lighties. He used you to get to Nahid.”

Well damn. I was off to a horrible start. Yeah, I had guaranteed protection, but I got a man killed to avoid a rape that would’ve never happened in the first place. Sure, one of the other Bloods could have gotten to me, but my fear came from the thought of Jermaine doing it. And now... I found out that I wasn’t even his fucking type. So now you know the big secret. No, I’ve never been punked. But yes, I have been played. And from what Elijah told me, all the Bloods know it. Hakim and I weren’t friends back when I first came in, so he didn’t know the story of me and Nahid. But I had a feeling that Elijah was going to try to tell him.

I finished my shower. As I dried off, I wondered if Hakim had finished getting his rocks off to frightening the new prisoners yet. He hadn’t. When I got back to the cell, it felt like a ghost town. The cells aren’t even this empty when we go to dinner. Everyone was outside and waiting for the bus to come, so I decided to go and gawk at the guys too. Even while I was still in the building, I could hear the men roaring outside like animals.

“Look what the cat dragged in,” Khalil said, when he saw me step out. “I thought yo ass wasn’t into shit like this.”

“I’m not. I’m looking for Hakim. I need to talk to him.”

“Shit, he’s way up front and having the time of his life.”

Khalil pointed in Hakim’s direction so I could see. “Alright. Yo, man, I’ll get at you later.” I made my way through the crowd, which was hard to do because the bus had begun unloading. All the men started screaming as soon as the first boy stepped off. When I finally got up front, I saw Hakim along with others.

Cypress had pulled a chair out to the front of the fence. And on his lap, sat Elijah. Elijah cut his eyes at me when he saw me come out, but didn’t pay much more attention to me.

“Fuck you doin’ out here?” Hakim asked. “You never come out for this.”

“No, I don’t. But I wanted to talk to you about something,” I said.

“Huh?” Hakim yelled. He couldn’t really hear me off of the loud baritone and bass screams behind us.

“I said that I need to talk to you,” I matched his volume.

“‘Bout what?”

“You remember my first day here, right?”

“In The Well?” he asked. I nodded. “Vaguely. I remember your first cellmate, though. The dude that got murked in the showers- Yeah!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” The loud outburst wasn’t directed at me. It was directed at a dark-haired college kid that stepped off the bus. If you could see the look on that kid’s face... “I want you baby! I’m gonna bang you all night long!” Hakim started humping the fence, symbolizing his dick running in and out of that kid’s ass. The guys behind us started laughing, and gave Hakim hi-fives, fist bumps and chest bumps. I laughed at how much joy this actually brought him. Once things slowed down, I started talking again.

“Yeah, well it’s about him,” I said.

“About who?” he asked, his mind had forgot what the fuck I was even talking about.

“My first cellmate. I heard something from Elijah that sounded like it may be coming out soon. So I wanted to make sure that I was the one that told you, and not someone else. I want you to remember that I was new and didn’t know anything. Please don’t judge me.”

“Judge you? Yo, man I can’t judge you. Nigga, I’m in here for 35 years because I got fucked up on meth and decapitated a bitch with a machete. The last thing I can do is judge you,” he said.

“Well-”

“Yeah!!!!” Hakim sounded off again. This time it was directed at a different white guy (Yeah... Hakim had a thing for the whites, kind of like how Jermaine had a thing for light-skinned niggas like Nahid and Elijah). This white guy was also a brunette, but looked like trailer trash. It was obvious that as soon as he got into The Well, he’d join up with the Aryan’s. “I hope you like salty nuts baby! Cuz that’s all you gon’ be eatin’ once I get ahold of you! Load after load after motherfuckin’ load of these black babies right down yo throat!”

The Bloods cheered Hakim on, but the Aryans did not look pleased. I looked around, and I could see that even the naturally hard face of Cypress broke to chuckle at Hakim’s comment. And while I was looking at his face, it suddenly shifted. It took a more serious look. His eyes were still focused on the bus. My forehead wrinkled at him, and Elijah saw my facial expression. He saw the fact that my eyes were on Cypress, so he looked at Cypress. He saw Cypress’s eyes on the bus, so he turned his eyes to the bus and so did I.

This kid had hopped down off the bus. He was a redbone, a real redbone. And his skin had this glow about it, which may have been a result of the sun. Dude stood approximate 5’11, maybe 150 lbs but certainly didn’t look a day over 18. The sides of his head were faded, while the top was a short and nappy curl. Ole boy had one of them nigga-mohawks. When all the other guys got a peak at him, they started going crazy. Some dude who was on the far right side of the fence actually pulled his dick out and started jacking it. After being so disgusted at seeing that, there was this shadow coming from behind me. I turned around and it was Cypress. He’d kicked Elijah off of his lap and stood up to get a better view. Cypress’s hands clinched the fence, and I was standing so close that I could actually hear him growling. Was this growl an angry growl or was it something lustful?

I looked back at Elijah, who seemed just as shocked to see Cypress behaving in such a way. Cypress turned to face the prisoners, and all the blacks stared at him. He roared like a barbarian, and then started walking back into the building. Elijah wasn’t far behind him. I leaned into Hakim.

“What was that about?” I asked.

“What you think man? Cypress wants ole boy that just got off the bus.”

“And what happens to Elijah?”

Hakim chuckled. “Once Cypress gets the new dude, Elijah’s history. That nigga gon’ give it up to the first nigga he can find that is willing to take Cypress’s sloppy seconds.”

“Damn.” *Prison politics*, I thought.

“Yeah!!!!” Hakim started screaming again as another white boy stepped off the bus. “Yo, watch out,” he said to me as he pushed me back away from the fence. Then, Hakim unzipped his pants and pulled them down along with his boxers.

“Nigga, what the fuck are you doin’?”

“Haha, watch this.”

Hakim turned upside down and stood on his hands. His erect dick slid right through one of the holes in the wired fence. His knees braced the fence and he began pumping his hips so his dick was rapidly running in and out of the hole. All the niggas, and even the Aryans and the Mex’s started laughing at this nigga.

“Dis gon’ be me and you nigga! Me and you!” Hakim yelled. He was so into pumping his dick that he didn’t see one of the black guards from the bus walk over to him. The guard slapped Hakim’s “nightstick” with his own night stick. The only problem was that the guard’s nightstick packed a bigger punch. Hakim fell to the ground holding his dick. More of the guys laughed at him.

And the black guard stood on the other side of the fence, smiling at him. “Put your dick through the fence again and I’ll chop it off. And that goes for all of you maggots.”

The entire crowd booed the guard, while I helped Hakim to his feet.

“You alright, man?” I asked, even though I thought it was funny too.

“Yeah, yeah. Dat faggot ass nigga tried to break mah’ dick.”

It seemed that the whole prison was on edge, waiting for the new prisoners to make it out of booking. The guards seemed to be holding them back there forever. We had lunch and dinner, but still hadn’t seen the new prisoners. And there was visible tension within the Bloods camp. Elijah had been yapping Cypress’s ear off because of what happened out in the yard. I was surprised Cypress hadn’t hit him yet. Maybe there was some kind of love there.

“You’re still not giving me a solid answer! Why did you push me off of you?” Elijah asked.

“Man, yo. You need to get out of my face with that. Since when do I answer to you?”

“You don’t answer to me. But I think I do deserve an answer.”

“You don’t! You don’t!” Cypress banged on the cafeteria table. “You deserve whatever the fuck I decide to give you! And if you don’t want to get your ass kicked then shut the fuck up!”

Cypress yelled a lot, but in the last year, you really didn’t see him yell at Elijah. He yelled at everyone else, but not at Elijah. It was probably because Elijah didn’t choose to piss Cypress off too often. Elijah closed his lips, and Cypress asserted that he still had his bitch on a leash. Even though Elijah pranced around the jail and pretended to rule things, Cypress still had him by the reigns and wouldn’t allow him to get that far out of control.

“I dare you to open your fucking mouth again,” he said.

Elijah didn’t speak. He just began to start his dinner. He opened his carton of chocolate milk. He brought to his face and opened his mouth to drink. Before he could even savor the taste of the chocolate, a fist flew at his face. The fist didn’t hit him, but it knocked the carton of milk out of his hand and sent it flying across the cafeteria.

“I said, DON’T OPEN yo FUCKIN’ MOUTH!” Cypress stood up and grabbed the tray with Elijah’s food on it. He handed it to one of the fatter Bloods. “Good news Mackie. Today, you get seconds.”

Elijah kept a salty look on his face, but made sure not to open his mouth.

Cypress sat back down, and looked at his bitch. “Don’t even fuckin’ yawn for the rest of the God damn night. Do you got me?”

Elijah was about to respond by saying, “I got you,” but in doing that, he would only show that he didn’t fully understand. Instead Elijah kept his mouth closed and let a “mmmhmmm” escape from his throat.

Dinner ended soon, and we all went back to our cells. But it wasn’t until deep evening when the officers pulled the new prisoners out of booking. They were about to start assigning them to cells.

Hakim and I were having a conversation in our own pod when Lil’ Billy came by.

“We’re spending the night together, right?” he said in the highest voice possible.

“Oh yeah,” Hakim said. He got up from his bed. “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow, little brother,” he said to me.

“I guess man,” I shook my head. Hakim’s ass was silly. He said he never fucked Lil’ Billy, but I don’t believe that shit. His infatuation for the white boys was growing and he was playing with fire by fucking with a former Aryan ho. Even though Lil’ Billy no longer belonged to them because they gave him up, they still didn’t like their former hoes to be fuckin’ outside of the race. But Hakim didn’t care. Shit, I don’t even see how he could think about sex when he’s been holding his dick ever since that black guard went upside it with a nightstick.

Hakim pulled his shirt tail out of the back of his pants for Lil’ Billy to grab. Instead of doing the casual stroll all the way around the prison that the Bloods always do, he just walked up to the guard’s station. The guards were too busy with the new prisoners to notice Hakim’s position, so he yelled.

“Tongis! Motherfucka, you know you see me!”

Tongis turned around and looked down to Hakim.

“Hakim? With Billy again? How can you even get that little dick up after what Officer O’Neal did to you?”

All the prisoners laughed, reliving the moment.

“My dick ain’t little! Bill got my shirt, nigga, so you know what to do!”

“Yeah, yeah. Get your ass up there to one of those empty cells. And if the two of you keep it up, I might force you into holy matrimony,” Tongis laughed to himself.

Hakim and Lil’ Billy went up to the top floor to pick out a cell and Tongis went back to work. There were only about 20 more minutes until the lights went out, so I decided to reread one of the letters that I received in the mail earlier today. It came from one of my ex-girlfriends. I got so engaged in the letter, that time passed quickly.

“Terry!” Tongis yelled from the guard station. I put my letter aside and came out of my cell and went to him. He was sitting down at the base of the steps with the boy; the boy that was the cause of all that ruckus earlier today.

“Sup?” I asked.

“You don’t have a roommate tonight. I thought you might want to take our new prisoner here.”

I gulped. I looked over at the Bloods, who seemed to be panting like a pack of wild wolves at the sight of this young man.

Tongis continued talking, “You always seem to want to play mama bear to the younger guys that come in. I thought you might want him. He’s a young kid, not affiliated with any of the gangs. You know what it would be like if I set him up with the wrong roommate.”

The boy looked as terrified of me, as I was of Nahid on my first day.

“Yeah. I guess he can bunk with me. Come on, man,” I told him. He followed me for a little bit. “So how old are you man?”

“18,” he said. I immediately saw why Tongis wanted the boy with me instead of many of the other guys out there. The boy’s voice was soft. It wasn’t necessarily thin, but it was definitely soft.

“Oh yeah? And what’s your name?”

“Jirani,” he responded.

And here he is. Prisoner #486350, Jirani Compton. Jirani is in prison for the vehicular manslaughter while under the influence of alcohol. Rani, what his friends call him, apparently set

off everyone's gaydar as soon as he stepped off the bus. And now that I was talking to him, I saw it too. The boy wasn't fem, but he was extremely soft. He's not gonna make it in The Well. And his biggest threat was on his way to my cell.

Cypress turned the corner in a brute type of way. He wouldn't be exchanging pleasantries with me. He came for one thing, and one thing only.

When Jirani turned his head, his face lit up, but not in a "I'm scared," kind of way. The look on his face was more... jubilant than anything. I couldn't understand why. Jirani was about to speak until he was shut down by Cypress.

"Shut the fuck up!" Cypress said.

Jirani did as he was told.

"Come with me." Cypress snatched Rani up like a ragdoll.

"Yo' what the fuck are you doing?" I said.

"Back the fuck up, sellout!"

"Hell nah! That's my fucking cellmate for the night."

"No, motherfucka. This is my bitch for the night," he said staring me down face to face. If there was a time for me to prove that I wasn't afraid of Cypress, it was right then and there. I was kicking myself for not having the confidence to go ahead and do. "Grab the back of my shirt, nigga," Cypress said to Jirani.

Jirani didn't know what the fuck was going on, but he grabbed it.

"Like this?" he asked.

"Yeah. Now, come on." Both of them left my cell, but I knew that I should do something.

"Jirani, you don't have to go with him. Just tell the guards that you don't want to."

"Back down nigga," Cypress whipped his head back toward me. "Back the fuck down."

Cypress and Jirani kept walking and stood in front of the station.

Tongis was thrown for a loop. Jirani wasn't in my care for a whole fucking minute yet, and here he was holding the back of Cypress's shirt.

"No, Cypress," Tongis said. "He's too new. I put him in the cell with Terry for a reason."

Cypress whispered to Jirani. "Tell him you want to go with me."

"I-I wanna go with him," Jirani said.

"You do? Tongis asked.

"Yeah."

"And you understand where the both of you are going, right? You know that by doing this, the two of you will come up to one of the cells on top floor for more privacy."

Jirani nodded, but Tongis still didn't believe his ass.

"And you will probably have sex," Tongis said. "You know this, right?"

"Yes sir, I know."

Tongis shook his head in frustration. "Well, go on up there then."

The Bloods hooted, for they had a new ho. And acquiring the slim and sexy redbone made all of them happy. They couldn't wait to have their night to fuck him. While the Bloods seemed to celebrate, one refused to accept it. Elijah was livid. This was the first and only time Cypress was going to fuck someone else since he and Elijah became an actual item. Ever since they've been together, Cypress never strayed. However, now he was, and Elijah wasn't taking this well.

Chapter 3: Rude Awakening

The next morning, everyone woke at 5. Lights didn't come on until 6, but everyone was awake due to the screams coming from one of the cells on the top floor. *Shit!* I thought. Again, this was gonna be because of me. I sat there and fucking handed that boy to Cypress, so there was no way that I couldn't be the blame for this.

The guards sounded the sirens, and then came running from the guard's station. The three overnight guards, including Khalil's baby mama ran up the steps and past the cells. Like me, they assumed the disturbance came from Cypress and Jirani, so you can imagine their surprise when they saw the two of them asleep on top of each other. The guards continued running, and went to the place where the sounds came from. There were no longer any screams, but there were sobs.

"Billy?" Monica said. "What the hell did you do?"

I heard her yell from downstairs in my cell. It didn't hit me at first. I heard the name Billy and knew that the only person by the name of Billy was Lil' Billy. But shit, that nigga goes up there with random dudes almost every fucking night. So the urgency of the situation hit me a little late. I jumped down from my bunk.

"Yo, Hakim, you up?" Hakim didn't answer. "What happened up there wit' ya boi?" Still no answer. I turned around to look at his bunk, and that's when I remembered. Hakim was up there with Lil' Billy. Why wasn't I hearing him? Hakim was the loudest talker, and the yeller with the most volume in his voice. Why the fuck wasn't I hearing my boy?

"Thornton!" I yelled. Thornton was the last name of the female guard that Khalil bangs. "Yo, Thornton, what happened?"

The two overnight male guards had Billy restrained, and dragged him down the steps. His chest was covered in blood, and I don't think much of it was his. Why the fuck couldn't I hear Hakim?

"Thornton!!!!!!!!!" I yelled.

Khalil, in the cell to my left even screamed too. "Yo Monica, tell us what the fuck is goin' on man?"

Officer Thornton came down to us. "You guys need to chill. I know y'all were friends, but y'all will not be talkin' to me like that.

"What's up with Hakim?" I asked.

"There's not a simple way to put this. All I can say, is that he's not breathing. I called the nurses. They're running down here right now to see if they can stitch him up and possibly bring him back."

Just then, the onsite paramedics came in.

"Where do we need to go?"

"Just follow me." Officer Thornton ran up the steps and they went along behind her.

The jail doors usually open at about 6, but for obvious reasons we stayed in our cells longer. I watched as the guards and janitors brought down the bloody sheets and the blood soaked mattress. I even watched as Officer Thornton told Officer Tongis and Officer Melee the bad news when they came in for their shifts. Tongis ain't take it well. The officers weren't supposed to have favorites, but if I had to put money on who Tongis' favorite was, I'd say it was Hakim. The two of them would banter like nobody's business. Hell, most of the block favored Hakim. The dude was goofy as hell and funny as shit. Tongis regretted letting him go up there with crazy ass Lil' Billy.

Khalil tried to make a lil bit of small talk to raise my spirits and shit, but failed. Hakim was gone, for good.

The cells finally opened when they cleared and cleaned up that cell that Hakim spent his last moments in. It was about 9 o'clock. Most of the guys got straight in line to go to the cafeteria but the last thing I worried about was some stale as Cap'n Crunch.

"Tongis! What happened?" I said.

The question was on everyone's mind, and when I asked, it seemed that the entire prison stood behind me waiting for the words to come out of his mouth.

"Let's talk in my office." Tongis walked into the guard's station office and held the door for me.

I didn't want to go in his office. I felt like if he was going to tell me something valuable, then he should tell me out here so that everyone could hear.

"Come on in here if you comin," he said.

I started walking and followed him. In his office, he closed the blinds because he knew how much the Bloods loved to read the officers lips.

"If I tell you this, it doesn't leave this office. You can't tell anyone; you can't even tell God," he said.

"Then, why are you telling me?"

"Because I know how close you and Hakim were. Literally, you were two peas in a fucking pod."

"So- So what happened?" I asked.

"Uh... when Officers Kevins, Thornton, and Freebush got up to cell 311B, they found razors, the kind of razors that Hakim somehow always manages to get. We scan every single thing that came for him and it never contained razors but somehow Hakim always had one on him. But uh... they got up to the cell and saw that Lil' Billy had been sliced a couple times and had a razor stuck in his chest."

"And Hakim?" I asked.

"He had 3 of his razors stuck in his body. One in the eye, one the neck and the last was lodged in his chest. Um... all I can really say is that, Lil' Billy claims it was self-defense--"

"Hakim wouldn't have hurt that boy," I said.

"And I don't think he did. Not a damn thing about Lil' Billy's story is adding up. His lies keep changing, so he's with the warden and will remain with the warden until we can get the absolute truth out of him."

"Ok," I said.

Tongis' eyes were watered.

"I know that a lot of y'all think that I'm hard on you. I'm not. I'm not strict at all. That's because in my experience, the more liberties you have the more happiness. Cell block B had its fights every other week, but we hadn't had a murder in years. And when murders happen, I can't shut the emotions off." A tear fell from his face.

"I'm sorry, Tongis."

"No, it's ok. Because all of that is about to come to an end, one way or another."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean that cellblock B had more liberties than any other cellblock in The Well. When Lil' Billy tells the warden what's been going on down here, I'm fired. So is Melee, Thornton, Freebush, Sciano, Stoch, Kevins- all of them. All because I let Hakim go up to that God damn cell with Billy."

"He might not fire you."

“I can’t take this shit anymore. I’ve seen way too much death in this business, and I’m done,” he said. Tongis got up and walked out of his office.

I sighed heavily. I knew it was hard on him. Tongis was close to the prisoners. Sure, at times he acted like an asshole but I really think that’s only because he felt himself getting to close to us and wanted to distance himself. But Hakim’s passing, really took a toll on him.

I left the guard’s office and went back to my cell. Mostly everyone had gone to the cafeteria for breakfast. I decided to skip it and go back to my cell. Oddly enough, the last two people that were in my cell last night, were back in it.

Jirani was sitting on the bottom bunk bed, and Cypress was standing up and facing me when I walked in.

“What you want?” I said.

“I’m sorry about Hakim,” Cypress said.

What? This nigga just said he was sorry? Cypress was offering condolences? You’ve gotta be fucking kidding me.

“He was uh... a good guy,” Cypress continued. “We were 2 cells down from him last night, and um... we didn’t hear anything. I wish that we had. Perhaps, it could have saved his life.”

WTF? The nigga’s demeanor changed. Cypress is offering condolences and speaking in complete sentences? His voice no longer had that “nigga” dialect. And this nigga said, “perhaps.” My face was stunned at this shit. And no, I wasn’t buying it.

“What you want?” I asked.

“Uh... I noticed you don’t have a roommate anymore. Though, the situation is terrible, it actually fits for what Jirani needs from you.”

“Jirani needs a roommate?”

“Yes,” Cypress said.

“Then, you be his fucking roommate. You had no problem fuckin’ him and shit last night.”

Cypress wanted to elevate his volume, but for some reason, he refused to. “I know that you’re a noble man. And I know that if I tell you something, you won’t go repeat it to someone else.” Cypress looked to Jirani, and Jirani rolled his eyes. Cypress seemed stuck on his words, so Jirani took over.

“Cypress didn’t fuck me last night,” he said as he stood up from the bed.

“He didn’t?”

“Hell no, that would be disgusting. Cypress is my big brother.”

I stepped back to get a look at both of them side by side. They damn sure didn’t look alike.

“Yo’ real brother?” I asked.

“Same mom, different dads,” Cypress said.

“That still doesn’t explain why you won’t just make him your cellmate.”

“I don’t want him near the Bloods. You saw the way they acted when he stepped off that bus. So many things are happening inside of the gang at this very moment that is actually making me think that many of the Bloods aren’t loyal to me anymore. If word gets out that Jirani is my brother, some of the Bloods will make his life a living hell just to get to me. The safest thing for him is to be with you.”

“Be with me?” I asked. “How the fuck am I the safest option you got? My manpower just decreased from 2 to 1 and that’s still a whole fucking gang. If they want your brother, they’re going to get him.”

“No they won’t,” Cypress sighed. “All of the Bloods held major respect Jermaine. And before he hung himself, he set many codes that none of the Bloods will break in his memory. One of those codes is the one that he made for you. Because of what happened between you and Jermaine, Bloods aren’t allowed to touch you or anyone that you associate with. Jirani needs to be associated with you.”

“And what if they decide to break that rule? You expectin’ me to defend him?”

“Yes, but just until I can get them all on the same page again. If I can get them united under me again, I will see to it that they never bother Jirani either. But with the way things have been going, they won’t listen to me right now.”

“But what the fuck, man? How in the hell am I supposed to protect him? I mean, y’all niggas are supposed to be a unit. They cheered you on when you went upstairs with Jirani last night-”

“Because they want him to be one of the hoes,” he interrupted. “Yeah, I know.”

“So don’t you think they’re going to be pissed that he’s free before they had a chance to smash?”

“Of course, they will. But like I said, if Jirani is with you, then they won’t fuck with him.”

“But you don’t know that,” I said.

“I do know that. If any of them try, all I have to do is remind them of Jermaine. He was like a prison father to most of us. They will honor his memory by carrying out his wishes.”

I scratched my head. “Oh, shit,” I said to myself. “I guess, man. But I can’t promise shit.”

“Good. Once everyone gets back from breakfast, I need you to walk around the cells with Jirani holding your shirt.”

“Oh hell nah, nigga! I ain’t doin’ that shit!”

“There needs to be a bold enough statement to show that he is aligned with you,” Cypress explained. “So, he will hold your shirt as you walk around the block.”

“Ok, fine. I’ll do it,” I said.

“Good.” Cypress turned to his brother. “Come here, Rani.” Cypress and his little brother embraced each other in a hug. “We can’t talk to each other for a while, at least not until I can get some things straightened up.”

“It’s ok, Cy. But don’t be a stranger to me.”

“I won’t. And uh... tell Ma that she can’t come visit you for a while. If she comes up here to visit you and somebody recognizes her, it jeopardizes the whole plan. We gotta be slick.”

“I know,” Jirani said.

They broke the hug, and Cypress left my cell.

Cypress headed to the cafeteria to eat breakfast until he realized that someone was in his cell. However, it wasn’t someone he didn’t expect. He walked over to the cell, and spoke low enough to not startle the person.

“How are you?” Cypress said.

Elijah turned around to face him. His mouth hummed because he kept it closed. If his lips had parted, the muffled sound would have clearly been, “I don’t know.”

“You can open your mouth. We need to talk anyway,” he said.

“No, we don’t. I get it. You found a new play thing and I need to get a move on.”

“No, baby, no. I still love you, but we need to talk about what happened yesterday.”

“Ok. Let’s start with why you took that guy up to the suites,” Elijah said.

“Not that. I’m talking about you getting vocal with me around the guys.”

“What?”

“Yes, Elijah, I told you many of times that you cannot do that. You can’t question me, you can’t disobey me, you can’t argue with me and you can’t nag me,” Cypress ordered.

“Why not? If this is a relationship, and we’re supposed to be in love then why can’t we have a dialogue?”

“Because it doesn’t fucking look good! If I can’t control you, then how am I supposed to control them? We always joke about how I’m the king and you’re the queen, but you gotta know that they don’t see you like that. I’m the leader and you’re my ho.”

“Your ho? You’re demoting me?”

“No, I’m telling you how they see you, how they need to see you in order for me to stay on top. If I fall, we fall. And I guarantee you that none of them will be concerned with protecting you like I am.” Cypress grabbed Elijah’s face and rubbed Elijah’s cheek with his thumb. “We both know that there are people that no longer want to follow me. If they try to takeover, I’m a dead man. We need to play it smart. As long as I’m runnin’ shit, you’re safe. The minute I’m done, they’re gonna have you starting all over again from the bottom. I love you too much to let them do that to you.”

Elijah inhaled and exhaled heavily. Then he smiled.

“And I want you to know, that I don’t think of you as my ho. I’ve told you many times over and over again that if we could officially rule the kingdom together, then we would.”

Cypress pulled Elijah’s face into him, and they sucked at each other’s lips. They savored the precious joy that there is in making-up.

I tried to make small talk with the young boy, but found it too hard to do. I couldn’t get over his gayness. Shit, I was cool wit gay niggas in here. Aarif was known to fuck niggas before he became a Muslim. Shit, I already said that Elijah was one of the closest niggas to me outside of Hakim. But they was different than this nigga. Beatin’ ya dick does get old, and sometimes you do wanna feel something else on it. In Elijah’s case, he didn’t have a choice. He needed to survive and I respected the shit. But Jirani? This nigga was fuckin’ niggas way back when he had the chance to get pussy. He was probably takin’ it up da ass too.

I was so happy when Khalil came back to his cell from breakfast.

“You iight?” Khalil asked.

“Yeah.”

“Tongis tell you what happened? I saw y’all go into his office.”

“He told me that uh…” I ciphered through all the information that Tongis gave me at the quickest speed possible. Since Tongis did tell me that what we discussed was not to leave his office, I didn’t want to tell Khalil anything that was specific. “Uh… he said that Billy’s story ain’t addin’ up. I guess he’s claiming that he killed Hakim in self-defense.”

“That meth-head ass white boy,” Khalil sucked his teeth. “You gon’ fuck him up when he get back?”

“Hell yeah. Hakim was my mothafuckin’ dude. I’mma turn that white nigga’s lights out.”

“You know I got my money on you man.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong,” Jirani started. “If you fight, don’t you get put in the hole or something?”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Don’t you think the powers that be, might get a little upset if you were to go to the hole?” Jirani was talking about his brother. If I got sent to the hole, Jirani was back on the market. And no, I suppose “the powers that be” wouldn’t be too pleased if I picked a fight with Lil’ Billy.

Khalil’s face couldn’t hide his confusion. “Terry, who da fuck is this?”

“This is my new roommate, Rani. Rani, this is our neighbor Khalil.”

“Nice to meet you, Khalil,” Rani responded.

Khalil laughed. I knew what he was laughing at. He was laughing at the very same thing that brought me shock when I first heard Rani’s voice.

“Kid, you’re never gonna make it in The Well. You gon’ get passed around like a joint,” Khalil laughed.

That reminded me. I looked around and saw that most of the Bloods had returned from breakfast already. It was show time. I stood up from the seat.

“Come on,” I said.

“Alright.” Jirani stepped up and grabbed the tail of my shirt.

Khalil stepped aside, and as we walked pass him, he saw that Jirani had ahold of me.

“Oh, snap!” he said. Then the nigga started laughing. That was the thing that grabbed everyone’s attention. They all looked at me as I began the stroll. I turned to the right as I walked out and passed a couple of neutral cells. After that, came the Muslim’s area. They looked at me with disdain. It was the same look they gave all men that took the stroll. One of them elbowed Aarif, whose head was locked on the Quran. He looked up to me, and his eyes locked into mine. He shook his head, and then dropped it. Eventually, he went back to reading. After passing the Muslims, I came across a couple more neutral cells, and then the Asians, and the Aryans. The Mexicans had the cells that were on the top of the Aryans and Asians, so they could see me from the top floor as well. I kept walking, and came across the area that had been declared territory for the Pedophiles and Christians.

I’d gone around about 2/3 of the oval area. The last 3rd was Blood territory. And they could smell me while I walked. I tried to appear as confident as they always do, but that didn’t help. Niggas were pissed.

“What the fuck?” somebody said.

One of the Bloods jumped out of his seat and stepped to me.

“You can’t claim him homeboi,” he said. “He a Blood ho, and you ain’t a Blood.”

“Leon!” Cypress called to the Blood that just approached me. “Let him pass!”

“Hell no! He can’t be walkin’ around here with a Blood ho!”

“The boy is not a Blood ho!”

All the Bloods turned to Cypress.

“I didn’t make him a ho for the Bloods last night. He was just a ho for me.”

“What?” Leon yelled back. There was a wave of grunts and groans that came from the Bloods that actually fuck men. The other Bloods didn’t really give a damn.

“If you want to fuck Jirani, you will have to wait until Terrius is done with him.”

“Fuck nah!!!” The Bloods sounded off.

“You heard me! And both Terrius and Jirani will go unharmed, as per request of Jermaine.”

Grunts and moans still ran through this entire side of the room. But they moved out of my way and let me pass. That didn’t stop them from shooting dirty looks at us though.

Up at the guard's station, Officer Melee looked down at us.

"What the hell is Terry doing?" Melee said. Tongis got up out of his seat to see what he was talking about. "When did he start raping the newbies?"

Tongis looked down. He knew that I wasn't like that, and was actually able to catch on to what was really happening.

"He's not," Officer Tongis said.

"Carl, look at them!" Melee said. "He's holding Terry's shirt. You know what that means."

"Yeah, I know what that means, but that's not what's going on. Terry is protecting him."

Officer Tongis went back to his seat and continued working.

I finished my walk and came back into my cell.

"Uza' slick nigga," Khalil said.

"Fuck you talkin' 'bout, nigga?"

"I'm talkin' 'bout all dat shit you be slangin about how Cypress is a pussy nigga, and all them niggas that fuck other niggas are bullshit, and you bout to do the same thing."

"It's not like that."

"The hell it ain't. I knew as soon as Hakim cracked that you weren't gon' be too far behind him."

"Yo, keep yo voice down. I'm not going to fuck him," I tried to explain.

"The hell you ain't, nigga. This cell gon' be smellin' like musty nuts, a shitty ass and lavender soap." The lavender soap was a reference to the towel that the top niggas sniff when that dirty aroma of prison sex gets to be too strong.

I laughed. "Nigga, how you know about the lavender soap?" I questioned, in a joking way. The joke hinted that maybe he, himself had sniffed the towel while he's been here.

"Aww, nah, nigga. I know da game," he laughed. "I heard them niggas talkin' about sniffin' the towel. You know me nigga. I don't need to fuck da niggaz in here cuz you know I'm still gettin' pussy."

"Nigga, you know you be sniffin' the towel, with that rank, dry and hairy ass pussy that Officer Thornton got."

Jirani and I laughed.

"Hakim always say that he could literally hear yo dick gettin' rug burns when you was fuckin' her."

All three of us laughed at that. Once the laughter settled, it became quiet. I don't know what Rani was thinking about, but Khalil and I were thinkin' about Hakim. We were really gonna miss that silly ass nigga. Khalil caught himself getting gloomy, and decided to shift the subject.

"But I never said I wouldn't fuck a nigga. I distinctly told you that I haven't done so, but if I needed sex bad enough, I'm not sure what I would do. But you, on the other hand," Khalil began to mock me. "I ain't gettin' punked, Ion't fuck niggas, I ain't eva gon' be on dat faggot ass shit."

"Ion't fuckin' talk like that."

"Yeah, you fuckin' do nigga," Khalil laughed.

"Shut up, and lemme whoop yo ass in a game of spades."

"Light, lemme go get Roland." Khalil took off to find his favorite spades partner.

I turned my head to Jirani. "You know how to play spades, right?"

Jirani nodded.

“Cool, come on.”

We played a couple of rounds of spades and Jirani wasn't that bad of a player. The game was noticeably quieter. Generally, Hakim would have been the one to be talking shit and getting everyone started up. While Jirani could play the game, he was no suitable replacement.

“Who is that?” Jirani asked. I turned and looked behind me. Jirani pointed to the half black and half Asian, that was fawning under his brother.

“That's Elijah,” I said. “He's an interesting character.”

“You fucked his man last night. He been walkin' around still pissed about it all morning,” Khalil said.

“And I bet yo ass enjoyed seeing him mad.”

“I don't give a fuck about either one of those niggas. I left that bullshit behind me when I left the Bloods.”

“You stay in contact with any of the others that left?” I asked.

“Um... yeah. I still talk to most of the neutrals.”

“What about Aarif?”

“Nah- nah,” Khalil said.

“Dat nigga completely jumped ship. He don't talk to any of the old crew anymore,” Roland answered.

“I thought it was a phase at first,” Khalil said. “But if we say wassup to him, he don't even look our way. Do he talk to you?” Khalil asked back.

“Shit, Aarif never really talked to me in the first place,” I answered.

“Dude used to be madd cool. I guess dat shit went out the window.”

“Maybe it's the religion.”

“Maybe so.”

During the last part of the conversation, I noticed Jirani's eyes dancing around at whatever was going on behind me. I found out why.

“I'm playing next game,” Elijah said, pulling up a chair from a table nearby. Normally, Khalil and Roland would get up, but it was extremely rare that they would have more points than me. Since they were up by 70, they remained seated and kept playing.

The game became awkwardly silent. Elijah and Jirani kept looking at each other. Elijah hated him on sight, and Jirani felt it.

“So... who's the new guy?” Elijah asked.

“You mean Cypress didn't tell you?” I asked. I meant the fact that Cypress and Jirani were brothers. But the way I said it, made it sound like I was trying to make a dig at how Cypress keeps secrets from Elijah. And that's how both Khalil and Roland took it.

They both laughed.

Elijah's face got sour. And I didn't know exactly how to recover. If Cypress didn't tell him that he and Jirani were brothers, then I assume he didn't want Elijah to know.

Elijah tried to keep his pride intact. “Cypress doesn't tell me things that he thinks might upset me. I know that they shared one of the suites last night, and I'm ok with it. I was just asking you punks to introduce me to him. Especially since he's yours,” Elijah took a dig back at me. “That was a nice show you put on earlier. I would say that I'm surprised, but that would be lying.”

“What you mean?”

“I knew you were fuckin'. And even if you weren't, I knew you were thinking about it.”

I shook my head. *This was the same bullshit Khalil was tryna say...* And the shit ain't true. I ain't fucked or even thought about fuckin' no nigga.

"I guess man."

"Don't play dumb, nigga," Elijah added.

This shit was beginning to make me mad. I ain't no fuckin' gay ass nigga. It was hard as hell to restrain myself from flippin' out on da dude. But I was working it out, until...

"It was only a matter of time before your perversion for young girls became a thing for little boys like Jirani anyway."

That's it!

Elijah was sitting to the left of me. Without a second of thought, my left hand punched him in the face and almost knocked his lil' sissy ass over. I followed up with a right hand to the face and the dude fell to the floor. Then, I put my hands around that bastard's neck. Behind me, Khalil and Roland were cheering me on.

"Beat his ass, Terry! Beat dat lil' niggas ass!"

From the guard's station, I could hear Officer Tongis screaming at me. "Terry, knock it off!"

I got fuckin' caught up in the shit and really wanted that nigga dead. Fuck friendship. Everybody in the block already knows, that bringing up that shit about my past gets your ass beat. EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT! Officer Tongis came running down the steps to get in the middle of the fight.

"Terry, let go!"

I kept choking him and even punched him again with my right hand as his arms flailed around helplessly. In the heat of the moment, I actually wanted to see Elijah's life pass from his body at the hands of me. I wanted him dead. My thoughts went so red that I forgot the consequences of putting hands on Elijah. But I was reminded soon enough.

"Hiyahhh!" A Blood came running toward me and kicked me in the ribs to get me off of Elijah. The kick didn't hold back any force at all. This nigga kicked me with all the power that his thighs could muster. I rolled off of Elijah, and he rolled on top of me. Officer Tongis tried to separate us, while Melee started coming down the steps as well because another fight had broken out. Roland was fighting with the Blood that kicked me.

Elijah already had a deep and dirty ass cut on his eyebrow, so he tried to get revenge. While on top of me, he pulled out one of those pencil-razors that Hakim gave him the day before. The nigga brought it down and tried to slash my face. My hands grabbed his arms to keep him away from me. Around us, the fight had expanded. Khalil was wrestling with some other random Blood. Through the corner of my eye, I saw Cypress running towards us.

I pried the pencil-razor out of Elijah's hand and swiped it across his face.

"Ahhhhhhh!" He screamed and threw himself back and away from me. The place I cut him was right across the nose. The cut wasn't deep, but it was long. Another Blood came charging at me and kicked the razor out of my hand. Then he got down and started punching me.

Cypress finally made it all the way over to the fight and pulled the Blood off of me. A few of the neutrals were able to pull Khalil away from the fight that he was actually having with 2 other Bloods.

"Stop it!" Cypress said.

The Bloods turned to their leader and looked lost, but they ceased.

"No!" Elijah hopped up, holding his nose. "He cut me! Kill him!"

“NOOOO!” Cypress yelled back out, to make sure that the Bloods did not act on his order.

“No? He just cut me! You should be defending me!”

“No. You’re not a Blood, You’re a ho.”

Elijah looked like his world was just torn into pieces.

“I want everyone to hear this. The days of fighting for Elijah are over. He is not a Blood, so do not defend him and do not come to his aide.”

Elijah stared into Cypress’ eyes, pissed at what he just heard. The army was no longer at Elijah’s disposal.

The Bloods retreated back to their area, and Cypress nodded at me before wrapping his hand around Elijah and leading him back to their cell.

Still livid from the fight and even more pissed about Cypress’s actions, Elijah snubbed him.

“I can’t believe you just did that,” he said.

“Shh. We’ll talk about it when we get a moment alone.”

“No, I don’t want to talk about it,” Elijah argued.

“Stop it,” Cypress begged Elijah to quit. If this thing between them escalated, in order to save face Cypress would have to do something he didn’t want to do.

“No, I won’t stop it! Why did you do that?”

Cypress had to do it. He grabbed Elijah by the neck and charged him back against the wall. “When I tell you to stop it, I fuckin’ mean it! Learn to fuckin’ listen!”

Tongis and Melee ran to Cypress to pull him off of Elijah.

“Come on, big fella. Let go,” Melee said.

“Turner, let go of him!” Tongis yelled.

Melee and Tongis pulled him away and held him back while Elijah felt how tender his neck was after being choked twice in 5 minutes.

“Eli,” Tongis said. “Go in to my office and cool down.”

Elijah took heed and walked to the guard’s station, so Tongis turned his attention back to Cypress.

“Turner, calm down.”

“Get the fuck off of me!” Cypress pushed both guards off of him.

“Do you wanna go to the hole?”

“I ain’t ‘fraid of no fuckin’ hole!”

“Fine,” Melee said. “Let’s go.” Melee pulled his nightstick out and nudged Cypress in the back with it.

“You ok with taking him by yourself?” Tongis asked Melee.

“Yeah, I got this. You should probably handle what went on with Terry and Elijah.”

“Alright.” Officer Melee walked Cypress out and Tongis turned around to assess the mess. “Khalil and Roland, go into Khalil’s cell. Durrel and Javon (the two Bloods that fought Khalil), go to your cell, and Kelly (the Blood that kicked me and fought Roland), take one of the suites. All of you guys are going into lockdown.” The guys groaned. For a second I thought Tongis forgot about me.

“And YOU!” he pointed to me. “Get your ass in my office right now.”

Chapter 4: Lockdown

“So what the hell happened with you two? I thought you were friends,” Tongis said. He sat at his desk as both Elijah and I sat on the opposite side of it.

“Everybody knows, don’t open yo lips if you can’t close yo fist,” I said. “That’s a fuckin’ rule of conduct up in The Well. Everybody knows that!”

“Yeah, yeah. You’re right,” Tongis said sarcastically. “They actually have that on The Wellside Correctional Facility billboard in downtown Indianapolis,” Tongis made a joke, but no one laughed. “Alright, so what was said then?”

“He brought up my past!”

“You cut my fuckin’ face!”

“You’re not even mad at me!” I yelled. “You came over and decided to start some shit with me because you’re mad and Cypress and Jirani!”

“Oh...” A light bulb clicked on in Tongis’s head. “This was about what happened last night.”

“Yes!” I said.

“No!” Elijah yelled at the same time I did. “There is nothing wrong with me and Cypress. He just wanted to try something different last night. I walked over to them to play spades. I made a harmless joke about him and his new boyfriend and he got pissed and hit me. I guess he’s allowed to talk shit about everybody else, but we can’t say something to him.”

“You can say anything you want to me, as long as you can back it up.”

“Well look,” Tongis started, but his phone rung. He answered it. “Tongis,” he said. After a series of “Uh-huh”s, he finally said, “I’m on my way to get him right now.” Tongis hung up. “Alright, both of you go to your cells. You’re going into lockdown so you can cool off. Now hurry up! Move your ass!”

We left the guard’s station. There’s something weird about the way Tongis rushed us out of his office. I turned around and looked at him before coming down the steps.

“Go!” I saw him mouth out through the glass. As soon as I got back to my cell, the jail doors closed and locked behind me. Jirani was already in my cell and he was chattin’ it up with Khalil through the jail bars.

“I don’t like the way she looks,” Jirani laughed.

“She ain’t ugly. I don’t know why y’all niggas keep sayin’ dat. Monica ain’t a dime but she ain’t ugly.”

“That bitch ain’t even a fuckin’ nugget.”

I laid down next to Jirani on the bottom bunk. “We talkin’ about Cryptkeeper Thornton again?”

Jirani laughed.

“You’re lucky there are bars between us, or I would knock you out, nigga,” Khalil said.

“Son, you know that bitch is ugly.”

“Pussy is pussy, nigga! I’m glad you can be so picky.”

“But son, you be runnin’ up in her raw,” I pointed out.

“Aww, fuck you nigga. See how you act? Dissin’ me when I just had yo back against The New Bloods. And I ain’t even get a thank you for it.” The New Bloods is what the Ex-Bloods like Khalil and Roland would call the current Bloods.

“Alright nigga, since you beggin’ for it. Thank you... Now shut yo bitch ass up so I can read my letters.”

I grabbed my box of old letters that people have sent me and hopped up to my bunk. Normally if I was in lockdown, I’d read them to pass the time.

The box was full of letters, and yes, most of them were from my girls. One of the girls was named Melanie. I met her when I was 19, and she was 14. She was one of the witnesses that had to testify against me in court. She didn't want to. But she had to when her mom went through her cellphone and saw the video of her 19 year old next door neighbor banging her 14 year old daughter. Melanie was a smart and perky Korean. And just weeks after her mother turned me in, she found out that she was pregnant with my kid. My mom, still wanted to be a part of her granddaughter's life but Melanie's parents wouldn't hear of it. They moved away not long after I got put in. However, Melanie wrote to my mom to find out how she could send letters to me. After a year in The Well, I got my first letter from Melanie. It was the best letter I've ever gotten to this day, and my favorite one to read.

Dear Terrius,

I hope u r ok. Hopefully u havn't dropped the soap yet. (lol!) I don't know if ur mom told u that I got ur address from her. I'm sure she did. I've been thinking about writing this letter for the longest. This is like the 18th draft. I still don't know exactly what to say. I guess I'll start off with the really really good news. I had the baby! I named her Theresa or Terry for short, after u. But my mom wouldn't let me give her your last name. But I did put some pictures of her in the envelope. I wanted u 2 c what she looks like. My little sister says she looks like you. I think she looks like me. So you be the judge.

I miss u alot. I'm sorry about the video. I'm sorry I got u caught. I hope u not mad at me. I wish I would of lied for u. Cuz I didn't see u as a predator. I liked u since I first saw u. But I guess that still ain't supposed to be right. Predators don't love like u. I should of said that cuz I love u. And I love our baby. I hope when u get out that we can be together again. I really really really miss u (lol) Don't write back to this address because if my mom sees it in the mail she will go nuts. Write from a fake address or sumthin. Ok. I love you.

After reading the letter for probably the millionth time, I looked at the baby pictures. I had many more pictures of Terry since these, but these were the most precious. Straight out of the womb, my daughter was gorgeous. And not in some sick way. She was the most beautiful little girl in the world. It still blew my mind how she came from us. From something that was supposed to be so damn horrible, came the most beautiful thing that this universe has ever seen.

"When are they lettin' us out for dinner?" Jirani asked. A decent 8 hours had passed with us confined to the cell. Jirani didn't say anything when he saw the prisoners go to lunch, but he had to say something since he saw them headed to dinner.

"They not," Khalil answered him. "Lockdown is a 24 hour punishment."

"What? But I didn't do anything."

"You didn't have to be in the cell when I came back," I said.

"But... shit. I didn't eat breakfast because I was with Cy, and now I don't get lunch or dinner?"

"You'll get used to it," I said.

"Fuck."

I jumped down from off my bunk and looked in Hakim's hiding space behind the sink. He always kept some kind of food back there. I pulled a napkin out from in back of it.

"What is that?" Jirani asked.

I opened up the napkin, and showed it to Jirani so he could see what it was.

“Spaghetti? In a napkin? That’s been behind a sink for who knows how long?”

“It was Hakim’s. Shit, he ain’t gon’ eat it.”

“And I’m not either,” Jirani turned it down. He laid down all the way on his bed and looked through the bars at Khalil. “What you got over there?”

“A bag of Cheetos,” Khalil answered.

“Oh, so that’s why you’re teeth are so yellow,” Jirani cracked a joke.

“Shut up,” Khalil laughed. The whole time I was reading my letters, they flirted back and forth. It bugged me. It didn’t officially irritate me, but it did bug me. “Nigga, do you want a Cheeto or not?”

“Yeah, I guess.” Jirani pulled a handful of Cheetos out of Khalil’s bag. “So Terrius reads, but what do you do when you’re on lockdown?”

“Depends on what I feel like. I might read my letters, or I might write down a rap or something.”

“So you rap?”

“Yeah, I got flow. But it’s more like spoken word poetry.”

“But you do rap. Can I hear you?”

“Shit, nigga, I don’t rap out loud. I just write it,” Khalil explained.

“You’re fucking kidding me. Poetry ain’t poetry unless it’s read aloud.”

“I read it aloud, in my head,” Khalil laughed.

“Since you won’t read it to me, will you at least let me read it?”

“Oh nah. You ain’t readin’ my work.”

“Why not? I write poems,” Jirani confessed. “I can tell you if it’s good or not.”

“You so obsessed with readin’ my shit, why don’t you let me read yours?”

“I didn’t bring a notebook with me.”

“Too bad,” Khalil popped another Cheeto into his mouth.

“But... I have one committed to memory. I don’t know if you’ll like it though.”

“I’ll judge. Lemme hear it.”

Jirani took a heavy sigh and closed his eyes. “OK, here goes. *I lost my mind and followed my heart, to a beloved desire hidden in the dark, I’ll be wounded but it won’t leave a visible scar, I see it in the tarot cards. I tried to read myself and the cards went black, Flipped to the next card and the red heart’s cracked, Flipped to the next card, the full balloon’s gone flat, Flipped to the next card and it’s filled with black cats. I tried to change the deck, but it’s more of the same, The black mistress cries for a grave with no name, Cupid’s arrow is bent, proof he has bad aim, Flames cover the sky too fast to contain. I read my own palm, but the lines weren’t complete, I could look the other way, but truth is easy to see, I can only accept ‘cuz there’s no way to cheat, this battle for love will end in defeat.*” Once Jirani finished his poem, he opened his eyes to Khalil staring deep at him. “So?”

“I don’t get it,” Khalil said.

Jirani laughed. “It’s called Tarot Card. I wrote it back when I was 15. I used to be really into magic and tarot cards when I was younger.”

“But... what’s a Tarot card?”

“Oh wow,” Jirani smiled. “Give me some more Cheetos.”

Khalil handed the bag to him.

“A tarot card is a card that supposed ‘psychics’ use to tell the future,” I said from my bunk.

“Thank you!” Jirani said. “At least somebody gets it.”

“It sounded like it was deep,” Khalil said. “But I still didn’t understand it.”

Jirani sighed.

“Khalil, stop acting slow nigga,” I interrupted. “Obviously, the poem is about a love that is doomed; a relationship that is not going to last. All the cards were bad omens.”

“Omen? What that is?”

Khalil and Jirani kept flirtin’ back and forth. I would say that Khalil didn’t know he was flirtin’ but the nigga turned on the charm so hard, that flirtin’ became mackin’. The whole thing made my stomach turn. I fell asleep reading another one of my old letters from Melanie. But those two kept flirting well past lights out. At least they had the decency to turn the volume down to a whisper.

“You still never let me hear one of your raps,” Jirani said.

“And I’m not going to, not after hearing yours. Now, I’m intimidated and shit.”

“For what? I just wanted to get a grip on your mindset. But if you’re scared, it’s ok.”

“Oh shut up, nigga, and go to sleep.”

“I can’t. I can’t sleep on an empty stomach, and I’m starving,” Jirani rubbed his stomach. “I wish I had something else to eat.”

“I do too,” Khalil said. “At least your mouth would be too busy to talk.”

“Stop it,” Jirani put his hand through the bars and playfully punched Khalil. “Ay, I got a question for you. The only Blood I ever knew was my brother and I never got a chance to ask him.”

“You got a brother that’s a Blood?” Khalil asked.

Jirani quickly thought, making sure that he hadn’t just given anything away. “Uh... he was a friend. I used to call him my brother.” Jirani took a deep breath, hoping that Khalil wouldn’t pry further.

“Oh, ok. Well what’s the question?”

“Umm... can a Blood listen to Snoop Dogg?”

Khalil laughed. “I heard that some of them do. But I don’t.”

“Ok. Can I ask one more question?”

“If I say no, would you ask me anyway?”

“Yup,” Jirani beamed.

“Then go ahead and ask.”

“If Snoop is a Crip, and The Game is a Blood, then why do they get along?”

Khalil laughed again. “There’s some kind of Bloods vs Crips truce in California or something. But that shit didn’t extend all the way across the US. I’m from Chi-town, and back when I was at home, if I saw a Crip, or a Latin king or anything, the nigga was dead in minutes.”

“Oh,” Jirani said, kinda shaken. Though his brother was very deep into the gang lifestyle, Jirani wasn’t. And he honestly began to feel that spending all day talking to Khalil had been in vain. This one confession that Khalil made, completely negated everything else.

“You stopped talkin,” Khalil said. “You scared of me now?”

“I was scared of you before.”

“But are you more scared?”

“Should I be?” Jirani tiptoed around the answer.

Khalil decided not to fight for an answer that he already knew. “I got a question now. It’s about that poem.”

“The poem that you didn’t even understand?”

“Yeah, yeah. That one. You wrote dat for some dude, right?”

“Yes. I know that I’ve been hiding it under lock and key since I got here, but yes I am gay,” Jirani said sarcastically.

Khalil didn’t say anything.

“What’s wrong? Don’t tell me you’re scared of me now,” Jirani chuckled.

Khalil laughed. “I was scared of you before.”

I woke up when the lights came up at 6, and jumped down from the bunk. The officers hadn’t unlocked any of the cells except for the Aryan’s. And there were about 12 officers, more than ever in cell block B. The only reason they would reassign more officers to a certain block is if they were planning a raid, or expecting a riot. The fact that they didn’t unlock all the cells proved they weren’t planning a raid. Something was about to go down. Officer Tongis and Melee had even come in early to join in on the fun.

Officer Freebush, a Jew that the Aryans hated, walked to their cells first.

“Well, well, well,” the Aryan leader said. “Boys, we’ve got a kyke in our midst.” Zachariah Thomas was his name. The man was near his 50’s with silver hair and very built, but aged body. Zach was pinched for carving “Jew” into a shop owner’s forehead with a steak knife because the owner accused Zach’s sons of stealing from the shop.

Zachariah got a good look around and saw that the “kyke” wasn’t alone. “Looks like the blandest fuckin’ rainbow out there,” he said, talking about the ranging skin colors of all the guards.

“Zach,” Officer Freebush said. “We have some questions to ask you. You can choose to answer them in private or you can answer them here. If you’re afraid of what the other prisoners might think, we can go in private.” Freebush did that on purpose. He knew The Well’s code on fear, that if you give in then you might as well give up. Freebush was provoking him. He didn’t want Zach to go into a private area to answer these questions, because he wanted all of us to hear the answers. Zach refused to retreat in fear of the other prisoners, so he decided to answer the questions in front of the entire prison, just like Freebush wanted.

“Ask me anything, Jesus killer. I’ve got nothing to hide,” Zachariah said. The other Aryans became restless. They knew what it meant when multiple officers came into a cellblock. And they could see the guns filled with corks and rubber bullets in their holsters. Some of the guard’s even had tasers.

“Ok. The warden has been talking to Lil’ Billy.”

“Let me stop you right there. The Aryans don’t fuck with Billy and you know that. We didn’t have a thing to do with him killing that jungle bunny upstairs.”

“He said that you did. And the warden believes him.”

“Well I’m telling you that I didn’t. That little faggot is a liar,” Zach said.

“He said that The Aryans threatened to kill him because you didn’t want him having sex with black guys.”

“He’s a fucking pig. The Aryans don’t give a fuck about pigs!”

“But that’s not true, is it? I can recall seeing you pull Billy aside many times in the past few months, after you allegedly discarded him,” Freebush responded.

“You’re a liar. You crucified Jesus and now you’re lying to me!”

“You didn’t like Billy kickin’ it with the homies, did you? You know some of the essas had a turn with him too.”

“What could I expect? He was a ho. So get the fuck outta here, kyke.” Zach turned his back.

“We’re not done.”

“Yes, we are.” The rest of the Aryans put on their best aggressive faces and were prepared to go to war.

“Stand down, all of you.”

“Fuck you!” an Aryan said.

Zach approved of what the random Aryan said. “My boys don’t take orders from Jews.”

“But you will,” Freebush smiled. “I said, we’re not done.”

One of the Aryans stepped into Freebush’s face, and quickly, Freebush clubbed him with his nightstick. And all hell broke loose.

Guards clubbed Aryans and Aryans threw as many fists as possible. Just about everyone who wasn’t already awake, woke up because of the commotion.

Khalil hopped up from his bed and you could see the erect stiffness from both he and Roland’s boxers.

“What’s goin’ on?” Khalil asked me.

“Billy told the warden that the Aryans put him up to killing Hakim.”

“Damn.”

“That doesn’t make sense though. Zach hates Billy,” I recalled.

“I saw them just the other day. They were hidin’ in that janitor closet and whisperin’ and shit. I believe it. If these white boys want to start a war, I can give it to them. The minute they open these bars, I’m crackin’ some fake ass Nazi skulls.”

An Aryan knocked the nightstick out of Officer Melee’s hand, forcing them to actually fist fight.

“Oh shit,” Khalil said. Melee and the Aryan were headed our way. Melee was able to pin the dude up against the bars of my cell, so being the nigga that I am, I reached through the bars and grabbed him. My arms locked around ole dudes neck in a chokehold. With me restraining him, Officer Melee pulled out his taser and shot the Aryan in his chest.

“Arrrrrghhh!” The Aryan yelled out. His body suddenly went stiff and he fell straight to the floor. After the Aryan dropped, Melee quickly handcuffed him. Melee looked up at me.

“Thanks Terry,” he said.

“No prob.”

After Melee secured the Aryan’s hands behind his back, he went back out to help other officers.

Dudes head lay right in front of Khalil’s cell, so of course he took the cheap shot and kicked him in the face.

“I hate those Aryan fucks!” he said.

He hopped back on his bed. I turned around to head back to my bed too.

Khalil reached his hand through the bars and slapped Jirani’s face.

“Wake up nigga! How in the hell are you sleeping through this shit?”

“What? Leave me alone,” Jirani pulled the covers over his head.

“Get yo lazy ass up.” Khalil pulled the blanket down and exposed Jirani’s naked body. “Nigga, you ain’t got no fuckin’ clothes on!”

“No, I don’t. Now leave me alone and let me go back to sleep.” Jirani pulled the blanket back over his head.

In a matter of minutes, all the commotion with the Aryans and the correction officers died down. With nothing left to really see, most prisoners went back to sleep. I got back on the top bunk and looked up at the ceiling. From the bunk I could hear Khalil and Roland whispering.

They were most likely about to play a prank on Jirani. I would have helped Jirani out, but I knew that whatever Khalil was gonna do, it would be harmless because he and Jirani had some shit in common. Khalil liked him. Anytime Khalil played pranks on me or Hakim, they weren't anything vile.

I paid the boys no mind and made an attempt to get some more sleep.

"Shh," Khalil told Roland. Roland sat on the chair inside of the cell, while Khalil lied on the bed. Khalil put his hand through the bars and slapped Jirani's ass.

"Stop it," Jirani said. The covers were still over his head, so you couldn't really hear him.

Khalil put his hands under the blanket. Roland giggled in his whisper voice and Khalil shushed him again.

Khalil's hand rested on Jirani's ass and Jirani smacked it away. Khalil and Roland both laughed and Khalil's hand never withdrew. Instead, it moved around. Khalil's "prank" was driven by sexual arousal. His hand moved down to the crevice and his fingers made a swipe through Jirani's ass. Then he withdrew his hand.

Jirani's interest piqued. "What are you doin'?"

Khalil looked at his fingers. There was no skid mark.

Jirani pulled the covers off of his head just in time to see Khalil sniff them.

"Yuck, nigga." Jirani said. "You nasty as shit."

Roland laughed. "Yo, yo. I'm goin back to bed. You niggas are silly as hell." Roland moved from the chair and jumped back up to the top bunk.

Khalil didn't notice a funk smell on his finger. The smell was more of a musk.

"Come here," Khalil whispered.

"Uh-uh," Jirani played coy.

"Come over here."

Jirani slid closer to him. Khalil put his hands back through the bars and went for Jirani's ass again. His finger rubbed around the rim of the hole, still too cautious to actually go into it. This was the first time that Khalil was going somewhere with another male. He always talked about being open to it, if it were to happen. He wasn't close-minded like me. This may be because he's actually been in the pen longer than I have- and wasn't ever going to get out. Plus the fact that he's seen many men turned out due to the fact that he witnessed the Jermaine Watts regime.

His finger stopped rubbing Jirani's ass and he pulled it out to sniff again. Still no funk. The finger went right back in. This time it didn't fuck around.

Jirani got taken by surprise at how Khalil began fingerbanging him so quickly.

"Uhhhh-" Jirani moaned in a whisper.

"You like that?" Khalil said back.

"Yeah-"

"Shhhhh," Khalil shushed him because he made the mistake of going full voice.

"Yeah," Jirani whispered.

Khalil pulled his blanket over his body. Then he turned to lay on his side and free his dick. Jirani did the same. The two boys lay face to face with only jail bars between them. Khalil's left hand reached past the bars, under the blanket, between Jirani's thighs, under Jirani's nuts and into his crawlspace. Khalil's right hand stroked his phat and throbbing 8 inch dick. Khalil covered his head with the blanket so Jirani followed suit.

Khalil had a fetish for pussy, fingering pussy and eating pussy, more so than actually fucking it. He loved squirters, and lettin' them squirt in his face or his mouth when they orgasm.

What Khalil was doing with Jirani, allowed him to relive his experiences with women. His two middle fingers plunged into Jirani's warm channel.

Jirani's soft whimpers were reminiscent of a woman's. He began to breathe heavier.

"Let- lemme- Lemme suck it," he said between breaths.

"You want to?"

"Yeah," Jirani said.

"Tight." Khalil extracted his hand. He didn't know exactly how this would happen. The guards were up and walking around, and the lights were on. But the idea came to him soon enough. He flipped his position so he was lying at the foot of the bed. He moved down so that their bodies could line up, and put the blanket back over his body. Then he slid his dick in between two jail bars.

With the rod staring him the face, Jirani sucked at it. Before he really got into this, he wanted to make sure he didn't get caught. There was a narrow space where Khalil's dick was visible. Khalil had his blanket cover his side of the bed, and Jirani's blanket covered his side, but that space between the bars was uncovered. A whole 2 inches of raw, milk chocolate dick was bare. Jirani pulled his blanket across the bars to cover it.

-Sluuuuuuurp- "Mmmm..." Jirani hummed.

Khalil liked this shit. He really dug it. The angle they were at was perfect to maximize his pleasure. Khalil's dick curved upward like a banana, so as it passed through Jirani's mouth, it never stopped touching a taste bud. And its length seemed a perfect fit. When Jirani's mouth came down as far as it could because of the jail bars, the dick sat right at his throat passage. And Jirani had no gag reflexes, so the dick went down easily.

"Aww shit..." Khalil bit his fist to keep from getting verbal. There were so many words flying around in his head that it was like a job trying to keep them from coming out. "Yeah, suck dat daddy dick," was just one of the phrases he tried to keep in.

"Uhhh..." Khalil moaned. His teeth actually began to pierce the skin of his fist.

Jirani enjoyed this too. He sucked dick like it was food. He valued the taste of Khalil's dick like it was a pizza, let the head pass his tonsils like it was a huge and unhealthy piece of red meat. He kept sucking at Khalil's dick, waiting for it to dispense its protein and fill his empty stomach.

"Ahhh," Khalil was starting to break his whisper. His abs began to tighten and sweat bubbles began to form at his forehead. "Oh shit," he broke the whisper, but was luckily still low enough to where no one outside of Jirani could hear.

Jirani's hand stroked his own dick underneath the blanket. He was getting off simply on the pre-cum that leaked into his throat. He kept gobbling up because he didn't want the appetizer, he wanted the entire.

"Keep suckin' dat dick, keep suckin' dat dick," Khalil encouraged. And instead of him relying on Jirani's head to do the work, he started feeding the dick to him. His hips pumped the bars at a steady pace.

Jirani's hands let go of his own dick and reached past the bars to pull Khalil's dick all the way through.

"Oh... fuck, keep suckin' dat dick, keep suckin' dat mothafuckin' dick," he whispered.

Jirani's hands went underneath Khalil's boxers so he could feel the firmness in his ass. He squeezed the cheeks, massaging them.

"Rani, get that nutt. Nigga, get that nutt up out of there." Khalil's body convulsed and his voice disappeared. He reached his hand back over to Jirani's cell, but didn't bother to go

underneath Jirani's blanket. He didn't give a fuck who saw. He grabbed Jirani's head and pushed it down as far as he could. He held that lil' nigga in place and distributed the nutt. "Drink that fuckin' nutt," he said in his whisper.

The first wave went into Jirani's mouth and he instantly started coughing. The cough actually pushed some of Khalil's nutt back out of his mouth and it dribbled down his cheeks. Jirani coughed again, and it sounded like he was hacking or choking.

"Yo, you ok, man?" I asked, oblivious to what was going on underneath me.

"Uh huh," Jirani answered.

Khalil let go of Jirani's head but still wouldn't pull his dick away. Khalil's nut sac flexed over and over again until it all came out.

"Huuuuuuuh," he exhaled when it ended.

Jirani swallowed the thick substance as best he could, and kept on sucking.

Khalil pulled the covers off of his head and lifted himself up. Jirani was still on his dick and suckin' on it. Khalil wondered what it looked like. He wondered exactly what it looked like to see Jirani's face, with that thin layer of mustache hair over his top lip on top of his dick. He looked around to make sure that no one was looking at him or into his cell. He pulled the covers off of himself first, and then he pulled Jirani's blanket off of his head. The boy was still going to town.

Khalil thought he looked gorgeous. His eyes were closed, and his smooth complexion beamed from the lights. The short faded sides of his head, shined from sweat. That thin layer of hair on his top lip gradually moved to and from Khalil's dick. And through the crevice of his lips was a thin layer of slightly transparent sperm. The shit could have very well made Khalil hard again. Jirani's lips let go of Khalil's dick, and he rolled from his side to his back. He beat his dick fast and hard, O-facing when he started to nutt. When Jirani turned, you could see a wet spot down on his blanket, but more importantly you could see Khalil's nut running down his cheek and collecting down at the bottom of his face and at his ears.

Jirani whimpered to himself when he nutted. When he finished, he opened his eyes and looked up at Khalil smiling at him.

Jirani took his hand, which was covered in his own nutt and brought it to his jaw. His finger touched the bottom of his jaw and brought Khalil's nutt back up to his mouth. The mixture from both men went into his mouth and Jirani swallowed.

Chapter 5: Tension

I hopped down off my bunk to take a leak in the toilet. Everyone had been back from breakfast for about an hour. After I pissed, I looked at Jirani who must have had a wet dream or something. The middle of his blanket had a wet spot. The nigga was still sleep and it wasn't any of my business, so I didn't worry about it. The 24 hour locks popped in Khalil and Roland's cell. And Roland sprung out of it. Khalil, however, stayed in bed. He wasn't sleep, but I guess he just didn't feel like leaving just yet. I stood up at the cell door because I knew that lockdown must have been getting ready to end soon. For me, lockdown began not long after Roland and Khalil's, and since their lock popped, mine was surely next. After pacing for about a minute or so, it unlocked. I opened the cell.

"Yo, Rani. If you hungry, you should go ask Tongis if he'll let you run to the cafeteria real quick," I said.

Rani pulled the cover off of his head. "Aww... nah, I'm fine." The nigga had dried up drool and shit on his face. "I probably should get dressed though." Jirani whipped the blanket off his bed.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa nigga!" I said. "If you gon' be in this cell with me, you gotta keep underwear on."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Jirani smiled. I left the cell so he could get dressed in peace.

When I stepped out of the cell, I looked over into the Bloods territory. Elijah and Cypress's cell unlocked. Elijah looked across the room at me, and he had a bandage on his nose. He walked over to one of the seats near the corridor and waited for an officer to return with Cypress from the hole. The full room was a lot quieter since all of the Aryans got evicted earlier in the morning. I didn't know if and when they would be back, but I knew all hell would break loose. Not a brotha in here would let it slide. Those Aryan fuckers were dead men for arranging Hakim's death.

I ran up the steps to the guard's station and knocked.

Tongis opened up. "What do you want Terry?"

"News. So the Aryans took out Hakim?"

"Don't you do anything stupid, Terry," Tongis spouted.

"I won't," I gave him my word. Generally, my word meant something, but this time it didn't. I might as well have been holding crossed fingers behind my back.

"Lil' Billy confessed that Zach and a couple of the Aryans told him to kill Hakim."

"So when is Lil' Billy coming back?" I asked.

"He's not," Tongis answered. "Lil' Billy is going to stay in solitary. They're going to try him for the murder of Hakim. If he's found guilty, he could be facing the death penalty. They'll move him to death row."

Good, I thought. "He never told you why the Aryans wanted Hakim dead?"

"The warden didn't give us any details, but it's probably because Hakim took up with him. Those guys have always had problems with sharing."

"Ok," I turned around to leave.

"Wait a second, Terry."

"Yeah?"

"I wanted to thank you," Tongis said.

"For what?"

"What you're doing for Jirani. I'm glad you kind of took him in before one of the other guys got to him. Believe me, the parole board is going to hear about what an exemplary prisoner you are."

"What about what happened yesterday?" I asked, reminding him of the incident.

"Oh yeah... well we don't have to tell them about that," he winked. "Did Elijah come out of his cell yet?"

"Yeah. He's waiting for Cypress to come back from the hole."

"Oh yeah. He should be on his way back up by now. It's amazing, that even while all of you loudmouths on lockdown, it really hasn't been much quieter," Tongis laughed. "Stay out of trouble."

"I will," I said as I walked out.

Cypress walked into his cell. He walked past Elijah, not even acknowledging that he was there. Cypress grabbed his soap and a change in clothing and walked right back out. Elijah hopped up and followed behind him.

“You showering?” Elijah asked.

“Yeah, but alone.”

“What?”

“I’m showering alone,” Cypress clarified.

“Baby, can we talk? Please.”

“No, we can’t. I’m tired of having the same conversation with you. And every day, you prove to me that you’re not listening.”

“I am listening.”

“No, you’re not. You know what the fuck is going on in the camp, but you keep making the shit worse,” Cypress said.

“Baby, I get it. I’m a ho. And I’ll play that role from now on with no problems, ok? Now, can you just forgive me so I can bathe you?”

Cypress grinned. His dick jumped at the thought of Elijah bathing him. He nodded his head toward the showers. “Come on.”

Elijah followed him into the showers.

“You know I gotta start being harder on you, right?” Cypress started his lecture.

“What do you mean?”

Once in the shower room, Elijah undressed first and went to the shower. Cypress sat on one of the benches by the lockers, remaining in his clothes. Elijah stood under the showerhead and adjusted the water so that it was the perfect mixture of hot and cold before Cypress even stepped in.

Cypress continued, “I mean, I have to be harder and meaner to everyone to prove that I’m still a fucking threat. That means that I have to be harder on you too. I’m letting you know because I think it would be easier if you do what I tell you to do, when I tell you to do it. If not, then I have to put on a huge show like I did yesterday.”

“I understand,” Elijah said. “The water’s ready.”

Cypress began to undress. “And after a week or so, I’ll tell the Bloods that they can defend you again. Until then, if someone starts shit with you, then I will be the one to deal with them.”

“Ok.”

“Good.”

“Am I allowed to ask a question about that?” Elijah asked.

Cypress joined him under the showerhead. “What’s the question?” Cypress closed his eyes and Elijah began washing his face first.

“It’s about yesterday. You saw the band-aid on my nose. That nigga didn’t cut me deep, but he still cut my fucking face. I want Terry dead.”

“No, you don’t.” Some of the soap got into Cypress’s mouth, so he spit it back out.

“I do,” Elijah moved down to start lathering Cypress’s chest.

“Yeah right. You ask me if you can go play spades with him every day, and after one fight, you want him dead?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll give him a stern talking to. Will that work for you?” Cypress asked.

“No. Cypress, he cut me. Even if I am only a ho, you’re supposed to defend me.”

“I’m not going to kill that man,” Cypress lifted his arms so Elijah would get his arm pits.

“Please baby. I would do anything for you.”

“You already do anything for me.”

“But when I do it, I won’t even think of complaining,” Elijah promised, as he moved further down Cypress’s body.

“I will talk to him, but that’s it.”

Elijah sighed. “Ok, fine.”

Cypress’s body faced the entrance so he saw the door swing open and the next group of people to come in. Khalil and Jirani walked in, laughing about something. Then, Jirani’s eyes fell on his big brother and his big brother’s ho. Jirani had never seen Cypress naked before. Their mom never put them in the same bathtub together, seeing as how there was a whole 13 year age difference. Jirani looked at the low hanging dick between his legs. If there was nothing else that proved they were related, it was the size of their family jewels.

Jirani followed Khalil and took one of the showers on the other end after they undressed. Trying not to let it show, Cypress was pissed. He didn’t want his little brother around any Bloods or former Bloods or whatever. And he certainly didn’t want his little brother around an Ex-Blood that didn’t respect him. *Where the fuck is that Terry nigga?* He thought.

Elijah noticed Cypress’s eyes and their fixation on Jirani. And when he looked, all he could see was Jirani’s big ass dick.

“Oh my God,” Elijah said. His attitude snapped like a twig. He’d gone from mild to superhot or fiery. “Don’t tell me you let him fuck you.”

Cypress’s head whipped back to Elijah. “Get the fuck out of here with that bullshit. I ain’t take no fuckin dick, I ain’t no bitch!”

“Oh, so I’m a bitch because I take yours?”

“Yes! Why the fuck do I have to keep reminding you? You’re my bitch!” Cypress walked over to the towel stand and grabbed a big towel to wrap around his waist. He still had soap and suds all the way down his back.

Cypress left the showers and headed back to the cellblock B holding area. Instead of walking to his own cell, he walked toward mine.

Shit, in my time alone I was sittin’ up in the bed trying to bust a quick nutt while lookin’ at Hakim’s old stash of internet porn when da nigga came in.

“Fuck you want nigga?” I asked.

He came closer to me.

“Oh hell no,” I grabbed a pencil-razor that I kept underneath my pillow.

“Chill the fuck out nigga. I just want to talk to yo dumb ass. Why is Rani in the shower with Khalil and shit?”

“Man, Iono. Them niggas are cool. They spent the whole time we was in lockdown flirtin’ like lil school girls and shit.”

“Well put an end to the shit. Rani’s supposed to be yo ho, so tell him to stop fuckin’ talkin’ to Khalil.”

“I’m not about to do dat nigga. Khalil’s cool people, and as far as I see, the brothas are cool,” I said.

“I don’t give a fuck. I don’t want Rani hangin’ out with that nigga. He’s probably one of the niggas that is tryin’ to fuck me over. I don’t want Rani with him.”

“Shit, man. I’ll tell him what you said, but it’s ultimately his decision.”

“No, it’s not. It’s yours. I put him with you, not Khalil. You better fix this shit,” Cypress ordered.

“Nigga, I ain’t yo bitch. yo bitch is still in the showers nigga, so I don’t know who you think you talkin’ to.”

Cypress bit his bottom lip. "Aight... I'm sorry. But talk to him."

"OK," I agreed.

I waited for Cypress to leave my cell, but he didn't move as quickly as I'd have liked.

"Elijah claims to want you dead," he waited for my face to react. "The Bloods don't bend to his will anymore, and I told him I would talk to you. I'm just givin' you a heads up. He might try something."

"Why you tellin' me? Ain't you betrayin' da wife?"

"My brother's protection comes above anything and anybody else, especially Elijah."

The Muslims took the floor following their leader, Malik Abdul Muhammad (His birth name was actually Jonathan Jones). They laid blankets on the floor and got on their knees to pray. Alternating from standing on their knees and the fetal position, they chanted, "Allah Akbar." They moved like a synchronized swim team. There was a unity in their movement, a unity in their speech and apparently, a unity in their minds.

"Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar." The same two Muslim words were recited for 15 minutes straight. Bloods, over on the other side of the block, snickered at them, but they did not let it disturb them. "Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar."

This was the first day of Ramadan. Ramadan was a fasting period for Muslims that lasted for 29 days. In this period, the Muslims were not allowed to eat, drink or participate in sexual relations during the daytime. To accompany their beliefs, when the sun fell around 8:50 P.M., Cryptkeeper Thornton would swing by their cells with a cart of fruit for their choosing, and water bottles for them to keep during the night.

The last meal of the day was about to begin. Khalil had already gone to the cafeteria. I'd been doing pretty good at keeping him and Jirani apart from each other but had no idea how I was going to keep it up.

"Rani, you ready?" I asked him.

"Yeah, let's go."

I escorted Jirani out of the cell. We started walking to the cafeteria when I heard a mumble from underneath the Muslim chants.

I turned, and near my leg was Aarif. He wasn't moving in unison with the rest of the Muslims. He wasn't even chanting anymore.

"Did you say something?" I asked.

"Yes. I said that you should be ashamed of yourself," Aarif stood to his feet. Aarif spoke in a slow and very deep voice. If you closed your eyes, you'd think you were hearing the voice of God.

"Ashamed of what?"

"What you're doing to this boy is wrong."

"It's none of your business," I said.

"It is my business if I know that it's going on. You're taking advantage of this boy."

Jirani stepped in between us. "He's not. I went looking for him. Anything that we do, it's because I want to do it."

Aarif still wasn't convinced. "Homosexuality is wrong, my brotha. You need to come with us. Enter the World of Allah."

"Homosexuality is wrong?" I interrupted. "Was homosexuality wrong when you were fucking inmates before you joined this shit? And drop that fake ass voice. You know good and Goddamn well you don't talk like that." Aarif's voice was naturally a smooth tenor-like with an

east coast accent. But after he joined the Muslims, it became a deep baritone and a more African sounding accent.

“Allah has changed me for the better. Allah can do this for you, my brotha,” Aarif tried to force a connection with Jirani, but it came off very eerie.

“Thanks, but I think I’ll stick with Jesus,” Jirani said. We went back to our plans and started back toward the cafeteria.

“Your Jesus doesn’t accept your life either, son. Turn your life around,” Aarif said.

Jirani laughed at this shit. “Was he serious?” he asked.

“Yeah, unfortunately, he was. The Muslims always approach the guys with Muslim sounding names. They tried to get Hakim a million times. They always swing by to try to get Khalil, and I guess, you’re on their radar now.”

“Jirani is a Muslim name?”

“Shit, I don’t know. Don’t let that nigga trip you out. He didn’t become a Muslim until a couple of years ago. He used to be a Blood. The Muslims snatched him up the same way he just tried to get you.”

“Oh,” he said.

“And by the way, I talked to yo bro earlier. He don’t like you hanging out with Khalil.”

“So? I don’t care.”

“Khalil is one of the Bloods that aren’t too fond of Cypress. In a sense, your brother’s just lookin’ out for you,” I enlightened.

“But I don’t care. Why would he think that he can control my life when he won’t even let himself be seen with me unless everyone thinks we’re fucking? At least I know Khalil is the only person in here that really likes me for me.”

“Hey,” I said. “I like you for you.”

“You like me because my brother asked you to. Khalil isn’t being forced.”

“I’m not being forced either. If I didn’t care, I wouldn’t help you. I agreed to help you because I used to be you. And then I got manipulated by the Bloods into some shit when I first got here.”

“You mean they-”

“No,” I shut him down. He was insinuating that they punked me. “No, they didn’t. But my fear of getting punked actually made me do something else for them that I still regret. I didn’t want the Bloods trying to get you too.”

“Oh.”

We just made it to the entrance of the cafeteria when a voice yelled my name from the opposite side of the hall. The way the prison was designed was so that all the halls from the cellblocks met up before you actually got to the cafeteria. I turned to look and saw one of my homies from cellblock C. The guy coming up was named Redd Saldana. He was a mutt of latin culture. His mother was half Brazilian and half Portuguese, and his father was technically half Afro-Cuban and half Puerto Rican. The assortment of Latin races combined with growing up in the hot Miami sun resulted in this shiny, orange-like, caramel skin color that was somewhat similar to Merlin Santana.

“Whattup Redd?”

“Yo, I missed you yesterday, mah man. But I heard about Hakim,” Redd gave me the brotha-man handshake (you know, that handshake when you half hug the dude and then pat him on the back).

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Who did it? The niggas said Lil’ Billy did it, but I can’t even picture what he look like.”

“Awww, remember that skinny white kid that used to always hang out with the Aryans from our block. He used to be big Zach’s bitch,” I described.

“Da one dat Zach made lick milk off the cafeteria floor like a cat?”

“Yeah, dat’s him. And Billy confessed that the Aryans made him do it.”

“Huh, is that why they snatched all the Aryans up out of cellblock C this morning?” Redd asked.

“They got ya’ll too? They came in and got the Aryans up out of B around 6 in the morning.”

“Yeah, yeah. They grabbed all of them, and I guess they put them in the Supermax building.”

The Supermax building was the 5th building of the penitentiary. It was like solitary, but worse. The space was smaller, the toilets didn’t flush and you could barely lay down in the cell. Any one of average or higher height, typically just tried to sleep while sitting straight up. Supermax cells were locked for 23 hours of the day, and the last hour would give the guys room to walk around and stretch.

“Damn,” I said.

“Who dis?” Redd asked.

“Oh, shit. I almost forgot. Dis mah nigga, Rani. Rani, dis mah dude Redd from cellblock C.”

Jirani extended his hand to shake Redd’s, his wrist a little limp.

“Ohhhhhh,” Redd said in a sing-song type of way. “Yo nigga, huh?”

“Man, don’t even start that shit. I hear enough of that in my own cellblock.”

Redd laughed.

Jirani looked around the cafeteria, bored at the conversation that I was having with Redd. He spotted Khalil in line.

“Ay Terry, I’mma go up there and hang with Khalil.”

The nigga started walkin’ and I pulled his arm back. “No,” I said.

“Terry, I don’t care what Cypress said. I choose who I want to hang out with, and I want to go eat lunch with Khalil.”

“Khalil Jackson?” Redd asked.

“Yeah,” Jirani answered. “You know him too?”

“Yeah... you can’t hang out with him.”

“Why the hell not?”

“Because this isn’t our block, Rani,” I said. “This is gen pop, the prison’s full population. You and Khalil might be the best of friends, but remember, Khalil is an ex-blood. There are only 4 ex-bloods in cellblock B, but in the whole prison, there are probably 30 or 40.”

“So?” he asked, not really grasping what I was saying.

“So? Who do you think Khalil is sitting with when he eats dinner? He’s sitting with other ex-bloods. If you go sit with him, you’ll be like meat dangling in front of a family of bears. You’ll get yourself and him killed. Don’t get stupid. You’ll sit with us and a bunch of other neutrals.”

Jirani sucked his teeth.

“Stay close to me,” I said.

We grabbed trays. Redd went down the cafeteria line first, I followed behind him and then Jirani followed behind me.

“Yo, I actually got a question for you,” I asked Redd.

“Yeah, wassup?”

“Are Bloods or the Ex-bloods acting funny to you?”

“Funny? How you mean?” he asked.

“Man, I don’t know. I’m just sensing that something is going on, that I might wind up in the middle of.”

“You ain’t even a Blood. If something happens and you are in the middle of it, then it’s because you put yourself there.”

“I ain’t ask you all dat, bruh. I just wanted to know if you noticed anything strange or out of the ordinary.”

“Well, yeah I have. It’s probably nothing though,” he said.

“I don’t care, tell me.”

“Alright. There’s a new prisoner in C named Sugarman.”

“Sugarman? Seriously?” I laughed at that sweet ass name.

“Yeah. Dude was a Blood on the outside and he a big ass dude. He got sent to the hole last night.”

“Why?” I asked.

“He rolled up on the Bloods last night for no reason at all. The nigga straight rocked ‘em! There’s 4 Bloods over in the hospital building. And ya’ man barely got tagged.”

“So he fought some Bloods, what’s so weird about that?” I questioned.

“The Ex-Bloods are just singing his fuckin’ praises and shit. When he gets out the hole, he’ll probably be aligned with them.”

“This Sugarman guy,” Jirani inserted himself. “Is he a big ass darkskinned dude? Kinda fat but still very muscly, scabby skin, has a dragon tattoo on his arm, and hot ass breath with yellow eyes like he has jaundice?”

“I didn’t get close enough to see his eyes,” Redd answered. “But that sounds like him.”

“You know him?” I asked Jirani.

“Yeah. He was sittin’ on the opposite side of the bus when we came in. He was staring at me, the whole fucking time; this blank, cold stare.”

“Yeah, that’s definitely Sugarman,” Redd said.

“Hey sweet stuff!” One of the elderly Ex-bloods yelled to Jirani while we were still in line. Jirani turned to look at the guy. “How’s about givin’ some sweet pussy to an old man for his birthday?”

Sitting right next to the Ex-blood was Khalil, who shunned him. Khalil looked up, but right back down and didn’t acknowledge the boy. Though Jirani was already told that the Ex-bloods would never accept him and that while Khalil was around them, he couldn’t be around Jirani, he hoped that Khalil was different. He hoped that Redd and I were over exaggerating. The person next to Khalil even got up from the seat and left, but Khalil moved over to take up both spaces, just to ensure that Jirani wouldn’t get the wrong idea and try to sit next to him.

After lunch, Khalil returned to his cell and got the cold shoulder from his boy.

Jirani and I were lying down on our respective bunks and he was writing on a sheet of paper that he got from Tongis.

“What you writin’, punk?” Khalil asked.

Jirani did not respond.

Khalil reached through the bars and poked Jirani in the leg.

“Leave me alone,” Jirani finally opened his lips.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Nothing. Just leave me alone, I’m busy.”

“Pssshh…” Khalil got back off of his bed and left the cell.

I felt like I should at least make sure that Jirani was cool. I looked down at him from my bunk.

“You ok?”

“Yeah,” he said, but wasn’t very convincing.

I got down from my bunk to use the toilet.

“Are you sure? You know you can talk to me.”

“I-I-I’ll get over it. It’s just… it’s really hitting me. This ain’t high school anymore. It’s prison.”

“Yeah,” I said.

“I guess after spending 24 hours in a cell talking to Khalil, I really thought that we were gonna be friends.”

“I feel you. I was the same way when I first got here. One of my first roommates was a Mexican. We were best of buddies in the cell, but outside of it, I couldn’t hang with his people. But it wasn’t his fault, just like it’s not Khalil’s.”

“It’s mine, for being so stupid to get sent here. 6 years of this shit? I’m not looking forward to it.”

“It gets easier. After a while, the days start to blur together and you start to mark time by huge events.”

Jirani looked confused.

“Ok… 4 years ago was when I arrived. 2 years ago was when Jermaine died and Cypress took over the Bloods. However, everything between me arriving and Jermaine’s passing is just a blur.”

“And then you lost your buddy a couple days ago,” Jirani looked sad.

“Yeah. And most of the stuff in the last 2 years is a blur once again.”

“So in theory, as long as no one dies and there are no gang wars, then 6 years should go by real quick.”

“It won’t go by quick, but when it’s passed, you’ll look back on it and think that it wasn’t so long.”

“I hope so.”

I got down onto Jirani’s bed with him.

“You crushin’ on Khalil, ain’t you?” I asked him.

“Ewww no,” he obviously lied. “Why you ask that?”

“You seem to be cliquing up with him. I was just asking.”

“He’s a funny guy. His personality is similar to my ex-boyfriend. And it didn’t hurt that he actually enjoyed talking to me.”

“Oh. Well, don’t take what happened personal. That’s just the rules of The Well.” The two of us got quiet, not knowing what to say. In our silence, our minds relaxed and somehow became extremely tranquil.

Shit! I woke up in the middle of the night. I don’t know when I went to sleep, but I knew that the lights were on then, and the lights were out now. I hated taking naps in the middle of the

day. If I took a nap, I'd be up all night in the dark with nothing to do. After our talk, I got a little too comfortable on Jirani's bed. I guess I started meditating for a little bit and then my eyes got tired. I fell asleep before Jirani did but he wasn't far behind me.

My eyes opened to darkness and a flashlight being shone in my face. I felt blinded by the bright ass light.

"Terry," the person holding the flashlight whispered.

I looked up.

"It's Officer Freebush," the officer still whispered. I tried to creep off the bed making as little of a disturbance for Jirani as possible. I got up and walked over to the door of the cell, only to notice that Khalil was at the door of his cell too. Officer Freebush waved both of us to the adjoining corners of our cells and began to whisper. "You guys were Hakim's best friends, right?"

"Yeah," I said.

Khalil, still half asleep, nodded.

"You want revenge, right?"

"What?" I asked.

"Thomas pissed me off this morning. He punched me in the back of the neck and I've had a kink in it all day."

"Wait a minute," Khalil started. "What exactly are you saying?"

"I'm saying that Officer Stinger, who normally guards the hole at this time, is on lunch. He's taking an extra-long lunch today actually. I figured you guys might want to pay Zachariah Thomas a visit."

"You would let us beat his ass?" I asked.

"Yeah. No weapons though. If he winds up with razor cuts or some shit then the warden will know that somebody went in there with him. Only clean fighting, do you hear me?"

"Yeah."

"Alright," Freebush quietly unlocked our cells. "You have up to an hour. When you get back, come to the guard's station so I can lock you back up in your cells. Don't get smart, and try to do something crazy while you're out and don't make a lot of noise."

"Gotcha."

Khalil and I had our fair share of times in the hole. Khalil got sent to it more times than me though. Back when he was a Blood, the hole was like his vacation cell; a jail-home away from jail-home. I've been there a few times, mainly it was whenever me and Hakim had an argument and wound up fighting (it only ever happened twice).

When we got to the hole, we saw Officer Stinger, a big white guard that looked like a professional wrestler. He had his own personal problems with The Aryans. The thought came into my head that this might be a set up. But I knew Freebush wouldn't do that. He liked us, he loved Hakim, and fuckin' hated Zach and the Aryans.

Stinger looked at us walking down the hall, he nodded and then pulled his keys off his belt and set it on the podium that he was standing on. Then he turned and walked away.

Was I dreamin' this shit? It felt unreal. The guards were on the same page with us, and were really going to let us beat the shit out of Zach in the hole.

Khalil went to grab the keys and I tried to find out which door was Zach's. There was a huge mail slot on each of the 15 doors. The first one had no one inside. The second one didn't either. The third was a white neutral meth head from cellblock C. The fourth door hosted this big ass thick nigga. He was about my height, and his arms were huge. His shoulders and chest were

very broad, but he still had man boobs. His stomach was wide and extremely thick with this string of hair that went down the center of it and led to his pubes. His limp dick hung about 4 inches between his legs. He paced the floor back and forth. This must've been ole boy, Sugarman. I could even see the dragon tattoo on his arm that Jirani mentioned. I closed the slot.

“Yo’ Khalil, come over here man.”

Khalil came to the door I was at and squatted down to his knees. “Is this Zach?” he asked.

“Nah. You familiar with a Blood named Sugarman? He came in on the same bus with Jirani.”

“Yeah, yeah. The dudes from C was tellin’ me about him at dinner.”

I opened the mailslot so he could see him. He stared in at Sugarman and all his girth.

“They said he fought 6 Bloods, and 4 of them are in Medical,” Khalil said.

“He is a big dude, but do you believe that?”

“I believe it. The so-called Bloods are a lot of weak niggas. I could see him takin’ down 4 of them.”

“Hmmm...” I closed the mailslot. We moved to the next door. I opened the slot and there was Zachariah Thomas. He was sleeping on the ground with his head facing the opposite way but I would know that silver hair anywhere. “It’s him,” I said.

Khalil handed me the keys and I selected the one that would open this door. I unlocked it and looked to Khalil to make sure he was ready. This nigga was gettin’ undressed.

“Khalil, no! You are not about to rape this man,” I said.

“Eww nigga, you sick. Ain’t nobody thinkin’ about raping that old ass fart. I ain’t trying to get blood on my clothes.”

“Oh,” I said. That was a decent enough idea. If we woke up with bloody clothes and somebody saw it, they could tell the guards or something. I pulled off my shirt and then my pants. Our underwear remained. “You ready?” I asked Khalil.

“Yeah, let’s do this shit.”

I opened the door and we both stepped in. The sound of the metal from the door woke Zach up.

“Good,” he said. “It’s finally time for me to get out of here.” Zach assumed that it was a guard getting ready to take him back to his cell. He stood up before even looking toward the door and saw us standing there. When he did see us, he jumped lightly.

He grunted. “Oh... lemme guess. Shaniqua sent you two niggers to come and teach me a lesson?” Shaniqua was the name that he would call Monica to be ornery. He thought for a second as we both took steps closer to him. “Oh no, it wasn’t her. It must have been Fagberg.”

The name Fagberg was one of the main reasons that Freebush hated Zachariah and the Aryans. They started a rumor and took it to the warden that Freebush was allowing the prisoners to fuck him. As far as I knew, it was false, but Freebush got suspended for a full month without pay. When he came back, the Aryans started calling him “Fagberg” to mock the fact that he was openly gay and Jewish.

“Tell me why you did it,” I said.

“I didn’t! Billy is a fucking liar! I haven’t talk to him in months and he knows that.”

“Now, you lying nigga. I saw you and Billy go into the cleaning closet a few days ago during lunch,” Khalil said.

“That wasn’t about that porch monkey. That was about something else.”

“But you just said that you haven’t talked to Billy in months,” I said. “Why did you go in the closet with him?”

Zach didn't want to answer this question. He sighed. We took another step closer to him, and he stepped back from us. "Fine! We fucked! Are you happy now?"

"You fucked Lil' Billy in the janitor's closet?" I asked. "You know Lil' Billy has fucked just about every race of guy in cellblock B, yet you still fucked him? What would your fellow Aryans think?"

"You tell them I said that and I will deny it until my last breath."

"That won't last long," Khalil swung on him first, punching him in the jaw with his right hand. When Zach's head shifted from the force of that punch, I hit him with my left hand and sent him flying back in the opposite direction. I grabbed Zach by his neck and threw a couple of uppercuts his way. I hit him in a variety of places, ranging from his abs to his chest to his chin. Then, I swung him into the cemented wall face first.

Khalil shouted, "Get up! Get the fuck up!"

Zach refused, so Khalil grabbed him. He held his arms behind his back. Zach already bled from the mouth and his whole chest turned red from my jabs. I punched him in the face repeatedly. His head kept swinging from left to right like he was watching a tennis game. I threw one more punch in Zach's face. The punch had so much force that it actually threw him out of Khalil's grasp. Zach stumbled to the left and his head banged right into the cemented wall. After impact, Zach slid down to the ground, knocked out cold.

I checked my knuckles and the skin on them had broken. I wasn't thinking about it while I was fighting, but now that I saw it, I sincerely hoped that this nigga didn't have HIV or something. Khalil noticed my focus on my fingers.

"You light?"

"Yeah," I said to him. I shook the tension out of my hands and my shoulders.

We left the room and I made sure the door was locked while Khalil got dressed.

"That felt fuckin' good to do," he said like he was breathing in fresh air.

"Yeah," I said. I put on my clothes too.

"You don't sound so happy."

"I'm just thinking."

"About?" he asked.

"I don't know. I might believe him. Maybe he didn't have anything to do with it."

Khalil laughed. "That's good timing," he said sarcastically. "You start wondering if he's telling the truth, after you beat his ass."

"I said, I don't know, man."

"Seems like you're full of I-don't-knows now."

"Fuck you talkin' 'bout?" I asked.

"Rani. I saw ya'll cuddled up and shit."

"Nigga, please. There wasn't no fuckin' cuddling. And besides, he's into you, not me. He was cryin' about how you broke his lil' heart earlier today."

"What the fuck did I do to him?" Khalil asked.

"He was just mad about dinner, but I explained the shit to him. He's startin' to breakdown about being in jail. It's starting to become more real to him."

"Oh, so then he ain't really mad at me?"

"Oh no, he's mad at you," I laughed. "But it's more about the situation than it is about you. Dude is just young and fragile. I had to tell him, 'Ay, you can't just follow Khalil around the prison, cuz he hang out with niggas dat would fuckin' hurt you.' He just needed some time to grasp that."

“Right, right.”

“But he’ll be alright.”

We walked back to cellblock B in silence for a second.

“You know Jirani was holding your hand when I came back to my cell, right?”

“Huh!?!?!?” I asked, I came out of my low volume and my voice actually echoed through the hall.

“Shhhhh!”

“What the fuck do you mean?”

“You was sleep, but he was still awake. He was holdin’ yo hand,” Khalil said.

“Nigga, you lyin’.”

“If I’m lyin’, I’m flyin’ and you see my feet on the ground nigga. I think ya’ boy is into you. And I think you mo’ into him than you lettin’ on.”

“Get the fuck outta here nigga,” I laughed. I noticed he wasn’t laughing along with me.

“You serious? You think I wanna fuck him?”

“You claimed him, son. In front of everybody in da block, you claimed him-”

“-To help him out.”

“Hey, if dat’s what it is, den dat’s what it is. I was just sayin’ dat it don’t always look that way.”

“I ain’t dat type of nigga, and this ain’t dat type of party. Son, you ain’t even gotta worry about that.”

“Light then.”

Chapter 6: Work-Release

“Prison Shakedown!” Cryptkeeper Thornton yelled. She had just gotten her hair done the day before, so it was plastered up and looked plastic and fake. She walked by all the cells, holding her nightstick to the bars to wake us all up. I got up from the bed and stood at the door, awaiting the locks to pop open. It was a full 2 days after Zachariah Thomas’s beat down. He was still alive, but banged up pretty badly.

Prison Shakedowns were room searches for drugs, alcohol, weapons or any other thing that the guards could find that you weren’t supposed to have. They had specially trained German shepherd guard dogs to sniff everything out. They smelled everything from drugs to food. When I heard Thornton yelling, I hopped down from the bunk and grabbed Hakim’s napkin of spaghetti out of the hiding space we made behind the sink. The last thing I wanted was for the guard dogs to sniff it out and find the hiding space along with all the pencil-razors that I still wanted to keep around. I threw the napkin in the trash bucket.

“Rani, you ain’t got no drugs on you, do you?” I asked.

“No,” he answered.

“Good.”

We were all in the clear. When Officer Kevins came by with the German Shepherd, we let him search. The only hang up was the trashcan. The German Shepherd smelled the spaghetti. Kevins looked in the can.

“What is that?” he asked.

“That was Hakim’s spaghetti. It was under the bed for a while.”

Kevins could have assumed that I was pinning it on Hakim, except for the fact that he knew Hakim’s nature. Kevins and his German Shepherd moved on to the next cell. After a few

more pit stops in the Muslim's cells because of the food they'd been keeping overnight, Kevins kept moving. No one on the block had any drugs or alcohol in their cell so far. At the Asian cells, the shepherd smelled some form of alcohol, and a couple of painkillers. 2 of the Asian prisoners were sent to the hole. In the Mexican cells, the dog smelled more alcohol coming from the cell. And the dog nearly went nuts when it got to the Bloods cells. 5 guys got caught in possession of cocaine and got sent to the hole.

Jirani looked over at his brother's cell. After Cypress and Elijah's cell got searched, the couple re-entered the cell, closed it and got under their blanket to go back to sleep. Elijah's arm wrapped over Cypress's body and Cypress's arm wrapped behind Elijah's neck.

Jirani envied. No, he didn't want to fuck his own brother, but he still envied Elijah. Even though Elijah was supposed to be a ho, he was the best treated ho in all of cellblock B and probably the whole prison. The Aryans made their hoes sit on the floor to eat in the cafeteria. The few Mexicans that do get down in the pen share a Puerto Rican ho and make him sleep on the floor. And Blood hoes? Well... they get treated the worst.

The Bloods tie their hoes to the beds. Apparently, it originated with Jermaine. But depending on the position each Blood prefers, they'll tie their ho for the night (or however long they decide to keep him) up in that position. For example, there's a Blood named Sean. His hoes always get tied in the same position. First, Sean ties their hands together and sets the ho on his back onto the bottom bunk. Then, he ties the ho's hands to the bars of the top bunk. And finally, he ties the ho's left leg up with a sheet, wraps it around the top bunk and then as the sheet falls back down, he ties it to the opposite leg. The ho's legs would be spread eagle and the position resembles the way you would look in a sex swing. And if Sean needed to bust a nutt, he'd climb down from off the top bunk, fuck the ho, bust the nutt and then climb back on the top bunk and go to sleep. The ho couldn't even use the restroom anytime he wanted.

Also, the Bloods would make their hoes feed them, clean after them, run their errands, and even entertain them. At one point, they used to put their hoes in catfights against each other for gambling purposes. Aside from cleaning, feeding and occasionally running errands for Cypress, Elijah didn't have to do any of the other things. And Jirani wouldn't mind doing Elijah's workload if it meant that he at least feel the love that Elijah felt from Cypress.

I caught Jirani's eyes looking at the lovebirds' cell.

"Was Cypress homo on the outside?" I whispered to him. I always kind of wondered the question. I was here when he got here, and all I remember was that he adapted to the homosexual antics of The Well rather quickly.

"No," Jirani answered. "At least, I don't think so. He had multiple girlfriends and kids, but then again, that doesn't mean anything."

"You don't seem surprised to know that he gets down with men."

"He told me about it on my first night, when we were up in the suites. He broke down the situation. And honestly, I get it. He's in here for life, so what's he gonna do?"

"Hey, he could always bang the crypt keeper, like some people," I winked at Khalil. Jirani laughed.

"Aww, shut up nigga," Khalil said.

Jirani threw himself onto his bed. "I can't do this shit anymore," he complained. "I can't stay in this cell all fuckin' day again."

"This is prison. What did you expect when you came in?" I asked.

"I don't know," he sighed. "Wait a minute, isn't there like a work thing? Work services or something?"

“You mean like making license plates?”

“Yeah. They have something like that?”

“Yeah,” I answered. “We’ll go talk to Tongis when the shakedown is over.”

You see, for the past 2 days, I’ve been thinking about Lil’ Billy. The warden and officers couldn’t legally beat the truth out of him, but I could. If there was something funny going on, and this nigga was lying about the reason he killed Hakim, I wanted to know. But I couldn’t get to the solitary holding cells without permission from the guards, and Billy didn’t make enemies of the guards like Zach did. But now, I had a reason to go to the solitary holding cells.

Immediately after the shakedown ended, I took Jirani up to the officers’ station. Tongis had just come in and the overnight officers had just gone home.

“What’s up Terry? How are you doin’ Rani?”

“We’re cool,” I answered for us both.

“You guys wanted to see me?”

“Yeah, Rani wants to work.”

“Really?” Tongis looked at him.

“Yes. I can’t stay in that cell all damn day anymore,” he responded. “I have to do something. What kind of jobs do you have?”

“Well,” Tongis pulled the employment sheet out of his desk. The employment sheet was a list of all the available work options for the prisoners. Not many of the prisoners chose to work, and the warden was fine with that. “Let’s see... I have some janitorial positions available.”

“He’s not gonna be takin’ that,” I answered for Jirani.

“Why not?” Rani asked.

“Janitorial work means cleaning the cells, mopping floors and washing them shitty sheets that come from out of the suites when the niggas are done using them. No thanks, we’ll pass.” Tongis smiled. “Ok, I also have some positions in the cafeteria. Is food preparation something that you would be interested in?”

“Yes!” Rani answered. I swear this nigga didn’t know a damn thing about haggling.

“No,” I said. “I was thinking about something more along the lines of mail distribution.”

“Ooh yes! I’d love to do that. I used to work the mailroom at a rec center during the summer breaks.”

“Hmmm...” Tongis hummed. “I guess I could get you in over there. Most of the guys that worked the mail room were Aryans, and they’re not working anymore.”

“Good,” I said.

“Hold on,” Tongis added. “You don’t know your way around all the buildings and the blocks.”

“Don’t sweat it, Tongis,” I said. “I’ll help him out. I know every building from the Aids ward to Supermax, inside and out. I’ll show him around.”

“Uh huh,” Tongis delivered a leering glare to me.

“We’ll make you proud,” I walked to the exit and opened the door for Jirani.

“Ay, Terry. Why don’t you hang back for a second?”

“O...K.” I closed the door after Jirani left. “Wassup Tongis?”

“I wanted to say that- I uh, I always thought you were one of the prisoners with the best morals in my cellblock.”

“Psssh... I think I am too,” I agreed.

“Yeah,” Tongis turned his head and walked over to his desk. “So did you hear about Zachariah Thomas?”

“No. What happened?”

“Uh huh. Well, they let him out of the hole yesterday and he had several bruises across his face and body. Officer Stinger says that one night, Zach just went crazy. He just started running and slamming himself into the walls repeatedly until he eventually passed out.”

“Awww man... you think it was guilt?” I said. “The guilt from killing Hakim finally caught up to him?”

“That’s a possible theory. Anyway, I just wanted to let you know that he’s ok, in case you were wondering.”

“Why would I be wondering? I hadn’t talked to Zach since he called me a boot-lipped coon on my first day,” I lied.

“Oh ok.” Tongis grabbed something out of his desk. “Well one more thing, make sure Khalil gets this back.” Tongis tossed a folded up piece of paper at me.

I opened the sheet and saw that it was a rap, 16-bars. And the shit had Khalil’s name on it- written in his penmanship.

“The warden found it on the podium by the hole,” Tongis added.

Shit, I thought. It must’ve fell out of Khalil’s pocket.

“Oh... I wonder how it got there. I guess somebody tried to steal it or something.”

“Right,” Tongis wasn’t buying my response. “So you don’t know how that got there?”

“Maybe a guard confiscated it and dropped it?” I suggested thinking quick on my feet. Tongis still had the same look of distrust in his eye. “I’ll go run this down to Khalil and then take Rani down to the mail center.”

“You do that, Terry,” he said, knowing that I was holding back.

That damn Khalil...

A whole two week period went by in which, no one sent Lil’ Cracker a letter. I was starting to get restless. Due to the low manpower, Jirani and I delivered half of the letters all the way around the prison while another group delivered the other half. I showed Jirani all the way around the prison.

Building A was the furthest to the east. On the bottom floor of this building, was the hospital. This was where the niggas that got their skulls cracked went to get fixed up. The female nurses always dressed down. It was our theory that they purposely rolled out of bed, put on their scrubs and came to work without wearing make-up or looking attractive to ward off the felons. One nurse has actually been raped before and several others have been attacked. So they’re always nice and never try to piss anyone off. The hospital only extended from the ground floor to the second floor. The entire 3rd floor was for dirty cops.

Cops that had been arrested and sent to this prison were assigned to building A. They were kept separated from all of the other prisoners because of the simple fact that they would be dead men. Most prisons are run like this. The prisoners in building A got a lot of leeway, even more than us in building C, cellblock B. They didn’t have to go to a cafeteria. They got their food delivered to their cells so they could eat while laying down on their full-sized mattresses, while watching whatever they wanted on the TV’s they had in their own cells. Down on the basement of building A, they had the hole’s holding cells, but they were rarely used.

Building B was the Aids ward and storage area. When you’re brought into The Well, you’re tested for HIV. Then the test is re-administered 8 months later, and repeated every 8 months. If you test positive, you’re moved into this ward. The ward wasn’t very crowded. The top two floors were the cells for the Hiv+ prisoners. The base floor was the office of the warden,

the mailroom and a storage area for copy paper, cleaning supplies, and anything that the prison needed to buy in bulk. And of course once again, the hole's holding cells were down at the basement.

Building C was the building that gen pop occupied. This was the largest building, and bigger than A and B combined. It's divided into halls. The second to the top floor was where halls (or blocks) A and B were, and the base floor was the location of halls C and D. The basement held the hole's holding cells, while the very top floor was where our psychiatric doctors, the small Christian temple and the Muslim's mini mosque were.

Building D was also known as hall E. It was another place to put gen pop prisoners and it held the conjugal visit rooms and the visitor's quarters. And the final building was the Supermax building. All the floors of building E were on extreme lockdown. All three floors that were above ground were for the Supermax cells, and the basement was solitary confinement. And solitary was where they put the prisoners that were endanger of losing their lives, or where they would put prisoners if they ran out of hole holding cells, but that hasn't happened yet. Anyway, solitary confinement was where I needed to go. When the first letter came for someone in solitary confinement, I wanted to make sure that we took it to them. On this day, the 4 man mail crew split into 2 teams. Jirani and I took buildings A, D, and E. If word had gotten back to the Aryans about what I did to their leader, I was sure they'd be happy to see me. But my concern lies only on one person.

"We have mail for a Gee-toe Torres," I said to the solitary guard. She was a white female who was on the phone and really didn't give a damn.

"The name is Jito (He-to), essa," Jito said. Jito was fairly short, even for a Hispanic. He was chubby and packed full of tattoos. He stood about two cells down from the female guard's desk.

Jirani walked over to him and handed him the letter. "I think it's from a lady friend," he said. "It smells like perfume."

"Si! Yo te quiero tambien, mami! Thank you, essa. Thank you," Jito said.

I stood in place and looked around the cells trying to spot Lil' Billy, but I didn't see him anywhere.

"Yo Jito," I said.

"Si papi, wazzup?"

I walked closer to him while the guard was still on the phone chatting it up.

"Do you know a Billy Chapman? A skinny white kid."

"Yeah papi! Esta alli!"

I didn't know exactly what he said, but he pointed so I went in the direction where he pointed. Lil' Billy's cell was a few more cells down.

"What are you doing?" Jirani asked.

"I'm just about to say hello to a friend. I won't be long, I promise."

Jirani followed me over to the cell and Billy was standing up like he was waiting for us.

"Hey Bill," I said.

"You've never been one to say hey to me," Lil' Billy rolled his eyes.

"You're right. And I don't apologize for that. I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions."

"I told them already. Zachariah threatened to kill me. It was either Hakim or me. He had a nice dick and all, but it wasn't worth my life."

“You don’t even feel guilty for it. If Zachariah actually threatened to kill you if you didn’t kill Hakim, the only reason he wanted Hakim dead was because you were fucking him. In the end, all this comes full circle and right back to you,” I said.

“I don’t have any control over how Zachariah reacts to me being with other men.”

“No, but you let him control you. You let him make you kill someone. And to tell the truth, I don’t believe that he told you that. I don’t think you’re telling the truth.”

“Well, he did,” Lil’ Billy reacted.

“And he wanted you to kill Hakim, specifically?”

“His words verbatim were, ‘kill that nigger that you’re always fucking.’ I assumed he meant Hakim.”

“But why Hakim? I mean, you’ve let many of brothas hit it, and a ton of the essas too.”

“I guess he had something against Hakim,” Lil’ Billy shrugged his shoulders.

“And what was it?”

“I don’t fucking know.”

“That’s hard to believe. You were the nosiest ho up in cellblock B. Even if Zach didn’t tell you why he wanted Hakim dead, you had the means to find out,” I concluded. “Why didn’t you?”

“It wasn’t my business. I just had to get the job done. Now, if you’re done playing 21 questions, maybe you and Cypress’s new bitch should go on back to your own cellblock.”

“You’re hiding something Billy. And you know what I think?”

“I don’t give a fuck.”

“I think you killed Hakim for somebody else, and then blamed it on the Aryans because of the bad blood between you and them.”

Lil’ Billy smiled a nervous smile, and I could see right through his facade. “I killed Hakim because Zach wanted me too. I told the officers everything that I know, and I don’t have to fucking answer to you.” Lil’ Billy rested his left hand on his hips and grabbed the bar of the cell with his right hand.

“Billy, I know you’re lying to me. And I’m going to get to the bottom of this. Should I find out the truth from somebody else, I will kill you. I will literally kill you.”

Lil’ Billy scoffed. “I’d like to see you try-”

The full word hadn’t even come out of his mouth when I grabbed that hand that was on the bars and yanked it through. Billy’s head banged on the bars of the cell, and in the confusion, he tried to use his other hand to block. I grabbed the second hand and drew him back from me. Then, I pulled extremely hard and his face hit two of the jail bars full on.

“Terry, stop it,” Jirani said.

“Fuck!” Billy screamed.

I let go of his hands.

The yell caught the attention of the female guard. She set the phone down, and looked over to Billy’s cell. “What the hell is goin’ on over there?”

“Nothing,” I answered. “We’re just giving Mr. Chapman his letter.”

“I think it’s time you guys get out of here,” she said.

“No problem,” I said. “We were just leaving.” I grabbed the cart and Jirani followed me out. We got onto the elevator and went up so we could distribute the letters to the Supermax prisoners.

“Look,” Jirani said after the elevator doors closed. “I know you feel some sense of loyalty to your buddy, and may even plan on going on some one man killing spree like that bitch

in Kill Bill. But I ask one thing and one thing only; please leave me out of it. I want my time to go by as easily as possible. I don't want to get caught up."

"You won't. That had nothing to do with you."

"But I don't want to get in trouble because of it."

"Ok, Ok, I get you. I won't bring you into my shit anymore," I said.

"That's all I want."

I looked at him as he sucked his lips like he had an attitude. No lie, the shit was cute. He had a fresh haircut that he'd received from the prison barber. He went for that same Mohawk he had when he first came in. I studied his posture, which resembled a straight chicken head. He noticed me looking at him.

"What?"

"I didn't say anything," I said.

"But you must want to."

"Nah, your mohawk just looks a lil' crooked."

"Liar," he said, not even budging at my statement.

The elevator doors opened.

There were 730 Supermax cells; so many because the cells were so small. The absolute most dangerous prisoners were in this building. I was surprised that Jirani wasn't shittin' his pants like I was the first time I came in here. Maybe it's because we hadn't made it to any of the scary niggas yet. The floor we were about to get off on, was the floor where they put all the pussy ass Aryans.

Jirani handed the first letter to the Aryan in the first cell. The Aryan snatched it from him. He was thrown back at the Aryan's rudeness.

"Niggers crossing," one of the Aryans said.

I grabbed the next letter. As luck would have it, it was supposed to be going to that Aryan that just opened his mouth. I pretended to hand it to him but dropped it to the floor.

"Pick that up and hand it to me the right way, nigger," he said.

I stomped the letter, twisting and turning my foot so the letter wrinkled up and even tore. Then I spat on it and kicked it to him underneath the cell.

"Bitch," he said as he bent down to pick it up.

We kept moving through. Oddly, not everything the Aryans had to say was negative. One of them complimented Jirani's looks.

"Haha, this is one sexy fuckin' nigger," he said. And yes, this was technically a compliment. "If you dyed your hair blonde, I bet no one would even know you were part coon. I'd definitely fuck ya."

"No need for that, I'm proud to be black," Jirani said.

"You guys hear that? He's proud to be black."

"Yes, Black is in and has been ever since November 2008," Jirani smiled.

Another Aryan said, "That fuckin' nigger stole the election. Barack? What a nigger name, I bet you got some real nigger name too, don't you boy?" This Aryan was actually one that came out cellblock B and his name was Ezra Finster.

Jirani began to feel self-conscious about his name. He quieted himself, so it was up to me to steal the power back.

"You realize that all of your hoes are gone, right?" I asked.

"The fuck are you talkin' about, coon?"

“Oh yeah. On the very night after you guys got locked up, they ran to the Bloods. Hell, one of them ran to me... and I took him, too. In unison, the whole block made them all chant, “Black Power” while they got their assholes destroyed by the all-powerful black dick.” Jirani snickered at what I said. “If you guys ever get out of Supermax, and try to fuck them again, it’ll be like throwing a dart into a steam train tunnel.” I raised my fist, mocking them. “Black power! Black Power! Oh My God, your dick is so much bigger than Ezra’s baby dick!” Jirani started laughing.

Ezra didn’t share the same sentiment. He and the rest of the Aryans were pissed. Who cared though? It was time to go.

“Yeahhh, nigga. I was like, ‘Black Power! Ahhh... your dick is so much bigger than Ezra’s baby dick!’ Nigga, they was mad as shit!” I told the story to Khalil and a couple of the other guys from the block and they cracked up too.

“I bet they were,” Khalil said.

“Fuck yeah!” I might have embellished when I told the Aryans about the whole “Black Power,” thing, but a lot of the Aryan hoes did run to the Bloods because they knew that the minute they got fucked by someone outside the race, the Aryans wouldn’t want them anymore. “Rani, come here!” I yelled. Jirani was still in the cell, but came out and walked to us.

“Yes?” he said.

“They was mad as shit, wasn’t they?”

“You got me out of bed for this? Boy please,” Jirani walked back to the cell and got back on his bed.

“Yo’, you havin’ problems keepin’ yo ho on a leash?” one of the Bloods that overheard, said.

“Nah, I don’t have any problems, homeboi.”

“Oh, iight den. I just thought you might want a lil’ free time. I’d take him off ya hands for you, if you wanted me to.”

“Fuck outta here nigga,” I said.

Dude acted like he wanna step to me and start some shit, but dat got squashed real quick when Tongis started calling us so he can make an announcement.

“Gather around girls,” Tongis said. He stepped out of his office and bent over the rail so he could look down at all of us. “I know everyone’s been having so much fun over the past couple of weeks. A lot of you have your own cells thanks to the Aryans being removed, but I regret to inform you that that is about to come to an end.”

Many of the guys groaned, upset at the thought of the Aryans coming back.

“Don’t worry, they’re not coming back yet,” he said. “The warden thought that this came at a perfect time, so that the prison can work on its upkeep. Cellblock C has been going through some plumbing issues, so the warden decided that this gives us a good chance to work on those issues. So for the next month, Cellblock C’s prisoners are being redistributed to other cellblocks. And in an effort to keep some sense of diversity, he randomly assigned the prisoners.”

What? I thought.

“Don’t try to make sense of it,” Tongis identified our confusion. “Just know that it’s happening. And we’ll be getting 7 new prisoners. Midas Suchkin, Eddie Alvarez, Redd Saldana, Gianni Sabato, Chuckie ‘Boricua’ Rivera, Quintell Simpson and Varnan ‘Sugarman’ Peoples.”

The room got tense, specifically because of that last name on the list. The Bloods were shook, hell some of the Ex-Bloods were shook. The niggas did not want Sugarman in our cellblock.

Prisoner #868029, Varnon "Sugarman" Peoples, stood about 6'4 and 400 lbs. The combination of fat and muscle on his body worked together to make a very threatening figure. Varnon was 29 years old, and locked up for the vicious torture and murder of a Latin King gang member in Joliet, Illinois. He entered The Well with a bang. On his second night of lock up, he stomped through the Wellside Bloods of cellblock C. He was sent to the hole. When he returned, after a dispute with a white neutral, he went postal on the guy and beat him to a bloody pulp. He was sent to the hole again.

After only 2 weeks of being in The Well, Sugarman had been to the hole twice. When he returned from the second trip, he got in yet, another fight and this time it was with an Ex-Blood. Sugarman was a one man wrecking crew, and it appeared that no race, religion or gang affiliation was safe. He had no allies and didn't need them.

Cypress whispered in Elijah's ear. "Come back to the cell with me," he said.

Cypress walked back and Elijah followed.

"What do you know about this Sugarman character?"

"Diamond, one of the hoes from Cellblock C, said that he fought 6 Bloods at once," Elijah started. "I guess his man was one of the ones that got hospitalized.

"Why did he fight the Bloods?"

"I don't know. Diamond said he was acting weird the entire first day. Then the next day, he called one of The Bloods a faggot. They stepped to him, and he pummeled them."

"What else have you heard about him?" Cypress asked.

"Uh... Diamond claimed they had sex, but I think he's lying."

"I don't give a fuck about that," Cypress snapped. "What else?"

"He uh... robbed a white guy for his gold chips, and apparently the last fight was with an Ex-Blood."

"Over what?"

"Crack. He just walked into the dude's cell, lifted his mattress and took a crack rock so they fought. On a danger scale of 1 to 10, he's probably a-"

"12," Cypress finished his sentence. Cypress walked to bars and looked across the block, worried about his little brother, and frankly, himself.

As if blood recognized blood, Jirani looked up and at his big brother at the exact same moment. Over where Jirani was, Khalil and I were already having a conversation. We saw Cypress pacin' back and forth in his cell.

"I bet you a hundred dollars, that nigga's over there flippin' out about Sugarman," I said to Khalil.

"I wouldn't dare take that bet."

"You worried?"

"Not worried, but this dude don't sound right in the head. He's been wreaking havoc in cellblock C, and I'm not just talking about the fights that we heard about," Khalil answered.

"Apparently he turned out an Ex-Blood."

"Word?"

"What does that mean?" Jirani asked. "Turned out a Blood?"

"You supposed to be the gay one," Khalil said. "But you sure are slow on the lingo."

“He raped him, Rani,” I answered his question. “And the Bloods don’t get raped. They might rape other dudes, they may have even been raped when they first came to The Well, but they don’t get raped after they’ve been here for a while.”

“Oh,” Jirani commented.

“But seriously man, this nigga Sugarman is taking this prison to a-whole-nother fuckin’ level.”

“So then, you are worried?” I asked.

“Man, fuck you,” Khalil said, while throwing a crumbled up sheet of paper at me.

“I’m serious though. Why are we sitting here exchanging rumors about this nigga? Do we even know if any of the shit we heard about his ass is really true?”

“What I don’t understand is, if he’s supposed to be getting into all of these fights, then why isn’t he in Supermax?” Jirani asked.

“That fat ass nigga probably can’t even fit.”

Chapter 7: Abandon

Moving day wasn’t scheduled until next week, so there were still quite a few days of jittery Blood behavior. Cypress snapped at the drop of a dime at any sign of weakness that a Blood displayed. This week, more new prisoners came in. The Bloods drafted a dark skinned ho, and there was a dispute over which Blood would bang him first. So they settled it the way that Bloods settle it. The dispute went on between Leon and Kelly. Kelly grabbed the new hoes right hand and interlocked his fingers, while Leon grabbed the boy’s left hand. The boy screamed Leon’s name.

“Owww,” he said once they let him go. Leon pulled him close to him. The battle was settled, but everyone wasn’t happy. Don’t get me wrong, Kelly accepted his defeat and Leon was more than excited to take his ho up to the suites. It was a 3rd party that took offense to the competition.

“You let Leon beat you?” Cypress got up from his seat. He stepped into Kelly’s face. “You fuckin’ let Leon beat you!?!?”

Kelly backed up. “He won fair and square.”

“I can’t fuckin’ believe this shit. Leon, the nigga that I considered to be the weakest fuckin’ link out of all the Goddamn Bloods in Wellside, and he just whooped yo ass.”

“Yo Cy, man, it’s not even that serious,” he tried to calm Cypress down.

“Not that serious? So you mean to tell me that you didn’t even want to win? You wasted the last 30 minutes complaining about how you wanted to fuck the ho first, but when it came to do the battle, you didn’t care if you won?”

“I mean... I tried man.”

“You didn’t try! If you fuckin’ tried, then you should have won! If that was you trying, then pull yo Goddamn pants down and open yo asshole right now so I can fuck you cuz you handled that shit like a little ass bitch!”

“Turner!” Tongis yelled from the officer’s station. “Knock it off.”

“Ain’t nobody fuckin’ talkin’ to you Tongis! Worry about the other motherfuckin’ slaves on the plantation, cuz I got this.”

“I said knock it off right now.”

Cypress turned away from the officer's station and back to the Bloods. He looked at all of them, his complete band of merry men. "I'm lookin' at you niggas, and the shit I see is sad. It's fuckin' sad. No wonder why that nigga took out 6 of you pussy bitches."

"Ay, Cy, man," Leon interrupted. "I been hittin' the gym a lot lately--"

"You're weak bitch! You're fuckin' weak! I'm seein' you out of shape niggas complainin' about fuckin' hoes; NIGGA, YOU SHOULD BE A HO! Why the fuck you niggas ain't got no muscle?"

Nobody answered. It was like watching a bunch of boys get a lecture from their father.

"You niggas are pussy! Straight motherfuckin' pussy!"

"Turner!" Tongis yelled again. "Knock it off or you're going to the hole. Break it up right now!"

Cypress laughed. It wasn't a real laugh. It was more like the type of laugh you laugh when you're on the brink of insanity.

"You're right, Tongis! You're fuckin' right! I'm breakin' it up. I'm disbanding the Bloods! There ain't but 2 of you that deserve to really be called Bloods and a gang of 3 people ain't shit. I don't want to see or hear about any of you motherfuckers calling yourselves Bloods!" Cypress walked to his cell, and laid down. The room was stunned; the full room. Not a Muslim prayed, not a Mexican muttered. The room stood still.

Jirani and I played a game of gin rummy with my deck of cards in our cell. There was some tension, as expected. I mean the nigga's brother did just flip out in front of every fuckin' body. I wondered what he thought about that. Jirani's lips pursed when he was in thought. He was easy to read in a card game. When he was planning a big move, those lips joined together like they were trying to cool a bowl of hot soup. And when he was anxious, his leg bounced up and down. But then again, the anxiety might be coming from his personal reaction to Cypress... who was standing in my cell.

I turned my head.

"Hey," he said.

"You wanna talk to Rani?" I asked.

Khalil was lying down on his bed, on the other side of the cell.

"Nah, um. I wanted to talk to you and Khalil."

Khalil didn't even look up. "Don't even mention my name homeboi," he said.

"light, fine. Then, I just want to talk to you."

"About what?" I asked.

"I guess you heard all that, huh?"

"I think Supermax heard all that."

"Yeah. There's uh... no easy way to say this, but I want you to become a Blood," he said.

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah. I know you can fight, I know you pack power in dat punch of yours. I want you to become a Blood."

"Uh... no. I mean," I had to think of a slick way to put this because Khalil was listening and he didn't know the relationship between Cypress and Jirani. "I partnered up with Rani to keep him out of harm's way. If I became a Blood, that would put him right in the center of it."

Cypress thought for a second. "Yeah... I guess you right," he said. Cypress stepped out of my cell and walked to another area.

“That nigga just asked you to become a Blood,” Khalil laughed. “He must be shittin’ bricks like a mothafucka. How you let anotha nigga get you shook like that?”

I looked at Jirani’s face. He remained tightlipped, but you could tell that he didn’t like Khalil talking about his brother like that. I refrained from joining in with Khalil.

“I been and said that them niggas was weak,” he kept going. “When Jermaine died, all the real Bloods left. Them Bloods out there now, damn near all of them are under 25. A real Blood could see that shit for what it was from a mile away; a bunch of homo-ass-niggas dressed up in red.”

“Can you shut up?” Jirani said. “I’m trying to think.”

“Pssh,” air passed through Khalil’s lips. He went back to looking through his porno mag. Jirani’s face turned sour.

“You alright?” I asked.

“Yeah.”

“Ok... Gin.”

After his stop by our cell, Cypress paid a visit to an old friend. Cypress took to the Muslim’s corner.

Back in the day, Cypress and Aarif were the biggest homies. Even though they didn’t even know each other long, the niggas linked up and became a 2 headed monster. Of course all of that changed when Aarif left the Bloods to become a Muslim. And so, Cypress went to the Muslim’s cells to see if he could persuade Aarif into returning.

“Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar,” The Muslims chanted.

“Aarif,” Cypress said.

Aarif looked up from his position.

“Can I talk to you for a second?”

Aarif nodded, and stood up. Aarif walked Cypress far enough away from the Muslim’s corner so their conversation wouldn’t disturb the prayers.

“Yes, my brotha?” Aarif said.

“Man, I need you. I need you to come back to the Bloods.”

“Ahh, but no. I have given my life to Allah now. Allah Akbar.”

“What the fuck does that even mean?” Cypress asked.

“It means God is Great, my brotha.”

“Stop it with that my brotha shit. If we were brothas, then you would be backin’ me up. We were Bloods. That’s a fraternity; it’s a religion its own right.”

“You are a fool, my brotha. Being a Blood did nothing but tear us down, and look at what it’s doing to you. You’re worried about losing battles so much that you don’t realize that you are already losing. You can’t fight them all, and you surely can’t win them all,” Aarif said.

“Then help me, Help me brother.”

“This fight is not in the name of Allah, therefore, it is not for me. I wish you good luck.” Aarif bowed to Cypress and then he walked back to the other Muslims and resumed prayer.

Cypress’s anger could have burned a hole in his head. He realized he dismissed all of those Bloods for being just like him, weak. He actually feared the arrival of a new prisoner. He was trying to organize a gang of men to fight his battle for him. If the battle was meant to be fought, he certainly didn’t want to lose. Pride played a big ass part in The Well. And Cypress could feel his slipping away. But he didn’t blame himself for it. He decided the key moment in his life that he began to become weak, was when he started courting Elijah.

Cypress walked back to his cell, while Elijah was lying on the bottom bunk, reading a book he checked out from the library.

“Get up,” Cypress said.

Elijah stepped up from the bed and stood erect.

Cypress grabbed the blanket off of his bed and tossed it out of their shared cell.

“What are you doing?” Elijah asked.

He got no response. Cypress grabbed the mattress from the bottom bunk and started to lift it.

Elijah sat back down, trying to keep the mattress in place, fearing the next move Cypress would make.

“Move,” Cypress said.

Elijah’s heart began beating faster and faster.

“I said move!” Cypress reiterated.

Elijah stood back up and quietly walked outside.

Cypress tossed the mattress out and then closed the cell door. The cell didn’t lock, but it stayed closed.

The lights went out on a real tense cellblock, that night. The silence was thick. Aside from the sound of the Muslim’s chanting, nothing else was heard, because not much else was said. Jirani has never seen his brother scared before. Cypress was, by no means, a role model to Jirani, but Jirani still looked up to him. Cypress was the closest thing to a dad that Jirani had, even though he wasn’t around much during most of Jirani’s tender years. But to see Cypress behave this way, broke his heart. Jirani knew that part of the reason Cypress became so paranoid was because of his pride. Cypress was top dog and had been for 2 years. And now there was a new person coming in that, if all the stories are true, had the power to dethrone Cypress and take over the kingdom. Paranoia? Yes, but I don’t think he was overreacting. Prison is about power.

But this wasn’t the only thing bothering Cypress, and yes, Jirani knew that. There was a threat to his throne, sure, but there was also a threat to his little brother. And he felt, what good is he if he can’t protect Jirani?

Middle of the night, I hopped down from my bunk to take a piss. After flushing, I headed back to my bunk. I braced my hands on the mattress so I could lift myself up, but noticed Jirani’s body shaking under the blanket.

“Rani? You up?” I whispered.

“Yeah, I’m up.”

“You havin’ trouble sleepin’?”

Jirani lifted his body up and moved over so I could sit down.

“I hate this,” Jirani said. He wiped his eyes

“You hate what?”

“Feeling scared. I know this is supposed to be the big bad Well, and you’re not supposed to show fear, but I am scared.”

“Why are you scared?” I asked.

“Are you kidding me? I have eyes. I see the way everybody looks at me.”

“Yeah... being cute in The Well, never really works out.”

“Oh, well thanks for the confidence,” Jirani said sarcastically.

I laughed. “But nothing is going to happen to you. You got me in your corner.”

“Forgive me if I don’t feel reassured,” Jirani smiled.

I laughed again. “Nobody is going to mess with you. You have two of the toughest guys in The Well here to help you out.”

“I know the first one is Cy, but who’s the second?” he forced a smile at the joke he just cracked at my expense.

“Ha ha, I see you got jokes. At least you’re feeling better.”

“Not much better, but I’m ok,” Jirani looked off into the darkness of the prison. He wasn’t ok. There was a character trait I noticed in this boy. He hid behind jokes and slick comments when he developed an uncomfortable feeling. Spending 24 hours a day with someone, you begin to notice these things. I looked around at all the cells, more particularly, at Khalil’s to make sure that he was still asleep. If I did this, and one of the other prisoners saw, I would never live it down.

I scooted closer to Jirani and put my arms around him. I cupped the back of his head with my palm like I were holding a baby. I even kissed the side of his head, where his hair was faded. His body was still stiff and sharp. I tried to get him to actually accept the hug and relax. Jirani resisted it for so long that the situation actually became awkward. I almost let go of him, except for the fact that I felt him exhale. After he did, he put his arm around me too.

“You’ll be alright, man,” I said. “You’re gonna be just fine.”

He exhaled into my ear again.

I rubbed his Mohawk and played in his low naps for a second. My fingers ran through his waves while the rest of my palm massaged his head. He cooed. That’s when I realized that he maybe misconstruing this. I was not trying to seduce him, but merely calm him down. Even though I didn’t mind hugging him like this and smelling his scent and stroking his hair- *oh fuck*. I needed to think of a way to back out of this before I turned into some doo doo pirate.

I stopped patting the boys head and released him from my grip.

“You should probably get some sleep,” I said.

“Right,” Jirani agreed.

The next day, Jirani and I kept along with our tradition of playing every Goddamn card game we could think of and even made up a couple of our own. At this point, we were playing Go Fish. We even included Khalil in on the... “fun.” Jirani laid on his stomach, while I was sitting at the opposite side of his bed. And Khalil lied on his back.

“Do you have a jack?” Khalil said. He was rusty on how you play when you have more than 2 people.

“You have to ask a specific person,” Jirani reminded him.

“K, fine. Rani, you got a jack?”

“Nope, go fish.”

“Lyin’ ass nigga...” Khalil picked a card from the deck.

I didn’t pay much attention to the game. It was another one of those days when Khalil and Jirani would flirt and flatter each other, so I faded into the background gradually.

“Terry,” Jirani started. “Do you have an ace?”

“Yeah,” I passed the card to Jirani. Rani, you got a 2?”

“Go fish.”

I pulled a card from the deck.

“Hey,” a voice from the cell door. All the relaxation that we had while playing this game faded away at the sound of his voice.

“Hey,” I said back to him, even though I really didn’t want to.

“I um...” Elijah started. “I wanted to say I’m sorry.”

“Sorry for what?” I asked.

“For what I said and for my contribution to the fight between us.” It had been weeks since that fight, and Elijah and I hadn’t really bothered to even look at each other. It didn’t faze me, but now that the Bloods were disbanded and Cypress threw his ass to the wolves, he was looking for as many friends as possible too. The nigga was transparent. “And I knew better than to bring up-” he was about to say it again, and I was well prepared to attack. “-your situation. A real friend would not do that, and that’s why I’m apologizing.”

“Ok,” I said, neglecting to say anything else that would make him think he was welcome in my cell. He didn’t get the memo though. He stayed in his position.

“So... what’s going on? How are you and the ho doing?” Elijah said.

Jirani, who was looking at the cards in his hand, dropped his hand and viewed Elijah through his dark and penetrating eyes. “What did you just call me?”

Elijah looked confused. He assumed that since Jirani had been in prison for 3 weeks now, that he’d understand the prison vocabulary. “I said ho. I mean... you are Terry’s ho, right? You guys do everything together, he never lets you out of his sight, and he’s fuckin’ you, ain’t he? You’re his ho.”

“No, I am not.” Jirani prepared himself to sound the fuck off on Elijah. Before things got to that level, I got up and grabbed Elijah by his arm and walked him away from the cell.

“Chill out,” I told him.

“What did I do? I was making conversation with your ho. Does he not know that he’s a ho?”

“He’s not.”

“So you’re not fucking him?” Elijah asked.

“It’s not your business.”

“You’re right. It’s not my business.”

“What do you have against Jirani?” I asked.

“I don’t have anything against him.”

“Yes, you do. Anytime you talk to him, you have that condescending tone.”

“I don’t either. And I have nothing against him,” he lied.

“Yeah, you do. You’re still mad about him and Cypress.”

“I said that I’m not mad. I have nothing against Julani or whatever the fuck his name is.”

Of course he did. There’d been many times that the hos squabbled because one of them got attached to a prisoner, but the prisoner moved on to a different ho. This happened a lot in the Bloods camp. “In fact, I would even like to offer him a job in the booking office. Ever since Lil’ Billy went into lockup, I’ve been short a player.” Elijah worked the booking office every Wednesday, doing data entry of the new prisoners into the Wellside computer database. He was one of the first faces the prisoners saw when they walked into Wellside.

“He’s cool in the mailroom,” I declined.

“Really? What’s wrong? The little ghetto boy doesn’t know how to use a computer?”

I wasn’t going to waste time exchanging catty, gay ass comments with this nigga. “Look Elijah, I’m only going to say this once. Leave him alone. And as for your apology, you can shove it up your ass and stroke your prostate with it.”

I walked back to my cell, and left Elijah with that dumb ass look on his face. As soon as I walked back into my pod, Jirani started running his mouth.

“You know...” he started. “I’m gettin’ mighty tired of hearing your friends call me ‘your ho.’ Especially because I’m not even getting any dick out the deal.”

What the hell did I just walk into? Not even 2 seconds back into my cell, and this conversation officially made me uncomfortable, but Jirani kept right on talking.

“I’m just saying, the only time I’ve ever been called a ho was when somebody was smacking my ass.”

The ever-so nonchalant Khalil, who was still lying on his back, reached through the jail bars and slapped Jirani on the ass. “Do you have any Jacks ho?”

Jirani had to smile at how silly that nigga was. “Go fish!”

Tongis got on the loud speaker. “Terrius McCord. You have a visitor. Please come to the guard’s station so Officer Melee can escort you into building D.”

“Well, my brothas. I got people to see.” I was about to just jet off, when I realized I’d be leaving Jirani alone. “Uh... Rani?”

“Yeah.”

“Stay in here until I get back,” I ordered him.

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah ho,” I smiled. Jirani found no humor in this at all. I went out to the guard’s station and waited for Officer Melee. As soon as he stepped out, I had to ask him. “Who is it? Who came to see me?” I did this every time I had a visitor. Melanie’s been saying that she was going to bring the baby up here to see me one day, but hadn’t done it yet.

“I don’t know Terry. They didn’t tell me.”

“Did they tell you her name?” I asked.

“No.”

“What about a description? Short? Asian?”

“They didn’t tell me. It might not even be a female,” Melee answered.

Nah, couldn’t have been no male. I didn’t know any niggas that would come up and visit me. I guess my Ma might’ve done something stupid like tell the Pastor to come up here and pray for me, but other than that, I couldn’t see any niggas comin’ to see me. Man, I wanted to finally see my daughter in person. The only person that’s been up here to see me was my moms. It was always a joy to see my mom, but I really hoped it wasn’t her.

Navia Alexander gave birth in 1987. Her son grew into an intelligent teenage boy with a sexual thirst for teenage girls that got him sent to the Wellside Correctional Facility for 10 years. Navia Alexander is my mother.

I walked into the huge visitor’s room and saw my mother sitting near the exit. I sat down at her table.

“Hey Terry,” she said, forcing a smile from her lips. “You look like you’re going through.”

“You say that every time you see me ma.”

“It’s true every time I see you. How have you been?”

“I’m awesome, you?”

“I’m good,” she answered. Ma looked at me and really took in the sight. “My God, I can’t believe how big you became. When I talk to you on the phone, I imagine that scrawny kid that came in here 4 years ago. Then, I come in and see biceps and pectorals. You’re transitioning into a man, and I’m not there to see it,” her eyes watered.

“Ma stop that,” I told her. “I don’t get to see you all the time, the few times that I do see you don’t need to be tainted with tears. Be happy, think happy thoughts. Like, how’s my baby.”

“You haven’t talked to Melanie?”

“Not since the last letter she sent me a few months ago.”

“Oh,” she said. We sat and looked at each other for a while. “I have to say this,” she said.

“What?”

“I’m heartbroken. I put on this strong face to come see you and pretend that everything is ok, but everything is not ok, Terry,” she lectured. “Why did you do that Terry? I mean, I want to ask you what’s the youngest that you’ve ever been with but the thought of even asking that question scares me.” Her eyes watered even further. She pulled a Kleenex out of her purse to dab her eyes. “And I’m really upset that I had no idea. Melanie’s mother came up to my house with the police accusing my son of having sex with her underage daughter. I’m sitting there and calling her a liar, but you were doing it! And had done it with so many other girls too. It breaks my heart!”

I sighed. “Ma, calm down.”

“No! You’ve got to stop running around town having sex with all these little girls and telling them that you love them, because these bitches are believing you! And then I lose my son!” she dabbed her eyes with the Kleenex again. “I’m angry, Terry. I’m pissed off!”

“There’s nothing I can do about it now. I’m here, I’m serving my time.”

“But that was disgusting! I could not fathom that my son would have done that. You robbed those girls, you robbed your own daughter from her father, and you robbed me. Mama wants to be happy. And it’ll be at least 6 years before I’m ever happy again.”

I continued to let my mother vent.

“You took that from me,” she took a deep breath. “I-I can’t even look at you right now.”

Ma grabbed her purse, got up and then left.

I wasn’t sure why Ma broke down the way she did. Anytime she visited, she may not have been a bowl of sunshine, but she never broke down like that. In a way, I can understand her. This was 4 years of pent up frustration, and she had 6 more to go. I just didn’t know why she exploded. There must have been some sort of trigger. Everything she said was right though. I lived dangerously in my late teen years, and I was spending 10 years in a maximum security prison to pay for it.

Chapter 8: Big Bad

Jirani was determined to have some kind of life outside of me. All of the tours that I’d given him around the prison left him comfortable enough to deliver the mail alone. He delivered the mail all over building E. The Aryans were still in the Supermax cells, but Jirani wasn’t nervous about it at all. He learned how to deal with them from me. If any of them had some shit to say, he knew to stomp or rip their letters into pieces. Jirani was going to fare just fine over in building E. After going through all of the floors in the Supermax building, Jirani hit the basement solitary cells. That same Mexican, Jito Torres, had another letter drenched in perfume.

Jirani hit the basement and that very same female guard was once again gossiping over the phone like she was having a day at the spa.

“I have a letter for Jito Torres.”

She waved him inside, without saying a word nor really paying Jirani any attention.

“Aqui, Papi. Estoy Aqui!” Translation: “*Here Papi, I’m right here,*” Jito called.

Jirani walked over to him, "I think it's from your lady friend again." He handed the letter away to Jito.

"Gracias Papi," Jito thanked. "You don't know how much this means to me."

Jirani smiled. This was one of the reasons he liked distributing the mail to the cells. Sure, he had pricks like the Aryans who would spit on his shoes while he walked by, and assholes like the Bloods that would make obscene gestures to him. But these moments, the moments when he saw genuine happiness in a prisoner's eyes because he'd literally brought them good news, made him feel better.

"You're welcome, Jito. Be good," he said. Jirani headed back to the cart so he could head back to the mailroom

"Ay dude!" Lil' Billy called to Jirani from his cell.

Jirani looked but became extremely hesitant about going over to that cracker.

"Come here, man."

Jirani took a few steps in his direction. Obviously, Jirani didn't like or trust this crackhead-skinny white male and Lil' Billy picked up on it. Lil' Billy figured it was probably a result of some information he'd been fed from me. And he was right. Whether he liked it or not, Lil' Billy did kill my best friend and roommate for 3 ½ years. And yes, I told my new roommate all about that shady white asshole.

"Yes?" Jirani asked.

"Any mail for Bill Chapman?"

"No," Jirani said. "Not today, sorry."

"Hmm..."

Jirani was in a rush to get out of Lil' Billy's presence. After answering his question, Jirani began to walk away from him.

"Hang back, man. Let's talk," Lil' Billy said.

"Talk?"

"Yeah. We're both from cellblock B. That almost makes us family," Billy smiled.

"Family?"

"Yeahhh. How's the block been going?"

"It's ok. Everybody's good, I think," Jirani answered.

"Nothing out of the ordinary has happened?"

"Define out of the ordinary," Jirani requested.

"Ummmm..." Lil' Billy hummed for a couple of seconds, then his facial expression shifted to a sadistic smile. "A murder, maybe? Is there anything juicy going on?" At first, Jirani dismissed this comment. He assumed that after weeks of solitary confinement, Lil' Billy was just happy to see a familiar face and wanted to gossip. Jirani didn't pick up on the devilish tone, nor the sense of urgency in Lil' Billy's voice.

"There's nothing juicy going on," Jirani said. "It's the same old boring ass cellblock B."

"Oh, that's where you're wrong. There's nothing boring about cellblock B. And any day now, I expect that it will get very interesting," Lil' Billy led on. Lil' Billy flashed those teeth in that same demented smile. This was the moment Jirani knew that something was up.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

"Oh no, have I said too much?" Billy joked.

"Why is it supposed to be getting interesting?"

"There are certain things in the universe that tell me so. The planets are aligning, and there will be blood on the sun."

That line threw Jirani for a complete loop. “What the fuck? Are you crazy or something?” Of course, Lil’ Billy was crazy, but Jirani meant, “Do you have mental issues?” Lil’ Billy smiled again. “Yeah,” he said mockingly. “I’m so crazy, yet I will be the one who is safe when the universe combusts.”

Jirani got fed up with Billy talking in circles. “Look, let’s end all the double entendres and the universe comparisons. What’s going to happen?”

“Haha,” Lil’ Billy laughed. “I could tell you, but it’s fun to see you squirm.”

“Well then fine, don’t tell me,” Jirani turned to walk away and continue his work.

“Do you really want to know?” Lil’ Billy said.

Jirani stopped walking. “Yes, but I’m not going to beg you.”

“Ok, I guess I could tell you.”

Jirani walked back to Lil’ Billy’s solitary cell to listen to the words of a mad man.

“The stars are all in place, so there’s nothing you can do to stop it anyway.”

“Then tell me.”

“Ok,” Lil’ Billy agreed. “The stars are all around us and the planets have aligned.”

“Can you speed this along, please?”

“You’re so touchy,” Lil’ Billy took pleasure in doling out the information slowly because he knew that it annoyed Jirani. “But... the planets will attack, and even the powerful sun won’t be able to stand a chance. It’s flames will go out, and it will no longer be the hottest thing in the universe.”

“Uh huh...”

“I guess this is the part that you’ve been waiting for,” Lil’ Billy said. “When the sun’s flames are cold, Cypress Turner will die.”

Jirani’s face went from boredom to rage in milliseconds as he reacted to the news. “What the hell are you talking about?”

Billy laughed. He walked back to his bed to lay down.

“I said, what the hell are you talking about?”

“I’m sorry, but it appears you’re out of money. And a psychic doesn’t give away the future’s secrets for free. Now, run along little boy. Try to stop the future from happening.” Jirani backed up from the solitary cell, and then bolted out, leaving his mail cart behind. After running out of building E, he ran all the way back to building B, where the mailroom was located. I heard his quick-moving footsteps as he was coming. When Jirani found me, his mouth panted heavily because he was out of breath from running so fast.

“What’s wrong with you? Why are you running?” I asked.

“Buh-Buh-Billy,” he tried to catch his breath.

“You’re running from Lil’ Billy?”

“No,” he swallowed. “But Billy wanted to gossip with me.”

“Gossip? Man, I told you not to talk to the prisoners. There’s no telling what kind of crazy will come out of their mouths, especially Lil’ Billy’s.”

“He said Cypress is gonna die,” Jirani spit out.

“What?”

“Yeah, that’s what he said.”

“How? Wh-Why?” I asked.

“He didn’t say. He just kept going on and on about stars and planets and the sun.”

“The sun?”

“Yes!” Jirani exclaimed. “He said that when the sun’s flames go out, Cypress will die.”

“Wait a minute. Nigga, you not makin’ any sense.”

“It’s what he said!”

I knew that Lil’ Billy was crazy, but damn... “He mentioned the sun and planets and all that shit? And you believed him?”

“It’s what he said!” Jirani reiterated. “He also said something about being psychic.”

Oh My God... this gullible ass nigga. “Lil’ Billy ain’t no damn psychic, nigga. He’s just a fuckin’ meth head and you’re letting him fuck with you. See, I knew I shouldn’t have let yo ass go over there alone,” I scalded him. “And where the hell is your mail cart nigga?”

“I-I left it.”

“Oh My God, nigga,” I was pissed. This nigga couldn’t go leaving other people’s mail unattended in this prison. “Yo, you stay here and sort these letters out. Imma go get that God damn Cart. I can’t fuckin’ believe you let silly ass Lil’ Billy shake you up.”

“When someone says that your brother is going to die, you’d react the same way.”

“Not when that someone is Lil’ Billy!” I walked to building E, and into the solitary chambers. The white guard lady was still on the phone so I walked right in and to Billy’s cell.

“Where do you get off trying to scare people?”

Billy smiled. “Somehow I knew you would show up next.”

“Yeah... because you’re psychic, right?”

He laughed. “Is he frightened?”

“Don’t worry about him. Now, what’s this shit about Cypress dying?”

“It’s true. You don’t need to be a psychic to see that. It’s a long fall down when you’re standing at the top.”

“Leave Jirani alone. Next time he comes in here, don’t you dare speak to him,” I ordered.

“Fine, I won’t. But don’t you want to know what I told him?”

“No, I don’t.”

I began to leave.

“Not even when it has to do with Hakim?”

I stopped in my tracks.

“Ahh... I knew that name would get your attention.”

“Don’t mention his name again,” I gave him another order.

“I’m trying to help you. I want to tell you what I know.”

“But you don’t know a God damn thing.”

“I know many things, Terry,” he said. “I know who killed Hakim.”

“Yeah, I do too. I’m looking at him.”

“I know who was behind it; the person who told me to kill him.”

“Bill, do you remember the last time I was in here?” I asked. He nodded. “I told you that I knew you were hiding something from me, and that if I found out the truth from someone else, I would kill you.”

Lil’ Billy nodded again.

“Hold me at my words. I will kill you and not think twice about it.”

“Not if you want the information I have,” he retorted.

“What information?”

“See, I know a lot of things. And I know that there’s a conspiracy to kill Cypress Turner.”

“By who?” I asked.

“Ummm, you know what? I don’t really want to tell you. This isn’t fun anymore.”

“Bill, if you don’t speak the fuck up-”

“Or what? You’re gonna grab my arms and slam me into the bars again? Try it! You can’t reach me from where you’re standing,” he said proudly.

“I will fuck you up.”

“I’m so scared,” he said sarcastically. “What’s the fun in giving you the answers? I’ll give you a hint. I’ll tell you everything I told that boy.”

“Then start talking.”

“The planets will align and attack the sun. The sun will bleed out and start to run out of heat. And when the flames burn out, Cypress will die,” he said.

“You’re fuckin’ crazy.”

“Maybe so, but do you want to hear the last little bit of information?” he asked.

“Not really.”

“I’m gonna tell you anyway. The orders for Cypress’s death come from the top—”

“The top? The top of what?”

“That’s all I can say,” he said.

“The top of the prison? What the fuck are you talkin’ about?”

“I said, that’s all I can say.”

“You’re a prick, Bill. And I meant what I said when I told you to never talk to Jirani again. You’re on real thin ice with me.”

I grabbed the mail cart and rolled it all the way back to the mailroom. Jirani was sorting the mail but dropped it when I reentered the room.

“What happened?” he ran over to me, eager to hear about my encounter with the white boy.

“He’s not psychic.”

“How do you know?”

“Because he told me that he was just fuckin’ with you,” I said. “Yeah, he played you.”

“Oh...”

“However, he did say that there is a conspiracy to kill Cypress and that apparently... it comes from the top.”

“The top? You mean like Tongis or something?” he asked.

“I don’t know. The nigga’s crazy. Let’s not worry about what that loony ass nigga said until after we finish working.”

“But what if he’s telling the truth?”

“He’s probably not. How would he know that there is a conspiracy to kill Cypress?” I asked. “Nobody would tell him that shit. The nigga can’t keep his mouth shut.”

“But you also said that he was a sneak and shady and nosy.”

These things were true. And I guess it could have been possible that Billy overheard it. But I still didn’t believe this shit. “Billy is just trying to stir something up.”

“So you’re not going to tell Cypress?”

“No. You can tell him if you want, but I wouldn’t dare tell mention that the local nutjob came up with some fake prophecy about his death, when he’s already worried about other issues; real issues,” I said. Today was the day that Sugarman and the rest of the guys would be entering cellblock B.

After our work in the mailroom, we returned to the cellblock. At the time, Cypress was taking a shower and bathing himself, while I tried to talk his little brother out of reciting the ravings of a madman to him. When we entered the block, Jirani ran to his brother’s cell to see if he was in there. I walked to our cell and I noticed this white envelope on Jirani’s bed. The

envelope didn't have Jirani's name on it, but it had mine. I picked it up. It had fine cursive penmanship that was instantly recognizable. Melanie Choi...

When Jirani saw that Cypress wasn't in his cell, he ran to me in our cell, panicking.

"He wasn't there, he's not there!" His voice startled me and snapped me out of a daze.

"That's because he's probably in the showers. Rani, you need to calm down."

"You're right, you're right. He's probably just in the showers," he took a deep breath and noticed the letter I was holding. "What's that?"

I smiled, "It's a letter. It's umm... a letter from my girl."

"Melanie?"

"Yeah," I said happily.

"Awww, do you think she put more pics of your daughter in it?"

"I'm sure she did."

"She's a pretty little-" Jirani saw Cypress coming out of the showers with a towel around his waist. "Cypress!" he yelled all the way across the block and then followed the yell with his quick moving feet.

Initially, I wasn't going to get involved, but I figured that I'd better. I put the envelope in my back pocket and followed him. Jirani stopped Cypress right before he got to his cell. Cypress's chest still shined from the moisture.

"I have to talk to you," Jirani said.

"The fuck do you think you are, callin' my name out from across the room like that? Nigga, are you crazy?" he said.

"I said that I have to talk to you, and it's important."

I approached the two men. "If you're going to say this, can we at least do this in a more private area?"

Cypress looked from me to his brother, and analyzed the worry on his brother's face.

"Alright," he said. "Come in."

Cypress walked into the cell first, followed by his little brother and I. Jirani took a seat on the uncomfortable bedrail. The bed still didn't have a mattress from when Cypress threw it out when he kicked Elijah out of their cell.

I stayed by the cell doors to guard it, and Cypress disrobed. *Very uncomfortable*, I couldn't stand being in a cell with a naked nigga, but I got over it.

"So what's up?" Cypress asked.

"Lil' Billy said that you're gonna die," Jirani announced.

"Uh... ok?"

"He said that someone's trying to kill you."

"And? This is The Well; someone tries to kill me every month. He ain't sayin' nothing new."

"This is what I was trying to tell him," I interrupted. "When he delivered the mail to solitary, Lil' Billy said some shit about the stars, the moon, and the planets and shit. He made it sound real poetic, and now this nigga thinks Lil' Billy is a psychic."

Cypress cracked a smile while he put on his underwear.

"Ok, so he's not psychic," Jirani surrendered. "But he did say that there is some kind of conspiracy to kill you."

"Get the fuck outta here," Cypress laughed. This was the first time that I was seeing him actually crack up. "I don't even know that nigga, and why would he even start talking to you about me?"

I inserted myself again. "It's probably because he was still here the night that you guys went up to the suites."

"Oh yeah," Cypress said. "Rani, he's obviously trying to fuck with you. Why are you takin' what this nigga says seriously?"

"Because I'm fuckin' worried about you," Jirani defended.

Cypress rubbed his forehead like he was getting a migraine. "Ok, well what else did the little bastard say?" He didn't look at Jirani, but instead, looked at me. He didn't want to hear Jirani's emotionally heightened transcription of what happened.

"He said some shit about when the sun runs out of flames, you're gonna die and that the conspiracy to kill you comes from the top," I answered

"The top?"

"Yeah," I confirmed.

"The top of what?" he smirked.

"I have no fuckin' idea."

"And you niggas ran in here to tell me this?"

"Correction," I pointed to Jirani. "He ran in here to tell you this shit."

"Excuse the fuck out of me for taking a threat against your life seriously," Jirani snapped.

Cypress put on a wifebeater A-shirt. "Ok, Rani. Well thank you for telling me."

"You're welcome. Now, who do you think it is?"

"Huh?"

"Who do you think it is?" Jirani reiterated.

"Are you serious right now? We just told you that Lil' Billy is fucking crazy, but you still believin' him?"

"Shouldn't we at least consider it?" Jirani looked to me for support, but didn't get it. I mean, what did he expect? That crazy ass white boy tried to say that Hakim's death was related to the alleged conspiracy. "Ok look, he said it comes from the top. My best guess is that Tongis has it out for you."

"Tongis?"

"Yes. He's the head of the correctional officers. Typically what he says goes." Cypress looked in my direction. He couldn't believe that Jirani wouldn't let this shit go. Jirani went on to add, "Have you noticed anything weird from him?"

"Rani, I'm going to be fine. And Tongis is not out to get me, Melee is not out to get me and neither are the night guards. You have to let this go, do you hear me?"

Jirani exhaled loudly. "I guess I'm sorry for caring about you."

"But you're being naïve."

"You know what," Jirani hopped up from the bedrail. "Fuck you, Cy." Jirani walked to the door and nudged me out of the way so he could get by. He walked out and walked back over to our cell. The departure of Jirani was immediately followed by a moment of awkwardness.

"I should probably go diffuse the situation," I said, excusing myself from Cypress's cell and went back to my own, where Rani was laying on his bed. I chose my words carefully. "I understand that you're worried about your brother, but what Billy said is completely without claim. It can't be taken seriously. Your brother will be fine."

Jirani didn't say anything. He refused to speak to me. He even turned his head away and into the opposite direction, upset because I didn't stand up for him. There was nothing else to say. I couldn't apologize for something I wasn't wrong for doing, and there was no point in trying.

Shit! I almost forgot. I pulled the white envelope out of my back pocket. Just seeing the way she wrote my name, I couldn't wait to rip into this letter. I ripped the envelope open and pulled out its contents. I didn't want to read it just yet. I really wanted to see the pictures of my girl. She was about to turn 4 years old soon. I shook the letter loose hoping the photo's would fall out, similar to how a kid shakes a birthday card from grandma just to get the 5 dollar bill out. No pictures though, not even 1.

I unfolded the letter and began to read.

Hey Terry,

I have something to tell you. You know I've never been comfortable with writing letters. Honestly, when I write them and read them back to myself I cringe. I want to tell you things, but I hate seeing them on paper. I hate knowing that you're not even going to get the message for a few days. I'll start with the good news. Theresa is about to be 4 soon, as I'm sure you know. She wanted to celebrate her birthday party at the skating rink but it costs too much. Instead, we're just going to take her to Chuck E. Cheese. She's getting big. 3 feet and 3 inches, height definitely comes from your side of the family. My mom picked her up from daycare, and um... she asked her the question that I've been dreading ever since I had her. She asked my mom why doesn't she have a dad. My mom told me that and I wanted to burst into tears. I can't answer that question for her What the hell am I even supposed to tell her. Like should I lie and tell her that daddy's at work or tell her the truth that daddy has a problem with touching little girls? And it hit me it hit me it fucking hit me! She is a little girl! Would I need to be worried about my daughter turning 14 if your out of prison. You will be out right before she turns 10 so will I need to be worried about her then. I know that I was always like I love you and I can't wait to see you but this scares me. You grew up but your taste stayed the same and I don't know if you can change. And I can not come home one day and find out that you have been touching my daughter. I can't do it. I know you said that you love her and you want to see her and all that but I can't. I'm growing up and I see that what you did was wrong. I loved you and you took advantage of that. You took advantage of me and it's time we both stop living in a fantasy. I told your mom and now im telling you when you get out don't contact me and don't try to find your daughter. She is better off never knowing you. This is my last letter and no I won't even stay in contact with your mother anymore. I don't want you or her near my baby girl anymore. Terry I wish you the best and please get some help.

Touching her daughter? Taking advantage of her? Get some help? Oh man... if you could have seen my face. Shit, I was so fuckin pissed at this shit. All the letters about how she loved me and how she couldn't wait for me to get out, and how she was going to bring Little Terry up to see me one of these days. And now her bitch ass sent this fuckin' letter to say this shit? I see why mama was pissed. She was callin' herself taking my daughter away from me, away from my moms? This shit hurts. This shit fuckin hurts. She said she never saw me as a predator but now she thinks that I'm a threat. I loved Terry. I've never loved someone so much in my life and I didn't even know her. I'd never seen her in person. I never heard her voice, but I loved her more than I loved myself. I would never do anything to harm her. And I would never touch her inappropriately. She was my little girl... she's my daughter...

“SHE'S MY DAUGHTERRRR!!!”

Jirani jumped from the bed and rapidly turned to me. The prisoners around the block looked too.

“Terry?” Jirani asked.

I ripped the letter into quadruples and dropped them to the floor.

“What happened?”

I grabbed the jail bars to my left and gripped them. The cell was spinning and I could feel the eyes from everyone staring holes through me.

Jirani got up from the bed and offered solace. He rubbed my back and shoulders, but I was too pissed to even acknowledge him. I kicked the bottom of the bars with the heel of my foot. There was a loud cling sound that resulted from the impact.

“Terry, what happened? Is she ok?” he asked.

I kicked it again. *Cling! Cling! Cling! Cling! Cling!*

Tongis came down from the guard’s station to see where the noise was coming from.

“Is he alright?” Tongis asked.

“I think he received some bad news,” Jirani answered.

I threw a punch at the metal bar. The shit hurt like hell, but I refused to let it show.

“Terry, chill out!” Tongis leapt into the cell and grabbed my hand to make sure that I didn’t do it again. “You need some ice?”

I didn’t say anything.

“Rani, go tell Melee to get the man some ice. “

Jirani obeyed orders. He ran off while Tongis held my hand like it was a fragile piece of equipment.

“Does it feel broken?”

“No,” I snatched my hand back and rubbed it. “I’m fine.”

“You don’t seem fine.”

“I am! Get the fuck outta my cell Tongis.”

Tongis’s face reacted to me yelling at him. “I’m going to let you slide because I figure you must be going through something since you’re in here trying to kill yourself and I have better things to do. But whatever the hell your problem is, I suggest you work it out before you get hurt.” He looked in my eyes, could feel my frustration and knew my pain. He respected my need to be alone and left.

My hand felt like it was vibrating right after I punched the bar, but now it started to go numb.

Jirani returned with a pack of ice and put it on my hand.

“Are you ok?”

“Yeah, I’m fine,” I said. The Ziploc back full of ice cooled my knuckles.

“You wanna talk about what was in that letter?”

“No.”

“Ok, that’s fine. But please don’t go punchin’ other things, and please don’t punch me.” Jirani’s lame attempt to make me smile proved uneventful, but he kept that bag of ice on my hand. “Does your foot hurt too?”

“No.”

Roland and Khalil walked in, peering in at me from the door.

“You iight?” Khalil asked.

“Yeah.”

“You sure?”

“I said yeah, nigga,” I snapped.

“Ay-ay-ay,” Roland elbowed Khalil to get his attention. Khalil turned to look at whatever it was that caught his homeboy’s attention.

“What’s goin’ on?” Jirani asked them, while keeping the ice on me.

“The prisoners from cellblock C are coming in,” Khalil said.

I flexed my fingers, making a fist and then opening up my hand again. I could feel my hand again, even though some numbness still flowed through the nerves. I grabbed the icepack from Jirani and walked to the door. I wanted to see this. I wanted to watch the man who’d been tearing cellblock C a new asshole. I wanted to see just what the prison had been shaken over.

An officer led the 7 prisoners in and pointed to the cells that the Aryans used to occupy. 6 of the prisoners followed the instructions given to them, but the 7th looked around, taking in his new surroundings. Sugarman loved his new home. He scanned all the faces of his onlookers, trying to see which ones had strength and which ones didn’t. He wanted to see which ones he would have to fight, in order to ensure that he was taken seriously now that he arrived. Sugarman had a fear of jail himself, and the way he thought he would conquer it, is to make the jail fear him. And it’d been working. There were 5 free cells, and the rest of the refugees made sure to pick their cells wisely, and left one of them empty because nobody wanted to share a cell with the man that had the dragon tattoo.

Sugarman felt like the whole block was staring at him and as he browsed, he tried to decipher the threats. He looked up toward the top level where the Christian’s cells were; and he could see Prison Pastor Chambers staring down at him. He looked toward the Muslim’s cells. Many of them were built, and looked like formidable opponents, but Aarif was the one that stood out to him. Sugarman continued to browse because he knew that the “leader of the Bloods” was in this block. He searched and eventually found the honey colored former Blood named Cypress Turner.

When their eyes met, Sugarman smiled. His gums were black and some of his teeth had gotten chipped from his battle royal with the Bloods of cellblock C. In an effort to prove that he was just as intimidating, Cypress popped his knuckles and rolled his shoulders just to prove that he was limber and ready, should Sugarman want to take it to that place.

Sugarman continued to browse his surroundings, his eyes landing on a few of the Mexicans and even that big white bodybuilding pedophile. Suddenly Sugarman dropped his luggage, which was only a blanket and pillow, and he began to charge.

“Varnon!” the guard that escorted the prisoners in yelled.

Sugarman began running. He wasn’t running at Cypress, or Aarif, or Chambers or any of them. Without even looking in our direction at first, he began running toward us. We had no idea who he was running to. The nigga impaled through me and took me down to the ground. Jirani barely got out of the way in time to avoid getting smashed down with us. The back of my head banged the toilet seat when I fell. This fat ass strategically planted his legs on top of my shoulders so I couldn’t swing my arms to retaliate, while he punched repeatedly. His fingers, the shape of bananas clocked me in the face.

Jirani hopped on the top bunk and tried to back away as far as possible, which wasn’t far because of how confined the space was. Khalil and Roland grabbed each arm to hold him back. Together, they worked to drag him backward, in hopes of getting him out of the cell. Sugarman wasn’t going out without a struggle. He broke out Roland’s clutches, and with the newly freed arm, he punched Khalil right in the nuts. Then, he turned to Roland and swiped the back of his kneecap so his leg wound up collapsing.

The guard who escorted the prisoners in, was also in the crowded cell. He used his nightstick to try to choke Sugarman out. Sugarman grabbed the guard's hand and dug his nails into it. By reflex, the guard let go of the nightstick which turned out to be a huge mistake. The guard soon felt the might of his very own nightstick, right between the eyes. He backed out of the cell, clenching his face. Sugarman also took the nightstick to both of Khalil's legs and even his head.

In all the commotion, I remember hearing one thing.

"Jirani," Cypress called. "Come outta here!" Cypress had run to the entrance of the door to make sure his brother didn't get hurt.

Jirani moved all the way to the foot of the bunk bed and hopped down so he could slide out of the eye of the tornado.

Once Cypress secured his brother's safety, he guarded him, making sure that whatever went on, had no impact on his little brother. Muslim Aarif got involved in the fight, but he was only trying to break it up. As one of the bigger guys in the cellblock, he thought that he might be able to subdue the giant. He started by locking his arms around Sugarman's neck in a headlock. Sugarman tried to swing that nightstick at him to get him the same way he got the guard, but when his arm went up, Khalil grabbed it from him.

"Gimme dat got' daym stick!" He threw it, and it flew into the next cell over.

Aarif yanked, dragging that fat ass backwards and he eventually pulled him far back enough so that his legs were no longer on my shoulders and I was able to throw punches at him. The first punch was with my weakened right hand, and I was certain that I heard a crack. Nah, fuck that, I heard it shatter. I ignored the pain since I was in the fight of my life. My left hand darted as many punches as possible, but they seemed not to faze him. He punched me again with that iron fist.

The prison sirens blared through the speakers. Tongis started them up once he saw the guard step back with his hands on his face. The prison sirens started up whenever a situation got out of hand, and they needed more correctional officers concentrated in a certain part of the building. "Cellblock B needs help, I repeat, Cellblock B needs help!" Tongis said over the microphone.

Fuck this shit. I was pissed the fuck off already, this nigga was charged me out of nowhere, and now I had a broken hand. It was time to end this shit! I reached back and behind the sink. I could feel that there were probably about 12 pencils left and all I needed was 1. I pulled the pencil-razor out of Hakim's hiding spot and jabbed it into his heart.

"Gaahhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!" He screamed in anguish.

The blade pierced his skin like butter. It went straight through, without putting up a fight. I, then twisted the pencil around. The blade rotated while it was in his body. I could feel it widening the cavity that it originally created as it twisted.

Sugarman's body weakened, and he actually allowed Aarif to drag him backward. Aarif pulled him out of my cell and laid him on the floor. The pencil end of the weapon stuck out of his chest with a pool of blood that was getting gradually bigger by the second. I stood up. My shirt ripped and drenched with his blood, my own blood oozed from my face and my right hand had to be broken. With all these things going on, all I could think was, *I did it! I slayed the dragon!*

I looked across the block. Cypress stayed on guard of his brother, and everyone else looked at the wounded version of me. I took a step closer to the body, limping. I wanted to see...

I had to see... He fucked with me, when he didn't even know me. I needed to see... that he was dead.

The guard that escorted Sugarman in ran up to the guards station and waited inside. And I could see Tongis and Melee suited up. The situation was diffused since the person who caused it was no longer living. But the reinforcement guards hadn't got the memorandum. They came charging in and throwing their tear gas cans. Prisoners scattered before that shit got too deep into their eyes. Most of them ran to the cells on the top floor, but I didn't. I was too proud to run. I stood, looking at Sugarman's lifeless body.

"Get down!" Officer Stinger, the officer who generally watched the hole, yelled at the prisoners.

No... I wasn't about to get down. I spent the majority of that fight being down. I was up and going to stay up for as long as I could.

Not knowing exactly which prisoners were fighting, the guard knocked down anything that wasn't already down, including me. Stinger's nightstick banged right at the top of my spinal cord. It hit the spot between the back of my head and neck. *Rendered unconscious...*

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