

# *True Brothers And Their Pride and Joy*

*By  
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## *Chapter 1*

### *Words of Wisdom*

There I was, in my room wiping the sweat off my face. I had just finished doing my push-ups, and as I was lifting my six-foot, brown skinned body from off the floor, I heard the doorbell ring. *Who the hell could be ringing the doorbell this late?* I wondered.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“Daniel, it’s me. We’ve got to talk, man. I heard what happened.”

I knew exactly who it was. I knew sooner or later he’d find out. You see, people, I faced a lot of challenges in my twenty three years of life, just like any other human being...

My mother and I had just moved from my grandmother’s house. Like many single mothers, my mom had a tough time raising me. I would see my father about five times a year. It was tough for me to even make true friends.

My mom and I moved into Rutland in December, '85. I remember getting beat up. I guess you could say it was the ‘hood’s way of preparing us for outsiders who didn’t belong near our area.

I remember my first fight out here in Rutland like it was yesterday. It was a cold but sunny afternoon on December 10, 1985. I was playing freeze tag with my boys, Richard, Tim, and Komer. Tim was “it,” and he was running closer to me. I was running fast like the Flash when I crashed into this boy who was twice my size. I hadn’t lived in Rutland long, but I had heard rumors about him.

I remember thinking about how this bully always tried to play tough guy. He was my next door neighbor, and a lot of people were afraid of him. Some even thought he was invulnerable, because when we played “Jason,” this bully always wanted to be him. I heard people would throw bottles, knives, Ninja stars and all sorts of things at him. At first, I didn’t believe it until I saw it for myself.

When I ran into him, I quickly fell to the ground. Before I could even say I was sorry, I was punched in the chest and had my sneakers stolen. From then on, everyone looked at me as the kid to beat up whenever they wanted to fight.

In 1986, I knew it was time for a change, so I went to my father and asked him to teach me how to fight.

“What?” My father was in shock. “Why do you want to learn how to fight?”

I remember looking at my father in the eye and saying, “Because I’m tired of getting beat up around here. I know you’re a correction officer, Dad. So I know you know how to defend yourself.”

My father started teaching me the basics of how to defend myself from that day on. By the next year, I was already learning how to box.

My next door neighbor was teaching me the art of boxing. He approached me one day saying to me, “Instead of having all these street fights, why not try boxing? It might be fun.”

My mother, Trace did not like what was happening to me. In the summer of 87,’ she started taking me to a dancing class, where I would go every Saturday. She also put me in Boy Scouts from the age of 9 to 13, because my friend Nate went there. We went every Tuesday.

But, I would still get into fights. Even though I started winning, my mother was still concerned. Even my father started asking my mother, “Why is my son always fighting?”

In January of 88’, my mother took me to see a psychologist, because she was worried, as were the school officials. The teachers in my school really showed concern, because I was always a nice quiet boy until I started fighting. So when January 15<sup>th</sup> came, the psychologist had a one-on-one talk with me, without me even getting upset.

I was able to talk about my mother and father splitting up, and how I used to always get beat up when trying to be friends with people.

Dr. Johnson even asked me if I had a girlfriend.

“Yes, I have three, and I’m only in fourth grade!”

Dr. Johnson knew I had a temper, but more importantly, he knew he could help me to control it.

Dr. Johnson felt that since it was a special day, Dr. King’s birthday, it was time for some special words. “Daniel, I know you are a special kid, and I want you to know you have a gift. You’re a nice person, and as you get older, you’re going to hear that a lot, but right now you’re just confused. You’re confused because you don’t see your father like your friends see theirs.”

I remember shouting out, “How did you know that?”

“Because I grew up without ever meeting my father. He ran out, leaving my mother to raise five children on her own. Daniel, there are a lot of people who go through the same thing. For some people it maybe worse, but it’s all a part of growing up. It’s a part of life. That’s the reason I pointed out that you are confused. You’ve been treated badly by people you think are your friends.” The doctor paused for a second, then said, “Also, Daniel, now that you’ve learned how to fight, you’re getting a lot of attention because you’re winning the fights.”

“But I don’t like fighting,” I said.

The doctor understood perfectly. He got out his pen and pad and said, “Daniel, I’m going to tell you about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”

“That’s right; it’s his birthday!” I shouted out.

“Yes, Daniel, but that’s not the reason why I’m bringing him up. I’m bringing him up because he was a leader, and that’s what you can be as you continue to grow.”

Later, the doctor told me that he had more patients and that we would continue this another time. He talked with my mother, and I was so happy that I couldn’t wait to see Dr. Johnson again.

My mother had seen a change in her son.

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It was a day before Valentine’s Day, and my teacher started talking about Martin Luther King, Jr. I remembered what Dr. Johnson’s main thing about Doctor King was, and that was how he had a dream.

When school was over, I planed on asking Trisha to come to my house so we could do our homework together. I also remembered my father telling me I could bring my girlfriend over after my homework was done. I approached Trisha and asked, “Trisha, would you like to come to my house so we can do our home work together?”

“No, Daniel, because my mother wants me to go home so I could pick up my little brother at four o’clock.”

“Now Trisha, it’s almost Valentine’s Day, and I haven’t even gotten a kiss yet!”

She walked up to me and gave me a kiss. “Wow, Daniel! I felt something in that kiss!”

“Yeah, so did I!”

“Daniel, why not come to my house so we can do our homework together? But remember, you have to leave before my sisters come home.”

I told her it wouldn’t be a problem, and thirty minutes later, I took a look around her house.

“So, what do you think about our house?” Trisha asked.

“Well, for every time I walked you home, this is my first time in your house.”

She looked at me saying, “Why don’t you come to my room?”

I said okay, and she led the way. “Wow! Nice bed, and since it’s a day before Valentine’s Day, let me give you a kiss,” I gave her a taste of my lips.

“Wow, Daniel! You’re kissing my neck!”

“Oh, sorry.”

She gave me an intense look. “No, Daniel. Don’t stop! Don’t stop!”

All of the sudden, she said to me, “Daniel, get out of my room for a second.”

I didn’t know why she wanted me out of her room, but after a few minutes, she called me back. “Damn, girl! Look at you!”

“Calm down! You want my neighbors to hear you?”

Seconds later, “Now remember, Daniel, this is my first time so go slow.”

I explained to her it was only my second time.

“Oh! Ow! It hurts! It hurts!”

“Okay, I’ll go slow.”

“Ah! That feels good! Keep going! Yes, Daniel! Oh! Daniel, let me get on top.”

Twenty-five minutes later I left Trisha’s house. It was time for her to get her little brother.

“I’ll see you in school tomorrow. And Daniel, happy Valentine’s Day!”

Later that evening, I was in Nat’s face. “Nat, you wouldn’t believe what happened today!” I told Nat what occurred.

“Daniel, it’s Valentine’s Day, but since it was the principle’s daughter, you get points for that. But I want you to know me and mine did it today in her bathroom!”

I told Nat that I had an appointment with Dr. Johnson. I was running late, and I didn’t really want to go, but I knew my mother would find out if I didn’t make it.

Moments later, Dr. Johnson greeted me as I walked into his office, and asked me how I was doing. There was a time that I wouldn’t say a word because I was really uncomfortable about this. For some reason, I felt as if he would tell my mother the things that I told him. But that all changed when me and Dr. Johnson got together in April, a week before Easter.

I sat there listening to what the doctor had to say about Dr. King before our one-on-one interview was over. He said, “Daniel, Dr. King had a dream, and that dream was that we have a better land, better people, and people would be able to communicate together and not be judged by their color. The most important words I remember, and also most people around the world remember, was when he said, ‘I have a dream, which my all little children will one day live in a world where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today...’ because Dr. King led our nation, and he was a great teacher to all of us. That’s what I meant when I told you that you too can be a leader.”

Before I left, I told the doctor how I didn’t get into any fights all year, and the doctor let me know he was proud of me.

Another thing that we discussed was the things that I love doing. I remember explaining to Dr. Johnson how I loved drawing comic books. Also, I love when me and my friends ride our bikes, and I’m always in front.

Dr. Johnson let me know how he was proud of me for controlling my temper. I gave him a big hug and told him thank you, and how he would see me again in June. The doctor smiled, and said, “Thank you, but I’m just doing my job. I help people overcome their problems. Also, Daniel, it makes me feel good inside to see that you’re not fighting. I’m not saying don’t defend yourself, but make sure there’s a reason to defend yourself.

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Two years later, I started junior high school. That’s when the fun really started. That’s when the girls were coming at me and calling my house. I felt I was finally getting respect, whether it was from fighting or playing basketball.

I felt it was time to see my grandparents before my graduation came. The next day, I went to see my father’s mother and father. “Hi, Granddad.”

“What’s up, Daniel?”

“Where’s Grandma?”

My grandfather told me she was upstairs. Seconds later, I was hugging my grandmother asking her how she was doing.

“I’m fine, and Daniel, I know you are getting ready for your graduation, and I’m proud of you, but I wanna know how many fights have you had into this year of 92’, and tell me the truth.”

I looked at my grandmother saying, “I only got suspended once this year, Grandma.”

“That not what I asked you. Daniel, come over here and sit down and talk to me.”

I did what my grandmother asked, and said, “I got into fights, but they were for reasons, and I even had two girls fight over me. I had girls bringing my books to class for me, and I love when me and my friends play basketball. I’m going to miss junior high school, Grandma, but I’m looking forward to high school, and it’s right across the street from you and Granddad. I’m going to have a lot of girls over there.”

My grandmother looked at me saying, “Now Daniel, I’m proud of you, but I’m also disappointed in you.”

I gave her a confused look. “What’s wrong? What have I done this time?”

“You’re starting to remind me of how your father was, and how your brother and cousin are now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Stop taking people’s feelings for granted. Now you’re about to start high school come September; school is a place for you to learn and use your mind to grow as a person, not for you to break hearts. Now I’m not saying you can’t have a girlfriend, but be careful also, because girls will throw you off track.” She paused for a moment, then said, “Daniel, that’s why I want you to enjoy the summer, and when school starts, keep your mind on those books, and remember, God loves you.”

I listened to every word my grandmother said. I then told her that I was going to see my other grandmother.

“Tell her I said ‘hi,’ and ride safe, and remember, the Lord loves us all.”

I kissed my grandmother goodbye and told her I would think about what she said. I knew she expected a lot from me.

Twenty minutes later, I was at my other grandmother's house. She was on her way to get her hair done. I told her my other grandparents asked about her.

"How are they doing?"

"They're fine, Grandee. Her and me had a serious conversation. I don't understand how she could think I was disrespecting those girls. She also said I was reminding her of how my father was, and how my brother and cousin are."

"Well Daniel, let me ask you this. How many girlfriends do you have now?"

I smiled at her and told her that I had three.

"I see where she's coming from."

I jumped up out of my seat saying, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, stop taking people's feelings for a game, because what goes around comes around. And what I mean by that is, one day you're going to fall in love."

"Hold on! Time out! Time out! Me fall in love? That sounds like something my other grandmother would say. You're both losing it if you think I'm going to fall in love."

"Hush, boy, and listen for a change. You are going to fall in love. I'm not saying you'll fall in love today or tomorrow, but you will fall in love, or you may even like a girl a lot, and she's going to treat you the same way you're treating these young ladies."

She went on to tell me that some girls will play with your mind, and that's why I should keep my mindset on one thing, and that should be school. "Daniel, your grandmothers know what they're talking about. Aren't you getting ready for high school? You should put that first if you want to succeed in life. Girls can come after that. Now, you enjoy your summer, boy, after your graduation.

I told my grandmother I'd think about what both of them said, and how I would see her at my graduation.

Both of my grandmothers would say something that would have me thinking.

I had finally reached home on my bike and ran into Tim and Nat. Tim asked me where I was coming from. I told them where I was, and told them that all my grandparents were doing fine. Then we all went to play basketball in the schoolyard.

“Look, Daniel, Nat! Everybody’s already in there,” Tim said.

Nat went upstairs, and Tim and I went inside the schoolyard. Richard and Mike were there, and he told me and Tim the team was them two, and Mike against E, Kenny, Reggie, and Wigs. Richard explained to us how they won 6 games straight.

“Well, it’s time we took those brothers off the court,” I said.

Twenty minutes later, “Daniel, are you enjoying your team getting their ass busted?” E asked.

I looked E in the eye, and said, “It’s time we took you guys off the court.”

“How you guy’s going to do that? You’re down 19 to 11. Remember, game is twenty-five,” Reggie said.

“We’ve got plenty of time.”

Ten minutes later, “Ha! Score is 20 to 22! E, we’re only down by two points.”

“How’s that, Daniel?”

I explained that I had scored 5 in a row, which made the game 19 to 16, and Tim had crossed Kenny over and scored, which made the game 19 to 18.

“Alright, and then we scored 2 in a row, which made the game 21 to 18,” Reggie said.

“Also, Mike scored two off of my passes, and now the score is 22 to 20.”

Five minutes later I, shouted out, Now the score is 24 to 24, and the game is 25 straight!”

Kenny looked at me saying, “I heard you’re getting ready for graduation. What high school are you going to?”

“The same school E went to, Tilden. But let’s finish the game.”

Within seconds, I had the ball. Richard was screaming he was open. Damn! Both Tim and Mike were open also. I already had my mind set to take the game-winning shot. Instead, I shot an air ball.

“Ha! Get clapped on, Daniel! And that’s game!” E said.

“Damn! Damn! Fuck!” I was totally upset with myself.

Minutes later, Mike was trying to calm me down, and told me, “We’ll get them tomorrow.”

“You damn right we will!”

I gave E, Kenny, Wings, and Reggie pounds, telling them good game.

Later that night, we were in front of my building. “Tim, Richard, I’m sorry about that game we lost.”

Tim looked at me and said, “Will you forget about that game? Now, what was so important that you had to tell us?” Tim asked.

I explained to Richard and Tim that both my grandmothers felt I was disrespecting Nichol, Adrianna, and Tina. “They also said I need to concentrate on school. Those older people swear they know what they’re talking about.”

“Daniel, I’m your boy,” Tim said. “They are right, but we are young. You know we are going to fall in love.”

“Time out! Time out! You mean you guys will fall in love? Man, you all are crazy!” I said.

“Shut up, Daniel! As we get older, we are going to have women we love.”

We all gave each other a pound saying, “Its love, money, and living life to the fullest.” We were all laughing before we went upstairs.

The next morning, we were all headed to Wingate Park.

“Are you guys ready to bust their asses? And this time, we’re going to win!” I asked.

Fifty minutes later, E was looking at me saying, “The score is 23 to 24. Daniel, it’s time to take another L.”

I stole the basketball from E immediately, and passed it to Mike, screaming, “That’s an easy basket!”

The score was tied up. I told them the game was straight 25 because I wanted to get ready for my graduation. They checked the ball to me, and Tim passed the ball right backed to me. E could see the look in my face. He knew I was going to take the shot.

“Daniel, don’t force the shot!” Tim shouted out.

“Ha! Yeah! Yeah! That’s game! See you at graduation, Reggie,” I said as I ran off the court. That was the game winning shot I just made.

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It was Sunday, June 19, 1992. The graduation was at Brooklyn College. I felt so happy that I was finished junior high school, and it was time for summer vacation, and then high school. I was so happy to be there that I felt I might go there for college.

It was the end of June '92, and I invited Richard and Tim to come to a party, but they refused. All of them were chilling with their ladies tonight.

I told them about how all three of my girlfriends had moved out of Brooklyn. Adrianna moved to Long Island, and the other two moved out of New York.

"Man, I see why you're going to get your party on," Richard

I explained to them it wasn't even about that. I was just going to enjoy myself, and hang out with K-Dog. "You guys enjoy yourselves with your girls, and remember what we said about our future wives."

We all shouted out, "It's about love, money, and living life to the fullest!"

Later that night, in the middle of the party, K-Dog walked up to me, telling me to take off because he had to handle some business with these three women. I agreed and left the party.

About 11 p.m., K-Dog was in front of my door with a bad attitude. "Yo, Daniel, why you lie and tell Komar I told you to go home?"

I gave him a confused look, reminding K-Dog that he asked me to leave the party. "K-Dog, what's the problem?"

K-Dog looked at me saying, "The problem is, I'm not going to Atlantic City with the guys because of your ass."

"That's not my problem, man! Now, I'm going to pretend that you didn't disrespect me in front of my door."

*Wham!* K-Dog pushed me down to the floor.

"Hey! What are you doing? Are you crazy? What's your problem?" I asked.

"What are you going to do about it? Do you want to fight?"

My mom kept telling me to come upstairs, but I kept looking at K-Dog. "Now, Daniel! Come upstairs!" My Mom shouted out.

I had no choice but to listen, but I told K-Dog this was not over.

The next day I was in knocking on Charles' aka Komer's door. Seconds later, "Charles, are you coming with me downstairs? Both me and K-Dog are going to have a fight."

Charles looked at me, telling me he had heard what happened at the party and in front of my door. He could tell I was serious from the way I was looking at him. "Daniel, let me get my girl to watch my little cousin, and I'll be right downstairs with you."

Two minutes later, I confronted K-Dog. "Now, what was your problem disrespecting me in front of my door last night?"

K-Dog looked at me laughing, saying, "What are you going to do about it?"

Within seconds, I was pushed to the floor again. After getting right back up.

*Whip! Whip! Whip!* "You're a sucker, Daniel! You're also a pussy!"

"What?"

"You heard what I said, and I'll push you again."

*Ka-pow! Chud!* I had punched K-Dog to the floor with a combination punch and then caught him with two right hand lead punches. I shouted out, "It didn't have to come down to this, K-Dog, but like others, you've forced me to do this!" *Whud!* I punched K-Dog in his face hard, with two more combinations.

Charles came around the hallway calling my name.

"Shut up, Charles! He's getting what he deserves. I told you we were going to get it on because now we don't get along."

*Bam!* I caught him with another right hand lead punch in the face. *Bam!* "Remember, my nickname is 'Iron man'!" *Ka-Pow!*

Charles came up to me saying, "That's enough, Daniel. You already beat him up, man. Let's go, man."

"I'm not finished, Charles."

"Daniel, look at him. He's bleeding from his mouth, man. You've done enough." Charles shouted out.

I turned around saying, "I'm tired of people stopping my fights!"

Charles looked at me, telling me if I didn't fight him, Jason sure would have for trying to hit on his girl.

"But I fucked him up for a reason!"

"Yes. Yes, you did, Daniel, and it's over now."

Both Charles and I walked off.  
The next day I found out I had broken K-Dog's jaw.  
Three weeks later, in the middle of July, everywhere I went I was being called "The Jaw Breaker."

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In August of '92, Charles was saying to me, "You see, bro, no one is messing with you no more."

I looked at Charles, asking him about all of the attention I was getting all of the sudden. "Why, Charles? Because of a fight?"

"Daniel, look how big K-Dog is compared to you. And now you even have more girls wanting you now. Also, remember the other day when we was in the park playing ball, and you punched Gorilla in the mouth?"

"Yes, because he fouled me hard and called me pussy. But what's your point?"

"The point is, now because of those fights, no one is bothering you anymore. I mean, some of them were for no reason, like the time when you fought that girl."

I explained to Charles the reason why I punched her. "Because she slapped me!"

Charles screamed at me, "I don't care what it was for, man! You don't put your hands on a woman! And remember, you got suspended for that, man, and you kicked her between her legs!"

I smiled at Charles, saying, "I was in junior high then. I've learned my lesson from that."

"I hope so because you're a young man now, Remember, I want you to pass this on to others when you get older."

Charles explained to me that as I get older, I shouldn't ever hit a woman. It was totally wrong, and God don't like ugly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Think about it, man. I'll see you later. I'm going to put my little cousin to bed before my aunt comes home from work."

"I said goodbye to Charles and went upstairs.

The next day I went knocking on K-Dog's door.

"What can I do for you, Daniel?" K-Dog's sister, Nicole asked.

I explained to her that I was here to see her brother, and to apologize.

“Haven’t you done enough to him?”

“Just call him downstairs, please.”

Moments later, I was looking at K-Dog, telling him I was sorry for what happened between us. “Just look at you, man. You can barley talk. But I want you to know I’m apologizing because I feel bad about myself for what I did. And now that I’ve apologized, there’s someone else I wanna see.”

Fifteen minutes later, I rang the doorbell. “Shantell, it’s Daniel. I know I could never forget you, and what you did to me. I understand, but that’s why I’m here to apologize because I don’t feel right about that. So look, whether you accept my apology or not, at least I feel better now that I came to your face and apologized.”

“Okay, I accept your apology, Daniel. And Daniel, let me give you a kiss right now, okay?”

“Thanks, Shantell!”

“Good luck in high school, Daniel. Goodbye!

“Same to you!”

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In September of ‘92, the brothers started high school.

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## *Mike*

### *Learning Responsibility*

I never showed emotions, whether it was talking about ladies or playing basketball.

“What’s up, Mike? Are you ready for your second year of high school?” Richard asked me.

I knew to look Richard in the face. “Yes, but do you think Daniel is ready for his first year?” I asked Richard as we started laughing about it.

“Ah, he’ll survive, but as for you you’re going to South Shore, man, that’s good,” Richard said, giving me a high five.

Richard explained to me how he met someone already. Her name was Sharon. I looked at him and said, “My mother and father already told me get my mind on my books and off these girls, and class didn’t even start yet!” I laughed and explained to Richard that my parents were right.

“Bro, I shouldn’t be telling you this.”

“Telling me what?” I asked.

We both saw Tim come out of nowhere. “Where you coming from, Trunks?” Richard asked.

“Trunks” was a nickname we all gave Tim. He had one huge smile on his face, telling us he was coming from a party. “I bagged up two girls at that party I was at, and brothers, I was grinding on this girl’s ass! I also got her number. Ahh! My fault, fellas! I have *three* numbers. I’m the man!”

Both Richard and I shook our heads.

Richard then said to me, “Mike, at least me and you aren’t like that. At least me and you know how to treat a young lady.”

Tim immediately turned the tables around saying, “Richard, don’t let him fool you, bro, just because he’s always quiet and he just broke up with his girl.”

I looked at Tim and said, “You just don’t get it. I broke up with her for a reason.”

“Why?” Tim asked with a smile.

“That’s none of your business.”

Tim could see he was getting to me. “Come on, Mike, we’re your boys.”

I finally gave in, explaining to them that she just wasn’t right for me.

“Why?” Tim asked.

“You two really want to know, alright? One, she doesn’t even like going to school to get her education. That just turns me off. Two, she doesn’t like going out. And three, she’s always asking me for money. Are you happy now, Tim?”

“Hey, I’m sorry man! But I see where you’re coming from because I know that I would have to get mines and leave her alone,” he said because he could tell I started having flashbacks.

Richard jumped into the conversation saying, “You forgot to mention the woman who *you* left, Tim.”

Tim smiled at us, telling us it wasn’t important. “I’ll tell you guys what is important. That we prepare Daniel for his freshmen year of high school.”

The reason we all suggested this was because when Tim was a freshmen, he got distracted a lot. I mean he had lots of girls calling his house, and he admitted to us one day that it distracted him, and he had to go to summer school to make up for two classes he had failed.

We all agreed on the same thing, and that was to prepare Daniel for high school, so he doesn’t go through what we went through with girls in our freshmen year of high school.

“Fellas, remember what we said about our future wives? And when we get older, we’ll even drink on it!”

Moments later, Daniel came up to us asking what we were all laughing about and letting us know he had something to take care of.

“Sorry Daniel, you’re late again, and we’re all about to go upstairs.”

“So fellas, to our future wives...” Richard said.

We all shouted out, “It’s love, money, and living life to the fullest!”

Later that evening, I got the message that my girlfriend called earlier. “Thanks, Dad, but I’ll call her later.”

My father looked at me and told me to call her now because he did not want me on his phone all night. It was a school night. I smiled at my father telling him I’d call her.

My mother quickly approached my father, telling him he shouldn’t be so hard on me.

“I know, babe, but I’m just teaching him responsibility. I want him to set an example for his sister and brothers, Danny and Buda.”

I went straight to my room.

“Man, Daniel doesn’t know how lucky he is. Having parents, that’s always on your back can be tough. Buda, you heard me?” I asked my little brother.

“Yes, I did,” my little brother said with a smile. “I should’ve had my door closed.”

I knew this was no way to set an example for my little brother, but at the same time, I knew Buda understood where I was coming from.

“Buda, what I meant is, they are always talking about how I should treat women, and they stay on my back about school—especially Dad.”

Buda looked at me and said, “They’re like that to all of us, except for the lady part. I’m not up to that yet. Dad always tells me to try my best when we have baseball practice. I can’t wait until I start high school. Then I’ll get to date girls *and* play ball. I remember Dad telling me everything happens for a reason. So you see, it’s great that we have both our parents living together, because we have great parents, and they’re great teachers about life and education.”

I hugged my brother saying, “Thanks, Buda. I needed that, even from a little brat like you!”

“You calling me a brat after what we just talked about?”

“Look, I said thanks, now leave the room so I can make a phone call, please!” I shouted.

“Who are you calling?” Buda seemed curious.

I gave him a look and told him it was none of his business.

“Why is it none of my business?”

“Because it’s not. Now you see way I called you a brat? Now leave before I make you!”

Buda threw his hands up saying, “You hit me, I’m going to call Mom and Dad!”

“Buda!” I shouted.

Immediately Buda ran out the room.

I was happy to finally be alone. It’s time to make that call, but it won’t be Nikkei who I call. It’ll be that new girl. I better do it now before it gets too late.

As the phone started ringing on the other line, there was a response immediately. “Hello!” There was this beautiful voice on the other end of the phone.

“Hello, may I speak to Sharon, please?”

“Speaking. Who’s this?” Sharon asked.

“This is Mike, from your high school. Remember, you gave me your phone number the other day?”

Sharon had her memory refreshed, but she didn’t expect me to call so soon. There was silence on the other end of the phone for a second.

“Well Sharon, I’m just calling to see how you were doing.” I felt that would start our conversation.

“I’m alright. And yourself? Mike, let me go tell my boyfriend I’ll call him back.”

I held on for a second, but at the same time, I was caught off guard that she had a man.

As soon as she clicked the phone back, she said, “Mike it seems you were surprised I have a man. But don’t worry, I’m about to break up with him.”

“Why’s that?” I asked.

“Because he wants me to drop out of school. All he wants is to stay home and have sex all the time, and I’m tired of it.”

“That’s bad business,” I said. “It sounds like he’s trying to force you into doing things you don’t like. What do your parents think about him?”

Sharon explained to me that her mother doesn’t like him, and she told me her father doesn’t live with them. “It’s just me, my mother, and brother.”

“Why doesn’t your mother like him? There must be a reason,” I asked with concern.

“Well, number one, because he’s 23 and I’m 15. My mother thinks he’s going to ruin my life. I should have left him alone the first time my mother told me he’s no good. The reason I’m telling you about my problems are...” she paused, then said, “I’m telling you because I just needed a friend to talk with.”

“What happened to talking to your girls about this situation?”

“No, no, no!” Sharon shouted. “They were negative about him just like my mother, but I see they were right.” I could hear in her voice that she was crying. “I just wanted to make sure I was doing the right thing.”

I explained to her that she was doing the right thing and that education comes first. “Don’t let anyone interfere with your education.”

“Don’t get me wrong; I love him. He wasn’t always like this until I started talking about college, and doing a lot of studying—and I mean *a lot* of studying.” Sharon explained to me that she needed to study hard because her math and science grades were slipping.

I understood perfectly. “Look, Sharon, I know you’re going to be hurt, but don’t let anyone interfere with your dreams in life. So what if he’s older than you! If he were a true man or a boyfriend to you, he’d let you continue your education.”

Sharon was smiling on the other end of the line as she was telling me I was right, and that she was going to have a talk with her man. She then thanked me and told me it was getting late, and that she would see me in school tomorrow.

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“Daniel! Daniel!” I yelled.

“What’s up, Mike?” Daniel asked.

I invited him to take the B78 bus because he heard me mention something about Sharon.

Minutes later, the two of us were on the bus.

“Okay, spit it out!” Daniel said.

I explained to Daniel the details and how Sharon’s man wanted her to drop out of school so they could have a child together.

“Hold up! Hold up! Time out! Time out! Is this the same girl you told Richard about?”

I nodded my head yes, and told Daniel she was having problems in her math and science class.

“First of all, the guy’s a loser if he wants his girl to drop out school. Now, what you need to do is tell her you’ll help her with her schoolwork, and bring her to your house and get that ass!” Daniel said.

“Now Daniel, you know that’s not what I’m about.”

Daniel smiled at me because he knew that I wouldn’t use anybody like that. I knew Daniel had a point about helping her because science and math were my favorite subjects.

I watched as Daniel got off at his stop to go to Tilden High School. I wished him luck on his second day and told him not to get into any fights.

He just gave me a smile and told me not to worry.

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Fifteen minutes later, Sharon’s man was in her face, explaining to her how he’d take care of her. “Look, babe. I promise we’ll get married and have children, and I’ll get a job. I promise I’ll take care of you.”

Sharon looked at Brian in the eye and said, “Brian, you just don’t get it. I’ve made up my mind already. My education comes first.”

“Who the hell put this shit in your head?”

“Since when are you talking to me like this?”

Brian quickly calmed down and held her hand, which put a smile on his face. Then, she pulled away immediately. “Look,

Brian, I don't know about you, but I'm going to school. The bell has rung already.”

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“Sharon!”

“Hi, Mike!” A quick smile came to her face when she saw me.

Brian stepped in between us and demanded to know who I was.

“A friend. Now, if you don't mind, we have a class to get to.”

“This isn't over, Sharon. We're are not finished talking. I'll be here after you get out of school,” Brian told her.

I could see the anger in Brian's face.

During 8<sup>th</sup> period, I ran into Sharon unexpectedly.

“Mike, you scared me!”

I quickly apologized and asked her, “Sharon, I was wondering if you'd come to my house so I can help you with your math and science studies.”

Sharon didn't hesitate at my offer, and we both agreed to meet after class.

After 8<sup>th</sup> period, I waited for Sharon, and I was curious as to why she wanted me to wait in front of her science class for her. As we made our way outside, I became even more curious.

“I wanted you to wait here for a reason. “There he is. Excuse me a moment.”

“Who are you talking about, Sharon?”

Within seconds, Brian walked up to both of us and pulled Sharon away. “Sharon, babe, we can work this out.”

“Brian, I've made my decision, and I'm staying in school.”

“Sharon, babe, that's what I'm talking to you about. You don't have to drop out of school,” he said with a calm voice.

Sharon folded her arms and said, “Brian, I also think we should go our separate ways.”

“Who the hell put that shit in your head?” Brian looked at her and asked the question again, then asked whether I was the guy he saw this morning, but she quickly said no. Then he spotted me and went to find out for himself.

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I saw Daniel just getting off the B78 bus. I went across the street to find out why he was around my school. “Daniel, where are you going?”

He had a smile on his face, telling me he was going to check out a comic book store around there and invited me to come along.

“Not today. Sharon and I are going to my place, thanks to the advice you gave me.”

“So, where is she?”

I explained to Daniel the situation, and that she was talking with her boyfriend.

“Are you crazy? You’re letting her talk to her boyfriend, and you’ve invited her to your house!”

Before Daniel could say another word, we saw a tall guy coming towards us. Seconds later, “I don’t know which one of you knows Sharon.”

I quickly walked up to him saying, “You must be Brian. I’m Mike, and I’m the one that knows Sharon. What can I do for you?”

“What the hell have you’ve been telling my girl?”

I smiled at him and said, “Well for starters, I’m not telling her to drop out of school.”

Sharon loved my sense of humor.

“Look, you better mind your own business before I fuck you up!” Brain said with anger in his voice.

Daniel jumped in his face, telling him he didn’t have to threaten his friend like that. “That’s what’s wrong with people today. All they think about is fighting. And, brother, you shouldn’t want the girl to drop out of school.”

Moments later, Sharon walked up.

“Sharon, what are you doing here?” Brian asked, demanding an answer.

“Brian, I told you it’s over. Now, go about your business.”

Brian finally agreed and told me I’d better take care of Sharon because she was one young lady he wishes he didn’t mess things up with.

“Hey, brother, it’s not the end of the world. There are plenty of women out here,” Daniel said, and Brian gave him a high five and told all of them to take care.

I thanked Daniel, because he was ready to fight—not so much over a girl, but because I was disrespected.

“You just go enjoy your day. I’m going to go get these comics before the store closes.”

We all said our good-byes and went our separate ways. Both Sharon and I jumped on the B78 bus heading to Rutland Plaza.

While in my house, Sharon was thanking me for being there for her. I was lucky my parents weren’t home. I quickly invited her to my bedroom to give her the “tour of her life,” and she was curious until I was showing her my basketball trophies. She was telling me how nice they were.

Sharon then gave me a hug, and I asked her what the hug was for.

“Just hold me, please,” she said.

She convinced me that it was alright that we kiss, and our lips connected.

“Yo, let me use your bathroom.”

I quickly showed her.

“Woo!”

Sharon came back to my room, naked. I quickly asked her if she was ready for what was about to come.

“Of course I am.”

After putting my rubber on, I started kissing her as I entered her walls.

“Ahh! Ahh! Yeah! Ohh!”

We quickly started another position, and Sharon could feel both pain and pleasure.

About thirty minutes later, I heard the apartment door open. “Shit! Sharon, that’s my father! Come get dressed right away!” I said.

Later on, Dad was asking me to go to the store. Before I left, he asked me if my homework was done.

As I was walking out the door, I introduced Sharon. “I’m going to show her where the bus stop is, and then go to the store.”

Sharon thanked me for introducing her to my father. “We never did start that homework, Mike.”

I told her it was alright, and that I would do it when I got home. We quickly reminded each other of what happened between us.

Sharon made it clear that she wanted me to be her new man.

“Excuse me, but isn’t the man supposed to ask the woman?”

“Not in this decade. Look, I’ll call you later,” she said as she kissed me good-bye.

Later that evening, my father was screaming and asking me what took me so long at the store.

“I... I...”

“Never mind! Did you do your homework?”

“No, but...”

“Some one’s in trouble!”

“Shut up, Buda, you little brat!”

“Don’t tell your brother to shut up! Look, I told you business before pleasure, you hear me?” my father said.

“Okay, Dad.” I knew my father was right, so I didn’t bother to argue.

Later that evening, I called Sharon and hearing her voice, I pictured her face and felt this could be something good.

# 3

## *Richard*

## *Respect For the Ladies*

I had just come from the store for my mother, and being a mama's boy, I always did a lot for my mother. I'd always help my mother out whenever she needed me too.

I saw Daniel coming down the block. "Hey, Daniel, where are you coming from?"

"The comic book store. And you wouldn't believe this, but I just stopped a fight that was about to happen."

I had thought Daniel scared the guy, but after explaining to me what occurred earlier, I was surprised he controlled his temper because I knew him well enough to know he would usually knock someone out.

Daniel invited me to shoot hoops, but I had to refuse, telling him I was going to music practice instead. I played the piano and loved it, but not too many know I can play the saxophone also. My Dad taught me to play the saxophone. It's his favorite instrument.

"Daniel, I'm proud of you. I'll talk to you later."

I went to take my mother her bags.

Thirty minutes later, I was at Ray Charles' Music School. Everybody settled down ready to concentrate on music.

"Hey, Richard you're looking good today."

"Thank you, Terry. How's it going? Because I'm feeling alright today."

Terry let me know about the new saxophone her mother brought her and asked me if I could help her practice. You see, people, a saxophone is an instrument that you would see a lot of jazz musicians play. I loved it because it makes people feel very relaxed.

I quickly said yes, and let her know I can do a lot more because she was still learning.

“Richard, how do you know how to play the saxophone? You also play the piano.”

“Wrong, Terry. I’m going to be a musician, and I’m going to be the kind that knows how to play all instruments. That’s my dad who taught me how to play the saxophone. And my old man still plays the saxophone, but we’ll discuss it later after class.”

“Places! Places, everyone! Everyone, today we’re going to learn one of Ray Charles’ best songs,” our music teacher said.

After class, I let Terry know she did a great job in music class. “So, where do you live at?” I asked.

“I live in Flatbush. Why that’s too far for you?”

I touched her shoulder, telling her it wasn’t far at all.

Terry let me know that the train would be faster.

Forty minutes later, I was getting a tour around Terry’s house. “Where’s your mother? She should be here. I want her to see what you’re about to learn, and I want to let her know this place of hers is nice.”

“Thanks, Richard. She’d be happy to hear you say that. Now, sit on the couch and let me find out if she’s home.”

Terry came back, telling me that her mother wasn’t home and that she must have gone out. After all, it was Friday. “Richard when’s your birthday?”

“That’s not important. Now, let me see your saxophone.”

I quickly played to one of Ray Charles’ songs. While I was playing, I could tell how relaxed her mind was. You’d think I was actually in a club performing.

After I finished, Terry let me know how beautiful I played the saxophone. I quickly let her know it didn’t matter how good I played because my goal was to make sure she got better at playing it.

I could see the passion she had when I played the saxophone. “Terry, you’re still not in a good position for people to love the tune you’re playing, so let me tell you what my goal is.” I was holding her gently and showing her the style to play.

“Terry.”

“Yes, Richard?”

“Nothing. Forget it.” I’m sure she could feel my dick up on her ass, but she quickly ignored it.

“Excuse me, Richard, but tell your friend to calm down!”

I gave her a look like I didn’t know what she was talking about.

“I’m sorry, Richard, but your not the man I thought you were. I mean, I would’ve never thought you knew how to play *all* these instruments!”

“That’s not the only thing I know.”

She said, “I know you like me. How’s that?”

I was quickly caught off guard.

“Because my friend, Debra told me, and said that you were talking about me.”

I confessed.

Terry told me I had nothing to be ashamed about. “Richard, I didn’t want you to find out this way. And don’t be mad at Debra. It was us just having girl talk.”

Soon, Terry confessed to me that she had a little crush on me.

“It’s alright. Come here. Don’t cry, please!” I couldn’t stand to see a woman cry, and I quickly wiped her tears.

She let me know that I was a sweet gentlemen, and I quickly showed her why she gave me that compliment. As I held, her we both started kissing each other gently. I started guiding her hand, telling her it was alright.

“Richard I hardly know you. It’s to soon for sex.”

“Who said anything about sex? I’m not that kind of guy. You see, I’d like to take it slow with you, Terry.” I’m sure she had never heard a guy say that before, just by the look she gave me.

Soon, Terry heard her front door open. She knew it was her mother. I told her quickly that I wanted to meet her mother.

“Richard, it’s almost 11-o’clock at night!”

She was surprised when I asked her to the concert at Madison Square Garden tomorrow. She told me she would let me know her answer later, and quickly gave me her phone number and told me to leave before her mother saw us—but it was to late.

Terry’s mother stood at 5-7 and weighed about 155 pounds. She had a scowl on her face, and I quickly introduced myself. Terry’s mother told me I could stay since I was a guest. I told her maybe another time because it was too late. I told Terry I’d call her later.

As soon as I got home, I called Terry. She had told me she was getting ready for bed, and while we were talking her mother walked in her room.

“Terry, we need to have a mother and daughter talk right now,” her mother instructed.

“About what, Mom? I’m on the phone with Richard,” Terry said.

“About men, dear. They’re dogs, so that’s how you treat them.”

Terry quickly defended me. “Mom! Richard isn’t even like that!”

“Darling, you’re so young. I have a lot to teach you. Number one, when you have sex with him, make him go down on you. And if he doesn’t know what he’s doing, train him. Dogs must be trained to do a good job. Two, if he cares for you, make him prove it, and not just in the bedroom. Three, he’s got to have a lot of money, and I mean—”

“Mother, enough!” Terry couldn’t take it anymore, and neither could I. I quickly hung up the phone.

“Now, Mother, I’m going to sleep. Those are your rules; I have my own rules.”

“And what are they?”

“Is that important?” Terry asked.

“Don’t answer a question with a question, young lady. Now go to your bed, and get off my phone. We’ll talk about this another time.”

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“Tim, did you see Richard today?” Mike asked.

“No, how about you?”

“Nope. Now I remember. I was with Sharon earlier,” Mike said.

“Yeah, that’s right. How did that go?” Daniel asked.

Mike looked at both Daniel and Tim and said, “Man, my father came in on us, and later, told me business before pleasure just because I didn’t finish my homework. But I will tell you this; I do have a new girl.”

“We’ll high five on that, bro! Hey, guys, look who’s coming down the hill. Richard, where do you think he’s coming from?”

“Who knows, Daniel, but I’m about to go upstairs,” Tim said.

“So early, Tim?” Daniel asked.

“Yes, I have these girls I’m expecting to call tonight.”

“What’s up Daniel, Will, Tim?” I said.

“Where are you coming from this late? It’s almost 12:30 am,” Daniel asked.

“I went to handle some business.”

Moments later, while everyone went upstairs, Daniel asked me again where did I go.

“Alright, Daniel, but don’t tell anybody. Daniel, me and this girl, Terry from my music school, almost hit it off, but her mom came in. Right when I was about to leave, I sensed her mother not liking me maybe because I was in her house so late.

“Ha haaaa!” Daniel kept laughing and said, “Richard, the first thing you do is get to know the mother. I mean me and Nessie’s mom get along fine. I’m invited to their family dinner. So you see, Richard, there are some good people in this world.”

I looked at Daniel and asked, “What’s the point to all this?”

“My point is getting to know her mother yourself before you judge her.”

“She even gave me her number, and told me to call when I get home.”

“Richard, look what time it is. It’s almost 1:00 am. Now you’re telling me you’re going to call her again this late? That’s not good at all. Remember, you’re trying to get her mother’s respect, and it lets Terry know you have something good to offer her. Another thing, it won’t come across her mind that you’re not one of those brothers who’s desperate for some pussy.”

I was shocked to hear Daniel talk like this. “Daniel, where did this all come from?”

Daniel quickly said his cousin, Angel’s mother. “Richard, she always said even if you and a girl aren’t serious, you still treat their parents with respect.”

Soon both Daniel and I were headed upstairs to get ready to start the next day off with a bang.

