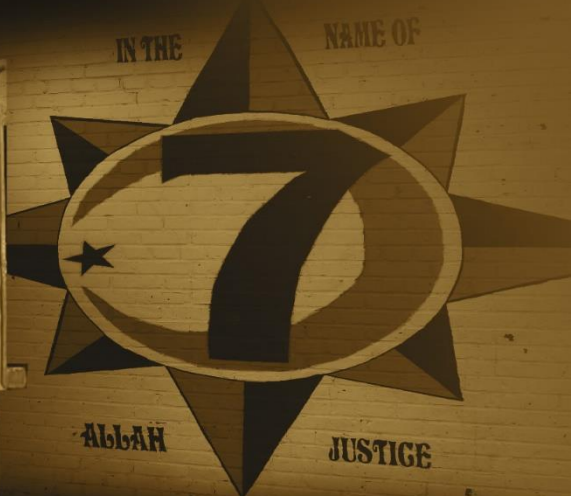


DIVINE G ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS
PART 1 OF A TRILOGY

Welcome to...
**BREUKELEN
HOUSES**



TRONG

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH?



A NOVEL BY DIVINE G

TGONG

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH?

Rayhiem Jones loved his community (Nubia Gold) so much he was willing to do whatever it took to clean it up. But he never thought his efforts to rid the community of drugs would cost him ten years in prison for a murder he did not commit. After finding out Jose Rodriguez (J.R.), the leader of Supranova, a vicious drug gang, had framed him for the murder, and upon his release from prison, Rayhiem is unable to simply put an H on his chest and handle it. Driven by a series of incomprehensible, reoccurring, life-long dreams, Rayhiem formulates a group that specializes in shutting down drug houses called . . . TGONG.

TGONG

A Novel By Divine G

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Money-Grip (Published by Street Knowledge Publishing)

Money-Grip 2 (Published by Divine G Entertainment)

Enigma of Love (Published by Divine G Entertainment)

The Canarsie Connection (Published by Divine G Entertainment)

No Other Love (Published by Divine G Entertainment)

Time Jack - under pseudonym John Whitfield - (Published by Divine G Entertainment)

Short Stories:

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Stage Plays:

Peak-Zone (appearing in *Exiled Voices, Portals of Discovery*, published by New England College Press)

TGONG ®

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Dedication

This novel is dedicated to the family members, friends and associates who were instrumental in helping me to get this novel written, edited and published. The list of supporters is huge and extensive, and as a result, I am apprehensive about attempting to mention specific names. I learned from past experience, if anyone is inadvertently left out and feels he or she should have been mentioned, it creates a lot of bad feelings. So, this time, I'm taking the safe road by sending out a universal dedication to all those who played a part in the success of this novel, without itemizing individual names. If you were there, by my side, had my back, and was supportive, then you are the person I am referring to when I send out this dedication. This novel is dedicated to you for being there. As always, thanks for the support.

CHAPTER # 1

Rayhiem Jones tried desperately to pull himself out of the deep sleep like a man struggling out of quicksand, but the dream held on to him like the locked jaws of a two-hundred-pound hungry Wolverine. He could hear himself screaming with blood curdling force. He tossed and turned, and thrashed and kicked wildly, flinging the covers to the floor, but the seven bright lights remained, hovering all around him. His whole body felt alien, as if his nerve-endings were exposed to Novocain or a cooling menthol ointment, which induced a profound sense of tranquility and well-being. Indeed, Rayhiem's fear was misdirected, since the bright lights during these regular and routine dreams had never presented themselves as a threat or a force that intended to do him harm. What caused Rayhiem's fear was the extreme vividness of the pulsating lights, the identical and on-going nature of the dreams, and his inability to comprehend what the bright lights wanted from him. They definitely wanted something because they always talked to him. Rayhiem's fear was compounded because he could never figure out what the seven lights' final statement was just before he would awaken.

"Ah! Way! Wollow. Follow!" Rayhiem talked in his sleep, rapidly shaking his head from side to side as if he was gesturing the word no. The dream world lights had drawn closer to Rayhiem while whispering his name, which always excited him and marked the conclusion of the first stage of this confrontation. "Yah! Ah, nah! Hollow. Wollow! Where. WHERE!" His dream talk grew louder and more urgent.

In a room on the other side of the apartment, Rayhiem's mother, Aretha Jones, was snatched from her sleep when she heard her 16-year-old son, once again, talking in his sleep. She got out of bed, calmly entered Rayhiem's room, and turned on the lamp on the night stand next to his bed; she picked up the blanket off the floor, shook it once, and gently put the blanket back over her only son. She sat on the bed.

"Line! Wollow!—Hollow!" Rayhiem continued.

"Relax; easy there child," Aretha said softly while caressing Rayhiem's hand and wiping his sweaty forehead with a piece of tissue.

She knew all he needed was a little attention and the nightmare would go away. "Don't worry, baby; momma's here with you now."

When Rayhiem's subconscious mind registered the presence of his mother, the seven bright lights, in ritualistic fashion, collectively made their last statement and released him from the dream. Like always, he felt a soothing sensation come over his entire body, like receiving a warm, deep cleansing shower after months of being unrelentlessly exposed to dirt, grime, and agonizing cold. As the dream world faded, he slowly opened his eyes and spoke softly, "Mom."

"Yes, baby, I'm here," She said with a smile. "It's Okay now."

"I'm sorry I woke you up," Rayhiem said, sitting up, squinting his sleepy eyes, and then stretching hard. "I'm all right now, momma."

"Yeah, I bet you are. Did you eat a big meal before you went to bed?"

Rayhiem nodded his head yes. He lied to her once again. He never ate big meals before going to bed. Because this explanation gave his mother some sense of satisfaction, he went along with it to prevent upsetting her any further. He knew from numerous failed attempts whenever he tried to explain the dreams to her, it was a waste of time, it frightened her, and it made him feel bad for scaring her. He also knew she would only explained it away with her big meals at night before going to bed theory, so he simply gave into her position for the sake of their collective piece of mind.

His mother kissed him on the forehead, stood up from the side of the bed and just before walking towards the door, she said, "Boy, I told you about eating big meals before going to bed. Why don't you give your poor momma a break?"

"I'm sorry, momma."

Rayhiem watched her walk out the door. He turned off the lamp, slid back down under the covers, closed his eyes and rewound the dream inside his third eye. As his mind visualized the seven pulsating bright lights, he muttered to himself for the thousandth time. "What do they want from me? . . . What are they saying to me?"

* * * *

The Glenwood Road Social Club sat in the middle of the Breukelen (pronounced Brookline) Housing Projects. This after school hangout for junior high school and high school teens was located at 104-17 Glenwood Road between 104th and 105th Streets in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn. Next to the Club on one side was a Bodega and on the other side was a Laundromat. It was April 20, 1981 and all the regulars were in the house, sitting in booths by the Jukebox bobbing their heads to Hip Hop songs, drinking Old Gold, talking idly, and watching break dancers do the electric boogaloo and spinning on their heads, backs, elbows and other body parts.

The Social Club was owned and operated by a Latino man named Father Divine, but was controlled by seven teenagers who were called the "inseparable seven" by their peers. These seven brothers were Rayhiem Jones, Jakwan Rivers, Barsun Harris, Shondu Williams, Shakhem Stewart, Divine Truth Hill, and Shamel Steadman. Behind their backs, however, among the jealous people who knew how to hold water, they were called the "insane seven", the "bugged out bunch", the "crazy crew" and an assortment of other names along the lines of the above. However, even these particular backbiters had to admit Rayhiem and his crew was a blessing to the safety and security of the Breukelen Projects, which they called Nubia Gold.

About a year ago, Rayhiem Jones, the undisputed leader of the bunch, earned his crew the respect and admiration from the Breukelen Community when he formulated a community watch group. As a result, they caught a rapist who chose Nubia Gold as a playground for his sick and sadistic thrills. The main participants of this watch group were members of the Nation of Gods and Earths, otherwise known as Five Percenters. Rayhiem had become a member of the Gods and Earths Nation four years prior, following in the footsteps of his older and only sister Lyasia. Rayhiem's crew, in turn, followed in his footsteps and got "knowledge of self", a term used to indicate entry into the Nation.

When the first girl, Monique, was rapped on 105th Street, everyone thought it was just one of those unfortunate and sporadic things that occur from time to time in a city like New York where millions of people live. However, when the second and third occurred in various parts of the Projects, everyone knew there was a serial rapist on the loose. Rayhiem called a Rally (cipher) in the Rock-n-Roll Park, summoning all Gods and Earths to report to the Park at 9:30 sharp and told them about his plan to formulate a watch group in order to catch the rapist. Some had doubts while the majority thought it was a righteous idea, right in line with the elements of 120 lessons (the teachings of the Nation of Islam here in the Wilderness of North America). Four seven-person patrol teams were put in place. Two of the teams were on the Glenwood Road side of the Projects and the other two were on the far side near Stanley and Williams Avenues, and 108th Street. Since Rayhiem, Divine Truth, Barsun and Shamel lived on the far side, they coordinated the far side teams, while Jakwan, Shondu and Shakhem coordinated the Glenwood Road teams since they lived on that side of the Projects.

After only four nights of patrolling the projects the rapist was caught. Far side team number two, coordinated by Barsun and Shamel had set the trap and caught the middle-aged Blackman who had third degree burn scars all over his face. They practically caught the rapist with his shitty, skid mark stained underwear down to his ankles and a smoking gun that was a pecker dripping premature ejaculation all over the place. When the scout from team number two informed the other teams that the culprit was caught, and when Rayhiem arrived on the scene and saw the whole team number two stomping the man out, giving him what was known as the "supreme ass whippin", he ran over snatching and pulling them off him.

"Now cipher!" Rayhiem shouted. "Hold up, God! What y'all doing!?"

Everyone ceased the brutal pounding, breathing extremely hard as if they were working on the man for hours.

Barsun drew a deep breath of air into his lungs, trying to tame the exhaustion, and spoke first. "Yeah, Ray. This is definitely the motherfucker."

"Word is bond," Shamel added, breathing just as hard as Barsun. "We caught him right in the act. Tell him Sha-Mecca."

Sha-Mecca was standing on the side wearing some skintight shorts and a body-hugging blouse that left no room for the imagination; to say she was dressed like a prostitute would be a gross understatement. Her butt was so huge and perfectly shaped even non-perverts could easily be enticed into responding in a sexually irrational manner. The sensuous sight of her small waist, her outrageously pretty face and those Hottentot features of hers were mind-boggling. Half of the patrol team members kept hard-ons when she was in their presence and they all literally couldn't wait until Sha-Mecca got out of that outfit and back into her refinement so as to give the blood vessels in their penises a rest. Since Sha-Mecca was Rayhiem's Earth, everyone involved in the patrol knew she was off limits, which only served to magnify the torture ten folds. If ever there was perfect bait for catching rapists, Sha-Mecca was absolutely it and Rayhiem knew it would work.

Sha-Mecca spoke excitedly while holding her blouse in place. "This faggot ripped my shirt and torn my shorts." She showed Rayhiem. "See."

Rayhiem hastily observed the torn garments and then looked down at the man curled up on the ground, in a fetal position, looking up at Rayhiem with puppy dog eyes. Rayhiem hauled off and kicked him in the mouth, causing a glob of blood to ooze out of his mouth. Upon impact the man's legs shot out like a switchblade. When Rayhiem saw the huge wet ejaculation stain in the crotch area of his pants, he was on the verge of stomping the man's face, but contained his rage.

Sha-Mecca continued. "It took them so long to get up to the roof, this freak almost got me. He had his dick out and everything!"

"WHAT!" Rayhiem's eye bulged as the maniacal rage boiled inside of him.

Sha-Mecca spoke while pointing at Shamel and Barsun. "It took them five minutes to get up there. If I didn't know that karate stuff you taught me, he probably would've stabbed me to death and raped me by the time they got up there."

Rayhiem was fuming. The thought of his Earth being injured or killed because of the negligence of individuals claiming to be all wise, and civilized and intelligent black men brought on a chill that reached the core of his bone marrow. "What the fuck took y'all so long to get up there!" There was no mistaking the level of rage in Rayhiem's tone.

"Bo--Both the roof doors were locked," Shamel said as a nervous trickle of sweat oozed from his armpits. "We was on point, but it was the roof doors." He was hoping and praying Rayhiem didn't fly off the handle like he did when Earl Henderson got drunk and squeezed Sha-Mecca's butt. Shamel started massaging his jaw as if his hand had a mind of its own when he thought about the wires used to fix Earl's broken jaw.

"Rayhiem, this motherfucker here ain't no regular rapist, God," Barsun kicked the man in the back of the head. "He locked them roof doors with those metal wires. Yah bitch ass mother--" Barsun kicked him again, but this time much harder.

"Y'all were supposed to make sure all that shit was in order before you let Sha-Mecca go up there." Rayhiem struggled to contain his anger. He turned to Sha-Mecca. "You got any injuries?"

"Only a scratch on my arm," She showed Rayhiem her left elbow.

Rayhiem gently embraced her arm, scrutinizing the cut. He looked her in the eyes with a pitiful expression, which clearly said, "I'm sorry." He had vehemently guaranteed her something like this would not happen and now he felt like he let her down. He angrily turned his head and yelled. "Yo, True God, K-Born, come here!"

The two got up off the bench and approached Rayhiem. "What's up, Rayhiem." True God said.

"I need you two to take Sha-Mecca home," Rayhiem said.

"Hey! We wanna get some rec. on this motherfucker too," K-Born said.

"If you ain't get your rec. already," Rayhiem responded. "You won't be gettin' any. We gonna punish him the same way Allah would do it."

The patrol team participants muttered disgruntled comments, since they knew where Rayhiem was going with this and they completely disagreed with his decision not to beat the living shit out of the rapist. After Rayhiem pointed out the 20th degree in 1-40, and the fact that they were required as members of the Nation of Gods and Earths to civilize the uncivilized, they reluctantly listened to the form of justice he had in store for the rapist. At first, the patrol team members thought Rayhiem had gone completely mad when he suggested they help the man get some psychiatric help, teach him the lessons, and make him pay reparations to his victims. But, as Barsun, Divine and Shondu joined in the effort to convince the remaining participants of the patrol teams, they all eventually agreed. When word spread of the righteous manner in which Rayhiem handled the situation, he was not only commended by the older and wiser members of the Nation, but also by the tenants in the Breukelen Projects as well.

As Rayhiem sat in one of the booths in the back of the Glenwood Road Social Club with Sha-Mecca on his right and Jakwan and Barsun seated across from him, the thought of tonight's party at the Community Center surfaced in his mind when he saw Dr. Knowledge and Mr. Divine enter the Club. They were members of a D.J. group called the "God Squad" and Rayhiem saw they came in the Club giving out flyers to remind everyone of the party. Rayhiem realized he was so preoccupied all week with how he and his crew was going to get the money to repair the transmission in their van, he totally forgot they had agreed to do the security for the center jam. Ah man, now he would have to re-do his whole schedule for tonight, he thought as Divine God (Mr. Divine) approached the booth.

"Peace Rayhiem," Mr. Divine shouted over the booming bass of the song King Tim the Third, while handing a flyer to Barsun. "What's the science Sha-Mecca, Jakwan, Barsun? How y'all doin'?"

Everyone greeted Mr. Divine with the word "peace."

Jakwan nodded his head. "Y'all ready to do y'all thang tonight?"

"Of course," Mr. Divine said, while bobbing his head to the thumping beat. "The God Squad was born ready da rock the house. Y'all gonna handle the door, right?"

"Handle the door?" Barsun muttered loudly, with a facial expression, which indicated he also had forgotten they were scheduled to do security. "Oh shit. We did say we was gonna handle that."

"We'll be there 8 o'clock, Divine." Rayhiem said. "We know the knowledge knowledge degree. Plus, with all those people from outside the Projects that's gonna be there, we wouldn't miss this jam even if you tried to pay us not to come."

As Divine turned and bounced towards the door, Rayhiem felt a sudden premonition, like a *déjà vu* experience, when he thought of the shoot-out that occurred in Marcus Garvey Projects in Brownsville two weeks ago, where a girl was killed when a stray bullet hit her in the forehead. There's definitely gonna be a lot of people from out of the Projects that's gonna show up at this jam, including the wild ones, Rayhiem thought to himself. He wondered was this why he had the dream last night with the lights? He pondered real hard as he stared at the door in a trance like fashion. The last dream he had about the lights was approximately two and a half weeks ago, and the next day Shamel had a huge fight at the High and he and the crew had to make sure the guy's homeboys didn't jump Shamel. Yeah. That gotta be it.

Rayhiem stood up. "We got some business to take care of before tonight." He turned to Sha-Mecca. "I need you to keep an eye on the place for about an hour."

"No problem, Ra," She replied.

Rayhiem turned and went for the door with Barsun and Jakwan on his heels. He instantly reactivated his usual self-talk session, trying to make sense of his dream last night. The bright lights were probably trying to tell me something about this jam tonight, he said to himself. I think they said, tomorrow is fine, but today is a nightmare? Yeah, that's what they said . . . Hold up . . . or was it tomorrow is time for a nightmare? Rayhiem's indecisiveness was intensifying as he walked out the Club,

heading towards Divine Truth's apartment on the far side. Rayhiem wanted badly to talk to his crew about what he thought the bright lights had said, but the last time he did that they joked, teased and wrecked him to the point he was about to get physical with them to make them stop with the constant jokes. Nah, he couldn't bring up the seven lights issue again, he concluded as they walked past the Rock-n-Roll Park. Plus, this bright light stuff was the reason people started calling him and his crew insane and bugged out, he realized, then sighed out loud, causing Barsun and Jakwan to stop their discussion.

"You all right over there, Ra?" Jakwan inquired, honestly thinking Rayhiem's sigh of frustration had something to do with his and Barsun's conversation about this girl named Lizzy who was into letting dudes run trains on her. "We wasn't talking about gettin' down with that. I don't know why you sucking your teeth at us."

Rayhiem had no idea what Jakwan was talking about, since his mind was totally somewhere else. "I'm cool," He said. "I was just thinking about something and spoke out loud, that all. I'm alright."

"Ahhh, shit," Barsun giggled. "I hope it wasn't them space lights tryin' ta regulate again." He laughed, causing Jakwan to join in.

Rayhiem looked over at the two with a smirk on his face and scolded himself inwardly for the hundredth time for being so stupid to mention those lights to them in the first place. How could he have played himself like that!? He was never going to hear the end of this shit. Rayhiem sighed as he wondered why couldn't they have open minds like Sha-Mecca? She was the only one who understood what he was going through and she knew he wasn't buggin' out because his reoccurring dreams were happening for a reason.

* * * *

At a quarter to 8, the inseparable seven arrived at the Community Center and after helping the God Squad unload their DJ equipment from the black van owned by Divine God, they had a brief discussion on how the security would be orchestrated, who would do what, where, when and

for how long. Since Jakwan and Barsun were larger in size than anyone else, they would handle the door. They would collect the one-dollar admittance fee and pat frisk everyone for weapons. Rayhiem and Shondu would be positioned out front, watching for any problems by individuals who would hang out front and enjoy the music instead of paying the one-dollar admission fee. Shamel, Divine Truth, Shakhem and Sha-Mecca handled all dance floor matters, including the rest rooms. Sha-Mecca and two of her home-girls would secure the women's rest room. The rest room security was a necessity because a lot of beefs that started on the dance floor were sometimes taken to the bathroom. Rayhiem also remembered the dead body that was found after a jam in the Pink House Projects Community Center's bathroom last year and he had no intentions of allowing that to happen in Nubia Gold.

At 9 o'clock the bass was booming, the doors opened and the people entered the Center by the dozens. Rayhiem instantly noticed this was going to be a full house and they would probably have to turn down some of the people from entering around mid-night. From past experience, Rayhiem assumed this would be about the time the place would reach the fire law capacity which was 1,300. The new faces, which were obviously from outside of the Projects, were numerous and it really didn't surprise Rayhiem much because the God Squad was well known throughout most of Brooklyn for rockin' a party just as good as the uptown crews like Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, Charlie Chase and the Cold Crush Crew.

Just as Rayhiem predicted, at about 11:30, Jakwan and Barsun announced the house was full and had to turn down about four-dozen people. The eager partygoers simply set up shop right out front and partied as if they were at a park jam.

Everything was going just fine until a little after 12 o'clock, when a group of drunk, rowdy, trouble making, thug looking teens, apparently from another neighborhood, came on the scene. Rayhiem was surprised when he felt a strange tingling surge shoot through his mid-section. The statement made by the bright lights instantly popped inside his head the moment he laid eyes on the four thugs walking towards the Center from

the direction of the train station, the BMT LL line. When Rayhiem suddenly saw a reddish cloud appear around the thugs, he panicked. Frantically blinking his eyes, he thought he was going blind as the reddish cloud disappeared just as abruptly as it initially appeared. Rayhiem brushed the event aside, assuming his eyes playing tricks on him.

Scrutinizing their every move, Rayhiem saw that these guys had trouble, drama and confusion written all over them. *Was this what the lights were talking about?* He asked himself. *Damn! What did the lights say?* He couldn't resist critically analyzing the situation, since the lights did say something to him just before they let him go from the dream . . . *Tomorrow is . . . is something about a nightmare. Ohhh yeah, this must be what they were talking about,* Rayhiem concluded when he saw two of the men violently grabbed a girl named Shirley's butt. When she protested, another thug mushed her face, while another one threw a beer bottle at the crowd of people hanging out in front of the Center; the shattering glass caused everyone to go into a panic.

"Relax! Chill!" Rayhiem raised his hands to the crowd to prevent a stampede. "It's alright. Don't panic. We got this under control, don't worry." Rayhiem whispered to Shondu. "Tell Jay and Barsun we got drama out here."

When Shondu quickly rushed towards the front door of the Center, Rayhiem casually approached the four thugs, intercepting them before they got too close to the crowd.

"Peace, my brothers," Rayhiem said with a huge, friendly smile, acting as if he knew the men. "What's happenin' bro? How y'all doin'? I'm sure glad y'all came out here to party in peace with us." Rayhiem noticed three of the four thugs were visibly high on hard drugs (probably cocaine, acid or PCP) and they all reeked of beer and hard liquor.

"Man, why the fuck you all up in our motherfuckin' grill like that for?" The thug with a brown Kango hat said. "Get the fuck outta the way so we can crash this motherfuckin' party Bedstuy style."

The other three laughed at their comrade's comment while wobbling and stealing quick swigs from their bottles of beers.

Rayhiem noticed out of the corner of his eye, Jakwan and Barsun were inconspicuously creeping up behind the four thugs. They were walking towards the fence as if they were leaving the party to go home. Rayhiem knew when they were out of the thugs' sight they would shoot across the street, get directly behind them and tiptoe right up on them. When Rayhiem cut his eyes the other way, he noticed Shondu and Divine Truth were in the bushes where they stashed two 30.30 scope rifles.

"Yo! Get the fuck outta the way, man!" The thug wearing a green suede front jacket shouted at Rayhiem. Huge droplets of spittle shot from his mouth, landing on Rayhiem's face.

Rayhiem was about go ballistic on the thug, but controlled his flaming urge to knock this drunken bastard's head clean off his fuckin' shoulders! Rayhiem also noticed at least two of them were strap and knew this whole thing could get out of hand real quick if one wrong move was made, so he basically ignored the smelly slime on his face. *Hold your head, now*, he repeatedly told himself while breathing deeply. He gritted his teeth and wiped his face, then said. "Listen, my brothers, I'm sorry but the party's filled to capacity. There's no more room. That's why all these people are out here."

"Fuck that! We ain't tryin' to hear that motherfuckin' bull shit!" The thug with the brown Kango hat shouted and threw another bottle at the crowd of people, causing some of them to curse at them profusely.

"Please, brother, don't do that," Rayhiem said, noticing Barsun was now only feet away and was waving at him, signifying to give him the word.

"Nigga, you better get the fuck outta the way!" The thug wearing a black leather jacket yelled as he pulled a 38 revolver from his waist.

"Hey! Hey!" Rayhiem said excitedly, stepping back while immediately throwing his hands in the air, and was surprised when he heard MC Sharieff say on the microphone from inside the Center at this precise moment: "Throw your hands in the air and wave 'em like yah just don't care."

The other three thugs immediately pulled their handguns and Rayhiem was shocked to discover all four of them were carrying steel.

"That ain't necessary brothers . . ." Rayhiem said softly as he saw Jakwan and Barsun carefully aiming their handguns at the thugs' backs. "Plus . . . Y'all ain't got no wins. Bro, y'all can't win on this one. If anyone of you chumps pull that trigger, I guarantee you, all of you, will die tonight. And that my friend ain't no bullshit."

"Nigga, what the fuck is you talkin' about?" The thug with the leather jacket said, wobbling towards Rayhiem while drunkenly trying to point his gun.

Rayhiem's heart pounded in his ears as the crippling fear of the thought of this drunken fool accidentally shooting him registered.

"STOP! Motherfucker!" Divine Truth shouted as he and Shondu stepped out of the bushes with their rifles carefully pointed at the thugs.

"It ain't a two against four thang either!" Barsun shouted from behind the thugs as he and Jakwan crept towards them with their handguns in the ready, now only a couple of feet away.

"Sneeze wrong," Jakwan said viciously, "And y'all ass is out!"

"Drop 'em!" Shondu said, pausing a moment, noticing no one complying with his order. "N O W!"

When Shondu screamed the word "now", he not only startled the four thugs into action, but he also startled the living shit out of Rayhiem because the sudden force of Shondu's shout made him think the drunken fool had squeezed off a shot.

After Rayhiem noticed all the thugs had dropped their weapons and Barsun and Jakwan were right upon them, he quickly scooped up their handguns and ran over to the bushes where the rifles were stashed and laid them in the grass. When Rayhiem returned, he realized this was the tricky part and then said. "Now, how do you gentlemen think we oughta deal with y'all after you came out here and dissed our party, beatin' up females and throwing bottles and shit? Huh?"

The four thugs wobbled and the one with the Kango said. "Fuck that man. We ain't do nothin' wrong. That girl was ugly anyway. That bitch should be glad I---"

The thug who wore the leather jacket kicked him in the ankle, cutting off part of his last remark.

"Fuck that, Ray," Shondu said. "Let's smoke these motherfuckers and dump 'em behind Path-mark."

"Sounds good to me," Divine Truth said, smiling as he noticed the terrified expression on the thugs' faces materializing.

"Fuck it, let's do it!" Rayhiem smiled, making eye contact with Barsun and Jakwan, as their facial expressions indicated they knew they couldn't shoot these idiots, but also that these drunken cowards didn't know that. Rayhiem became belligerent and started shouting. "Ohhh, I see, y'all got a fuckin' death wish!? We can definitely help y'all with that. Man, let's shoot these punk mothers!" Rayhiem saw his entire crew take aim. "Go ahead; smoke these disrespectful ass motherfuckers--"

"Wait! Please, wait, man!" The thug in the green suede front jacket shouted hysterically. "We--we ain't mean no harm! You know how it is brothers—you--you know what I'm sayin'--we we was just having a . . .

Rayhiem spun around and glanced at the crowd of observers as the thug in the green suede front babbled on. Rayhiem could see the crowd was visibly anxious to see how this thing was going to be handled. He knew they definitely couldn't shoot 'em, the thought resurfaced in his mind. With all these people out here that was totally out of the question, he strenuously reaffirmed. Nor could they drive off with them because if they were found dead, those bodies would be attributed to them. And if they let them go without some type of justice being implemented, these hardheaded fools would come back out here with the same old shit. What would be a good way to let these clowns know the Gods of Nubia Gold didn't play them disrespect games out here? Rayhiem pondered his options very carefully. He turned back around, staring hard at the four thugs who had that arrogant aura about them. He stared at them for another three seconds and the idea for a penalty hit him like a Bruce Lee roundhouse kick. Yeah! That'll work. Rayhiem smiled crazily causing the rest of his crew to smile along with him. When Rayhiem started nodding his head, they all did the same as if they were playing a game of "Simon says."

The thugs saw this weird behavior and their nervousness intensified; they made eye contact with each other while still wobbling, but not as much as earlier.

"So, what is it, Ra?" Jakwan inquired, still nodding his head along with everyone else. "What's the knowledge, knowledge?"

"I want y'all motherfuckers to strip!" Rayhiem shouted at the thugs, startling them. "Butt ass! And that means everything. After that y'all can get the fuck outta here."

"What!?" The thug wearing the Kango hat said nervously. His eyes grew so wide and insane looking his facial expression was comical. Terror gripped him because it dawned on him that he had a micro penis. He instantly remembered how all his girlfriends used to tease him because of the extraordinarily small nature of his "Little Pee Pee" as his girl Debby used to call it. "I--I'm--I'm not doing it! Fuck that!"

WHAM!

Jakwan hit him on the top of the head with the butt of the revolver, dropping him to the pavement. "You either do it or you die, bitch! The choice is yours." He cocked the hammer on the revolver.

Divine Truth said teasingly with his gun pointed. "Please choose the die option, will yah, pleeeaaase."

Shondu said smilingly as he rubbed the barrel of his gun on one of the thugs' chin. "After this shit y'all just pulled, I'm dying to smoke one of you motherfuckers."

"Come on, guys, you can do it." Jakwan added with a wicked smile. "Tell you what I'll do . . . I'll make sure it's fast and painless. I'm a head shot specialist."

Barsun said with a serious screw face. "Yeah, homey, go with the head shot. You won't even feel it, man."

The thugs hastily started taking their clothing off, creating the appearance as if they had suddenly become sober at the moment their minds comprehended Jakwan, Divine Truth, Shondu, and Barsun's sincere eagerness to burn them and burn them real well.

When the four thugs took off their boxer shorts, exposing their private parts, the laughter from the crowd ignited like an explosion.

As the four butt-naked thugs scurried down 105th Street towards the LL train station and the crowd cheered, laughed, hooted happily and clapped their hands, Rayhiem attempted to rewind the statement the seven bright lights had said to him and he still wasn't sure of what that exact statement was, but he was finally starting to believe whatever that statement was, it appeared to be some kind of warning of a possible situation to come. If they didn't have them guns out here, there was no telling what those drunk fools would've done, Rayhiem concluded as he shook his head in disbelief since they were planning to have only one gun on the scene until Rayhiem vehemently insisted at least five firearms be brought with them.

Rayhiem and his crew quickly retrieved all the weapons, including the four they took from the thugs, and brought them inside the Center just in case someone called the police. While stacking the guns inside a huge camouflage hole in the basement floor, Rayhiem sighed hard and tried to find a logical answer to explain why were these seven dream world lights messing with his head? He again started second guessing everything about the lights, wondering were these lights actually talking to him? Were they really giving him warnings of some sort? Why were these lights talking to him? Why couldn't he figure out that last remark? Why!? Why!? Why!? Or . . . Could it be he was actually losing my damn mind?

CHAPTER # 2

Six years later, on September 14, 1987, Rayhiem sat on the living room sofa in his Breukelen apartment, pondering how he intended to deal with a series of issues. It was a rainy night in Nubia, which only served to complicate Rayhiem's ability to focus. The constant tapping of the rain started to remind Rayhiem of the various break beats that were played at the Center jams that still continued.

The first and foremost matter he had to address was the formulation of his speech he was scheduled to give at a fundraising Banquet in Manhattan for a group called the "Black Unity Front", a Citywide organization dedicated to the social, political and economic up-liftment of all Black Communities in this City. Rayhiem, along with a number of other prominent Community Activists, including Rev. Al Shearson and Ron Garrison, were keynote speakers for this event. Not surprisingly, after Rayhiem graduated from High School, and spent some time in College, he went straight into the business of community building and eventually became a leading community advocate for the Brownsville/East New York/Canarsie sections of Brooklyn. However, from the prospective of most people involved in this business, Rayhiem was known as a radical and extremist because he not only propagated that extreme measures of rectification were needed to facilitate change, but he also had a well-earned reputation for going directly into rough urban communities, some even classified as the most dangerous areas of the City, and would vigilantly implemented his programs. Indeed, he went places where no other community activist would even fantasize of going.

With his writing pad in hand, Rayhiem began structuring ideas for his speech inside his head. Now, how could he make this speech forceful enough to spark some life into the walking dead while at the same time not scaring the shit out these scary ass folks? Rayhiem wondered as he leaned back on the sofa rubbing his chin as if the chin massage would draw out the answer he was searching for. Rayhiem was forewarned, in advance, that the object of this Banquet was to obtain money and formulate new alliances, not to incite and inflame the emotions of these

potential supporters. After about two minutes of deep concentration, the thoughts began to flow and within 15 minutes he completed the first draft of the speech and put his note pad and pen to the side.

He drew a deep breath, and let it out hard as the next issue on his list of matters to be dealt with this evening jumped inside his head. The matter began tap dancing on the part of his brain that handled anxiety, patience and other similar emotions. Rayhiem and his crew decided to run a drug gang called Supranova out of Nubia Gold. They were going to use their old adolescent methods; roll their sleeves up, hit the front-line of the battlefield and get their hands good and filthy. How dare these parasites come out to this part of town with that bullshit!?! Rayhiem had said to his crew when he found out. He sat his feet on the coffee table, closed his eyes as his third eye formulated a picture of the storefront on Flatlands Avenue where Supranova peddled their death in small plastic vials. A disrespectful act of this magnitude would be unheard of back in the days! And no sane person would have ever dared to even entertain the thought of establishing a drug house in Nubia Gold when he and his crew were running the streets, Rayhiem thought as he gritted his teeth and imagined how the Projects would look very soon. He had been working this particular plan over and over inside his head for the past two weeks, trying to work out the potential flaws and defects he had detected while re-structuring the plan in his mind.

When Rayhiem thought about this new and improved enemy; the crack epidemic, his head throbbed with pure rage. These advocates of the Devil, Rayhiem thought, were currently introducing this monstrous drug to the residents of Nubia Gold, despite the fact this particular Project had managed to keep that shit out of this area for over two years since crack appeared on the scene. As far as Rayhiem was concerned, this showed and proved that these Supranova cats were either a bold bunch of motherfuckers or they were stupid enough to set up a spot without doing their research. Whatever the state of their mental status was, they would soon learn a hard lesson.

Rayhiem was fuming with rage. He couldn't understand what would make a person peddle that shit to people when it was a known fact

this monster, crack cocaine, was taking people down for the permanent count like massive radiation exposure after a nuclear holocaust of global proportions. The gradual and insidiously catastrophic process was so devastating, Rayhiem vigorously propagated that this epidemic had to have been planned, orchestrated and instigated by the Government. And he often equated it with the infamous Co-Intel Program, which was responsible for the systematic murder of thousands of American citizens who were only seeking true freedom, justice and equality. He knew with this type of talk, he had created a number of political enemies for himself. But, the facts indicated that's what the deal was, and therefore he simply told it like it was. There was one thing the Nation of Gods and Earths had taught him, which he never forgot and would always implemented throughout his entire life, and that was to speak the truth because the truth is the power to save the future, our babies.

Rayhiem angrily stood up, went to the kitchen, obtained some apple juice, returned to the sofa and then shifted his thoughts to something else. That's when he began thinking about how fast time had literally flown by. To Rayhiem it appeared as if he merely blinked an eye and like an Alice in Wonder Land World, things miraculously changed. Damn! It felt like only yesterday he and the crew were graduating from Canarsie High, still running around the Projects securing the neighborhood as if it was their own personal crib and they were a bunch of spoiled babies scared to let anyone near their domain. Yes, sir, they didn't lie when they said life was too precious and too short to waste time, Rayhiem had said to himself on several occasions. And with time there was always the question of change, he realized.

When Rayhiem thought about the substantial number of inevitable changes that occurred in recent years, he noticed there were a few he didn't know whether they were for the better or for the worse. Rayhiem, however, was glad his Old Earth (mother) had up and left New York City three years ago and returned back to her hometown in North Carolina. City life was just too damn dangerous and Rayhiem knew, no matter how hard he tried, there was no way he could be with his mom 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, acting as her personal bodyguard. Now that she was down

south that was one less stress provoking issue he had to keep under wraps.

When Rayhiem's older sister, Lyasia, moved out of the apartment six months after his Moms left, he at first thought this was a blessing. Although Rayhiem got along really well with his big sister, except when she teased him about the weird dreams, there was nothing like having a three-bedroom apartment to himself, he thought, until he realized just how boring it could get.

Three months after Lyasia moved out, Sha-Mecca moved in with Rayhiem and saved him from going insane from loneliness and boredom. Rayhiem noticed his love for Sha-Mecca had grown so profoundly that the mere thought of them not being together frightened him intensely. He often felt a choking sensation come over him when he imagined her leaving him. He was so proud of Sha-Mecca he didn't know what to do with himself. She was currently in her fourth and last year of college. Her major was Social Science and a Bachelor's degree from John Jay College had substantial weight in that field of study. Rayhiem enjoyed the fundamental aspects of learning and acquiring a higher education beyond the required High School level, but for him the real meat and potatoes of mental growth and development was going straight out into the trenches with the ones who needed help the most. He received his greatest rewards when he was able to see the process of helpless people learning to empower themselves by engaging in collectively work and responsibility. That look of supreme awakening that would appear on those faces when the truth started clicking was a sight well worth its weight in gold. This was the main reason Rayhiem dropped out of Brooklyn Technical College located in downtown Brooklyn with only six months and 13 credits to go to obtain his Associates degree. His eagerness to snatch the head Administrator position at the Breukelen Community Center when Ms. Linda Murphy retired, everyone knew, was the real reason Rayhiem left College. Rayhiem had told everyone it was because he was tired of College, but because his decision to fill the position was made the following day after Ms. Murphy submitted her retirement papers, it wasn't hard for people to figure out the real deal.

With the exception of Divine Truth and Shamel, Rayhiem's crew had gone to College and either acquired a degree or was still working on it. Jakwan, Shondu and Shakhem had Associate degrees while Barsun was still in College with only 4 credits away from his Bachelor's degree in Political Science. They all loved Nubia Gold so much they either continued living in the Projects, despite their financial ability to leave, or moved to an area not too far away and then practically spent all of their spare time in the Projects anyway. Rayhiem, Divine Truth, Jakwan, Barsun and Shamel remained in the Breukelen Projects while Shakhem and Shondu re-located.

Just as Rayhiem picked up his pad and pen, about to edit and tighten up his speech, it dawned on him that he promised to pick Sha-Mecca up at the Broadway Junction train station. He dropped the pad and looked at his watch. Ah fuck! He shot to his feet, snatched his coat lying on the armchair and bolted for the door. It was 8 minutes to 9 o'clock. Rayhiem promised he'd be there waiting for her when the 9:02 train arrived at the station. Ten minutes should be enough time to make it there if he got a little heavy footed on the gas pedal he thought as he locked the apartment door and race down the stairs. Ah damn it! He mumbled when he reached the first floor, realizing he forgot the umbrella and it was too late to turn back now.

Twelve minutes later, Rayhiem pulled up in front of the train station. Before he threw the gear in park, he saw Sha-Mecca standing behind the station door in her beige trench coat. He jumped out of the car, oblivious of the pouring rain and trotted towards his beautiful Black Queen.

He gave her a quick kiss on her soft, luscious lips. "Sha, baby, I'm sorry I'm late. I got caught up in my speech and--

"Where's the umbrella?" She said. "Ra? Don't tell me you left it?"

"Sorry, Boo," He felt like a blundering idiot. He quickly took his coat off and held it over her head. "This'll do the trick. It's only a few feet. Come on."

They scurried to the car. Rayhiem opened the passenger door and Sha-Mecca jumped inside, then he got in on the driver side and pulled from the curb.

"So, how'd it go with those drug dealers?" Sha-Mecca inquired.

"Terrible." Rayhiem responded. "I tried to talk to one of the runners. This dude was so high strung on himself, it was like having a conversation with this steering wheel."

"It's a damn shame," She shook her head as the statistics she read in the paper surfaced inside her mind regarding the countless crack related deaths and the large number of people serving prison sentences because of this drug. While in deep thought a sharp pain appeared in her chest as she observed the abandon buildings that scrolled across her vision. "Why these kids don't realize those drugs are killing us? . . . I know I sound like I'm about to start babbling again, but it don't make any sense."

"Yeah, you're right," Rayhiem turned down Pennsylvania Avenue. "That's why it's up to us to step up and do something about it."

"I can only imagine how anxious your little mob is to confront these guys." She thought of back in the days when they used to think they were the guardian angels of Nubia Gold and smiled.

"They're so anxious to get at these dudes they wanna just run up in the joint without any real planning. I told them they're getting old and over confident. You can't underestimate these young cats nowadays. I work with a lot of them and they're growing up even faster than we did. Plus . . . I—I." He had another one of those strange dreams about the lights last night and wanted to share it with her, but wanted to structure his words correctly. "Last night—I--"

"I know. You had one of those dreams last night. You didn't have one in so long, it scared me when you started talking in your sleep . . . So? Did they say anything this time?"

Rayhiem felt awkward discussing the bright lights with Sha-Mecca, even though he knew she completely believed him and supported him every step of the way. Explaining the dreams made him feel like he was some kind of deranged, mentally twisted lunatic or something and that he

was allowing these mental mirages to guide and control his life. "They're still doing the same thing."

"How about the last statement?" she inquired in a sincere tone of voice. "Has it gotten any clearer since the last time?"

He thought about the comment and shook his head, indicating no. "This shit is buggin' me out, Boo. It's like the statement is as clear as day when I'm in the dream, but the second I wake up it fades like that." He snapped his finger. "And by the time my eyes open, the statement is like a blur and I can't figure it out. This time they sounded like they said, Tomorrow is . . . is mine, today is theirs. Something like that."

"Tomorrow is mine, today is theirs," She repeated while working the words over in her head, trying to find logic in the quote. "It might be a warning like the ones you used to get back in the days."

"Yeah. That's exactly what I figured. That's why we're gonna run these death merchants of misery out of Nubia Gold this week. In two more days to be exact."

* * * *

At about the moment Rayhiem was driving down Pennsylvania Avenue, Ricky Howard, the drug dealer who Rayhiem had spoken with earlier, drove his red BMW up the circular driveway of a huge Mansion on Davidson Street in Wyandanch Long Island. The two-story modern castle looking structure cost J.R. a little over two million dollars and covered several acres of land. There was a huge pool in the back, a five-car garage and a huge parking lot for workers and guests, capable of holding 17 vehicles. The trees and bushes, which surrounded the establishment, were well taken care of since J.R. hired servants for that particular chore.

J.R., alias, Jose Rodriguez, the top man in the chain of command of the Supranova drug distribution organization, purchased this extravagant Mansion with cash and was one of the most sophisticated drug dealers in the New York City's Metropolitan area. At only twenty-five years of age, J.R. was worth well over hundred fifty million dollars and accumulated

this wealth in only two years. After graduating from College with a bachelor's degree in business management and advertising, he tried his newly acquired skills in the work market. During his six months at a firm on Wall Street, J.R. met a white international drug trafficker name Stanley Sterling who took a strong liking to him which sparked the beginning of it all. With the help of Keith Lattimore, A.K.A. "Pretty Boy", the Supranova drug organization was able to become one of the biggest and most impregnable drug syndicates in New York City. Although Pretty Boy was African-American and J.R. was Hispanic, they were like siblings from the same womb and grew up together in the same neighborhood in Saint Albans Queens. At the time Pretty Boy decided to help J.R. formulate the Supranova drug crew, he was an accountant with a Park Avenue Corporate Firm with a bachelor's degree from Medgar Evers College. He too owned a Mansion on Long Island and was worth about hundred and ten million dollars.

Since J.R. and Pretty Boy had become out of tune with the streets as a result of their long stays in College, they hired J.R.'s cousin, Ralphy, as the crews' street organizer who was the leader of a street gang called the Rican Kings. In a matter of months, they were able to mobilize enough street-wise people to run the streets without any real problems. J.R.'s Wall Street associate, Mr. Sterling, also had countless connections with the Italian Mafia and the Russian Mob, which made the Supranova's embryonic development an easy reality. In essence, it didn't take long at all for them to get their drug empire up and running in a matter of months. Indeed, all of their college education was mixed and intertwined with this illicit endeavor, which merged into one of the most hi-tech forms of drug expansion ever seen in the Ghettos of New York. Supranova had drug houses in every Borough in New York City. All together they owned and operated 57 drug spots, which sold everything from crack to angel dust.

Ricky got out of the car dressed in casual clothing and pushed the button on the side of the door.

BUNG DUNG

Ten seconds later, a huge Blackman, who apparently was a bodybuilder, answered the door.

"Hey, Ricky, baby," The bodybuilder said, waving for Ricky to enter. "Bring your little puny ass on in here, man." He patted Ricky on the back with unnecessary force while giggling, causing Ricky to almost lose his footing.

"What the fuck wrong with you, Danny!?" he said, with false anger. "I told you about beatin' up on me like that. Where's J.R.?"

"He'll be down in a minute. Go on and chill in the den."

Two minutes later, J.R. entered the room and Ricky nervously rose from the velour armchair in the same manner as they do when a Judge entered the courtroom.

"Hey, Ricky," J.R. said, waving for him to sit back down while he took a seat in a crush velvet chair with gold trimming. He had been working on the blueprints for a new spot in Staten Island and had to concentrate to control his impatience and urge to get back to work. He sighed hard. "What's so urgent that can't wait until tomorrow?"

"It's the Breukelen spot . . . There's a couple of problems. Manny said he saw a couple of dudes from Sky Ride cruising around the place. I think they tried to follow me too, but I got rid of them in Lefrak when I did the car switch trick and--"

"I know that's not what you making a big deal out of?" J.R. crossed his leg and sighed hard, wondering why Ricky was pestering him with these problems instead of bringing it to Pretty Boy's attention. These matters were clearly his department.

"That's only one of the issues," Ricky said quickly. "You know that guy, Rayhiem? Well, he stepped to me when I did a pick up and paid the workers; he was talking some crazy shit about we gotta pack our shit and leave. I would've took matters into my own hands, but you told us to let you know if anyone from out there steps to us."

"Was he alone?" J.R. inquired unemotionally as his heart jerked into attention and his blood flow increased. Now he saw why Ricky was here.

"Yeah. That's the way it looked. He could've had some people holdin' him down; they could've been laying in the cut, but none of us noticed it."

J.R. paused for a long moment, staring at his East New York/Canarsie runner who managed and controlled all street level matters in those areas. He actually was expecting to hear this news a lot sooner. Based on the rumors he heard from a couple of the Mancini Crime Family associates, he was surprised there wasn't a blood bath the first day they opened this spot two weeks ago. This Rayhiem character, he had heard, was some kind of community activist and spoke out against any form of activity, which he claimed, curtailed the growth of the community. J.R. even heard he was one of the primary reasons no drug houses had been set up in Breukelen because most drug dealers were too afraid to test the waters while this Rayhiem cat was in the midst. J.R.'s ego wouldn't let him back down from this highly lucrative challenge.

J.R. did some research into Rayhiem's background and discovered he was well known throughout New York City and basically had a big mouth. His Uncle Emanuel, who was the current city councilman for Queens and was an ex-New York State Senator with countless friends in almost all political arenas throughout the state, had told J.R. that Rayhiem was not well liked by most Politicians. He indicated the reason for this aversion was Rayhiem's radical and extremist views and his willingness to speak out against the Government in a very derogatory fashion. J.R.'s uncle also told him Rayhiem was well loved by the people in the ghettos and urban communities. He also added that if something was to happen to Rayhiem, he believed riots would break out which was one of the reasons the secret political clean up groups didn't resort to extreme measures to deal with Rayhiem. This was definitely going to pose a problem, J.R. determined when he became privy to this information. He knew if he killed Rayhiem, and if the people in the community found out, his spots all throughout the city would probably be attacked by those people in those communities. But, at the same time, if he didn't do something about him, he would most likely lose a major gold mine; the Breukelen Projects. Since this area was untapped soil of mind-boggling wealth, J.R.

decided long ago that he would fight to get control of it. Indeed, he had to knock off a couple of Sky Ride's workers who were trying to set up shop to let them know Breukelen was his and only his and if anyone attempted to cut into that area they would have to endure his wrath.

J.R. nodded his head at Ricky and said. "From now on, I want you to keep two extra gun men inside the spot. Ralphy's gonna handle your pick-ups for now on. You'll be riding shotgun with him. I also want you to snatch up at least two of your strong-arm men and keep them with you. You all are to attack only if attacked."

"Ah . . . No disrespect, but, ahhh, wouldn't it be a lot wiser if he just blaze this motherfucker, Rayhiem and--"

"When did I start paying you to advise me on my goddamn affairs?" J.R. said in a calm, but vicious tone of voice. "Do as I say and don't second guess my motherfuckin' judgment."

Ricky nervously spoke, wishing he had kept his mouth shut. "I'm sorry J.R." He wiped the sheet of sweat from his forehead that appeared out of nowhere. "I--I didn't mean anything by it. It won't happen again. What do you want me to do about those Sky Ride dudes snooping around the spot?"

"Fuck 'em! Big Row ain't stupid! He may be a big mouth ugly motherfucker with a scary ass bark, but he ain't suicidal. Believe that shit."

* * * *

The following day, September 15th, in a tenement building in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn on Prospect Place right off Buffalo Avenue, Big Row and several of his top Lieutenants were engaged in a highly-charged meeting. It was about seven o'clock in the evening and the cloudy, dreary day had now turned into a damp, depressing night. According to the deed, 582 Prospect Place was owned by Darlene Daniels, one of Big Row's girlfriends, but was purchased by Big Row as a birthday gift. The outer appearance of this establishment looked just like all the other shabby, rundown buildings on the block, but upon entering

582 Prospect Place, one would think they had been teleported to a Millionaires Mansion. The inside of this three-story building looked like a palace. Every square inch of the interior was filled with all sorts of extravagant furniture, carpeting, wallpapers, chandeliers and other exquisite things of outrageous monetary value.

Big Row had about a dozen girlfriends throughout the metropolitan area, whom were all similarly situated like Darlene and were strategically scattered all over the City. Big Row insured their financial well-being and only had one real string that was attached (besides sexual favors, of course) and that was he and his top Lieutenants would have unabridged access to the houses when they needed to conduct meetings regarding Sky Ride business. Some of the establishments were also used as stash houses for drugs and weapons.

As the East New York Lieutenant, named Ace, explained his findings, Big Row moved gracefully across the living room, pacing back and forth, listening intently. His 6 foot 7, two-hundred-and-sixty-pound frame and strong African facial features resonated with a deep seriousness.

"That's when I saw that dude Ricky drive into a Parking lot over in Lefrak City," Ace said with a cigarette between his fingers. "After that I lost him. I waited out there four hours; he never came back out."

"Damn!" Big Row muttered. He knew for certain Lefrak was not where J.R. or Pretty Boy lived. "Why you didn't try to get inside the garage and snatch him up?"

"He wouldn't have been able to do that," Casper interjected. "You gotta live there to get inside. I used to hang out there a couple of years back. Man, they got security guards and shit all over the place. Shit would've got real messy if he did it like that."

Big Row paused for a long moment while the silence in the room became thick and ear shattering. He stopped pacing, sat down and mumbled out loud, while nodding his head approvingly. "The switch."

"What you mean by that?" Heavy asked. "The switch?"

"That's what that motherfucker did," Big Row said sharply, frustrated because his crew hadn't caught onto what he was pointing out.

"He switched fuckin' cars on us and drove outta there in another ride." He turned to Ace. "Did you see any other cars leave while you were waiting?"

Ace thought about the question as the mental pictures appeared in his mind. "Damn sure did. As a matter of fact, there was a lot of traffic going in and out of that garage, man."

"That's the only thing it could've been," Big Row added. "Them bitch ass niggers ain't no dummies. But there's more than one way to break these bitches down." He sighed hard when his brother's image popped in his head. Every time he thought of how J.R. murdered his younger brother, Skeet, he felt tears materializing and had to force them back. About a month ago, when they tried to open the spot in Breukelen, the Supranova click sent out a crew to strong arm the Sky Ride click out of control over that spot. When Skeet refused to give up the spot, they gunned him down along with his man Kano as they came out of the spot on Cleveland Street. If he could only find out where J.R. and Pretty Boy lived, and then smoke these two bastards, he'd be able to cripple Supranova in a real way, Big Row thought as his crew sat quietly, waiting for him to continue. But, right now, he guessed they'd have to settle for a small advancement and work their way up to a bigger one, he concluded, and then spoke.

"We gotta strike. We been waiting too long as it is. If we let this thing go without steppin' to our business, we'll have all the other crews lining up tryin' ta Butch kid us out of our shit, thinking we turned pussy or somethin'. We all know how this thing work."

"That's right!" Heavy said excitedly. "Tit for Tat. And if a motherfucker can't hold it down, he ain't got no business with it. And we all know Sky Ride definitely holdin' it down for sure."

"You got that right, Heav," Big Row continued. "Tomorrow night we hit Supranova's Breukelen spot. We wait until the runner shows up and lay every motherfucker in there out."

Without hesitation, everyone in the room agreed whole-heartedly.

* * * *

At 11:15 p.m. on September 16th, Rayhiem, Jakwan, Barsun and Shamel sat in a classroom in the Breukelen Community Center, re-discussing how they intended to shut down the drug spot.

"That's a good idea," Rayhiem said nodding his head. "But, if they got a system that can forewarn them, like hand signals and body gestures or something, we'll be treading on dangerous grounds."

"I agree," Shamel added. "This particular drug crew ain't some two-bit lame ass crumb snatching bunch of dope fiends."

"Well," Jakwan said still in deep thought. He paused and was having great difficulty structuring his words. "We--What--what other way are we gonna--I say." He sighed as his frustration grew. "Your plan, Rayhiem—I--I don't know, but it seems like a shoot-out could occur if we're off by even a second." He paused while shaking his head doubtfully to emphasis his position. "I think putting the look-out under gun point will work. I'm telling you, this cat is a cold-blooded crack-head. If we lay the right type of pressure on his punk ass, he'll signal us when the runner arrives."

Silence.

Rayhiem worked the scenario inside his head again and still concluded that Jakwan's plan had too many flaws, not to mention it was utterly risky. He spoke with a reluctant tone to his voice. "I'm telling you, the safest way to deal with these guys would be to--"

Shakhem, Divine Truth and Shondu entered the room, causing everyone's head to turn.

"It's about time," Jakwan said, looking at his watch for all to see.

The three ignored Jakwan's comment and took seats reserved for them.

Rayhiem looked at the three and said. "We gotta take a vote on how we're gonna proceed with this run."

"I thought we already had a plan," Divine Truth said.

"Jakwan came up with another way to step this," Barsun said. "And he feels it's better than the original plan."

"Okay. Let's take another vote," Rayhiem said, getting up and walking over to the chalkboard, which had a drawing of the plan he constructed. He erased the board, turned and crossed his arms. "Let's see your plan, Jay."

Within two minutes, Jakwan explained his plan, while utilizing the chalkboard. They voted and Rayhiem's plan won by a five to two vote. The only one who voted for Jakwan's approach was Shakhem.

At 1 p.m. in the morning, Rayhiem and his crew were in place. With a pair of binoculars in one hand and a walkie-talkie in the other, Rayhiem sat on a bench in the projects across the street of 104-04 Flatlands Avenue, watching the drug spot. This Supranova owned and operated storefront was next to a shoe repair shop and a dry-cleaners, which were also owned by Supranova and served as a camouflage to their drug selling activities. The Supranova workers utilized the overhead apartments in these establishments to count money, get rest and prepare meals.

When Rayhiem saw an old brown Chevy Impala with five men inside drive pass the spot for the third time, he got on the walkie-talkie. "Everybody, keep an eye on that brown Chevy."

Jakwan and Shondu were hiding in an alleyway in the middle of 105th Street in between two private houses on the same block as the drug spot. About three minutes after Rayhiem spoke, Jakwan saw the brown Chevy come to a stop and park on the corner of Flatlands Avenue and 105th Street. When Jakwan saw Ricky get out of the brown car, he got on his walkie-talkie and spoke excitedly. "This is it! It's them! They're coming your way."

Then, just as Jakwan and Shondu were about to follow them, two cars raced pass them and stopped at the corner. When they saw six masked men jump out of the two vehicles with guns drawn and began following the five men, Jakwan and Shondu retreated to their hiding place. Jakwan got back on the walkie-talkie. "Hold up! I think there's something else going down! We got some newcomers on the scene. It looks--

Massive gunfire ignited and sounded like it was coming from several different locations at the same time.

Seconds earlier, Rayhiem had his binoculars trained on the five men as they turned the corner, heading towards the spot. He was about to give Divine Truth and Barsun the signal to intercept them, but his words were cut off when he saw six men rushing from around the corner of 105th. Just as he heard Jakwan's panic stricken voice crackle through the walkie-talkie, it was instantly drowned out by massive gunfire from the Uzis the six masked men had pointed at the backs of the five men.

When Rayhiem hastily turned the binoculars in the direction of 104th street, he saw four other men with masks and Uzis in their hands rushing inside the spot. He squinted his eyes in disbelief when he saw the last man who entered the store shoot the lookout in the head.

Rayhiem barked off information into the walkie-talkie. "Come in! Come in! Everybody, I need to know your status!" Rayhiem decided they had to take the back seat on this one. What the hell was going on here, he nervously said to himself as his walkie-talkie came to life.

Everyone responded that they read him loud and clear.

"Pull out! Abandon the run! Meet me at the Center as soon as possible!" Just as Rayhiem started walking away from the building, a huge explosion went off inside the drug spot. He was startled to such a degree it compelled him to increase his speed. Damn it! Rayhiem released a frustrated sigh when his subconscious memory reminded him of the beef another drug gang had with this Supranova bunch over control over this spot. This is probably what it was, he said to himself. Now, they had a fucking drug war out here! Rayhiem fumed as his attention was violently re-directed back to the spot when he heard screeching car tires and saw another car-load of masked men jump out of a blue colored vehicle, shooting at another newly arrived car.

* * * *

The following evening at 8:35 p.m., J.R. and Pretty Boy arrived at 817 East 82nd Street, one of their secret meetinghouses within the

borough of Brooklyn and quickly entered the two-story structure with four bodyguards around them. An emergency meeting was called as a result of last night's shoot-out.

As J.R. entered the living room area of the house, he saw all eight of the Brooklyn Lieutenants were present and were standing near the huge conference table. J.R. was devastated by what happened and he knew everyone could see the pain mixed with rage and regret written all over his face.

Pretty Boy waved for everyone to be seated as he sat at the head of the table and J.R. at the opposite end.

Pretty Boy drew a deep breath and blew it out with unnecessary force. "Well . . . Ralphy's dead . . . So is Ramsey, Peto, Delroy, Tom Cat, Ray Ray and three other cats I don't remember their names . . . Need I say, gentlemen, we have a very lot to discuss."

"For starters," J.R. said, staring at Ricky who was on the scene and managed to escape last night's fiasco. "We wanna know who the fuck is responsible!?" J.R.'s mind was already made up. This was the work of that motherfucker Rayhiem and he was going to make him pay dearly.

Ricky nervously fiddled with his hands and said. "It was Sky Ride that did--"

"WHAT!?" J.R. shot out of his seat as if a flame was placed under his backside. "This ain't the time--"

"Would you let him finish, for Christ sakes!" Pretty Boy said to J.R., and then turned to Ricky. "You said Sky Ride did this?"

Ricky nodded his head.

"What makes you think it was them?" Pretty Boy continued, making a conscious effort to contain his shock and rage.

"We laid down one of the shooters. I pulled the ski mask off. It was that kid Black Jack from over on Sutter Avenue. He's down with Big Row. No doubt about it."

"Listen Ricky!" J.R. said forcefully. "You better not be playing games or pushing some kind of hidden agenda here. That motherfucker Big Row wouldn't go there with us and you know it!"

"Relax, J.R." Pretty Boy said. "And before you start making assumptions, don't forget Big Row lost his brother over this spot. Put yourself in his shoes and think how you would react."

J.R. sat back down and knew Pretty Boy was right. He knew even a cold blooded coward would attempt to fight an unbeatable giant if pushed the wrong way. But this shit doesn't make sense because Big Row had to know he just committed suicide! J.R. said to himself as the silence in the room thickened and all eyes were on him. There were so many ways to break Sky Ride he didn't know where to begin. Cut off all their drug supplies and connections, shutdown all their spots, the list was quite numerous, he reflected. But the real problem right now was how in the fuck was he going to explain Ralphy's death to Uncle Emanuel and Aunt Maria?

"There's something else I think you should know," Ricky said, shaking J.R. out of his semi-trance. "That Rayhiem guy was there as well. We actually thought it was him at first, which is why we held back when we saw the strange cars riding back and forth around the spot. If we had--"

"Hold up!" J.R. interrupted as a flash of fresh white-hot pain fired through his veins when he realized his order to hold back apparently caused the deaths. "Are you certain it was him?"

"Absolutely," Ricky answered. "I saw him leaving when the shooting started. Rambo was on one of the roofs and he counted about seven of them. From the way he put it, they were definitely going to hit us but Big Row beat 'em to the punch."

J.R. made eye contact with Pretty Boy and saw the anger mixed with the expression "you made the bed, you gotta lay in it" written on his face. J.R.'s rage started to boil and was seconds from exploding. J.R. sighed because he knew if his people were acting in accordance with their usual approach towards suspicious strangers circling the spot, the large number of casualties probably would've been prevented, since they would have struck first. As he silently and angrily pondered the way he was going to annihilate the entire Sky Ride crew, the perfect way to also get rid of Rayhiem hit him. Um huh, he said to himself as he realized he

had all the resources to actual pull it off without any significant difficulty. He smiled when he detected this plan would not only get rid of Rayhiem, but would do so in such a manner that it would not inflame the community and would create future benefits so far reaching that all other drug crews would thank him in the long run. When J.R. thought of the pain his Uncle was currently experiencing as a result of the death of his only son, he smiled inwardly because he knew his Uncle would use the full force of all his influence to punish the murderer of his child.

J.R. abruptly stood up and spoke. "I guess there's nothing more to discuss." He gestured for Danny to hand him his coat. "Sky Ride has officially signed their death warrant."

Pretty Boy put on his coat and spoke to the eight Lieutenants. "You guys know how this is going down, right?"

They nodded their heads.

Pretty Boy continued. "I want you all to play the sideline until we need y'all to deal with affairs outside of Brooklyn. Tomorrow, Dewey and Shamrock will be paying y'all a visit for info on the best way to neutralize Sky Ride's home base locations."

The eight Lieutenants muttered their agreements as J.R., Pretty Boy and the bodyguards exited the house. They got in the stretch Limousine and drove off.

Sitting in the back seat across from J.R., Pretty Boy poured himself a glass of champagne. He offered J.R. a glass, who refused, and then said. "I saw how you reacted when Ricky mentioned Rayhiem . . . I think it's about time we get rid of this guy. This situation here could be the perfect way to do it . . . Because a man out on the streets on a night like that, without an alibi, can find himself knee deep in a world of shit."

"You know something, Pretty Boy?" J.R. smiled from ear to ear with a devious grin. "Remember all the times I told you I think you got ESP and psychic abilities?"

Pretty Boy giggled. "Don't tell me I read your mind again?"

"Yes, you did . . . Hey, Ted!" J.R. shouted to the man behind the wheel. "Take us to my Uncle Emanuel's house."

* * * *

Turning around to face J.R., Emanuel Rodriguez clenched his teeth until he heard ringing in his ears. "Rayhiem!?! That rebel rousing, wanna-be community revolutionist is the one who killed my son?!" He slowly sat down in his cushioned office chair and studied the picture of Ralphy, which sat on the desk. "Oh God, why? Why now just when he had turned his life around?" He shook his head in disbelief as the tears flowed freely once again.

"There are two eyewitnesses who saw him pull the trigger," J.R. said.

Emanuel looked up with a shocked facial expression. "I spoke with someone from the 69th precinct and he claimed they had no witnesses at the moment." Emanuel dabbed the tissue at his eyes, sniffing. "I personally spoke with Commissioner Chavis and he said no one came forth yet."

J.R.'s mind churned at breakneck speed, searching for the perfect words that would elicit his Uncle's undivided assistance with helping to dispose of Rayhiem. He knew he had to proceed carefully because his Uncle was a sheer master at detecting bullshit. It was as if he had bullshit radar built into his genetic make-up. "Uncle, Eman, you know people from those neighborhoods are afraid to get involved in these types of incidents. I had a few of my friends ask around and they stumbled upon these two witnesses. The police are not looked upon as friends of these communities--

A heavysset woman burst into the room crying hysterically. "Jose-- Jose, they killed him. They killed my Ralphy." She grabbed J.R.'s arm and hugged him.

J.R. embraced her softly. "It's gonna be all right, Aunt Maria," J.R. whispered into her ear. "The people responsible for this will pay." He then spoke at regular volume as he made eye contact with Emanuel. "Uncle Eman and I will not let Ralphy's murderers go unpunished." He grinned at his Uncle.

"Oh, yes," Emanuel said with a strong touch of viciousness, and spiteful connotations. "That son of a bitch, Rayhiem will pay! And pay dearly he will!"