

# IF I WAS...HIM

by

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(Based on, THE 2022 BUFFALO SUPERMARKET  
MASS SHOOTING)

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INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP, OFFICE - DAY

Neck craned to look out the window, MAMIE (late 50s - Black), with her eyes...deep pools - studies menacing clouds above.

She looks down at the foreclosure letter in her hands, then sighs, as impending doom washes over her.

Stocky but strong, Mamie moves to the door in deep thought. She looks in the mirror, studies her face, then clenches her hands in a silent prayer.

Before exiting, she lovingly slides her fingers across a barber smock on a hanger. The name 'James', is sewn on.

INT. BUS - DAY

The view through the windows of the NFTA transit...that needs a cleaning - shows dark, cloudy skies overhead.

COURTNEY (20s - black) rocks a Beyoncé t-shirt, tight jeans and big curly hair. Light-skinned and athletic looking, she studies from an I-pad and seems focused. Next to her...

DIGGITY [20s - black) His dark skin stands out against his light blue, college track suit. He does a double-take when he notices Courtney, then fiddles with his phone.

The full bus, passes scenes of the Buffalo inner city and its disrepair.

SUPER - SATURDAY MAY 14TH - 1:15 PM

EXT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

A postman delivers boxes and letters to SAPPHIRE (50s - black) Her head wrap matches her African attire.

Next door to her store, a sign reading 'BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP', hangs proudly, but is in need of re-painting.

Sapphire's Afrocentric store displays fashions from the Motherland. She smiles as she signs for her deliveries.

Mamie, steps outside of her barber shop with playfulness in her eyes.

MAMIE

How y'all doing this afternoon? Hey Sapphire, your boy got that Publisher's Clearing house check for me in that bag?

SAPPHIRE

Hey Miss Mamie. His sorry ass didn't include mine today. Hope you have better luck.

He has more letters and boxes for Mamie.

MAMIE

This better not be another IRS letter or I'll slap this boy so hard, that Niagara Falls will dry up.

The IRS letter is there, they both see it. He fast walks away from the shop.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

I'll will open it later. Don't want anything to ruin my afternoon.

INT. BUS - DAY

1:30 PM

Courtney notices Diggity, stealing looks during the ride.

COURTNEY

You're from the dorms, right? That's some nice cologne you're rocking, brother.

DIGGITY

Yeah, I knew you looked familiar. I dig this scent too. Got it from a customer of mine. It's actually essence oil. Folks call me Diggity.

COURTNEY

I'm Courtney. I usually don't work this shift. You run track?

DIGGITY

Yeah, for the two weeks there ain't no snow on the ground in this crazy city. I'm headed to work now. Just finished my last final this semester.

COURTNEY

Nice. I'll work half day at my gig at the supermarket and then hit books for my last final exam on Monday. I already finished culinary school, now getting my business degree. Run my own joint one day. But right now, whew...the stress.

His eyes are drawn to the Buffalo Bisons tattoo on her arm.

DIGGITY

You should stop by the hair place I work at. Same plaza as the market. Called, BUFFALO SPIRIT. I see from your tatt that you're a sports fan too. One of our barbers used to play for that team.

COURTNEY

Baseball is my joint. You should see me get down.

DIGGITY

I'd love that. Tell you what...I'll give you the employee discount to try a shampoo to relax for your finals.

COURTNEY

Might take you up on that. Supposed to take that long bus ride to Orchard Park to see my mom, after work.

DIGGITY

Orchard Park? Way out near the stadium? I rap...did a gig out there once. Mayo city. Your mom been there long?

COURTNEY

(whispers)

My mom is white.

DIGGITY

Is that why you work at the market? Reconnecting with your people?

COURTNEY

You might have a point there, Mr. Diggity. I felt...pulled to work there.

(MORE)

COURTNEY (CONT'D)  
Raincheck me on that Buffalo Spirit  
spot. Shampoo huh, sure sounds  
good.

The bus stops at the plaza. They depart with flirtatious eye contact and smiles.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

VT3 (20s - black) and friend K-DUB (20s black), in matching Buffalo Bills gear [white OJ jersey], march into the supermarket with a hop in their step.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Both guys make a beeline towards the booze.

VT3  
Well, I got enough to buy a case of  
beer for my birthday.

K-DUB  
Should buy your mama a bottle of  
Jack for putting up with your ass  
this long. Want to invite some  
girlies over to party in the  
basement?

VT3  
I don't know none that ain't got  
kids.

K-DUB  
Most of the girls you know would  
bring the kids along, if free beer  
was on the menu.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

Mack Smith the 'BLACKSMITH' (30s - black), seems uneasy in the barber chair. Dark and muscular, he gets a short cut. Wears Army fatigues that compliment the simmering rage on his face.

Working on him is LEONARD (40s - black), salt and pepper goatee with a small afro that is dyed black. He is focused on his craft. His work area is packed with family photos and faded newspaper clippings about baseball.

LEONARD

Glad you stopped by, soldier boy.  
Ain't seen the Blacksmith in a  
minute.

BLACKSMITH

Just got back in-country. Real  
talk...I wanna stay home. Lately, I  
been questioning my life choice of  
the military.

LEONARD

Whoa. Is that right?

BLACKSMITH

Sending me to shitty places all the  
time. Low key racism from day one.  
But now with this MAGA bullshit,  
lately it's more in your face. Not  
sure if I'll stay long enough to  
get full pension, if this crazy  
shit keeps going down.

LEONARD

Make sure you got your money right.  
I'm working two jobs. I'm at the  
Donut Hut at 4 AM, before I come  
over here.

BLACKSMITH

Damn, bruh.

LEONARD

Yes-sir. The older I get, the  
harder it is, but a black man needs  
to be the provider.

BLACKSMITH

You should be an empty-nester by  
now, right? Why you working so  
hard?

LEONARD

Family is too important. Making  
bank now, so I'm not a burden  
later.

DONITSMELLGUD, (late 20s - black) arrives to the barber shop  
like a rock-star. He stands at the door momentarily like he  
expects applause. He wears a satin suit...sparkly tie.

Expensive shades, that he doesn't take off. His pearly white  
teeth form a televangelist smile. The over-sized, gold  
medallion that hangs from his neck reads, DONITSMELLGUD.

DONITSMELLGUD

What's up, good people of the  
sexiest city this side of Vegas?

MAMIE

Gone somewhere with that used car  
salesman bullshit.

DONITSMELLGUD

Master level - Used car salesman.  
Can sell refrigerators to Eskimos  
and stink to dog poop...then talk  
dog poop into buying my essential  
oils to hide the stink.

MAMIE

At least he ain't coming out his  
face with nonsense about women  
today.

DONITSMELLGUD

That reminds me. When it comes to  
the shawtys, I'm a mind control  
master. And short skirt blaster.

Mamie rolls her eyes and goes about her business.

DONITSMELLGUD (CONT'D)

Stopped by to get a fresh cut  
before I meet up with a girl I  
hooked up with years ago. Return  
customer. Thinks I'm so special,  
she's bringing a friend...and a  
gift.

IKE (late 60s - black), long gray afro and thick glasses,  
looks over to the blow-hard with devilment in his eyes. He is  
the embodiment of cantankerous.

IKE

Ha. Her friend is probably a  
psychiatrist and that gift will be  
a straight-jacket.

DONITSMELLGUD

What you know about women, with  
your ancient ass? Prettiest girl  
you dated was Harriet Tubman.

The fragrant joker takes a look around the shop.

DONITSMELLGUD (CONT'D)

Where's that college boy at? He's  
the only one I want to cut my hair.

(MORE)

DONITSMELLGUD (CONT'D)  
 Y'all old folks don't know nothing  
 about what's styling these days.  
 Got to keep my women happy.

BLACKSMITH  
 What that necklace mean?

DONITSMELLGUD  
 Glad to meet you, brother. That's  
 my handle. I roll up on a honey and  
 tell her my name, they break out,  
 just a giggling. That's what  
 loosens them up. Then it's easier  
 for them to buy...whatever I'm  
 selling.

BLACKSMITH  
 Is that right?

DONITSMELLGUD  
 Especially, perfume, oils or my  
 exclusive...panty removal service.

MAMIE  
 Please. You can't get a girl's  
 panties off, for anything short of  
 diarrhea.

All laugh.

DONITSMELLGUD  
 See all this hostility, bruh? It's  
 not easy being an alpha male,  
 player...that women can't resist.  
 Use them, get money from them, then  
 toss them. I don't need them  
 falling in love with me.

BLACKSMITH  
 Player, huh? I'm Mack Smith, but my  
 peoples here call me the  
 Blacksmith. Yo, I'll have to deploy  
 again soon, that for messed up  
 Middle East...even though I caught  
 shrapnel last tour.

LEONARD  
 No medical discharge yet?

BLACKSMITH  
 PRAYING FOR IT. My brother got a  
 farm in Gowanda, near the  
 reservation. So...peaceful. My goal  
 is to live there. Near nature.

LEONARD  
I ain't hating that.

BLACKSMITH  
In the meantime, I'm gonna stop by  
the club and get some trim tonight.

He turns beck to the playboy.

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)  
Yo, Smell Good...introduce me to  
some of them hootchie mamas you  
know.

DONITSMELLGUD  
Okay, but might have to charge a  
pimping fee.

MAMIE  
Don't give his lying ass no oxygen.  
Donitsmellgud ain't shit.  
(to Donitsmellgud))  
If you are getting any at all,  
you're paying for it.

She takes a step closer to the soldier.

MAMIE (CONT'D)  
Yo Blacksmith, you don't want no  
parts of them hood rats he got. One  
of them thug-ass girls will find  
out he's cheating and he'll end up  
with his nuts hanging from her  
necklace.

Big laughs.

INT. SUPERMARKET BREAKROOM - DAY

1:45 PM

Courtney in breakroom, puts on uniform. Puts her purse in a  
locker but looks around at other workers...who look a bit  
shady. She takes her wallet out and it goes with her. She  
strolls towards her cashier station.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

The bell rings as the front door opens. Mamie glances over  
and smiles at OFFICER KELSO (30s - white, clean shaven) as he  
steps through the entrance, coffee in hand.

There is a familiarity and lack of tension in the body language of the barbers.

KELSO

Hey folks, how's my favorite barber shop and wrestling arena today?

MAMIE

If it ain't Officer Hurricane Kelso. Hold up, I got something for you in the back.

She scoots off.

IKE

Good thing you stopped by yesterday, when you did. That drunk-ass rascal was about to get one of them, bare-knuckle, Jack Johnson whuppings.

LEONARD

Jack Daniels already had did enough damage to that fool. If he'd kept causing a ruckus, one of these straight-razors was about to put him on...time-out.

DONITSMELLGUD

Y'all had a knuckle-head, huh?

Mamie trots back with Tupperware in her hand and a grin on her face. She pops open the lid. A dessert is inside. Kelso's face shows he is touched.

KELSO

Red Velvet cake? You know that's my heart-string. I can't—

MAMIE

Hush up and take that damn cake, boy. We know you're humble and shit, but save the 'aw shucks' bit for another time. Enjoy. You deserve it.

LEONARD

Yeah, dude. You're super laid-back for a cop. Mamie don't make that cake for any old white person, you dig?

All laugh. Mamie hands him a plastic fork.

IKE

Who you telling? She ain't making  
it for black folk neither, unless  
it's a birthday.

KELSO

My goal is to keep this community  
safe, so the hidden diamonds in the  
hood get a chance to shine and make  
the whole world better.

Kelso forks off a chunk a cake and jams it in the pie hole.  
He moans in delight.

MAMIE

What ya think?

KELSO

My whole world just got better, in  
one bite. I'm going to get a coffee  
refill and enjoy this in the squad  
car where nobody can see me drool.  
Thanks again.

They wave at each other warmly as he exits. She pulls the IRS  
letter out of her barber smock and heads towards her small  
office.

OFFICE

After taking a deep breath, she studies the return address.  
Mamie tosses the other mail on the pile of others that  
read...Final Notice...Foreclosure documents.

MAMIE

I'm finally in a good enough mood  
to read this bullshit. How bad can  
it be?

She opens and reads it. Her face contorts from stress. Mamie  
scans the barber shop with her moistening eyes.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

My community, my family. I've  
failed them.

Her sight turns to an OUTSTANDING SERVICE plaque from THE  
BUFFALO WOMAN'S SHELTER. She swallows hard.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Lord, good Lord Almighty...please  
help me.

A tear forms in her eyes...then runs down her cheek. She caresses the barber smock again.

Ike strolls by and she quickly wipes the tears and tries to put on a face to hide her emotions.

IKE

There you are. Some politician  
looking clown is at the door,  
asking for you.

MAMIE

Okay.

She takes a deep breath, then leaves the office.

LOBBY

Mamie comes out to see a man in a cheap suit, MR. ANTONELLI, 940s - white), looking around the shop and putting notes in his I-pad.

Her eyes get big, appalled at the sight. She dashes over to the Italian man with haste.

MAMIE

Oh, hi. You must be Mr. Antonelli.  
I'm Mamie. Let me speak to you  
outside for a moment.

The shop patrons pick up on the tension in her voice. She hurries him out the door.

EXT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

As the taller man looks down to her desperate eyes, Mamie peeks around to make sure nobody else hears.

MAMIE

Look, I know the bank wants their  
money. Understood. I just need...a  
little more time.

ANTONELLI

I'm just an appraiser. You'd have  
to call the bank.

MAMIE

Other than praying hard, I'm  
looking for a buyer...as much as I  
hate to sell it. Me and my husband  
been here for decades. A week more?

It seems he feels for her, but...

ANTONELLI

I'm just doing my job. If we put off the appraisal, there's a fine of \$4,000. Just sinks you deeper.

A sound of anguish emits from her soul.

MAMIE

I'll just have to eat that. I didn't tell my employees yet. And I...it's hard to face them.

Her lips tremble.

ANTONELLI

That Covid thing closed down many a store. Don't be so hard on yourself. You're not alone.

MAMIE

But I do more than run this shop. I'm a community leader and proud of it. That disease caused the need at my woman's shelter to skyrocket. My people at the shop, they'll lose their jobs. They all need me.

She stares through the window and sees folks laughing and joking. He puts a comforting hand on her shoulder as she starts to break. Antonelli replies...

ANTONELLI

When Generals in war retreat, it doesn't mean they surrender. It means they want to save the lives of their soldiers. Don't let your pride stand in the way of winning the war. Tell them.

MAMIE

I just can't. It will kill them. I gotta stay strong, but it's all so much. So heavy.

He watches her fight back sobs.

ANTONELLI

Hey, we're the city of good neighbors, right? I'll postpone until next Friday and see if the bank can waive the fine.

Mamie nods back her appreciation. He smiles and leaves. Her eyes turn to the dark clouds above, but sees beyond them.

MAMIE

Thank you, Lord.

She marches back towards the door.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Whew. That was a close one.

INT. SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT - DAY

2:00 PM

At market. Courtney hears popping noise outside, brushes it off. Guy in long coat, Covid mask, black ski cap that covers his hair...dashes into the store. She cannot see his face. Courtney asks co-worker...

COURTNEY

Why that clown dressing for Winter  
in the Springtime?

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

Diggity arrives, Donitsmellgud gets in the chair. A barber's smock is tossed on immediately.

DIGGITY

S'up y'all. We good today?

DONITSMELLGUD

Where you been college boy? I can  
stop a woman in her tracks, but  
time? Time is precious and I'm  
obedient to it, like my women are  
to me.

An apron is draped over Donitsmellgud.

DIGGITY

Sorry, I met a girl and-

DONITSMELLGUD

Ohhh, sniff-sniff, do I smell puppy  
love? I tip my hat to the next  
generation of players. My boy been  
slapping them cheeks. I forgive you  
this time.

DIGGITY

It's not like that, Dawg. I just met her, but...she's special.

DONITSMELLGUD

Oh, okay. But you still hit it right?

An eye roll and head shake are his answer.

LEONARD

Let the boy experience some romance before you corrupt him with your use 'em and lose 'em philosophy.

DIGGITY

This girl, she took my breath away. Romance? I can only wish. It would be...so dope.

Leonard and Ike sing a snippet of, JUST MY IMAGINATION, as the others there laugh.

DONITSMELLGUD

Look young blood, you need to get macho in the crotch-o. You can either be like me, enjoying something new from the buffet everyday...

(towards Leonard)

or like Homer Simpson over there. Eating the same ham sandwich for decades.

MAMIE

This fool be starving for weeks in between meals. He don't do nothing everyday but cut cheese.

LEONARD

Right. Don't listen to that insecure, skirt chaser. Ain't a damn this wrong with a good relationship with your woman.

DIGGITY

I'm all about that, brother Leonard.

DONITSMELLGUD

And find yourself working two jobs. Why? Because if you with them long enough, they put a spell on you.

He motions Diggity to come closer.

DONITSMELLGUD (CONT'D)  
 (to Diggity)  
 After a while, you'll be a  
 zombie...  
 (towards Leonard)  
 ...like this one.

He mimics a zombie moving.

MAMIE  
 This day is going from bad to  
 worse.

INT. SUPERMARKET, BEER SECTION- DAY

2:05 PM

At the market. Both guys are in the store and check out females in a jovial mood. They grab a case of Genesee Beer.

K-DUB  
 Wonder if we should get two, just  
 in case we can pull some honeys.

VT3  
 Yeah, Keke Palmer and Shakira over  
 there can't wait to drink beer with  
 us in your mama's basement. And  
 what's up with this lame ass  
 shopping music?

A look of disgust is displayed.

VT3 (CONT'D)  
 It's whack, hate it. It's  
 Buffalo...hello. Play some Rick  
 James.

K-DUB  
 At least something with a thumping  
 bass.

They hear several loud blasts that fall on the downbeat.

VT3  
 Now the bass is too loud.

K-DUB  
 That ain't a bassline, fool.

They crouch low. Hear screams. The realization shows on their faces. Oh shit.

INT. SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT - DAY

Courtney, shocked, can't believe her ears. Leaves her station to look.

A bloody man comes running from the aisles. Collapses in front of her. Her screams blend with others in the store.

INT. SUPERMARKET, BEER SECTION - DAY

Panic - all around - as some dive for cover and others sprint to what they hope is safety. The two guys crouch down low.

VT3

K-dub...grab a case for a shield.  
Sitting ducks here.

K-DUB

Bullets go through beer cans, fool.

VT3

It's either aluminum cans or a  
boxes of cereal.

INT. SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT - DAY

Courtney tries chest compressions on the man with tears in her eyes.

A glass object above her is hit and shatters over her. She recoils fast.

COURTNEY

I'm sorry. I gotta go. Forgive me.

She slinks low, making a beeline to the door. Slipping on blood, she keeps balance and sprints into the parking lot.

INT. SUPERMARKET, BEER SECTION - DAY

The guys move towards the door.

An old woman is shot and falls at end of aisle.

They see the shooter run past her like a blur.

VT3

You see that shit? Lets go.

They dash towards the door. VT3 tries to tend to the woman but slips on her blood. He falls. K-dub keeps running.

Shots are fired at VT3 from across the room. The rounds hit the beer and a few cans explode.

VT3 goes into fetal position as shooter aims at him again. K-Dub looks on and cringes, near the door.

Sirens are heard. The shooter freezes, then runs deeper into the store, firing. VT3 and K-Dub scoot out quickly.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

At the barber shop, sounds of gunfire demands their attention be turned towards the supermarket.

MAMIE

Sounds like them half-crazy gang bangers is shooting up the parking lot. Stupid asses. Move back and stay low.

More sirens, loud now. They see reflections of the berries on the windows.

Moments later...Courtney bangs on door, blood on hands, hysterical.

Diggity, terrified by the state of his dream-girl, lets her in. She hugs him as her body shakes...barely can speak.

Mamie locks the door after them.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Back away from the door. Get down!  
(dramatic beat)  
Not in my place. No, no, no...mama got you. What Happened?

COURTNEY

(stutters)  
Sh-shooter. Dead folk. I-I tried to...but I ran.

The crew understands about the shooting. And it shows on their faces. They panic.

Blacksmith jumps from his chair and goes towards the door and peers out.

DIGGITY

Say what? That's crazy. Listen up,  
sis. I'll protect you with my life.

BLACKSMITH

Just one...or more of them?

COURTNEY

I don't know. I-I Just want this  
blood off my hands. Please.

MAMIE

Come. I'll take you.

(beat)

Y'all take cover. Ain't nobody  
catching lead in MY shop. We'll get  
through this...together.

They hurry to the restroom.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

2:20 PM

VT3 and K-Dub hide behind cars in the parking lot. They see  
dead bodies on the pavement, bleeding out. The horror hits  
them.

K-DUB

You lose your phone? I'm surprised  
you ain't filming this.

As the phone is retrieved, VT3 curses himself.

VT3

Damn. My brain froze up. I'm  
usually catching cops doing dirt. I  
was all about surviving just now.

The filming of the crime scene by VT3 begins.

K-DUB

Yeah, that's more like the VT3 I  
know. Protector of the hood.  
Defender of the good.

VT3

Funny. And all I had to do is get  
stomped by the pigs a few times to  
earn my superhero outfit.

He peeks his head up and looks around.

VT3 (CONT'D)

I'm not sure it's safe on the streets yet. Let's go to the barber shop, I'm sure some brothers there got some pop-back.

More cops start to arrive.

K-DUB

Not me homey, I got warrants. Going straight home and drink free beer. What a shitty birthday, huh? Sorry. Let's jet.

They run away in separate directions with cases of beer on their shoulders to block head-shots.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

Leonard sees the stress on Diggity's face. The young man tries to sip water with shaky hands.

LEONARD

That was the girl you met this morning, huh?

Diggity confirms it with the look in his eyes.

DIGGITY

And I have no idea what to do.

Mamie dashes back from the restroom.

MAMIE

Baby girl said there's at least one shooter in market with an automatic weapon.

She pulls an old rifle from behind the counter.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Anybody else?

Donitsmellgud pulls out a white ghost gun from inside his suit.

DONITSMELLGUD

I'm strapped.

BLACKSMITH

A real blacksmith puts shoes on horses, I put my shoe up any fool's ass that steps to me stupid. Gimme that straight razor.

Leonard hands him one. He flings it at the door. It sticks in the wood at face level.

MAMIE

Damn, that would give a thug a third nostril.

Just as Mamie admires the kill shot, VT3 bangs on the door. They let him in and he bursts through, staying low, with beer in tow. OJ jersey covered in blood.

He runs behind some furniture, breathing heavy and body shaking from fear.

LEONARD

Damn, little homey. You get hit?

VT3

That mad dog with a gun is out there. Stay back. He's crazy.

While he is crouched down, eyes wide...Mamie bends down face level.

MAMIE

Baby, are you shot anywhere? We can get you some help.

VT3

I don't feel nothing. All I feel is the urge to go back in there and blow his damn fool head off.

Mamie gets him a bottle of water. He chugs it as his lungs heave.

MAMIE

Drink it slower. Take deep breaths.

BLACKSMITH

Tell us what you saw in there.

VT3

It was like a video game, but it was real. We were hunted.

He tries to get control of his breathing.

VT3 (CONT'D)  
Ain't ever seen shit like that.  
Screams so loud you could barely  
think. The gun-blasts...they were  
even louder.

BLACKSMITH  
I been there.

Mamie comforts him with a hand on the shoulder.

VT3  
Was madness, my dude. My people  
were ducking, running, leaping over  
shit...like whoa. You feel me? Saw  
a dead security guard and I knew,  
we were on our own. Poor, old sista  
caught a few right in front of me.  
This is her blood.

The emotion overwhelms him. With eyes fighting back tears, he  
takes in another gulp of water. He looks down at the OJ  
jersey and lets out a huge sigh.

VT3 (CONT'D)  
By the way he walked, I think it  
was a cracker. What brother could  
do that type of shit? Me and my  
homey, K-dub snatched up cases of  
beer to use as shields.

All eyes in the barber shop are captivated by his story.

VT3 (CONT'D)  
That punk tried to blast on me, but  
the beers saved me. When he heard  
sirens, he ran to the back. I was  
in the wind after that. Dead folks,  
they were in the parking lot too.

Each face shows the effect of the eyewitness account. It  
affects everyone there, deeply.

VT3 (CONT'D)  
I hope it's over by now. But y'all  
got some clap back, just in case?

Weapons are held high. Vt3 nods back with gratitude, then  
looks at his shirt again.

VT3 (CONT'D)  
This, this blood...

He looks down at his red-splattered OJ jersey.

VT3 (CONT'D)

I need a new shirt. I never want to see this one again.

BLACKSMITH

I got you homey.

Blacksmith starts to remove his shirt, but Mamie stops him.

MAMIE

Hold on. I'll get one from Sapphire next door. Go wash up.

Vt3 nods without a word and goes to the john. Mamie takes out her phone.

IKE

It ain't no laughing matter, I understand...but ain't it ironic to see that particular jersey with blood on it?

All minds remember the look of the once white, now red , number 32 jersey with, SIMPSON, written across the back.

BLACKSMITH

You could have kept that joke to yourself, old man. This might be some war-time shit jumping off. Yo, pretty boy. Hand over that weapon.

Donitsmellgud is caught off guard. He holds the gun closer to his body.

DONITSMELLGUD

But I need it for protection.

BLACKSMITH

How many men you shoot down in your life. Can't afford to have you freeze up. I'm at 14...and counting.

The fragrant-one, reluctantly hands over the ghost gun.

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)

This Hasbro looking piece of shit best not blow up in my hand.

Vt3 emerges from the bathroom, just as Sapphire comes through backdoor with an African print shirt. In her other hand, a pistol.

VT3

Thank you, ma'am. This is beautiful. I'll pay you later. I promise.

The room watches him put it on.

SAPPHIRE

It is fitting for a warrior. You earned it by surviving today.

(to the barber shop)

I'm grateful for strength in numbers. I'll stay here and ride it out. Had locked the store and was in the back with my gun, alone.

Jumpy...eyes wide. Her pistol, gripped tight...as she paces back and forth.

MAMIE

Your heater...is it legal?

SAPPHIRE

I never seen a legal gun in my life. The question is, does it work? If a fool try me, they mess around, find out.

BLACKSMITH

Whoever it is shooting up black folk...will have to go through me, to get to the sisters.

Shows the white gun. Sapphire looks at it and laughs.

SAPPHIRE

Is that a toy?

BLACKSMITH

Best not be, or pretty boy is in trouble.

DONITSMELLGUD

Naw, it's good.

BLACKSMITH

You fire it before?

DONITSMELLGUD

Yep.

Blacksmith rolls his eyes and checks the functionality and clip.

BLACKSMITH

This thing's a virgin. Humph, just like Diggity.

Nervous laughs. Courtney comes out but glass is in her hair. Diggity goes to her. They lock eyes.

COURTNEY

Can someone help me get this crap outta my hair?

MAMIE

I'll take it out and give you a shampoo. Follow me.

DIGGITY

You'll feel better after this. I promise.

COURTNEY

I need some special shampoo, that can wash that glass out of my hair and clean those memories from my mind, too.

Mamie brings her to the salon part and notices Sapphire still pacing back and forth.

MAMIE

Sapphire...Breathe and try to calm down, baby.

SAPPHIRE

Can't calm down till the shooter is dead, even if I do it. Lived through what happened in Rwanda. Neighbor killing neighbor. It can happen so quickly. Only so much you can do with a machete. But this? Them no get-back-up.

They look out the window to see dozens of cop cars there.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

2:25 PM

Officer Kelso, knocks on door. Some are scared. Mamie unlocks it. He sticks his head in.

KELSO

Cops shut down the whole plaza.  
I'll guard your place and come back  
when I know things are safe. Looks  
like we all might be here a while.

VT3

Damn, at least I brought some beer.

Kelso ducks back out. Leonard, the barber who worked on  
Blacksmith, grabs a beer, opens it. Sprays all over him.

LEONARD

Ain't that a bitch. More beer on me  
than left in the can.

MAMIE

That's the good Lord telling your  
ass to stay sober. I'll put them in  
the fridge so they don't premature  
ejaculate on anyone else.

DIGGITY

Let's see if it's on the news yet.

He grabs the remote and turns on the TV.

INSERT - TV NEWS

BREAKING NEWS - LIVE COVERAGE [ACTUAL NEWS FOOTAGE, shots  
from News copter, TV reporters at the scene, scroll all the  
local stations]

IKE (V.O.)

I can see the barber shop in the  
shot.

MAMIE (V.O.)

How weird it is to be on  
camera...and part of the saddest  
moment the city has ever seen?

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)

What's it say? I can't read it. Uh,  
forgot my glasses.

Ike turns to his vain customer.

IKE

Since when you start wearing  
glasses?

DONITSMELLGUD

I don't let my women or my haters  
see my wearing them. Ruins the  
mystique.

IKE

Your mystique died in the crib when  
you was born.

They watch the coverage in silence.

VT3

This news is depressing. Might be  
stuck here a long time. Got any  
Buffalo Bills games on tape?

LEONARD

Good idea. I learned from my days  
in the minor leagues, that sports  
has a calming effect.

COURTNEY

You played baseball? Cool. I'm  
captain of the college softball  
team.

LEONARD

Look at you, little one. What  
position?

COURTNEY

I'm that rocket arm catcher who  
won't let nobody steal second base.  
Check out the team on our Youtube  
channel.

LEONARD

Really? I was a catcher too. All I  
got to show off are there old,  
sports page clippings.

Diggity puts on a Buffalo Bills, snow game on one TV...as the  
other, still plays the News.

The men cheer when a touchdown is made.

Mamie turns back to picking out glass from Courtney's hair as  
Sapphire posts up near her.

MAMIE

Look at the guys watch football.  
They hoop and holler about a game  
they already know the outcome of.

SAPPHIRE

Why is that?

MAMIE

Poor brothers. I guess this is all so much, they long for comfort. For the feel of winning - for a change.

COURTNEY

Right. This day has been a big L, so far.

MAMIE

Might be others are in the roped off area with no place to go. Just a second, baby.

Mamie leaves the salon area, grabs a blank sign, then starts to write on it. She puts a sign on door. It reads, HALF OFF ALL SERVICES TODAY...PROCEEDS GO TO VICTIM'S FAMILIES.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

This is how we don't let them win. They can shoot individuals...but when we are a caring community...we CRUSH THEM.

Mamie's phone rings. She answers right away.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Hey baby, guess you heard. Calm down. Yes, I'm fine. Hell yeah we got guns, plenty...Don't worry yourself. I'll call you later. I'm in the middle of something now...Love you too. Thanks for checking in...Alright...Yes. I'll be careful...Bye.

IKE

That wasn't the mayor, was it?

MAMIE

Funny. No, that was my daughter. She lives in Rochester. The whole nation knows about this shit now. Assured her that we are well armed and feisty as hell.

Mamie takes deep breaths after the call.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Used to go to that store every day.  
For years, we've all been one  
community. That pistol packing punk  
didn't just take lives. He tried to  
kill our place of sanctuary. But  
we're still here. Ha.

She goes and continues Courtney's shampoo.

2:45 PM

Knock at door. REV. BENNETT (60s - black) comes in with a bag  
in his hand. Blood is in his pastoral clothes.

A younger man also enters as he opens the door for the  
minister. We later know the gracious man as JOSH E (early 30s  
- black, wears dreads).

REV BENNETT

It's ugly out there, y'all. I  
pulled into the parking lot just  
after the shooting started. Officer  
Kelso grabbed me to give last  
rites, for those dying and dead.

He hangs his head.

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

The victims...they asked why it  
happened. I had no words for them.

He takes a seat with a heavy thud and deep exhale.

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

No words? Me? I failed them. Been  
comforting families, could. I'm  
just...so exhausted now.

IKE

Yep. Look like you been through a  
storm, pastor.

REV BENNETT

A hurricane, wrapped inside a  
tornado, brother Ike. Took some  
clothes from my trunk. I'll change  
in bathroom. Got to wash this blood  
off me and say some silent prayers.  
Like, right now.

He shuffles away, hauling the trauma on his shoulders. Josh  
E, wearing a T-shirt that reads, CORPUS CHRISTI and jeans.  
His eyes show sympathy for the minister.

MAMIE

Were you in the market too?

He turns to address her.

JOSH E.

No ma'am. Was at the cemetery paying respects, then came to store for juice before going home. Shooting happened before I was about to go into the store.

He shakes her hand.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

Folks call me, Josh E. Stands for Joshua Emmanuel. I saw the sign on your door. Would like to get a cut and donate to the victim's families. If that's okay.

MAMIE

Thanks. That's very kindly. Have a seat. It's safe in here

Josh E is dabbed-up by the brothers. Takes a seat on the couch.

Rev returns in Bills polo shirt and jeans. Pastoral outfit in a bag. He looks stressed and sad. He takes a seat in Ike's barber chair.

REV BENNETT

Doubtful anything I said to them helped. I just, feel so...useless. All words have left me. Evaporated, gone. What kind of minister am I? Have I wasted my life?.

MAMIE

Don't be so hard on yourself, Rev Bennett. These fools been shooting up folks all over the country. Even at elementary schools.

REV BENNETT

Have to tear up tomorrow's sermon. Somehow, I need to find a way to preach and give comfort about this devilish act. What can I say? What good will I be?

IKE

On days like this, seems like the devil is winning.

REV BENNETT

I feel a responsibility to all people, regardless if they go to my church, any church or no church at all. My job is to represent and to reflect God's love. Where was the love in this?

He looks in the direction of the supermarket.

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

Where? It was an act of complete madness and evil. That's all.

BLACKSMITH

If you seen what I seen in war, it would break you. This violence and hatred is a global curse.

IKE

I'm sure that Romans slaughtered Jesus's neighbors back in his time. What did he say about it? Why ain't that in the bible?

3:10 PM

Another knock, it is Westside Juan, (30s - Afro-Puerto Rican, shaved head) still in very bloody paramedic clothes. He holds his backpack tight.

WESTSIDE JUAN

Dios Mios. What a day, fam. Can I change clothes in the bathroom.?

MAMIE

Hell yes. You ain't no stranger around here. God bless you for everything you did today.

Recognized by Rev, he watches him stagger into the john.

REV BENNETT

Brother Juan was working hard to keep folks alive. Seen it myself. Lost many...but probably saved even more. A true hero.

3:20

Suddenly, Kelso the cop sticks his head in the shop.

KELSO

The shooter. He was caught.

BLACKSMITH

Caught? Y'all didn't kill his ass?

MAMIE

Was he white?

KELSO

Uh, yeah.

Crowd inside the barber shop reacts like they are repulsed, disappointed and angry.

BLACKSMITH

It figures.

IKE

If he is convicted, big deal.  
Skinheads in prison will make him  
their king. Live behind bars better  
than he did out in real life.

DIGGITY

How come when we sell loose  
cigarettes we get choked to death.  
These Nazis kill a shit-load of  
black folks, they get taken alive.

IKE

Humph. Will they take this one to  
Burger King too?

SAPPHIRE

Fine, officer. Sure there ain't no  
more Ku Klux Klan-ish copycats out  
there, game-hunting for black  
folks?

KELSO

That punk is only eighteen years  
old. Timothy Gendron is his name.  
He used an AR-15 and that dirtbag  
had the nerve to live-stream it on  
the internet.

A gasp is heard throughout the room.

KELSO (CONT'D)

When we surrounded him, he put a  
gun to his head...then surrendered.

(MORE)

KELSO (CONT'D)

We think he's some sort of Nazi,  
trying to start a race war.

IKE

These fools always wanna start a  
race war. Why? Whose gonna win  
Olympic gold for y'all after that?

DIGGITY

Them folks...why so angry? They  
already own everything and got it  
easier than us. What they so damn  
mad about?

IKE

Easy... 'cause they don't want you  
to have nothing! Not even life.

COURTNEY

They didn't even have to pay  
reparations yet. Imagine what  
they'd be like after that.

KELSO

If I ran things, REPARATIONS WOULD  
HAVE BEEN PAID ALREADY.

He looks dead serious, Sincerity in his voice.

KELSO (CONT'D)

Only a Nazi can't see that.  
Especially since it was paid-out to  
other groups in the past. Who has  
worked harder in this country and  
deserves it more? As a white  
person, I'm embarrassed that our  
citizens are so greedy.

VT3

Greed is one thing. A murder spree,  
using an AR-15? Yo, that's some  
next level, crazy shit with Satan  
sauce on top.

MAMIE

But here? Buffalo? We got plenty of  
good folks here. Bet he's from  
outta town.

IKE

Remember the 22 caliber killer,  
years ago. Same shit. Klanish-  
assholes defaced the MLK statue  
too. City of Good Neighbors?

(MORE)

IKE (CONT'D)  
Yeah, sometimes...but also a  
breeding ground for plenty racist  
dirt-bags too.

KELSO  
When I find out more about this  
shooter, I'll let you know. Around  
ten dead, so far. Got to get back  
to my post now.

Kelso exits. Silent digestion about the shooter, sinks in.

MAMIE  
Y'all listen up. This asshole and  
all terrorists, use violence to  
scare us. Make us cower to them.

Mamie puts her game-face on as she looks everyone in the shop  
in the eyes.

MAMIE (CONT'D)  
Anybody scared in this bitch?

All respond with tremendous energy...

EVERYONE  
Hell no!...Not today...Not even!

MAMIE  
Just checking.

She lightly pounds her chest in solidarity, then grins.

IKE  
Just for the record, can we agree  
that if the slaughter, was the  
other way around...a Black man  
would not be walking out in cuffs.  
Surrender, or not.

Heads nod in agreement.

SUPER - IF I WAS JESUS

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

Rev Bennett still looks upset, as Ike works on his hair.

REV BENNETT  
What's so crazy is that I had just  
pulled up to go in.  
(MORE)

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

My deacon called, almost didn't answer, but I did. All hell broke loose while on the phone. If I didn't take the call I'd have been inside just before the shooter.

MAMIE

Might be dead now. Praise the Lord. He saved you.

REV BENNETT

Hallelujah. I tried to stay strong and pray for their poor souls to be welcomed into heaven.

IKE

Good God. Seen a lot in my years. My grandpa told me about the race riots in Tulsa when white folk went crazy. Now that evil-ass thinking, made its way to New York. When will it end?

Westside Juan comes out of the bathroom in sweatpants and hoodie - to applause. He nods back, humble.

REV BENNETT

There's our hero.

WESTSIDE JUAN

Thank you. Really. Did the best I could. Been at this gig, more than a minute. That was the worst I saw. If I can ever find a way to pay for the rest of my school, I'd start a clinic, right here.

MAMIE

Dream big, boy. That's what I like to hear.

WESTSIDE JUAN

Thank you. And yo, Miss Mamie, I left a bloody mess in bathroom sink, sorry-

MAMIE

Y'all, keep fussing over that bathroom. How bad could it be?

She opens the door so all can see inside. The blood-stained sink, door knobs and floor, look like a slaughterhouse of some kind.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God. That's a lot of blood.  
Maybe I'll just leave it for  
vampires to lick clean tonight.  
They can smell all that blood,  
right through the coffin.

BLACKSMITH

That weapon is MEANT to leave a  
bloody mess. I fired AR rifles,  
many a time. A gun like that ain't  
got no business on these streets.

REV BENNETT

After seeing dead body after dead  
body, all mutilated, I started to  
wonder, is there really a God? How  
can the Lord allow this to happen?  
The holes in the bodies...

He shakes his head covers his eyes momentarily.

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

If I was Jesus, even with his  
power, could I heal wounds like  
that?

The room falls silent.

BLACKSMITH

Why do I risk my life in the  
service, when back home, fellow  
citizens, whose freedoms I  
defend...hate my guts because of  
the color of my skin?

IKE

Tell 'em, brother.

BLACKSMITH

The real threat to my people's  
existence are the white fanatics  
that think slaughtering us is cute.

SAPPHIRE

What is this world coming to?

Disgust with the human race, oozes freely.

WESTSIDE JUAN

People suck. Sorry. Always did and  
always will.

(MORE)

## WESTSIDE JUAN (CONT'D)

After they tear themselves apart,  
they need folks like me that try to  
put them back together.

## MAMIE

Right. We sure could use some  
Jesus...like right now.

## IKE

We know, deep down, that we gotta  
pay for dumb shit we do. When we  
review our lives...it's us...not  
God...who condemns our souls to  
suffer, for what we did to other  
people.

## WESTSIDE JUAN

Amen, OG. If I was Jesus I'd heal  
all these homeless folks who look  
like they have health issues and  
mental problems...like that maniac  
shooter.

In mid-shampoo, Courtney adds...

## COURTNEY

I'm with you on the healing tip.

Blacksmith's booming voice joins in...

## BLACKSMITH

Healing? Sure. But if I was Jesus,  
I'd snatch them haters by the neck  
and shake some sense into them.

He looks around the room, pain in his voice.

## BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)

You should see some of the places I  
seen. Billionaires, all over the  
world...and they let people live in  
such disgusting conditions. And I  
have to defend them? With my life?

The soldier points to himself and shakes his head...no.

## DIGGITY

Who the hell needs billionaires on  
this planet, when people are  
starving. I sure as hell don't.

## SAPPHIRE

I come from Africa. Starvation  
central. Another thing.

(MORE)

SAPPHIRE (CONT'D)

If I was Jesus, I'd make them stop  
messing up God's green earth, so it  
will still be here for our  
grandkids.

DONITSMELLGUD

At least the ones I know about.

He snickers as others moan.

BLACKSMITH

Okay, playboy. Time for real talk.  
I sure wish I was Jesus back in  
them times. That whole bible would  
be different.

CUT AWAY

Blacksmith appears as Jesus with ancient robes on, seen from  
the back. He turns around, the robe is open, his abs shine.  
The robe falls to the ground. He is shirtless and super buff.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)

If he could change the bodies of  
lepers, he could change his own.  
I'd get mad buff, feel me. Swoll.  
Then, I'd have the skills of Bruce  
Lee.

He does katas that flex his muscles. Roman soldiers circle  
him ready to clash.

As they engage, punches, kicks and head-butts send soldiers  
flying. Locals cheer for Jesus/Blacksmith as the soldiers are  
knocked senseless.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)

Knock out twenty or thirty Roman  
soldiers at a time. No doubt.

Jesus sees injured, bloodied soldiers across the battlefield.  
He mounts a hill. Lifts his arms. The soldiers rise up,  
healed. They bow to him.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)

Afterwards, I'd heal them, convert  
them and they'd be MY crew, from  
then on. I'd have them take me all  
the way to Rome.

He marches into the coliseum with soldiers flanking him.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Get in the ring as a gladiator.  
Whoop booty on everybody who dares  
step to me in the coliseum.

He wears a hooded robe like boxers do today, with satin trunks.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Punching and preaching the Good  
Word to the entire empire, as I put  
the world's best fighters down for  
a nap. All of Rome would be on my  
side.

Gladiators from around the world get beat up. The emperor orders Jesus/Blacksmith to finish them. He waves him off.

He heals the fighters and they join his crew. He is showered with roses.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Then I'd call out Caesar for being  
a punk ass bitch.

Jesus/Blacksmith knocks over statues of Apollo and Zeus. The Emperor is angry. Orders soldiers to kill Jesus. They turn on him and toss the emperor into the arena.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Give him a wedgie if front of all  
his boys. Exposes him and the gods  
he worships as fakes and weaklings.

His royal robe is removed and he is a scrawny man. He is given a wedgie as the audience laughs at him.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Overthrow the emperor and run him  
out of town. Take over as big boss.

Jesus/Blacksmith takes the laurels from the emperor's head and rips it up. The emperor runs away in disgrace.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Spread the word of God to the  
world, from the throne of the most  
powerful nation...delivered by, the  
world's greatest fighter.

Jesus/Blacksmith on the throne. Now in the arena, food, clothes and water are passed out, as believers get healed by his touch. The audience chants his name.

END CUT AWAY

The soldier beams with pride.

BLACKSMITH  
How could people trip after that?

JOSH E.  
(satirically)  
Maybe only black belts can qualify  
to become deacons?

BLACKSMITH  
Good idea.

Ike looks at them perplexed.

IKE  
There's an active shooter  
terrorizing our hood. How does a  
story like that relate to our  
situation? It's just escapism  
nonsense.

MAMIE  
Escapism, huh? What's wrong with  
that?  
(beat)  
We got at least one active shooter,  
trying to kill us or at least scare  
the crap out of us. Take back your  
humanity through imagination and  
laughter. We can't let little  
Hitler win.

IKE  
You think these daydreams have any  
affect on those blood-thirty Nazis?

MAMIE  
It ain't about them. It's about us.

Her eyes scan the barber shop family.

MAMIE (CONT'D)  
Come on. Who's next?

VT3's hand thrusts into the air.

VT3  
The problem back then is the same  
as now. Corruption and bad cops.  
(MORE)

VT3 (CONT'D)  
With all the power he had, Jesus  
took too much bullshit. From the  
jump...I'd go gangsta.

CUT AWAY

VT3 as Jesus, but wears a Bruce Smith football jersey with  
his robes.

VT3 (V.O.)  
After fasting for forty days, you  
think I'd be in the mood to play  
with these fools?

He marches out of the wilderness, looking pissed. As he  
stands, his stomach growls.

VT3 (V.O.)  
Yo, I'd throw the whole blitz  
package at them suckers and bust  
John the Baptist out of jail, Rambo  
style.

Jesus/VT3 kicks in the door of the dungeon, wearing a head  
band and camouflage face paint.

When soldiers attack, weapons disappear from their hands.  
They run. Jesus finds John the Baptist's cell. He looks like  
his friend, K-Dub. Rips the dungeon door off with his bare  
hands, they hug.

VT3 (V.O.)  
I sure wouldn't let John the  
Baptist go out like that. John  
wasn't no scrub. That was his  
kinfolk. His boy, understand?  
Operation Jailbreak, in full  
effect.

The two march down Palestine streets, side by side, in slow-  
mo. John/K-Dub, has an Ed Oliver football jersey on, with his  
animal fur vest.

VT3 (V.O.)  
Bust him out, clean him up and  
start running them streets like a  
boss.

Regal looking ladies in a carriage seem offended as John/K-  
Dub, surrounded by a crowd...points at them, humiliates them  
and laughs.

VT3 (V.O.)  
 Johnny Boy would have been his  
 greatest disciple. Talking smack  
 about Harrod's wife and her dried-  
 up momma too.

The two spy Judas talking to priests, who give him bag of  
 silver coins. Jesus/VT3 and John/K-Dub shake their heads in  
 disappointment and anger.

VT3 (V.O.)  
 If I knew about cut-throat Judas  
 ahead of time, I'd have to go Al  
 Capone on his ass. I'm risking my  
 life trying to raise people up and  
 this snake is scheming on me for 30  
 pieces of silver? I'd have that  
 snitching punk...shanked at the  
 Last Supper.

Judas slinks away from the Last Supper table. Jesus/VT3 nods  
 towards John/K-Dub. A spear is hurled by John/K-Dub, in a  
 Josh Allen jersey, at Judas. The traitor is impaled to the  
 door before he exits.

VT3 (V.O.)  
 Naw, wait, Okay, no violence. Turn  
 him into a leper at least.

When Judas kisses the cheek of Jesus/VT3 in the garden...the  
 betrayer's face starts to rot, quick. Those traitorous lips  
 fall off and land in the dirt. Judas and guards run away,  
 screaming.

VT3 (V.O.)  
 Have fun spending that silver while  
 your face is rotting off.

Later, the face of Judas has deteriorated even worse.

VT3 (V.O.)  
 Snitches get stiches, but traitors  
 get face craters.

END CUT AWAY

VT3 gets dapped-up by Blacksmith.

JOSH E.  
 If I were to guess, I'd say that  
 you're a football fan?

VT3

Naw, bruh. I'm a Buffalo Bills fan.  
That's on a totally different  
level.

DIGGITY

Y'all are missing the whole point.  
His mission was to give us words  
that ring through to our souls. I  
see him more as a rapper. The  
original...Cool J.

CUT AWAY

Folks lined up to buy tickets and printed on them is 'Cool J  
and the Eternal Life Crew'.

DIGGITY (V.O.)

I'd have lasers, my brother. Big  
screen, dancers, everything.

At the concert, the dark stage is blasted by lasers.  
Jesus/Diggity appears on stage. Wild dreads, no shirt. Crowd  
is into it.

DIGGITY (V.O.)

Then, I'd come out. All them  
parables and lessons I'd be  
spitting as lyrics.

Diggity as Jesus bounces into, "IF I RULED THE WORLD", by Nas  
and is performed with a disciple as DJ.

DIGGITY (V.O.)

*If I ruled the world  
Still livin' for today, in these  
last days and times*

*Yo, it'd be, paradise life,  
relaxin'  
Black, Latino and Anglo-Saxon*

The diversity of the crowd is seen.

DIGGITY (V.O.)

*Armani Exchange, the Range  
Cash, Lost Tribe of Shabazz free at  
last  
Brand new whips to crash, then we  
laugh in a iller path  
The Villa house is for the crew,  
how we do*

(MORE)

DIGGITY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*Trees for breakfast, dime sexes and  
 Benz stretches  
 So many years of depression make me  
 vision  
 The better livin', type of place to  
 raise kids in.*

He raises his hands to the heavens.

DIGGITY (V.O.)  
*Can you imagine if he started  
 spitting lyrics while hanging on  
 the cross?*

JOSH E. (V.O.)  
 Uh, not really.

Jesus/Diggity on the cross, rapping a strong game.

DIGGITY (V.O.)  
*Open they eyes to the lies,  
 history's told foul  
 But I'm as wise as the old owl,  
 plus the Gold Child  
 Seeing things like I was  
 controlling, clique rollin'  
 Trickin' six digits on kicks and  
 still holdin'*

Even the Romans groove to his song.

DIGGITY (V.O.)  
*Trips to Paris, I'd civilize every  
 savage  
 Give one shot, I turn trife life to  
 lavish  
 Political prisoners set free,  
 stress free  
 No work release, purple M3's and  
 jet skis  
 I'd open every cell in Attica, send  
 'em to Africa.*

An officer gives a signal to let him go. Jesus/Diggity is freed, but hits the ground, still rapping. Crowd loves it.

DIGGITY (V.O.)  
*If I ruled the world  
 Still livin' for today, in these  
 last days and times.*

END CUT AWAY

The pastor gives him, side-eye.

REV BENNETT

Hip hop on the cross? You done lost  
your whole, entire mind.

DIGGITY

Come on. We'd still be rocking to  
them beats today. Teach his crew  
how to rap, too. They'd be like the  
Wu Tang Clan of their time.

MAMIE

They were fishermen, not B-Boys.

JOSH E.

I'm sure he'd take that over a  
Gregorian chant, any day of the  
week. But-

IKE

I'm not seeing how this  
little...fantasy crap is helping.

MAMIE

In Jim Crow, we were under siege  
and getting lynched left and right.  
We turned that pain into  
creativity. Ragtime, Blues, Jazz,  
Rock and even Country music came  
from our imaginations. We don't  
run...we use our minds and  
overcome. It's a gift...that God  
gave us. And it's powerful.

JOSH E.

I like how you think.

REV BENNETT

I agree, Miss Mamie. It got us  
through slavery too. They had the  
nerve to think those songs we sung  
in the fields was to entertain  
those kidnappers. Those songs came  
from the soul...by us and for us -  
to heal and go on.

BLACKSMITH

Preach brother. Preach.

The importance of this exercise sinks into everyone present.

COURTNEY  
 Hey. What about the miracles,  
 fellas? Did you read about when  
 bruh went fishing?

CUT AWAY

Courtney as Jesus on a boat raises her arms, then smiles as a huge haul of fish is dumped on the boat. On-lookers are amazed.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
 Tons of fish at a time. And that's  
 not all.

Jesus/Courtney pours out wine to customers. They enact the stages of a connoisseur at a wine tasting. They sip, then moan in pure joy as their taste-buds explode.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
 He could turn water into wine that  
 is THE BEST anywhere.

Jesus/Courtney acts humbled by their reaction.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
 If I was Jesus, I'd start my own  
 seafood restaurant by the Sea of  
 Galilee. The fastest way to the  
 heart, is through the stomach.

JOSH E. (V.O.)  
 True that.

Huge restaurant with a waiting line, out the door. Instead of Red Lobster, it is...RED SEA LOBSTER.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
 Heck yeah, then start a winery in  
 the backroom. Wouldn't even need a  
 vineyard.

In backroom, water is poured into large vases. Jesus/Courtney swirls her finger in it.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
 I'd just stick a finger in it. My wine  
 leaves no hangover, no angry drunks  
 and is good for the body. Make as  
 many varieties as we have today.

They ladle some out. Red wine is poured into a goblet. Smiles after she tastes it.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
Folks from all over the trade  
routes would come.

Wide shot shows caravans in each direction traveling to the restaurant.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
I'd have my moms, Mary, do some  
home cooking.

An older version of Courtney, dressed as Mary, smiles as she stirs a huge kettle of food.

COURTNEY (V.O.)  
Do a sermon before each delicious  
meal. If you do a good deed for  
somebody else, you get your grub-on  
for free.

Guy brings a crippled man, secured to his back, for Jesus/Courtney to heal. The sick man is cured and they both sit down in front of a seafood feast.

END CUT AWAY

Courtney peers over at Diggity and smiles.

COURTNEY  
Palestine would be ill...from  
goodwill. Then it would spread all  
over the world.

DIGGITY  
Fine dining with the disciples?  
Winner, winner, chicken dinner.

BLACKSMITH  
Y'all making me hungry. Damn  
redneck shot up the grocery store.  
Can't even buy a Twinkie in this  
bitch.

WESTSIDE JUAN  
Folks didn't roll up on Jesus for a  
fish sandwich. They wanted to be  
healed, right?

VT3  
Ya got that right. Twinkie would go  
down nice, tho'.

WESTSIDE JUAN  
If I was Jesus, I'd be healing  
folks like rapid fire.

CUT AWAY

Juan as Jesus in back of a wagon. Crippled, blind etc...lined  
up on both sides of the road.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
Just cruise through town and your  
boy would just give a gangsta wink  
at my peoples who need healing.

In the quickly moving vehicle, he just nods to the  
infirm...and they are healed. Some dance for joy.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
They'd end up healthier than they  
been in their whole lives.

As he gets out of wagon, Romans kneel in front him. Are  
healed.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
Even Romans would take a knee to me  
so that I might cure their  
syphilis.

They dump huge piles of coins at his feet.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
Mira. Can you imagine if I would  
make folks pay to be healed? That  
money would solve starvation too.

Tent has prices for healing on it. Mary takes the money.  
Jesus/Juan waves from inside. On the outside of the tent is a  
free food, lunch kitchen.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
Those who couldn't pay could donate  
labor to build the world's first  
hospital.

Finishing touches are done on modern looking hospital but is  
constructed with boulders and mortar.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
Wouldn't even have to enter the  
rooms, just flick my finger from  
the hallway.

Jesus/Juan on inside, strolls the halls. Patients of all cultures are in rooms, seriously ill. Jesus/Juan flicks his finger into each room. Wounds heal, people awake from comas.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
 Boatloads of folks would come from  
 every nation. FEEL FINE IN  
 PALESTINE would be put on the signs  
 for the city limits. How could they  
 deny the word of God then?

JOSH E. (V.O.)  
 The guy from Nazareth healed folks.  
 Yet they still ignore his request  
 to love each other.

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
 His game was strong, no doubt. If  
 they started trippin', I turn that  
 ass back to how they were.

END CUT AWAY

A smirk of pride covers Westside Juan's face.

JOSH E.  
 Sounds exhausting.

LEONARD  
 Listen. Showtime at the Apollo  
 wasn't his style, but I'm sure he  
 had folks laughing when he was  
 preaching.

JOSH E.  
 Word.

LEONARD  
 If I was Jesus, I'd be telling  
 jokes along with the parables, like  
 a stand-up comic.

CUT AWAY

Jesus/Leonard strolls onto the stage of an ancient  
 amphitheater, mic in hand, the crowd cheers.

JESUS/LEONARD  
 Thank you, thank you! It's great to  
 be here tonight. Man, being the Son  
 of God is a tough gig.  
 (MORE)

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
Everywhere I go, people keep asking  
me to do miracles. 'Jesus, heal me!  
Jesus, walk on water! Jesus, turn  
my water into wine!' Listen...I'm  
not a bartender, okay?

The audience laughs hard.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
Once turned water into wine at a  
wedding...and now I can't go  
anywhere without someone handing me  
a glass of tap water and winking.

He acts out the non-verbal request. Giggles from the crowd.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
I was just in Jerusalem...tough  
crowd.  
(beat)  
Sorry...too soon?

Audience laughs.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
My favorite car?  
(beat)  
A Chrysler?

Groans and laughs are heard.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
Folks ask me my favorite workout. I  
tell them...cross-fit.

Audience groans, laughs.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
Nailed it...pun intended.  
(beat)  
Speaking of Good Friday, I see all  
these people using crosses to honor  
me. You crazy? What makes you think  
I wanna see that thing again? It  
hurt. Please stop.

He checks his wristwatch.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)  
Alright, that's my time! Be good to  
each other, tip your servers, and  
remember...I'll be back - in three  
days!

Mic drop. Stage lights flicker. Thunder rolls...

END CUT AWAY

Those in the barber shop have a good chuckle.

LEONARD

I'd have them in tears from laughing. Go full Dave Chappelle on that ass.

MAMIE

Escapism is good, but if you told those corny ass jokes...Judas would have turned you in, as soon as you got outta the Jordan River.

LEONARD

Folks like you are the reason he didn't have female disciples.

MAMIE

Somebody was cooking that fish and baking that bread. Believe that.

LEONARD

Another thing. Forget all that dying young nonsense. If I was Jesus, I'd make sure I lived to be an old, old man. Dude died at 33, way too young.

JOSH E.

How should it have gone down?

Leonard turns to Mamie.

LEONARD

Can I go again?

IKE (O.C.)

Please don't.

She shuts down the old man with a look.

MAMIE

To get our minds away from this daytime nightmare? Be my guest. Sometimes we use visualization therapy like this at the woman's center.

LEONARD

Cool. Well, my man should have split town, right after the Last Supper. I'm a dad. I wish Jesus could have had that opportunity too.

CUT AWAY

A cutie washes the feet of Jesus/Leonard and winks back at him seductively.

JESUS/LEONARD (V.O.)

The chance to fall in love with a local hottie. Get a taste of that sensual seduction.

She kisses him passionately as she pulls him towards a bed. He has a seat.

The view from behind shows her back. His new wife drops her gown to the floor. Jesus/Leonard faces her and smiles wide. Then gives thumbs-up to the heavens...

JESUS/LEONARD

Great job, Dad.

The candle is blown out and giggles are heard in the darkness.

JESUS/LEONARD (V.O.)

Enjoy marital bliss. You know what I'm talking about.

His wife hands him an infant in swaddling clothes.

JESUS/LEONARD (V.O.)

He should have been able to hold his first newborn. Nothing can compare to that.

A tear of joy in his eyes.

JESUS/LEONARD (V.O.)

He could groom his kids to be just like him. I know the mission was about us, and not about his happiness...but damn...he deserved some joy too.

A painter sketches a family reunion portrait of all his offspring. The patriarch beams a huge smile.

END CUT AWAY

The barber shop is silent.

REV. BENNETT

I agree. He died too young and  
hardly got to enjoy the best things  
in life.

SAPPHIRE

Yeah, that's shame.

DONITSMELLGUD

Nothing wrong with enjoying some  
earthly delights. The point was to  
get more love into the world.

JOSH E.

Seems to be the case.

DONITSMELLGUD

If I was Jesus I'd take the  
player's route. Ain't but one thing  
humans love more than war. Marvin  
Gaye said it, baby...sexual  
healing. I know just how to do it.

CUT AWAY

Donitsmellgud as Jesus, primping in front of a mirror. When  
satisfied, he pops his collar, grins.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)

Start me a harem of women from all  
over the world. Draw them to me  
with my mind, the way he did with  
the fishermen.

Jesus/Donitsmellgud leans against a post with biblical robes,  
but wide brim hat on.

Lots of women are in the market, shopping. He rubs his chin.  
They all turn around. He winks at them.

They drop what they are doing, pretty themselves up and rush  
over to stand next to him.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)

Instead of stopping at twelve  
disciples, I'd have hundreds of  
fine-looking dimes.

Jesus/Donitsmellgud stands on a hill as women from other nations, scamper over to him. All races are represented. The women jump, swoon and shout when they see him like he is a Rockstar.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)  
 They'd travel from far way  
 countries to get that sexual  
 healing. Might even be some Martian  
 babes in the crowd.

A green girl peeks at him from behind a tree and smiles.

In a tent, he stares a gorgeous black woman in the eyes, flashes a smile and rubs her hair. Her body shudders wildly.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)  
 Make them orgasm by just breathing  
 on them.

From outside the tent, some moaning his heard.

Shirtless Jesus/Donitsmellgud and his honey are in bed. He makes a sweeping motion his arm as he talks to her.

Suddenly the cosmos is shown floating above them. She is in awe. Tears are in her eyes.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)  
 After knocking boots, then...I drop  
 that knowledge on them. And it  
 would totally change their lives.

His honey is back with her tribe in Africa. Although they wear traditional garb, she wears a t-shirt with the face of smiling Jesus/Donitsmellgud on it, as she preaches to a crowd from a hilltop.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)  
 When they went back home and around  
 the world, they'd be cheerleading  
 for my ass and my message of love.

She commands their attention.

DONITSMELLGUD (V.O.)  
 Since they'd be so beautiful, folks  
 would pay attention to what they  
 say, better than some old dusty  
 dudes from the desert with a stank  
 nut-sack. God wins. Ya dig?

END CUT AWAY

Donitsmellgud is waved off by most in the barber shop.

MAMIE

All that Viagra done made this boy  
delusional. I think he needs a  
blood transfusion.

IKE

Hold on. TD Jakes is a good  
preacher...but I'd much rather be  
looking at Pam Grier's face when I  
hear the Good Word.

DIGGITY

I prefer, Beyoncé.

Diggity winks at Courtney. He gets a half giggle back.

MAMIE

One thing our wanna-be playboy got  
right. The good word is drowned out  
by too many hot-links at the family  
cook-out. Not enough room for  
mommy's salamis.

SAPPHIRE

Tell it, sister.

Kelso knocks, then walks inside.

KELSO

Hey folks. Just got the word.  
You're all free to go.

They look among themselves. No one gets up.

MAMIE

Well, Officer K...sometimes  
community, gives more comfort, than  
solitude. We're just sitting  
around, keeping spirits up.

KELSO

I sure could use a little of that,  
myself.

MAMIE

You know you're welcome here. Grab  
a seat if you can spare the time.

The lawman looks somber as he pulls over a folding chair.  
Some folks there look uncomfortable with his addition.

KELSO

Thank you. You were talking about keeping spirits up? On a day like this? How?

JOSH E.

You won't believe it.

LEONARD

We was just riffing on how we could make a difference back in the day...if we was Jesus.

COURTNEY

Jonesing for a better world, ya know?

Kelso digests the psychological coping mechanism and smiles back, compassionately.

KELSO

I got ya. Who's next?

The chimes on the door ring as two burly, biker looking guys enter the shop. Faces tense up. TOASTY (30s - white, severely bearded) has slightly less facial tats than his buddy.

MAMIE

Oh shit. Is this another active shooter situation?

KELSO

You guys got the right spot?

TOASTY

Yes sir. We finally got here after waiting all day. Sorry to hear about the shooting. In spite of what happened, this is a great place for our shop. Is Meemie in?

MAMIE

It's Mamie. I told that stupid realtor not to send folks during business hours.

All eyes turn towards her.

LEONARD

You...are you selling the place?

REV BENNETT

Say it ain't so.

SAPPHIRE  
You just joking right?

A deep exhale is followed by her eyes scanning her beloved business. They settle on the confused faces of her employees and customers.

MAMIE  
No joke. IRS is up my ass and because of Covid and an accountant from hell, I can't pay the bank either. Got no choice.

TOASTY  
We wanted to make a bid before it hits the market. It's the perfect place for a tattoo shop.

IKE  
Tattoos? You hear that, Officer? Shoot that ass...right now.

Toasty and his partner ease towards the door.

MAMIE  
Look, today has been a lot. Come back Monday evening, after six.

TOASTY  
Okay, sounds good.

The bikers zoom out of the exit. All eyes converge on Mamie. Secret exposed, she watches them scoot away.

SAPPHIRE  
I'd rather be here next to you, rather than the Hell's Angels. How can we help?

MAMIE  
Save it. A bake sale ain't gonna work. I'm in too deep. I should have told you all, earlier.

Silence befalls the shop. A look of loss is on the faces.

MAMIE (CONT'D)  
Listen. It's at the point now that if I don't sell it, then it gets taken from me. Okay? Nothing I can do anymore.

Deeper silence penetrates the air like thick fog. Sad faces tip downward to a floor that needs sweeping.

IKE

I need this job. Damn.

LEONARD

Miss Mamie. You've been a part of this community since I was a kid.

MAMIE

Hurts worse for me. Believe that. I don't know what to do anymore. I put so much time into this place and the woman's shelter...I might have to move to Rochester now? Leaving it all behind...would about kill me.

She closes her eyes. Sapphire comes over and comforts her.

SAPPHIRE

Keep praying, sister. There's got to be a way. We'll find it.

MAMIE

I've failed you all. My husband too. Strutting around here like I'm somebody. I'm not a leader. I'm a loser. Please forgive me.

JOSH E.

If I was Jesus, I'd hook you up with all the cheese you need. You're a good woman with a big heart...it ain't fair.

MAMIE

That's awful sweet of you, baby. I'll keep praying on it. Those scared girls at the women's shelter...they count on me to be there for them. I let them down.

IKE

Woman, if you wasn't so full of pride, we could've been helping, all along.

COURTNEY

I'll Google around and see if there are some grants you can apply for.

DIGGITY

I'll help you, if that's cool.

MAMIE

This is all too much. Y'all been  
like family since James passed.  
Imma get one of VT3's beers.  
Anybody else?

All hands go up, except Josh E. And Kelso. She stomps over to  
the fridge and removes the beers. Leonard turns to Josh E.

LEONARD

You ain't getting down, young man?

JOSH E.

I prefer wine.

IKE

We're talking Genesee Beer, my  
friend. The champagne of Western  
New York. Just a little booze...to  
chase away the blues.

Others laugh.

JOSH E.

Funny. Okay I'll take one.

Mamie returns with the brew and passes out the cans. Rev.  
Bennett cracks it open right away.

COURTNEY

Hey. I didn't know ministers could  
drink beer.

REV BENNETT

This ain't beer. It's Genesee.

He toasts to her, has a sip and smiles.

When done, Mamie has a seat next to Josh E. She pops a can  
open and has a big swill...

MAMIE

Ahh...Yeah baby, that's what I'm  
talking about. Y'all still telling  
Jesus stories? I'll go next.

REV BENNETT

By all means, sister. Seems like  
you got a lot on your mind.

MAMIE

From Your lips to the ears of God  
himself. Ike, this one's for you.

She lets out a huge belch. The others laugh.

IKE

Woman, if I needed gas, I'd go to Exxon/Mobil.

MAMIE

Listen up. This always bugged me, since I was little. As good as Jesus was, it's obvious that he was strongly against abusing the females and kids, right?

CUT AWAY

Mamie as Christ, is surrounded by children, sharing a story. Suddenly she sees a mob chasing a woman, throwing stones at her as she runs.

Jesus/Mamie stands, points to the mob and their rocks turn into sand. The all-male mob, stops in their tracks.

Now Jesus/Mamie, hand on hip, fire in her eyes...gestures wildly at the mob. They back away. The woman runs to her and hides behind her back, shaking in fear.

REV. BENNETT (V.O.)

Without a doubt. Saving the prostitute from catching rocks to the face, proves it.

MAMIE (V.O.)

Somehow, the sausage party that edited the bible, took most of the stuff about men controlling their genitals...out. You know why, right?

Monks in candle-lit room, study a book. They draw a red-line through a passage that says, "Thou shalt not rape."

COURTNEY (V.O.)

Yeah, they hardly mention that. But it's so important. Why, sistah?

Priest leads kid into a room. Crosses on the walls. Double locks the door behind him. Grins devilishly.

MAMIE (V.O.)

We've seen time after time what them priests are into. Defenseless kids. And they do it in the name of Jesus?

WESTSIDE JUAN (V.O.)  
Dios Mios.

VT3 (V.O.)  
And good Lord almighty, too.

BLACKSMITH (V.O.)  
Lucifer himself wouldn't even go as low as that.

KELSO (V.O.)  
Getting your childhood taken by force, is worse than all the ten commandments rolled into one.

MAMIE (V.O.)  
If I was Jesus, just before a man would attack a child or a woman...

Attacker jumps from bushes as a woman walks by alone. He grabs her roughly. On the side, Jesus/Mamie watches.

MAMIE (V.O.)  
Them dick and balls, all disappear. Poof. Feel me?

She flicks her finger. The attacker stops suddenly. Grabs his groin area in surprise and fear. The woman runs away.

MAMIE (V.O.)  
That crotch would look like a Ken doll. Smooth. Ya heard? Got to learn how to piss out his armpit or his asshole.

The attacker turns to the side, opens his robe. Screams and runs away...hysterically.

MAMIE (V.O.)  
Mr. Johnson...would be...a memory.

END CUT AWAY

Inside the barber shop, both the men and women applaud her version of handling sexual assault.

BLACKSMITH  
You tell 'em, sister.

SAPPHIRE  
Yep. Stop that bad seed from spreading through the generations.

KELSO

If you could see the sick stuff I bust people on. Wow, if that was on the ballot, I'd vote for it.

COURTNEY

That's why girl's sports are so important. If you can't fight them off, at least out-run them.

DIGGITY

You play baseball, right?

COURTNEY

Softball, brother. But ain't nothing soft about my game. I'm a catcher.

LEONARD

Cool, that was my position too.

DIGGITY

I want to hear from the Motherland. What would you do if you was Jesus?

SAPPHIRE

Now that I have hindsight, me understand what to do. If I was Jesus, I'd make folks call me by my real name, Yeshua. Y'all know he was African, right?

CUT AWAY

The commonplace image of Jesus, morphs into Sapphire in ancient robes. Panning down we see a t-shirt that reads, YESHUA...in big letters.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

That's why he went to Egypt right after he was born. Blend in with the homeys there.

Black Mary and Joseph cross a desert with pyramids in the background. The black residents of a village come out to greet them warmly.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

Slavery and the destruction of Africa never would happen.

Slave ship picture. It is stamped with a big red 'X' over it.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

I'd make sure all generations knew  
what I looked like too. Have a  
portrait artist as disciple.  
Getting busy with the paint and  
cavass. Just use one of the  
townsfolk.

Jesus/Sapphire goes to a blind man with glazed over eyes. The  
healer spits on her hands and rubs the palms over the man's  
eyes. When he opens them, the eyes are clear.

He hugs Jesus/Sapphire in gratitude. The black Nazarene  
whispers in his ear and hands him painting supplies.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

I'd leave so many paintings of me,  
the bad guys couldn't burn them  
all.

Several different artists are drawing Jesus/Sapphire as  
healings are happening. Many other finished portraits  
surround the area already.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

You think our people would be  
kidnapped and slaughtered if they  
thought the savior of all mankind,  
looked like us? Shooting us up in  
supermarkets, like today? Nope, not  
happening.

Monks stand around their own artist as he works. They smile.

SAPPHIRE

If they changed the way I look  
after I was gone...

They take down the original depiction of Jesus on a wall and  
replace it with the one they just drew. A long-haired white  
guy. They proudly shake hands.

SAPPHIRE (CONT'D)

Like...let's say, if they turned me  
into some hippie looking Viking?

Old, accurate images are torn down all over the ancient world  
and replaced with the new one.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

Guess what?

In present day, all images magically change to show black  
Jesus/Sapphire with dreadlocks.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

All at once, all the statues,  
crucifixes, paintings, statues and  
children's books all across the  
world...would suddenly to turn into  
what I really looked like.

White people freak out and run around in a full-on panic.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)

White folks be yanking them  
medallions off their necks  
like...Yaaaah.

END CUT AWAY

Sapphire acts like she is flinging insects from her chest and  
makes a funny face. The barber shop rolls with laughter.

JOSH E.

Hey Rev, do you call him Yeshua or  
Jesus in your church?

REV BENNETT

I tried the real name, but folks  
don't wanna hear that. The Jesus  
name runs too deep and they don't  
want to change.

IKE

That's why my daddy raised me,  
Black Muslim. Too many folk,  
brainwashed by their kidnappers.  
Running from the truth.

REV BENNETT

And what exactly, is the truth?  
If I was Jesus, the very last  
people I'd want to tell my life's  
mission, is the folks who nailed me  
to the cross. Believe that.

JOSH E.

I heard that.

MAMIE

Romans sure 'nuff killed him. It's  
kinda crazy that we trust a single  
word they say about him.

CUT AWAY

Rev Bennett as Jesus, still wears his collar. A possessed woman with crazy hair, screams and starts running towards him. Her skin is rotted from leprosy and fingers are missing.

Jesus/Rev Bennett holds out his hand for her to halt. Her body spasms, then collapses to the ground. Near her body are two withered fingers, that must have fallen off.

Picking them up, Rev Bennet as Jesus, re-attaches them to her hand. When she sits up, she looks like a secretary from, MAD-MEN, with beehive hair-do and Catwoman glasses.

REV BENNETT (V.O.)  
If I was Jesus, I would get a  
scribe to be an apostle so they  
could write down everything I said  
and did.

She nods thanks to Rev Bennet as Jesus, then grabs a stenography machine and begins typing as he starts preaching.

REV BENNETT (V.O.)  
I'd sit her right next to  
Sapphire's sketch pad artist.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)  
My guy was a PAINTER.

The stenographer sits next to an egotistical painter.

REV BENNETT (V.O.)  
Whatever. The point is, to have  
eyewitness accounts of what  
happened at the time.

IKE (V.O.)  
Yeah, not years and years later.

REV BENNETT (V.O.)  
Huge chunks of his life his  
missing. Especially about the time  
that he became a man.

A teenage depiction of Jesus/Rev. Bennett, with same collar on, smiles.

REV BENNETT  
What wisdom could he have passed  
down to the youth?

The teen version peeks around a huge question mark.

REV BENNETT (V.O.)  
Are we supposed to guess?

END CUT AWAY

The preacher holds up his war torn bible.

REV BENNETT  
This book. We trust with our  
eternal souls ...is incomplete. If  
I was Jesus, I'd fill in the holes.  
Give the WHOLE story.

MAMIE  
I respect that, reverend. How about  
you, Ike? If you was--

Ike tips his head so he can see above his bifocals and  
directly into Mamie's eyes.

IKE  
Y'all can skip me in this game. I  
wasn't raised that way. Robocop  
over there can take my turn.

DIGGITY  
Aw, come on, old man. Where's that  
elder knowledge?

IKE  
Fine...if I was Jesus, I'd cure my  
arthritis, then go home and drink  
more beer. Happy?

Several of the guys boo that answer.

KELSO  
Let me protect and serve my senior  
citizen by taking his spot. I  
didn't get much church growing up,  
but I think Jesus did what he was  
supposed to, actually.

JOSH E.  
In what way?

KELSO  
Seems like it was a contractional  
obligation that sucked to fulfill,  
but he did it anyway.

(MORE)

KELSO (CONT'D)  
Here's my thing, Pontius Pilate was  
there to uphold the law. He didn't.

CUT AWAY

Pilate/ Kelso in Roman robes, on a throne. Soldiers surround him. Jesus, only seen from behind, has his hands bound behind his back. Dreads lay on his shoulders. Priests hold him.

KELSO (V.O.)  
He blew it. Screwed up bad. If I  
was Pilate, I wouldn't have  
sentenced him to death for just  
making speeches. What kind of shit  
was that? Most of what he said  
wasn't about Rome anyway.

Priests roughly shove Jesus closer to Pilate/Kelso.

KELSO (V.O.)  
Killing him? How stupid. That's a  
move an insecure punk would make.  
No amount of hand washing can clean  
away the blood of an innocent man.

Kelso looks confused, then rubs his chin. Points orders to his soldiers. They arrest the priests and cut Jesus free. Jesus dabs up Pilate.

KELSO (V.O.)  
I'd arrest the folks who brought  
him to me, for making a false  
police report.

Jesus is seen from the back as he and Pilate chill in lounge chairs on a balcony overlooking Jerusalem. Pilate bows in respect to him, then they shake, Pilate smiles.

KELSO (V.O.)  
I'd buddy up with the brother, have  
some wine and cigars with him and  
hear him out.

They stand in front of a food tent. Folks walk out with huge plates of food. A sign of the tent reads, : TODAY'S SPECIAL - FISH, BREAD AND RED VELVET CAKE.

KELSO (V.O.)  
I'd work with him to turn Palestine  
into a paradise. Everyone fed,  
respected and happy.

Locals and Romans sit together and eat at tables. Smiles all around.

Palestine Border Patrol guards, watch people from all over the world, scale barrier walls to enter the country.

KELSO (V.O.)  
Folks would pour into Palestine  
like they do to America.

Pilate/Kelso stands on a balcony, sees squabble between locals, below. Then he shakes his head in disgust.

He goes to a spotlight on the balcony, turns it on. In the night sky is the image of a fish. Jesus and his crew show up in a flash.

KELSO (V.O.)  
Be like Batman and Commissioner  
Gordon. Work together for justice.  
To truly, protect and serve.

END CUT AWAY

Ike studies Kelso's face, like a horn just grew out of his head, then chuckles.

IKE  
And so who decided this dilly,  
comic book boy...could carry a gun?

MAMIE  
Oh, hush up. Your old, evil self.  
You can't even speak on the name of  
Jesus without bursting into flames.

VT3  
Right. We need more decent cops  
that feel a responsibility to  
improve the world. Old blue blood  
here probably don't remember  
busting me with a joint, then  
letting me go.

KELSO  
I don't remember, but yeah...I do  
that often.

VT3  
If I was a cop, that's how I would  
play it.

Kelso levels his green eyes at the younger man.

KELSO

I can help you make that happen.  
Join the force. We need more folks  
like you with their heart in the  
right place.

VT3

Me? Come on, man.

MAMIE

Shit, why not? You're running  
around here taping them on your  
phone all the time.

VT3

Yeah well, I'm protecting the hood  
when I'm filming.

KELSO

When you become a badge, you can do  
that at a bigger scale, plus get  
paid for it.

IKE

Don't listen to them. Stay living  
in your mama's basement until you  
get gray hair like me.

VT3 shifts in his chair and looks uncomfortable.

VT3

Ain't this something. Getting  
recruited by Elliot Ness and his  
buddy...the elderly mess.

LEONARD

I know I'd feel better if I knew  
you was on patrol around here. I'm  
just saying.

The fingers of VT3 caress his African shirt as his eyes catch  
his reflection in the mirror.

VT3

I'll think about it. You got a  
card?

Kelso quickly digs out his contact info and slides it to him  
with a smile.

KELSO

Call me anytime.

Ike still works on the pastor's head as he watches it go down.

IKE  
Touching, ain't it? Toss me another one of them beers. I'm ready to tell y'all what I would do...if I was Jesus.

Mamie pulls out another and walks it over to him.

LEONARD  
Nobody wants to hear that shit now.

MAMIE  
No. It's okay, Ike. Tell your whack ass story.

REV BENNETT  
Since you're swigging more of that booze, I assume you are done with my head.

The pastor checks himself in the mirror, then slides Ike the cost of the cut, plus a tip.

IKE  
Chair is open, Mr. Josh.

The announcement catches Josh E with a mouthful of beer suds. He swallows.

JOSH E.  
This beer is hitting the spot right now. I'll be over after your story.

IKE  
Bet. Then we can hear yours.

JOSH E.  
I'll make sure that you all get my version. I'm sure if there is a real Jesus...or Yeshua, he has enjoyed your take on his mission.

IKE  
Maybe that's because he ain't heard from me yet.

Gray hair tips back for a healthy swig.

REV BENNETT  
Don't let that beer make you blaspheme.

Ike chuckles and waves him off.

IKE  
Everything the human race done did  
since we slaughtered his son was a  
big, huge blaspheme. Who we  
kidding? Am I lying?

CUT AWAY

Gray skies hover above the hills of Golgotha. Soldiers roughly shove a bloodied, beaten man to the ground. It is Ike as Jesus.

Roman soldiers whip him until he lies on his back. Underneath him, a wooden cross. One centurion has a hammer and three, long, spike-like nails in his hands.

IKE (V.O.)  
If I was Jesus, the world would  
have been over when they hammered  
that first nail in my hand. Ya  
heard? I ain't playing.

His arms are tied to the cross with rope, first. Then one of the metal spikes is placed over his wrist, ready to be pounded in. Ike gives him an, "I don't think so', look.

IKE (V.O.)  
I would be fair and even warn that  
ass first. I'd be like...

JESUS/IKE  
Looky here, buddy. Y'all done  
already beat me like a country mule  
in your little torture chamber, but  
you start playing pin cushion with  
my ass...I got something for you.

The look on his face says...You better back up if you know what's good for you.

He turns his head to face the intimidated on-lookers.

JESUS/IKE (CONT'D)  
After all I did for your sorry  
asses? Nothing?

FLASHBACK - IKE HEALING

In the countryside, Ike as Jesus, heals people with his touch. He preaches to crowds, who wear ragged robes.

IKE (V.O.)  
Jesus didn't have to be a servant  
to them stank folks...stumbling  
around the desert. Healing them,  
feeding them, uplifting them.

DAYDREAM

Ike as Jesus, macked-out, on a throne with gold jewelry just  
dripping off him. Hot girls feed him grapes as they massage  
his feet.

IKE (V.O.)  
He could've been straight  
profiling. Iced up and more gold  
that the world ever saw. Fine ass  
servant girls feeding him grapes.  
But he didn't, did he?

FLASHBACK - JESUS/IKE PUNISHED

Jesus/Ike being whipped by Romans.

IKE (V.O.)  
He allowed himself to be put in the  
position of being tortured by  
these...uncivilized, barbarians.

He carries the cross. In the crowd watching are people he had  
a flashback of healing when they were at their worse.

IKE (V.O.)  
Ungrateful ass people he healed,  
didn't even bum rush the enemy.  
Jesus did miracles for them...and  
nothing? Cowards...didn't even make  
a peep.

Jesus/Ike arrested in the garden and his crew flees away.

IKE (V.O.)  
Even his crew scampered away like  
spineless snakes. They saw the  
miracles, heard the wisdom...first  
hand. Nobody, no one, came to his  
aid? Really?

END OF FLASHBACK

Jesus/Ike returns to being flat on the cross. The Roman is  
ready to impale him to the wood beneath him.

IKE (V.O.)  
Was the mission worth his time? Was  
it? Bunch of poo-butt losers with  
no gratitude.

The spike is lined up over the naked wrist of the Nazarene.

JESUS/IKE  
Hey, I tried to be nice to you  
niggas. Nicer than nice. Now...I'm  
done.

Jesus/Ike looks to the sky, as if he is summoning something.

IKE (V.O.)  
The ground would start shaking and  
shit...and I don't mean a lil bit.  
The whole earth would turn dark.

Earthquake. The Roman looks scared, then drops his hammer.  
Then darkness...covers everything. Thunder roars loudly.

CUT TO BLACK.

Silence.

The sound of birds in the distance, gets louder. Then,  
sunshine slowly stretches across the horizon.

IKE (V.O.)  
When the sun came back  
out...wouldn't be a damn thing left  
alive...but the birds in the sky -  
and fish in the sea.

An abandoned, depopulated desert stretches out for miles.

The ruins of a once mighty civilization is devoid of all  
human existence. Birds fly through blue skies.

END CUT AWAY

Everyone in the barbershop stares at Ike with mouths agape.

BLACKSMITH  
Damn, bro...so we'd all been dead  
if you was Jesus?

DIGGITY  
That's pretty harsh, grandpa.

IKE

Damn straight. Good Friday, would be the very last Friday, these ungrateful humans would see.

His gray hair tips back as he takes a swig of suds.

MAMIE

I hear ya. After all the work that the Almighty did to make this world to enjoy...we mess it up. Then when he sends his son to clarify things--

VT3

And he gets mercked. That's some heartless, cold-blooded shit.

REV BENNETT

Then on the holidays where God is supposed to be celebrated - they torture and kill his earthly presence...with Santa and the Easter bunny. Talk about imbecile moves, wow.

COURTNEY

Wouldn't be so bad if we would have learned to be better people, from what he went through for us.

Westside Juan stands, to emphasize his point.

WESTSIDE JUAN

But we didn't, did we. We still suck. Still do horrible things to each other. Everyday I see it and--

KELSO

And today is proof. I don't know why the good Lord still puts up with us.

IKE

That's why I'd wipe all their asses out. I might start life somewhere else in the world, but them suckers...

Ike makes the universal sign of a throat being cut.

SAPPHIRE

Think they would have treated him like that in Africa? Hell no.

JOSH E.

If his mission was to show how much  
God loves us by sacrificing  
something precious to him...I'm  
sure he'd find a way to prove that  
in Africa too.

Sapphire is taken back by the statement.

LEONARD

He must see something spectacular  
in us...that we can't see.

Leonard seems confused.

JOSH E.

I think you're right. More  
spectacular than we could imagine.

SAPPHIRE

Well, Josh E, we best hear your  
version so we can clear out of  
here, so Miss Thang can pack up her  
shop...so them knuckle-dragging,  
degenerate bikers, can set up their  
tattoo shop, slash - meth lab.

MAMIE

You ain't right.

SAPPHIRE

Shee-it. If they ain't Meth-  
Monkeys, their funky ass clients  
will be. End up driving me off,  
after about a week.

VT3

This neighborhood won't be the same  
without the shop.

Mamie is deeply conflicted and it shows in her face.

MAMIE

Baby, I still believe in miracles  
and I'm sho' nuff waiting on mine.

4:20 P.M.

Donitsmellgud looks at his watch, then at Josh E.

DONITSMELLGUD

Forget them, Corpus Christi. My date will be here any second and I want to hear what you got to say. Grab your horn and blow, brother.

JOSH E.

Okay. All those stories were very entertaining. But me...I think Christ did a perfect job. Exactly what he was sent to do.

Blacksmith gives him side-eye.

BLACKSMITH

Really? It could have been easier if he just took over the Roman Empire, right?

JOSH E.

Why would he settle for an empire, when he was here to save the whole world? Rome could fall...and did, but oppression, greed, and murder would remain unless people changed from within.

BLACKSMITH

But the army would help enforce his ideas to make a better world.

JOSH E.

True change comes from choice, not coercion. If Jesus wanted political power, the people would have gladly given it to him. Many were expecting a military Messiah.

BLACKSMITH

I can dig that. Romans were greedy bullies. They wanted some of that sweet payback.

He mimics throwing punches.

JOSH E.

But - he rejected that path. He wanted to change the world in a way that no emperor, army, or government ever could...by changing hearts.

DONITSMELLGUD

I agree with you, man. He should have used my idea of using some fine looking dimes to spread the word. No offense, Rev.

Some chuckle.

JOSH E.

Jesus wasn't looking for drop dead influencers or bikini models to help make a change. He needed workers. He wanted people who would serve, love, and sacrifice. His grungy looking disciples, despite their flaws... were willing to give up, everything - to follow him.

WESTSIDE JUAN

They sure did, huh. That's why the mass healing of folks should have been the priority. That's something they'd never forget.

JOSH E.

What good is a healed body if the soul is still sick? He could heal every sickness on Earth, but if hearts remain unchanged, what good would it do?

Westside Juan looks skeptical.

WESTSIDE JUAN

I'm sure the folks he healed would remember it forever and be grateful. He gave them a new chance to enjoy life.

JOSH E.

Jesus knew that people could witness the most incredible signs and still turn away. After all, the same crowds who cheered for his miracles...later shouted, "Crucify him!" Am I right?

A headshake of despair acknowledges Juan's argument has fallen flat.

WESTSIDE JUAN

Your right - hey...like I always say, people suck.

(MORE)

## WESTSIDE JUAN (CONT'D)

He made the blind folks see, then they flipped him off when he needed them the most.

## COURTNEY

Ain't that pitiful? I know I got carried away with my version of what Jesus could have done, but it's easier to listen, when you ain't starving to death.

Heads nod in agreement.

## MAMIE

Yep, wasn't no food stamps or social security back then. If you can't work, you can't eat.

## JOSH E.

Seems like...he wanted sharing to be our food stamps and compassion to be our social security. Jesus didn't want people to see him as a source for free meals or some kind of...magical food dispenser.

All in the barber shop have a laugh.

## COURTNEY

I guess that's true.

## JOSH E.

If he miraculously fed everyone, it wouldn't fix the root causes of suffering. Instead, he taught people to share, to love their neighbors and to care for the poor.

## SAPPHIRE

Like Bob Marley said. Them belly full, but them hungry.

Josh E points to her in agreement.

## JOSH E.

That's exactly what I'm saying. Bob was a genius. Jesus knew that hunger is more than just a lack of food. People need spiritual nourishment too...inner peace, love, and a purpose to live.

SAPPHIRE

Brother Bob believed Yeshua was a black man. So do I. Why should I trust the other stuff they say when they lie about that?

JOSH E.

People might change his image to fit their agendas, but that wouldn't change...who he is.

SAPPHIRE

So why did that happen?

JOSH E.

The deeper issue is... when people change his image for their own gain, it's not about him...it's about them - and about control.

After a clap of the hands, Ike points to him, smiling.

IKE

You got that right, brother.

JOSH E.

Twisting his identity to fit human agendas is missing the whole point of his message. Repaint his image however you like, but if you don't follow his words...you absolutely miss out on his salvation.

DONITSMELLGUD

Oh he was definitely black. His boy John the Baptist dressed like a cross between Rick James and George Clinton in the Funkadelic days.

Leonard lowers his voice few octaves.

LEONARD

(sung)

*The bigger the headache...the bigger the pill, baby.*

VT3

That's what I'm talking about. If he had saved John, when Judas went to kiss Jesus with the po-po behind him - John would say...He ain't Jesus, kiss ME...you backstabbing ass nigga. I'm Jesus.

Laughs.

LEONARD

Yeah, he was a brother who was down till the end.

JOSH E.

Storming Herod's palace would send the wrong signal, right?. Violence or showing out...commando style, would not lead people to transform spiritually.

IKE

Nobody would shed a tear if Judas got shanked. Ungrateful piece of shit that he was.

Mumbled agreement is expressed by the shop.

JOSH E.

At the Last Supper, Jesus washed Judas' feet. Think about that.

(beat)

Jesus humbled himself to serve the man who would soon betray him. Feel me? He didn't retaliate. He didn't expose him to the group. He showed love, even to the person who would cause his execution.

The room is silent.

REV BENNETT

Blows your mind when you think about it. MLK had a truckload of that kind of love too. Even as a pastor, I struggle to live up to that kind of forgiveness.

MAMIE

So you are saying Jesus would still have love for that asshole that shot up all them innocent folks today? For real? I can't wrap my head around that. Sure can't.

Pent up anger and pain are entwined in her words.

REV BENNETT

That's why a religion naturally formed around him.

(MORE)

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

He was the best of us...and his words should never be forgotten. I just wish much more was written about him.

COURTNEY

I liked that idea of having someone writing down every word he said.

DIGGITY

Compared to Buddha and Mohammad, he has barely anything written. They have volumes.

A smile comes to Josh E.

JOSH E.

He didn't come to win a writing contest. Jesus came to change hearts. He preached, healed, and led by example - knowing that living the truth...was more powerful than just writing it down.

REV BENNETT

Wouldn't it be better to have more than just Matthew, Luke, Mark and John to refer to? Whatever happens to our eternal souls, depends on understanding it.

JOSH E.

I think he wanted his words to be lived, not just recorded. Do you really prefer him to sit in a house, dictating scripture? He walked among people, ate with them, and shared his teachings. He wanted people to experience his message, not just read it on a scroll.

Rev Bennett seems to agree, but adds...

REV BENNETT

With less written down, it made it easier to lie in his name.

KELSO

And twist around what he did say. Some heartless assholes even used some of his words to justify shit like slavery.

JOSH E.

He knew that people would misinterpret and manipulate his words. Jesus warned that false teachers would come in his name. He told his followers to judge them not by their words alone, but by their actions.

The minister holds up his bible and shakes it in agreement.

REV BENNETT

That's true. He did say, "Many will distort my words...but look at their fruit."

JOSH E.

People can edit, censor, and twist words, but truth has a way of enduring. A true follower of Christ produces fruits of love, justice, mercy, and humility. If they use his name, but seem to just lust after money and power...do not eat of that fruit.

He motions that he tosses the fruit away.

REV BENNETT

You sure know a lot about the Good Word. Are you a preacher too?

JOSH E.

Me? I'm what you might call a fix-it man. But I did minister a bit - in the past. It never leaves you.

Intrigued, the preacher sits forward.

REV BENNETT

Why did you quit?

JOSH E.

The elders didn't like that I was a social activist. They thought they knew everything, yet they were wrong and also corrupted by money.

REV BENNETT

Glad you walked away, then.

Josh E gets a thumbs up from his fellow minister.

JOSH E.

Well...It was more like they pushed me out. But it turned out okay.

MAMIE

I see how you take the Gospel so seriously. You probably pissed off all them preachers, just in it for the money and the lonely widows.

Her insight makes Josh E chuckle.

JOSH E.

Without a doubt.

MAMIE

It just makes me sick when men are found to be pedophiles or woman beaters. Especially when they are supposed to be preachers.

JOSH E.

He didn't just speak about justice for women...he LIVED it. You see, Jesus didn't just suggest protecting women and children...he commanded it.

REV BENNETT

He sure did. Matthew 18:6. "Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for them to have a millstone tied around their neck and be thrown into the sea." He wasn't playing.

A high-five is slapped to the preacher by the visitor.

JOSH E.

Christ treated women with dignity when the world did not. In a time when women were often treated as property, Jesus broke cultural norms to uplift and defend them.

LEONARD

That proves my point. If he lived longer, he could have shown more folks the right way to act.

MAMIE

And maybe we wouldn't be in the mess we're in now. Especially on a day like today.

JOSH E.

Jesus CHOSE TO give up his life  
when he did. He knew that staying  
longer, living a normal life, and  
growing old...would have meant  
abandoning his purpose.

(beat)

Sacrifice of self...for others.

Minds digest his words, in silence.

LEONARD

But he was so young. I've got socks  
that are older than he was.

JOSH E.

By not finding an attractive wife  
and not allowing to give himself a  
happy family...made his sacrifice  
even more meaningful. Wouldn't you  
agree?

MAMIE

Considering that we're still  
killing and abusing each other,  
that poor brother must wonder - if  
that sacrifice was worth it.

Josh E hesitates before answering.

JOSH E.

I hear ya. Not just the dying, but  
the loneliness he felt, must have  
been devastating.

REV BENNETT

He had a crew of twelve. Lonely?

JOSH E.

Yes, but..no romance for the  
messenger of love. Imagine that,  
Reverend. No hugs.

(beat)

He was alone. Even the disciples he  
hung out with, weren't like him. No  
one was. At the end, they ran from  
him. That's lonely.

IKE

He would have made one hell of a  
Blues singer.

Mamie narrows her eyes in her barber's direction.

MAMIE

Hush up, fool.

COURTNEY

I never thought about, how alone he must have felt.

LEONARD

All the more reason to lean into humor. Laughter heals everyone. Even the one telling the jokes.

The statement is pondered by Josh E.

JOSH E.

No doubt. Jesus understood that humor has power. It can disarm, it can reveal truth, and it can make lessons stick. He used stories, exaggeration, and clever phrasing...but his goal wasn't just laughs. His goal was spiritual transformation.

IKE

I appreciate him trying to help us not be assholes to each other...going through all that loneliness and other bullshit they threw at him. But it didn't work. Ask them dead folks in the supermarket.

He points aggressively at the scene of the mass murder. That feeling of outrage is not lost on Josh E.

JOSH E.

I don't think his mission is completed yet. Even in the face of betrayal, cruelty, violence and death...his purpose never changed. He loves the human family with an intensity that is hard to fathom.

(emotional)

In unbelievable pain...bloodied and facing death - he said, "Father, FORGIVE THEM...for they know not, what they do."

His heartfelt outpouring, brings Rev Bennett to his feet.

REV BENNETT

That example is the reason I became a preacher of his word.

(MORE)

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

Thank you for reminding me young man. I'm starting to feel recharged again.

JOSH E.

Glad to help, Reverend. We all have to remember something. Jesus didn't just preach love and mercy...he lived it...to the very end.

IKE

Still, it's hard for me to wrap my head around that, even though it seems to make sense. I doubt that sort of mercy is in my bones.

Mamie turns in his direction.

MAMIE

All you got in your bones is arthritis.

Laughs.

JOSH E.

Even though my brother has aging in his bones and snow on the roof, it's never too late to change. Jesus knew that humans had to live by the law of the jungle for a time. But that time is over.

(beat)

That's why he came. To show a better way. And you know what?

(emotional)

He'd probably do it all again. Even that brutal execution.

BLACKSMITH

Damn. That's what I call a REAL MAN. Whew.

VT3

Massive props.

KELSO

Yeah, that's deep.

IKE

I'm starting to smell what you're cooking, young man.

DIGGITY

Churches sing songs about him but  
they don't come close to how you're  
laying it down. Just lots of  
repetition and hollering.

Deadpan.

IKE

Too much hollering.

DIGGITY

With hip-hop, so much information  
can be broke-down in a short time.  
I still wish he was a rapper.

JOSH E.

I'd like to hear that too, straight  
up. That song you played earlier  
was tight, but I think he'd spit  
different lyrics.

COURTNEY

That's something I'd wear-out on  
Spotify.

Josh E saunters towards Diggity.

JOSH E.

You still got that beat on your  
phone, brother?

DIGGITY

IF I RULED THE WORLD by NAS? I'm  
not sure if my boy from Nazareth  
could even match that?

JOSH E.

Let your boy in the barber shop  
take a shot.

Diggity smiles at him, then pulls out the trusty cell phone  
and dials up the beat. All see Josh E., bop to the bassline  
as the vibration radiates through his whole boy.

A hair brush, similar in size to a mic, is scooped up from  
Diggity's barber products. The hair stylist nods to Josh E  
that it is okay.

Josh E adds a swagger to his stagger, as he uses the brush  
like a microphone. He pounces on the beat...

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*Still livin' for today, in these  
last days and times...  
Yo, it'd be...heaven on Earth, love  
lasting  
Black, Latino, Asian, Anglo-Saxon  
No more division, no hate, no  
factions*

He holds up his index finger.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*Just one people, one light, one  
passion  
The lost found, the broken made  
whole  
Chains shattered, no more lost  
souls  
No more hunger, no more pain  
No more weeping, lot less shame  
Brand new homes for the orphans to  
laugh in  
Fathers return, no more kids  
abandoned  
Tables full, every cup overflowing  
Faith bloom like seeds in the  
garden I'm growing*

He smiles.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*No more greed, less love for the  
cash  
Every knee bows, every first made  
last  
Every king serves, every rich man  
gives  
Every heart heals, every lost soul  
lives  
Open them eyes to the many lies  
they were sold  
Truth shines bright, worth more  
than gold  
No false prophets, no wolves in  
disguise  
Only love, only truth, only light  
in your eyes*

Josh E points to his peepers.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*I'd free every drug addict locked  
in a cage  
Break every cycle of violence and  
rage  
Turn war zones to places of peace  
Where the streets shine joy and the  
battles all cease  
Political prisoners, set 'em all  
free  
No more corrupt men controlling the  
weak*

Josh E squats a bit so he is eye level with those sitting.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*No more hunger, no child in despair  
Every nation would know that the  
Father is there  
I'd let the words of Dr. King lead  
the cities  
Turn every hustler's grind, into  
purpose with me  
I'd make kings out of slaves, lift  
the depressed from the ashes  
Give the blind their sight, heal  
the world with compassion*

The hairbrush is spun in his hand, then he starts again.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*If I ruled the world, I'd make all  
things right...  
Every fear withered away in the  
Kingdom of Light.*

The rapper smiles to everyone.

JOSH E. (CONT'D)

(sung)

*Still living for today...  
In these last days and times.*

At the end, Josh E does a mic drop with the hairbrush. It falls to the floor with a thud.

After a fraction of stunned silence...the whole room erupts into an outburst of applause and...

ENTIRE BARBERSHOP  
 You go brother...You hear  
 that?...My man was slappin'.

JOSH E.  
 If you don't know...now you know.

He drains the rest of his beer, then shoots the can in the trash basket, but misses.

VT3  
 Maybe you can rap, but stay away  
 from the NBA.

As he bends over to scoop up his wayward shot, his colorful bracelets fall off and scatter. Huge, ugly wounds in both his wrists are seen.

Diggity and Mamie help him pick them up.

MAMIE  
 Good Lord, brother. What happened  
 to your wrists?

His reaction is calm and composed.

JOSH E.  
 I was in police custody before.  
 Left me for dead after a massive  
 beating and torture. I usually look  
 forward to Fridays, but that one,  
 not good at all. I've learned to  
 forgive and move on.

KELSO  
 Sorry fella. I apologize for all  
 the good cops who would never do  
 anything like that.

JOSH E.  
 It warms my heart to hear that.

MAMIE  
 Poor Buffalo. We been through some  
 shit ain't we? Long may she live.

DIGGITY  
 I got the perfect jam for the  
 moment.

He fidgets with his phone until music plays. The song is Rick James - GHETTO LIFE.

All those in the shop toast each other and some sing along with the lyrics.

BLACKSMITH

This is for all the brothers and  
sisters that were taken away from  
us today.

He pours out beer on the floor for the dead and others join him in the tribute.

MAMIE

(yells)

Don't pour it on the floor, fool.  
Pour it in the base of them damn  
plastic plants. They look hungry.

Ike looks over to Josh E.

IKE

If you're done spitting saliva all  
over our sanitized brushes, I'm  
ready to get that dreadlock look,  
lined-up for you.

JOSH E.

Thank you, sir. This beer is  
working on me. I'll use the  
bathroom and be back shortly.

He strolls to the john.

WESTSIDE JUAN

You might need to put down some  
newspaper so you don't get blood on  
your sandals.

Josh E...Turns and laughs.

JOSH E.

Blood on sandals? It ain't nothing  
new to me.

He goes inside.

The chime on the outside door is activated by LING (24), an attractive Asian woman who looks around.

LING

Excuse me. My name is Ling. I'm  
here to meet, Donitsmellgud. His  
friend, Brenda sent me.

DONITSMELLGUD  
That's me, sweetheart.

LING  
Glad to meet you.

He turns to the barber shop crew.

DONITSMELLGUD  
Watch and learn how to get two  
dimes for the price of one.

LING  
Can I speak to you...outside?

He goes peacock and escorts her through the door, grinning.

IKE  
How does a big, oblong head brother  
like that get so lucky?

EXT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

Just outside the door, Ling turns back to him. Her eyes are watery. Her composure, shaky.

DONITSMELLGUD  
Where Brenda at? I'm ready to get  
this party started.

He bubbles with sexual anticipation.

LING  
A terrible thing happened, sir.  
Brenda was in the store...when,  
when...the shooting...

She starts to cry hard. Donitsmellgud is rocked backwards.  
The smile is wiped off his face. His mouth...hangs open.

DONITSMELLGUD  
Is...is she-

LING  
They just took her to the hospital.  
She's in bad shape. I'm the tutor  
that she hired for you.

DONITSMELLGUD  
What? Tutor?

LING

It was supposed to be a surprise.  
You confided in her that you can't  
read, so she hired me to help.

He looks around to make sure no one heard her.

DONITSMELLGUD

No one is supposed to know that.

LING

She said that's the only thing  
holding you back from becoming your  
true self. She told me the jewelry  
and playboy stuff was just an act  
and deep down...you're a diamond.

A change comes over Donitsmellgud. Gets emotional. His eyes  
get misty.

DONITSMELLGUD

Nobody ever...I don't know what to  
say. God bless that girl.

LING

She's at Buffalo General. I had to  
tell you first, but I'm going there  
right now.

DONITSMELLGUD

I'll meet you at the hospital in a  
few. I can't believe this.

They hug, then she dashes away.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

He drags back into the shop, stunned. He plops down on the  
couch, bewilderment in his eyes.

BLACKSMITH

Hey playboy, you alright?

It takes a moment to respond.

DONITSMELLGUD

My girl. She got caught up in the  
shooting. And...I think she loves  
me - for me. This is too much.

He covers his face with his hands. Mamie rubs his shoulders.

BLACKSMITH

Sorry to hear that, bro. How can we help you?

The former player lifts his head. Eyes are red and watery. He goes over to Blacksmith.

DONITSMELLGUD

She's in the ER. I got to go see her. Like right now.

He looks over to Kelso, mindful not to expose the upcoming proposition.

DONITSMELLGUD (CONT'D)

(whispers to Blacksmith)

That gun. Could you buy it from me? I need to buy as many flowers as I can carry.

Blacksmith pulls out his wallet, hands over some big bills.

BLACKSMITH

Glad to help. I can shoot white rabbits in the snow with that thing and not be seen.

DONITSMELLGUD

That's a lot of cheese, bro. Here...I won't need this anymore.

He removes his jewelry and even his custom made necklace.

BLACKSMITH

My man, I can't take this. It's who you are.

DONITSMELLGUD

Not anymore. If you can't use it, donate it to Mamie's woman shelter.

MAMIE

Thank you, baby.

DONITSMELLGUD

Cool. Wow, what a day. Imma scoot. Thank y'all. This might be the most important day of my life.

REV BENNETT

We'll be praying for you, son.

He exits the establishment in a hurry.

MAMIE

I think that boy's days of being a player are over. I can see it in his eyes.

COURTNEY

Today proves, if you can find love, get it while you can. Ya never know when your last day could be.

Diggity smiles at her. She smiles back and flutters her eyes.

REV BENNETT

Amen to that, sister.

VT3

There's more beer if anyone is down. Feel free.

Courtney's phone pings. She pulls it out and grins proudly.

COURTNEY

Ha, coach sent highlights from our last softball game. I socked a homer and got three RBIs.

LEONARD

Really? Can I see? I used to tear it up in my day.

She waves him over. He scampers to her side so he can see it.

DIGGITY

Cool. I want to see the tigress in action too.

All three watch her cellphone screen.

LEONARD

Look at you getting that good wood. Way to go. Stick with it. I just played minor leagues, but baseball was one of the best times of my life. Wish I could still play.

COURTNEY

I know. Seems like I just feel so alive. Especially when the team wins because I made a good play.

LEONARD

Your team travel much?

COURTNEY  
Just around the New York colleges.

LEONARD  
For me, it took me all over the country. The best times was when I was a Buffalo Bison.

COURTNEY  
I never met my dad, but he was a Bison too. Maybe you met him.

LEONARD  
Maybe. Where did you grow up?

COURTNEY  
Way out in Orchard Park. Not too far from Chestnut Ridge.

LEONARD  
Hmm. I dated a Polish girl who lived in that area. Boy, did her parents hate me. I really liked her though. After I was traded, I wrote plenty of letters to her, but never heard back.

Courtney, shocked... she drops the phone and does not seem to care. Her eyes are fixated on the middle aged barber.

COURTNEY  
Uh, this sounds crazy, but my mom's last name is Tanikowski.

Diggity picks up her phone, but Leonard tilts his head sideways and squints his eyes as he studies her.

LEONARD  
Not Mary Lou, right?

COURTNEY  
How did you know?

Leonard backs up and nearly loses his balance.

LEONARD  
No way.

COURTNEY  
When my grandma died, they found unopened letters from an LT Johnson. My mother was pissed they were hidden from her. I hate to ask, but...is that...you?

All eyes focus on the ex-baller as he reaches behind himself for something to sit on so he does not fall flat out.

LEONARD  
This can't be happening.

COURTNEY  
(quivering voice)  
Dad?

The realization hits them both at the same time and it brings tears. He leaps up and gives her a tight hug.

LEONARD  
Oh my God. I had no idea you existed. Is this a joke?

COURTNEY  
No joke. Holy shit. I searched for years on the internet for you. Wait till I let my mom know about this.

LEONARD  
Ha, wait until your brothers and sisters hear about this. Whoa.

Diggity grabs two beers for them.

DIGGITY  
I think it's time for a toast.

They both clank cans...

LEONARD  
This toast is to my new beautiful daughter and whatever brought us together on this horrible but miraculous day. I promise that we will never part again.

COURTNEY  
I second that.

Others in the shop cheer as they consecrate their new relationship with a healthy chug.

LEONARD  
Know what's funny? One of the most outstanding young men that I've ever met, seems to have fallen in love with you on the bus ride to work. But he's afraid to speak up.

Diggity is shocked, embarrassed and annoyed that he spilled the beans.

DIGGITY  
Leonard. Really?

COURTNEY  
Gee, Dad. I can't imagine who that could be.

She looks over at Diggity, but he quickly avoids eye contact.

LEONARD  
The boy was just raving about you when he came to work. Now that you're here, he's too shy to ask for a date.

SAPPHIRE  
Hey Kelso, if he was your color, he'd be bright red like a cherry right now.

All laugh. Awkwardness covers Diggity's face.

IKE  
Leonard, you best stop teasing that boy before he makes your daughter an orphan up in here.

DIGGITY  
Look...I'm not shy, I just-

COURTNEY  
Just what?

DIGGITY  
I just don't want to blow it.  
Or...make a fool of myself.

Courtney maneuvers herself to face him. They lock eyes.

COURTNEY  
Ask.

DIGGITY  
Umm...can we have a coffee, together. At some point?

She toys with him.

COURTNEY  
(little girl voice)  
Daddy. That colored boy over there  
is sweet on me. Should I say yes?

LEONARD  
Starbucks, right? None of that  
cheap crap.

Diggity rolls his eyes.

DIGGITY  
Yeah, Starbucks.

LEONARD  
Yes daughter, you have my blessing.

MAMIE  
Good. Bring me back a vente iced  
mocha, no whipped cream.

SAPPHIRE  
And use oat milk. Whole milk makes  
her farty.

Everyone laughs. Mamie waves her off.

COURTNEY  
What a day. I almost get my head  
blown off, then I meet my future  
husband and the man who will give  
away the bride. It's a miracle.

BLACKSMITH  
I sure am happy for y'all. Next  
week I'll be knee deep in sand and  
camel shit...shooting folks I have  
no personal beef with.

His phone pings, he pulls it out and reads the text. His face  
distorts. Lips tremble and eyes get moist.

MAMIE  
You alright, soldier boy?

BLACKSMITH  
Them days...them days are over. My  
military discharge just came  
through. I'm free. I-I can't  
believe it. Praise the Lord.

COURTNEY  
Another miracle? Wow.

BLACKSMITH  
I gotta let my brother know.

He begins to text on the phone as he wipes tears. Suddenly he starts laughing.

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)  
His crazy ass wants me to get some chicken wings from the Anchor Bar to celebrate being a Buffalo boy.

VT3  
We lost one soldier but gained another. Kelso, if you can put me on the right path to work in internal affairs...I'll sign up for police academy, tomorrow.

KELSO  
For you, this will be a dream job. I'll get the ball rolling on that right away. For me, it's what I longed for...the community seeing me as a trustworthy cop.

MAMIE  
It's hard to imagine that boy in anything other than a football jersey. A Buffalo P.D. uniform? Looking forward to it.

VT3  
The best birthday gifts, are the ones you give to yourself.

Westside Juan points to the TV. Several Buffalo Bills are at a press conference with the team SPOKESWOMAN (30s).

WESTSIDE JUAN  
Check that out. Turn it up.

TV SCREEN

Somber faces on the players reflect a serious moment.

SPOKESWOMAN  
A tragedy has rocked our beloved community today. Our prayers go out to the families affected. On behalf of the Buffalo Bills, we have started an educational fund for all medical first responders. Full tuition.

WESTSIDE JUAN  
What? Are you shitting me?

He gets up and starts pacing back and forth. Mind blown.

MAMIE  
Looks like we have to call you  
Doctor Westside Juan, soon.

In his exuberance, he knocks Ike's beer to the floor.

WESTSIDE JUAN  
Sorry.

IKE  
Doctor? Him? Clumsy as that boy is,  
I don't want him to do nothing for  
me, other than a flu shot.

Ike bends over to get the can, then stands up with a curious look on his face. He tosses the can, but bends over again and stands up. He then does squats.

MAMIE  
Constipation problem?

IKE  
No pain. If I did this yesterday,  
agony would be my middle name.  
Since when does arthritis just...go  
away?

He begins to strut. Big smile.

VT3  
See, Genesee Beer has hidden,  
healing properties.

Ike walks by the window.

IKE  
This is crazy. Hey Sapphire, you  
got a Fedex package at your door.

SAPPHIRE  
Huh? What did I order?

Sapphire dashes by him as he does a silly dance to a jingle from a TV commercial that plays on the TV. She brings the big box inside.

MAMIE  
Y'all just ship your relatives over  
now and just skip immigration?

SAPPHIRE

Hush.

She pulls a switchblade from her purse and clicks it open.

KELSO

Those are illegal, but...I didn't see that.

The binds and tape are quickly cut and she lifts the lid of the large box that has African postage.

SAPPHIRE

Good God, man. I ordered this stuff a year ago. I had given up.

She pulls out gorgeous shirts, gowns and outfits as the folks at the shop, 'ohh and ahh'.

Ike 'camel-walks' over to her.

IKE

Whew. Look at that pretty shit. I like that one with the silver. Matches my hair. I'll buy it right now, sister.

SAPPHIRE

In Africa, we respect our elders. Anybody else want to make an offer on these before I put them on hangers?

Almost everyone gathers around her to inspect the goods.

Just as Rev Bennet gets up to take a look, DEACON GREENE (40s) comes in through the front door with an excited look on his face.

REV BENNETT

Deacon Greene? What brings you here?

GREENE

You got it, sir. What we spoke on the phone about before the shooting.

The minister seems to flip through his memory banks for a moment, but comes up blank.

REV BENNETT

Anything that happened before that bloody slaughter, escapes me. What was the topic?

GREENE

The research trip to the Holy Land, Remember? They notified the church on our Facebook page, just now.

Rev Bennett shakes his head as the news sinks in.

REV BENNETT

Praise God, from where all blessings spring. Me? In Jerusalem?

GREENE

Yep, working on ancient manuscripts, just like you wanted. I just had to tell you in person.

REV BENNETT

Thank you, Brother Deacon. I don't know what to say.

GREENE

Well, the congregation heard you went through some sorrowful things today...but we really need you to pastor for us tomorrow. If you can.

The preacher takes a deep breath with eyes tilted to the heavens, then replies...

REV BENNETT

My people need me...and I need them. And the good Lord Almighty needs us all. Especially in these days. Tell the flock, I will be there.

Deacon Greene smiles wide and heads to the door.

GREENE

I'll let them know right away. Congratulations, Rev Bennett. And thank you.

The deacon exits as the room goes silent.

MAMIE

I'm so happy everyone is getting the things they need most in this life.

(MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)

As horrible as this day has been,  
some folks have been healed...and  
that pleases my heart.

IKE

That brother been in the john for  
more than a minute and missed all  
that good news. I'll go check on  
him. I gots to piss, anyway. These  
blood pressure pills make you pee  
like a dog marking its territory.

Half dancing, Ike knocks on the door. No answer.

Ike opens the door. The entire bathroom is sparkling clean,  
especially the sink. But now...a huge goldfish is in it.

IKE (CONT'D)

Get over here, big mama. You gotta  
see this.

Mamie stomps over and looks. She is speechless.

MAMIE

How'd that happen?

IKE

Where the hell is Josh E?

MAMIE

He didn't go into the lobby and the  
windows are still nailed shut, so  
customers don't try to weasel away  
without paying. And why the hell is  
this stupid fish here?

As she picks up the fish by its tail to move it...dozens Of  
gold coins fall out of its mouth. Roman coins in spotless  
condition.

Ike and Mamie are temporarily frozen in shock. She picks up  
one of the coins.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Praise God. If I'm sleeping, don't  
you dare wake me up.

She scoops up more of the coins, gives a few to Ike. Then  
pets the goldfish.

IKE

This...is crazy.

MAMIE

Mr. Fishy, you just found your forever home. Ike, after you're done pissing, I need you to go over to Walmart, to get a nice big fish tank for our buddy here.

IKE

If he keeps spitting these things up, he can buy his own lake.

Mamie, excited and giddy goes into the lobby.

REV. BENNETT

Lord have mercy, child. Why in the world, you so happy?

SAPPHIRE

It can't be from seeing Ike's old, wrinkled weiner.

MAMIE

Y'all know I was on the verge of losing the shop. But a miracle just happened. And I don't mean a little one. Where is Josh E? You seen him?

KELSO

He didn't come through here.

LEONARD

I thought he was still in the bathroom.

MAMIE

I can't explain it, but this just happened. A blessing from heaven.

She shows the coins and gives each person one.

SAPPHIRE

Huh? How?

MAMIE

Wait until you see that bloody bathroom, somehow it's clean now. Like brand new.

(turns towards bathroom)

Ike hurry up.

He opens the door, bewildered.

IKE

You ain't gonna believe this.

Others come over and stare in wonder about the transformation of the bathroom. Mamie is shocked to see the fish is gone.

MAMIE

Where'd he go?

IKE

After I was done pissing, I turned around and it was gone.

Mamie looks at him like he's lying.

MAMIE

Boy...

IKE

What you think? I ate him raw?

REV BENNETT

How do you explain this? And where is Josh E? This makes no sense.

MAMIE

I've got more than enough to pay the IRS and bank. Maybe I'll donate the rest to the families of today's victims.

They head back into the heart of the lobby, confused and full of questions.

KELSO

Quite a mystery on our hands. Any ideas, cadet?

VT3 shakes his head. Bewildered too.

DIGGITY

Hey, where is the hairbrush my man was spitting lyrics with? It was right here on the floor.

REV BENNETT

I got to get over to the church and prepare that sermon for tomorrow. Folks are counting on me to help them through. Thanks again, Mamie.

He waves good-bye and strides to the door, then freezes.

REV BENNETT (CONT'D)

Hey y'all. I think I found Josh E. You won't believe this. Look.

All look out the window. About ten feet from the store, Josh E stands facing the supermarket. He raises both hands.

Small spheres of bright energy orbs, fly from the grocery store towards him. All ten spheres hit the palms of his hand and seem to be absorbed.

All are gathered at the window. Eyes so wide they are about to burst.

Josh E turns with a joyous smile, to face his new friends. Then winks.

They quickly back away from the window, with fear and fascination in their eyes.

MAMIE

D-did y'all see...what I just did?

They creep back over towards the window, in wonderment mode. They look outside. No one is there.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

What's going on, preacher man?

REV BENNETT

Sister, I don't know what to tell you. But I think, we just been blessed to see miracles...after living through madness.

Mamie turns to study the joy on the faces around her.

MAMIE

Good God almighty. You ain't nothing BUT right about that.

She reaches for the doorknob, hesitates, then swings the door open wide...for the first time today. A significant Spring breeze flutters their clothing.

Mamie takes an audible deep...deep breath.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

Y'all smell that? That's the gift...of another day.

(beat)

And a brighter future. Amen?

They all stare out the door, as the sun breaks through dark clouds...on a special day.

EVERYONE

Amen...

The afternoon sun illuminates the faces of all those in the shop...as they take in the simple beauty - of being alive.

THE END