

IF I WAS...JESUS
by

Christopher Harmon

(Based on, THE 2022 BUFFALO SUPERMARKET
MASS SHOOTING)

Name - Christopher Harmon
EMAIL Address - darkmarktwain@yahoo.com
Phone - 480 251 4827

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP, OFFICE - DAY

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

SUPER - WHEN IT RAINS, THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY GETS WET. WE MUST STRIVE TO SHELTER - ALL PRECIOUS SOULS.

She glances 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 notices the mirror, studies her face...then clenches her hands in a silent prayer.

Before she exits, 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 needs to be re-painted.

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 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 focuses 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,
comes from the john. The old barber 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. 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 her uniform. Then 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, heads towards her...

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. Eyes moist.

MAMIE (CONT'D)

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

Her attention 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. She wipes the tears away 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, (40s, Italian), 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 Antonelli 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 laugh and joke. He puts a comforting hand on her shoulder as she starts to break.

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 noises outside. She brushes it off. Ghetto car engine back-fire?

GUY IN LONG COAT (20s), Covid mask, black ski cap that covers his hair...dashes into the store. Her eyes scan the odd customer.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

Diggity arrives with a single rose in tow. Donitsmellgud gets in the chair. A barber's smock is tossed on immediately.

DIGGITY

S'up y'all. We good today?

He puts the flower in a small vase.

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. Might even stop by here today.

DONITSMELLGUD

Oh, okay. Explains the rose. You 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, shows shock. Can't believe her ears. Leaves her
station to look.

A bloody man runs 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. VT3 and K-Dub, freeze.

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 boxes
of cereal.

INT. SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT - DAY

Courtney tries chest compressions on the injured man with
tears in her eyes. Her hands, bloody.

A glass object above her is hit. Chards shatter over her. She
recoils fast.

COURTNEY

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

She slinks low. Makes a beeline to the exit door.

INT. SUPERMARKET, BEER SECTION - SAME TIME

The guys move towards the entrance, with caution.

An OLD WOMAN is shot - falls at end of aisle. They see the guy in the long coat 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. 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. More rounds fire. VT3 and K-Dub scoot out, fast.

INT. BUFFALO SPIRIT BARBER SHOP - DAY

At the barber shop, sounds of gunfire, demands the shop's 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.

Blacksmith rushes to the door as others find cover.

BLACKSMITH

That's an AR-15. Me and my PTSD know that sound, anywhere.

He peeks outside. More sirens, loud now. They see reflections of the berries on the windows. He spins to face the others.

BLACKSMITH (CONT'D)

Whatever is jumping off, it ain't even a little bit good.

Moments later...Courtney bangs on the glass door, blood on her hands, hysterical. A red stain is left.

Diggity, pushes Blacksmith out of the way. Terrified by the state of his dream-girl. He lets her in. She hugs him as her body shakes...barely can speak.

DIGGITY

My God. What happened?

Tears fall. Mamie locks the door after them.

MAMIE

Back away from the door. Get down!
You too, soldier boy.

(dramatic beat)

Not in my place. No, no, no...mama
ain't havin' it.

COURTNEY

(stutters)

Sh-shooter. Dead folk. I-I tried
to...but I ran.

The crew understands about the shooting. And it shows on each individual's face, as well as collectively as a community.

DIGGITY

Say what? That's crazy.

MAMIE

You're safe now, baby. Breathe.

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. There's glass
in your hair too. I got you.

(to all in the shop)

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, as the African-American corpses bleed out. The horror hits them.

K-DUB

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

The phone is retrieved with shaky hands, VT3 curses himself.

VT3

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

VT3 films the crime scene.

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 scans the area.

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 possible 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.

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, but I put my shoe up any fool's ass that steps to me stupid.

A second later, VT3 bangs on the door. They let him in. He bursts through, staying low, with beer in tow. OJ jersey covered in blood.

He runs behind some furniture. He breathes heavy. Body shakes. Eyes, wide - from fear.

LEONARD

Damn, little homey. You get hit?

VT3

A mad dog with a gun. Out there. Stay back. He's crazy.

While he crouches down...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. HUNTED!

He tries to get control of his breath as all are stunned.

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?
Poor, old Sista caught a few right
in front of me. This is her blood.

The emotion overwhelms him. As eyes fight back tears, he
takes 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, captivated by his story.

VT3 (CONT'D)

That punk tried to blast on me, but
the beers saved me.

(MORE)

VT3 (CONT'D)

When he heard sirens, he ran. I was in the wind after that. Dead folks, they were in the parking lot too.

COURTNEY (O.S.)

That's what I saw too.

Courtney emerges from the bathroom. Her hands clean.

Each face shows the effect of the eyewitness account. It affects everyone there, on a deep level.

VT3

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 grimaces 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 comes out of the bathroom, just as Sapphire comes through backdoor with a 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 on the top with African designs.

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. 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 smiles at Diggity.

COURTNEY

Can someone help me get this glass outta my hair?

MAMIE

Follow me.

DIGGITY

Do you mind if give you a shampoo? 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.

Diggity brings her to the salon part. Mamie notices Sapphire as she paces 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

For any witnesses, we'll get your statements later.

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.

IKE

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. They scroll through 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. Um...forgot my glasses.

Ike turns to his vain customer.

IKE

Glasses? Since when you start wearing glasses?

His mind races so they won't know - he can't read.

DONITSMELLGUD

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

IKE

Your mystique died in the crib when you was born.

They watch the coverage in silence. Heads dip, tears fall.

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 on the soul.

Cortney hears and addresses Leonard as Diggity picks glass.

COURTNEY

You played baseball? 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 these old, faded, sports page clippings.

Leonard 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 observes Diggity lovingly pick 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.

IKE

That wasn't the mayor, was it?

MAMIE

No, silly-ass. 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.

VT3

I hope the cops put so many holes in his body that we can play a game of connect the dots with all of his entry wounds.

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, after he opens the door for the minister. We later know the gracious man as JOSH E (early 30s, Black, wears dreads and bracelets).

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. I'm
 just...so exhausted now.

IKE
 Yep. Looks like you been through a
 storm, Pastor.

REV BENNETT
 A hurricane, wrapped inside a
 tornado, brother Ike.

FLASHBACK - REV BENNETT

In the parking lot, Kelso urges Rev Bennet to follow him.
 Paramedics work on bodies on stretchers and on those who were
 shot outside on the pavement.

WESTSIDE JUAN, (30s, Afro-Puerto Rican, shaved head), a
 paramedic, does chest compressions as sweat drips from his
 forehead.

Rev. Bennett is led to a VICTIM (50s, Black), next to her
 car, with horrid gunshot wounds. She coughs up blood. Some
 gets on Rev. Bennett. His eyes tear up. Hands shake.

The minister goes to one knee. She grabs his arm in
 desperation. Her eyes struggle to focus.

He rubs her forehead with heartfelt compassion. Chaos all
 around them.

VICTIM
 Why?

REV BENNETT
 I-I don't know, sister.

VICTIM
 Jesus. Will I see J-Jesus?

His tears now flow - but his face, stoic.

REV BENNETT
 Yes, my child. He will welcome you
 with love.

VICTIM

I-I see him. I...

Her grip loosens. Her eyes close. Breath stops.

KELSO

Rev Bennett. There's another over here. Please hurry.

BACK TO SCENE

His posture, slumped. His eyes, moist. The faces in the shop show that they feel his pain.

REV. BENNETT

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, as he hauls the trauma on his shoulders.

Josh E, wears a T-shirt that reads, CORPUS CHRISTI, sandals 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 the store 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.

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 rip 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?

SAPPHIRE

Did the cops kill that demon?

REV BENNETT

I don't rightly know. I didn't hear no shooting when I was there.

IKE

Damn. 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?

JOSH E.

Somehow...we must find it.

Rev Bennett looks in the direction of the supermarket.

REV BENNETT

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, 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

It's over. The shooter. He was caught.

BLACKSMITH

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

Kelso looks confused.

MAMIE

Was he white?

The policeman hesitates before answering. He looks away.

KELSO

Uh, yeah.

Crowd inside the barber shop reacts loudly...like they are repulsed, disappointed and angry at the same time.

BLACKSMITH

It figures.

COURTNEY

No way. How?

SAPPHIRE

Why? Y'all run out of bullets?

Kelso shuffles uncomfortably.

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.

KELSO

The victims will get justice. That's the important thing.

IKE

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

SAPPHIRE

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

KELSO

This is what I know. 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.

VT3

I was right. Our deaths were just a video game to him. You should have hit the 'delete' button on his funky ass.

KELSO

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

JOSH E.

What a lost soul.

VT3

That soul...needs a bullet hole.

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? Yeah, sometimes...but also a breeding ground for plenty racist dirt-bags too.

Police banter over Kelso's radio is heard.

KELSO

When I find out more about this shooter, I'll let you know. Sorry to say...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 pounds her chest in solidarity.

IKE

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

The impact of the statement hits home and is met with silence. A pained realization shows on all faces. Heads nod in agreement with Ike's assessment.

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. 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

Seen a lot in my years. My grandpa told me about 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.

The tension breaker causes many to chuckle.

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.

COURTNEY

And those dirty, sleazy politicians won't do a DAMN THING to stop it.

JOSH E.

Corrupt leaders have been making lives hard for a long, long time.

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. 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. 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

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.

Blacksmith/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.

Blacksmith/Jesus 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 in 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.

Blacksmith/Jesus 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.

Now in the arena, food, clothes and water are passed out. 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 was 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)

(MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)

We had an armed mad man, 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 fantasies have any affect on those blood-thirsty, demonic Nazis?

MAMIE

It ain't about them. It's about US. Laughter is a weapon. Sends fear a-running. Scared for their lives, Harriet Tubman probably had her crew rolling like she was Tiffany Haddish or Leslie Jones. Use it.

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

CUT AWAY - VT3

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. John 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.

The two men spy Judas talking to priests. They give him a 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 - DIGGITY

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 life
 lessons, I'd be spitting as lyrics.

Diggity/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
 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, raps 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.
 Look out that window. Look.

First Responders and their vehicles fill the parking lot.
 Bodies with sheets are loaded into the Coroner's van.

MAMIE
 In Jim Crow, we were under siege
 and getting lynched left and right.
 (MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)

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

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 digit in there. My wine leaves no hangover, no angry drunks and as many varieties as we have today.

They ladle some wine into a goblet. She tastes it, smiles.

COURTNEY (V.O.)

Folks from all over the trade routes would come.

Caravans in each direction, travel 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 - WESTSIDE JUAN

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 infirmed...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.)

Mira. 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.)

Use them pesos 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 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.

END CUT AWAY

Leonard is bursting to tell his version.

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 like a stand-up comic.

CUT AWAY - LEONARD

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. Everywhere I go, people keep asking... 'Jesus, heal me! 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)

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)

Speaking of Good Friday, I see 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 amid chuckles.

JESUS/LEONARD (CONT'D)

Alright, that's my time! Be good to each other 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.

COURTNEY

I wouldn't blame him.

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 - LEONARD

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? He deserved it.

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 earned him some joy too.

A painter sketches a family 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

Donitsmellgud as Jesus, primps 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 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, eyes burn in pure ecstasy.

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

From outside the tent, some primal moans are 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 gorgeous, 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.

WESTSIDE JUAN

Ain't no cure for...all that.

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, with compassion.

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 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, than the Hell's Angels.

JOSH E.
I'm pretty sure, Hell ain't got a single angel.

VT3
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. My bad.

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.

JOSH E.

With God, all things are possible.

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

Mamie as Christ, is surrounded by children, sharing a story. Suddenly she sees a mob chase a woman. They throw 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 disappear to Wisconsin.

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.

BLACKSMITH
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 - SAPPHIRE

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.

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.

After hugs, Jesus/Sapphire 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 she preaches and heals.

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.

A chorus of agreement is heard.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)
 And if they change the way I
 looked, all at once...I'd change it
 back into what I really looked
 like. Bam.

All the statues, crucifixes, paintings, statues and children's books all across the world...suddenly to turn into Jesus/Sapphire. White people freak out and run around in a full-on panic.

SAPPHIRE (V.O.)
 Some White folks be yanking them
 medallions off their necks
 like...Yaaaah.

END CUT AWAY

Sapphire acts like she flings 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

Rev Bennett as Jesus, still wears his collar. A possessed woman with crazy hair, screams and runs towards him. Her skin, rotted from leprosy. Fingers, 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 fell off.

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/Jesus, then grabs a stenography machine and begins typing as he starts to preach.

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 are
missing. Especially about the time
that he came into manhood.

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 contractual obligation that sucked to fulfill, but he did it anyway. Here's my thing, Pontius Pilate was there to uphold the law. He didn't.

CUT AWAY - KELSO

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/Pilate 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 that overlooks 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 a squabble between locals, below. 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 him. Stay living in
your mama's basement until you get
gray hair like me.

VT3 shifts in his chair, 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 - IKE

Gray skies hover above the hills of Golgotha. Brutal 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/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

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

IKE (V.O.)

He could've been straight
profilng. Iced up and more gold
that the world ever saw. Fine ass
servant girls feeding me grapes.
But he didn't, did he?

FLASHBACK - JESUS/IKE PUNISHED

Jesus/Ike...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, 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 Jesus/Ike.

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 summons 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 sand flies in the desert.

An abandoned, depopulated desert stretches out for miles.

The ruins of a once mighty civilization - 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 ever 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 ungrateful
moves, wow.

COURTNEY

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

JOSH E.

Yeah, that was his mission.

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. It's sickening. 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. But Romans were evil, greedy bullies. They deserved 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. 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 five-oh 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?. 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 brutal 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 stamps her foot. Confusion on her face.

MAMIE

Wait. So you're 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.

VT3

Me either.

IKE

I'd wither his ass up like Jesus did that fig tree.

BLACKSMITH

He was hunting us. Ain't a soul in that market harmed him or his kin.

DIGGITY

When you got haters on the internet telling these dummies that we are the problem with America...it's bound to happen.

COURTNEY

Forget the internet. They got whole news networks on TV, spewing that hateful crap about us everyday. CRT this and DEI that.

VT3 jumps up and points towards the grocery store.

VT3

Then this happens. And we ain't even got no clap-back to tell them they're full of shit, liars and getting played by billionaires - who want us at each others throats.

MAMIE

Tell 'em, young-blood. They should find what podcasrs radicalized him and throw them in the joint too.

Josh E clears his throat.

JOSH E.

Is it possible to bring some bad actor to justice, but still love all of humanity? I think so.

REV BENNETT

That's why a religion naturally formed around him. He was the best of us...and his words should never be forgotten.

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 Josh E.

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. 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.

Not a sound is heard in the shop as the reality of his words, penetrates their hearts.

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.

IKE

(deadpan)

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*

(MORE)

JOSH E. (CONT'D)
*Fathers return, no more kids
 abandoned
 Tables full, every cup overflowing
 Faith blooms like seeds, in the
 garden I'm growing*

He smiles. Heads in the shop, bop to the beat.

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
 (MORE)*

JOSH E. (CONT'D)
*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...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, big grin.

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 - thanks.

(MORE)

DONITSMELLGUD (CONT'D)
 (to Mamie)
 Here...I won't need this anymore.

He removes his jewelry and even his custom made necklace.

MAMIE
 My man, I can't take this. It's who
 you are.

DONITSMELLGUD
 Not anymore. If you can't use it to
 pay your bills, donate it to the
 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.

DIGGITY
 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.

DIGGITY (CONT'D)

Look at you getting that good wood. Way to go.

LEONARD

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.

(MORE)

LEONARD (CONT'D)

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?...My God. That seems so weird coming out of my mouth.

The realization hits them both at the same time and it brings tears. Both are in shock.

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 and take a selfie.

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. I'll send this to my mom later. I want to enjoy this alone for a moment.

Others in the shop cheer as they consecrate their new relationship with a healthy chug.

LEONARD

And to think, you could've been killed earlier today and I'd would never know I had lost my own flesh and blood.

COURTNEY

Damn. That's deep. And I would have died alone.

LEONARD

Alone? Know what's funny? One of the most outstanding young men that I've ever met, seems to have gotten smitten by your charms 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. Bought you
that rose. Now that you're here,
he's too shy to ask for a date.

Diggity turns to Leonard and gives the gesture to, 'zip-it'.

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?

She leans into him with a Cheshire cat smile.

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 and turns to her long lost father.

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 dad and
get a free coffee from a handsome,
sweet, young man. It's a miracle.

Smiles are on all faces, except Blacksmith.

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.

He turns to the side so others don't see his moist eyes.

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 to laugh.

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? 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 but
take my blood pressure.

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 - 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 over 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, Black) 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.

The eyes of Rev Bennett seem to pierce the ceiling and land
on the heavens above. A sustained exhale follows.

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 clasps his hands in prayer posture.

REV BENNETT

My people need me...and I need
them. And the good Lord Almighty
needs us all. Especially in these
trying days. Tell the flock - I
will be there.

Deacon Greene smiles wide and heads to the door.

GREENE

Amen to that. 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. 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

What? Huh? 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 live fish out of the sink by its tail to move it, then...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.

(MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)

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 wiener.

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. I'll donate the rest to the victim's families.

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 hugs 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.

Under gray skies and above the police cars...small spheres of bright energy orbs, fly from the grocery store towards him.

A total of ten spheres hit the palms of his hand and seem to be absorbed into - the wounds on his wrists.

Every eyeball in the barber shop is glued to the scene and 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?
GOOD LORD ALMIGHTY!

They creep back over towards the window, in wonderment mode. They peek 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

You ain't nothing BUT right about that. HALLELUJAH. If you ever wanted to 'speak in tongues', now's the time.

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 dramatically 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