

LOYALTY, LOVE,
& BETRAYAL

SURVIVING THE HAND THAT WAS DEALT
GROWING UP IN THE HOOD

PART ONE

WRITTEN BY

WAYNE GRIND

Wayne Grind

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PRAISE FOR:

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"After reading "Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL" by author Wayne Grind, I feel he may be the next go-to author for urban hood stories. His book is full of twist and turns, and great tales of really surviving the hand that was dealt to young, black youth in the ghetto street-life, and having the ability to overcome such obstacles and tough situations. Putting it on paper is a great accomplishment. I highly recommend that you get your copy!"

- Kelsey Nykole: Artist/Songwriter/VH1 Star

"Wayne Grind's new book "Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL "is raw, gritty, and extremely real. Once he put his heart on paper with pen, his unique, edgy, and gripping story of growing up in the hood, full of Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL, was born. It is real, and I appreciate him sharing this story with the world. I wish you much success, and may God be with you, Wayne. I highly recommend this book."

- King J. Harden: Singer/Songwriter/ Entrepreneur - kingjharden.com

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"I personally know Wayne Grind as a hard worker, a street guy, and an author and businessman. I can say that this great urban hood story is a must-read. Wayne does a great job of painting a realistic picture of what it is like growing up as a young, black man with a hard-core street life and with limited options. The title and cover depict the book at its best. From the first page to the last page, I highly recommend Wayne Grind's book which is full of Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL. He kept it real while clearly describing what it's like to grow up in the hood."

- Heartbeatz: Producer/Songwriter

"Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL: Surviving the Hand that was Dealt Growing Up in the Hood - Part 1" by Wayne Grind has a great mix of truth, rawness, grit, and survival about growing up in the hard-core urban neighborhoods and projects of New Orleans, along with discovery, coming-of-age, dealing with good or bad situations, forgiveness, betrayal, family ties, and love. This story is pure, and encompasses a very realistic picture of life on the streets, gang life, prison life and poverty. It also is about overcoming the harshest conditions and challenges one can face, and learning how to stay strong and make something of one's life. Author Wayne Grind bravely puts his heart, soul and truths into this book, and it is definitely a must-read."

- Suzanne Sumner Ferry: Author (*The Day the Stars Stood Still*, 2012; *Corinna the Christmas Elf*, 2009)/Actor/Producer/Screenwriter/CEO, FERRY PRODUCTIONS, INC. - suzanne.ferry@verizon.net

LOOK for a **SNEAK PEAK** AT THE FIRST CHAPTER OF PART TWO OF
LOYALTY, LOVE, & BETRAYAL: SURVIVING THE HAND
THAT WAS DEALT GROWING UP IN THE HOOD

BY AUTHOR WAYNE GRIND AT THE END OF THIS BOOK!



Wayne Grind

Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL: Surviving the Hand that was Dealt Growing Up in the Hood - Part One

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Actor/Producer/Author (*The Day the Stars Stood Still; Corinna the Christmas Elf*)

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DEDICATION
&
IN MEMORIAM

To my Moms, Pops, Kim, Elmer, Mommy Nett, RIP Juan (my son), my brother Russell, & Pun Pun...May God bless y'all soul and I pray that y'all rest in peace...Since y'all been gone it's been a constant everyday struggle, but I refuse to give up, I do this for y'all...Love y'all from earth to heaven.

Wayne Grind

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by giving God Almighty the glory and praise for keeping a nobody like myself, giving me the opportunity to turn my negatives into positives, and allowing me to make something of myself. I love you, Father, for your love and grace. There were certain situations that some people never understood how I could overcome them. Sometimes I didn't understand it myself, but I know that it was you, Heavenly Father, who stuck beside me when everyone else fled from strife. It was only you who protected me, so it's only you whom I will praise. I thank you; I thank you; Amen.

I would like to thank my sisters, my brothers, my nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends who kept me in prayers when I was lost, thuggin', drugging, and incarcerated. Thanks to all those who stood beside me, whether up or down. You know who you are. Love y'all.

I want to give a big shout-out to my grandson, my kids, and my baby mothers for honestly putting up with my B.S., and my being away. It may seem a little selfish at times, but it took great sacrifices to get this book done. Thank y'all for never giving up on me and sticking by my side, and loving me anyway. I love y'all to pieces for that.

I give a big thanks to my ex-wife for holding me down, and being a soldier in my time of need for your support. I admit that incarceration detached me from emotions, which caused me to fail at returning love. With that being said, I apologize for us not makin' it. I wish you the best that life has to offer you and your love ones. And to all my exes: thanks for the experiences, and even though we didn't make it, I learned from every situation.

Thanks to all the people who wish to see me succeed; thanks to all who wish to see me fail, LOL. I see y'all who are straddling the fence to see if I'm gonna win or lose, to see which way y'all are gonna rock. For years, I took your love for granted, not really

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appreciating the woman you are, nor the love and companionship that you tried to share with me. Right or wrong, you were my ride or die. But now we travel through life on different paths, with different people, and I still pray that God blesses and protects you with love and peace. The memories we share can never be wiped away, and you are forever my friend.

I want thank the two niggas I did my first everything with, who taught me the streets, survival, and women. FREE Jaime Gat and Seafood; love y'all. I hope the future holds better days for you both. FREE my brother Ricky. Man, I can't explain how much I miss you. Just know I'm here for you until you touch down. To my cousin, Booty Earl. Man, I wish you woulda listened to me. But regardless, I'm gonna hold it down. I do it for y'all.

I would like to thank my beautiful mother and hardworking father whom are both deceased, for giving birth to me, loving me, and protecting me in this cruel world until death did us part. R.I.P. to you both. I want to thank my mom for instilling me with church values, respect and mannerisms before leaving this earth. I also want to apologize to Pops for thinking you were too hard on me. Pops, as I look back on life, I must admit that the tough love you gave has really prepared me to stand as a man today. It was all worth it. I just hate that it took me to go through hell and the places I went, to understand that you were only trying to do your fatherly duties and raise your child.

-Wayne Grind

INTRODUCTION

Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL is a great urban hood story about young kids growing up in the city streets, adapting quickly to the street life and having the privilege to be schooled by an old gangsta by the name of Silk. Silk preached all the time about the coldness of this world, and the game. But after Silk was hospitalized from a gunshot wound, the gang was worried and disappointed. It showed on their faces. Silk was like a father to them, and things just weren't the same without going to Silk's car wash, soaking up the game, and making that money. Champ and the gang were confused about what had happened to Silk, but then the good news came that Silk had made it out. However, things would never be the same around the shop again. "Survival by Any Means" became the gang's motto...in or out...and Silk needed them. They were family.

This book is real. It is a must-read.

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CHAPTER ONE

The sound of his mama being beaten by his pop every night during his youth was something that Champ will never forget. As he beat her, she would scream, and as she screamed, Champ would lie in his bed staring at the ceiling...just listening to it. In the beginning, it would aggravate him. He would try to block out the sound by covering his head with a pillow. It became so regular that it didn't bother him. He ate with it, slept with it, and lived with it every single day.

It was the summer of '81 and all the kids were out of school. While the other kids were going to camps or some fantastic theme parks, Champ's summer was usually spent just in the neighborhood, out on his block. His mom was a very nice lady, and even though she didn't have a job, whenever she talked to him she would always say, "Everything that I do, it's only to make you happy." Champ thought that's why his next door neighbor, Mr. Henry, would always sneak in the back door when his Pops was away. He would always see him do it from his bedroom window. Moms would let him in and they'd lock up in her room, and wouldn't come out for hours. Sometimes, Champ would put his ear to the door and listen. He would always hear his mom inside, yelling and making some weird noises. One day he cracked the door open to see what was going on in there and saw Mr. Henry and his Mom in the bed, butt-naked.

Pops was kind of a nice fella although he wouldn't talk very much. He was always working or hanging out with his buddy, Leroy. When they did talk he would ask Champ, "Champ, have you found you a squeeze or a sponge?"

Champ would always giggle and reply, “Nope.”

Champ used to always wonder why Pops went to work clean and came home clean. Every weekend Moms would iron his uniforms for the whole week, and Champ would shine all of his shoes. He enjoyed that because then he could play “Jungle Man” because they all looked like snakes and alligators. He’d always give Champ a two-dollar bill to put in his pocket, but Moms would take it and give him two dollars in change. She always said that a two-dollar bill was good luck.

Every now and then, Pops would take Champ riding with him in his pretty car. He never knew the name of it, but Pops used to call it “Eldog.” He would take his son across this long bridge and pick up this lady named Ms. Katt and her two kids. Then they would go straight to Chuck E. Cheese’s to eat pizza and play games. Ms. Katt’s son, Bo, was the same age as Champ, and her daughter Holly was a few years older than them. They would leave the kids at Chuck E. Cheese’s and tell Holly to keep an eye on the boys. During that time, Champ felt that he really began to live. It was June 8, 1981.

Champ remembered one time when his Pops took him over to Ms. Katt’s house to stay for the weekend. He always wondered why her son’s bedroom was the same as his. He even had the same clothes and toys as Champ did. For most of the day, he and Bo played with the toys inside while Holly talked on the phone to boys. Toward the end of the day they walked to Ms. Katt’s bedroom and stood in the doorway and watched her as she got dressed to go out and have a good time. Ms. Katt was so fine. At first she didn’t even notice Champ standing there as she pulled her silk stockings up her sexy pair of legs. When she did turn around to see Champ she looked surprised. She grabbed a pair of clip-on earrings off her dresser and began putting them on her ears while saying, “Hey Champ, baby, what’s wrong? Are you bored?”

He shook his head from side-to-side and replied, “Naw, I was just thinking about something.”

As she reached down to grab a pair of high-heeled pumps from the foot of her bed, she asked, “What were you thinking about?”

He walked over to her bed, sat on it, and asked her, “How come everything that I got at my house, Bo has here?”

Ms. Katt was so shocked at what Champ had asked that she stopped what she was doing and looked at him through the mirror on her dresser. She couldn’t find a good enough answer, so he continued by asking her, “Why do Pops buy Bo everything that he buy me?”

She stood silent for a moment before saying, “Now baby, who said that your daddy bought those things?”

All of a sudden, Bo stepped into her bedroom doorway and said, “I did, Mamma. It was me who told him that!”

Ms. Katt looked at Champ, then at Bo. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes and said, “Look! I’m about to go out and have myself a good time. I’ll talk to y’all later about this!” Then she turned toward the mirror and began putting some makeup on her face. “Now y’all go tell Holly to get y’all some cookies off the shelf!” Neither of them moved.

She turned around and looked at both of them and said, “This ain’t the time and I ain’t the one to tell you, so will you please be good and wait until tomorrow and I’ll have y’all da--” she stopped because she realized that she was about to say something that she wasn’t supposed to. When a car horn blew outside, she hurried and grabbed her purse. “Look, y’all! Be good, okay?”

“Alright, Momma,” Holly replied. Then Ms. Katt left.

After Ms. Katt left, the boys stayed up watching an old gangsta movie called *The Cotton Club*. However, after what had gone on in Ms. Katt’s bedroom, Bo and Champ had very little to say to each other, if anything at all. The rest of the night was pretty much the same. The gangsta movie went off and they fell asleep in the middle of an old *Laurel and Hardy* clipping.

The next morning was a total wreck. Ms. Katt walked into Bo’s room with her nightgown on, Holly right behind her, and said, “Champ, baby? How come you don’t want to eat breakfast?”

He replied, “I want to go home!”

“There are a lot of kids around here for you to play with if that’s yo’ problem,” she said. But he continued to say that he wanted to go home.

“Well. I’ll just call your daddy and have him come and pick you up,” she said as she left the room. When she left, Bo walked into the room with the exact same Super Friends pajamas that Champ had on Saturday, which were lying on the other end of the bed across from him.

As he sat on the bed all frowned up, he asked, “Champ, man how come you want to go home? Today we were supposed to go outside and play football with my friends.”

Champ replied, “Nigga! Why you worried about me so much? Shoot!” he continued, raising his voice, “People don’t like it over here!” Champ ranted on more, “Y’all ain’t kin to me anyway, and besides, I got my own friends that I can play with!”

Bo got up off the bed and yelled, “See how much you know! My Daddy already told us that he brought you over here to play with me because they wasn’t any kids your age around your house!”

“Nigga, you lying!” Champ shouted abruptly.

“Yeah, he did!” Bo shouted.

“And, nigga, that *ain’t* your Daddy!” Champ screamed.

“Yeah, he is, bitch!” Bo yelled.

That’s when Champ got up off the bed, balled his fists up and shouted, “Nigga, you a bitch!”

Bo balled up his fists as well and replied, “I betcha’ I can kick your fuckin’ ass!” and then they both ran toward each other and started fighting. He decked Champ in the nose, and Champ punched him in his eye.

They kept fighting until Holly came running into the room yelling, “Momma! Momma! They fightin’ up in here!”

Ms. Katt rushed into the room and they broke them up. Bo said, as she held him by the collar of his PJ’s, “He started it, Momma!”

“Bitch, you started it!” Champ shouted.

Ms. Katt looked at Champ astounded, and said, “Oh, no! Champ baby, you got to go with all that cussin’ cause my children don’t be doing no cussing!” As she shoved Bo out of the room, she said

“Holly, come out of there and close that door. Leave his ass in there until his daddy comes to get him.”

Holly walked to the door, then looked back and said, “Yo’ daddy gon’ whoop you, boy!”

“Get outta here, bitch!” Champ yelled.

She slammed the door shut. Nothing was going to happen to him until Pops came. It took him a while to get there. As a matter of fact, it took him so long that Champ fell asleep waiting for him. He must’ve slept for about an hour before he felt someone shaking him to wake up. It was Pops. Champ recognized his voice as he continued to say, “Champ, wake up! Champ, wake up!”

Champ woke up, wiped his eyes, looked at Pops and quickly said to him “Man, I’m ready to go home. I don’t like it out here!”

Pops and Champ had a long talk, for about a half hour or more. He was mainly talking to Champ about his attitude. He kept reminding his son about what he had told him before; how to act around friends of his. He would always say that he would never bring Champ by someone he didn’t trust. Then he called Bo into the room and talked to them both. He told them that they were closer than they thought. The reason why Bo had everything that Champ had was because he was his blood brother. The boys both found it sort of funny when Pops said, “Y’all both fell from the same Walnut tree, but just on a different lawn.”

That’s when Champ said, “But I thought you loved me?” He looked Pops in his eyes, desperately waiting for his answer.

“I do, Champ!” he replied, as he placed his hands on Champ’s shoulder. “I love you both,” he said. “That’s why everything I buy, I buy it for two. And by the way, y’all didn’t make me mad by fighting with each other.”

They both replied at the same time, “You ain’t mad?”

Pops shook his head from side to side and said, “If y’all don’t fight the outsiders then I’m going to be mad, y’all understand?” They both nodded their heads. Then Pops looked at Champ and said, “Now, Champ, I want you to go in there and apologize to Katt.” Champ stared at Pops for a moment with a frown on his face.

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He knew that he didn't want to go in there and tell her that he was sorry, but he knew he had to.

Bo looked at him and said, "Go 'head bro, don't be scared." Champs looked at him, then at Pops. He got up and headed to her bedroom to apologize. He was only nine at the time and that seemed like the hardest thing for him to do. He slowly walked into Ms. Katt's bedroom where she stood with her back turned toward him while making up her bed. He was too embarrassed to say a word so he just stood there silently with his back against the wall staring at her. She started to the other side of the bed when she noticed Champ standing there.

"You always sneaking up on me, huh?" she asked, as she continued making the bed. After a few moments she turned to Champ and asked, "So, did your daddy send you up here to tell me something?" Champ just stood there and said nothing as she continued making up her bed. Then she said, "Well, whenever you get ready, I'll be here." She finally looked up at him but he kept his head down, too ashamed to speak. After she pulled the last crease out of the bedspread and took a look just to be sure that the bed was properly made, she looked over to where he was standing, only to see that he had left the room. She spoke in a low tone to herself saying, "He so mannish."

She then went to her dresser to clean it up a bit. It was only a few moments before Champ came back into the room with his head still hanging down and said, "Ms. Katt, I am sorry for cussing in front of you today."

She walked over to where he was and stooped down to look him in the eyes and said, "Champ, baby, listen. I know it is hard being around a woman other than your momma, but I love you like you was my own." She continued, "I know that I can never take her place, but anything that you need that she can't give you, you just call me, okay?" Champ nodded his head and that was it. He found out that it wasn't so hard after all.

After that was over, the boys ate breakfast and then went outside to play with Bo's friends. They were already outside playing. There was one kid who was playing with a spinning top in an empty

lot where all the kids in the neighborhood did most of their playing. Bo yelled at him, "Hey, Dusty, come here!"

When he came over, Champ realized that he was younger than they were. Bo asked him, "Where your brother at, nigga?"

Dusty looked at Bo with a strange look and said, "They all went to the clubhouse, bra. Who this nigga is?"

Bo replied, "Stop worrying about that you Lil' bad mutha fucka!"

"Aw, fuck you, nigga!" Dusty replied, as they all started toward the clubhouse. They walked across the empty lot to a fence that had a hole in it. They climbed through the hole and ended up in the yard of an abandoned apartment complex. There was trash and debris everywhere. Most of the windows were boarded up so that vandals couldn't get in. They came to a rather long alley which lined one side of the property, and there was a kid who was sitting up in a big Chinese Elm tree. He said, "Nigga, you late!"

Bo looked up at the kid and said, "Man, I had to go somewhere with my Pops. Donkey, come down from there. I got somebody I want everybody to meet." Donkey started climbing down out of the tree.

Bo looked at his brother and said, "Say, Champ, do you like dogs?"

Champ replied, "Yes I do, very much so!"

At the end of the alley there was one last apartment they had set up as a clubhouse. Bo opened the door and they all went in. Inside, there were two other boys who were sitting on a raggedy sofa playing with some small Pitbull puppies. They both looked at Bo with an angry look, and he knew that they were mad because he hadn't showed up on time. So he told them that their Pops had come and picked him up, and then one of the boys stood up and said "Man, you getting worse than Bruce with that shit!"

"Don't say that!" Bruce said. "Cause I haven't been late in a while."

That's when Bo said, "Busty, my brother wants in!"

All the kids in the clubhouse yelled at the same time, "What?"

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Finally, Busty broke the silence and said, "Man, you ain't told us you had a brother." Then Bo told them that he and Champ had the same daddy.

Champ finally relaxed when Bo walked over and picked up one of the puppies and said, "Champ, meet the gang."

Bo walked over to the first boy they saw in the lot and started introducing his brother to the gang. "This is Dusty, the baby thief of the gang," and they all started giggling.

He walked over to Donkey and described him as a 'pretty boy' and Donkey replied, "Girls just love me."

Then he walked over to Bruce and said, "This is Big Bruce."

Right then is when Dusty said, "The fat motherfucker." Dusty began to laugh until Bo gave him a strange look, and he shut up.

He walked over to Busty and said, "He is half of the mind that keeps this gang together and tight." Then he said, "Gang, meet Champ; my brother."

Champ looked at everyone for a few seconds, nodding his head up and down repeatedly. He was in a gang. Right then he knew one thing...that he was going to like it over there after all. For the next few days he hung out with the gang. Champ was having the best time of his life.

One day, Bruce asked Champ when he was planning on going home. Champ told him that he was going to ask Pops if he could stay for the rest of the summer. They all began to smile and cheer, and that's when the little guy they called Dusty said, "Then you can come and work with us, man!"

Champ looked around at everybody and asked, "What is he talking about?"

It was silent for a few seconds as everybody looked at each other and then Busty finally said, "Say, bro, one weekend we go to the car wash and do a few jobs for a few nickels and dimes and stuff. But, umm...you can stay here if you don't want to come." They all looked at Champ, waiting to hear his response.

He looked at Bo and said, "If the gang wash cars, then I wash cars!" and they all smiled.

At the end of the day the gang went home and when Champ arrived back to Ms. Katt's house, he went into her bedroom. She was watching television. He asked her if she knew if his dad was going to pass over there today.

She looked at Champ and replied, "I can call him if you want me to, but he will be coming over here tonight to pick you up. Why? You ready to go home now?"

Champ turned to look at the television and then back at her and said, "I don't want to go home." She was astounded, and then she asked him how long he wanted to stay. He looked her directly in her eyes and said, "For the rest of the summer." She cracked a big smile.

That night when Pops came to bring Champ home, he told Pops that he wanted to stay for the summer. He just looked at his son with this crazy look on his face. Champ guessed that the talk that he had with Pops had brought a sudden change, but it wasn't the talk with him that did it. It would probably fall in the category of freedom. Champ never had friends before and now that he did, he thought he'd stay for a while. Of course, Pops would get in a big argument with his Mom once he told her about it. Yet, with Champ knowing Pops like he did, he knew he had a way of handling everything.

Champ wanted to know what the gang did at the car wash. The day finally came for them to work. The car wash was only a few blocks away from the clubhouse. When they made it there, it was packed with cars. The whole gang was thinking, *Wow!*

Then Bo said, "Y'all, we about to get paid big time!"

As they got closer, an older guy yelled, "Where have y'all been? These people won't let anybody wash their cars but y'all!"

Busty replied, "You told us to be here at noon."

He looked at all the cars that were parked at the car wash and said, "Yeah! Yeah! Silk made a mistake. Go ahead and get to work." The gang all headed toward this room where they kept all of their supplies.

The older guy by the name of Silk was a tall, slender fella who wore a dark gray khaki outfit with a nametag that read "Auto

Detailing.” He was in his thirties, and well-groomed with French braids running down his back. He raised his left hand up to rub his light goatee as he watched the gang scramble through the car wash. Then he noticed Champ. He was helping Bruce fill up the pails for the cars. He knew that there was only five of them, and now six, so he asked, “Who this is?”

The rest of the gang froze and looked at Silk, who then said to them, “Where did he come from?”

“Th-th-that’s Bo’s brother,” Bruce stuttered.

Silk looked Champ directly in his eyes and his knees were shaking like a ‘66 Mustang in the Indy 500. Silk knew that Champ was nervous and then he asked, “What’s your name, Lil’ man?” as he started to rub his goatee again.

He said, “My name is Champ.”

Then Silk looked over at Bo and said, “To be honest, you do look like that knucklehead.”

Then the gang started laughing. He looked back at Champ and asked him if he knew how to wash cars. Champ looked over at Bo who was nodding his head, trying to tell him to say ‘yes’ and that’s when Champ looked back at Silk and said, “Nah!”

All of a sudden, someone yelled across the lot and said, “Say Silk, send them boys over here!” But the gang never moved. They all just stared at Silk in suspense.

Then Silk yelled at all of the boys, “Get to work and show Lil’ man here how to wash cars.”

As the gang started to wash cars, Silk decided to take Champ over to a long, black Continental that was parked under the third cover, and did a little car washing of his own to show Champ how it was done. He helped Champ wash, rinse and dry the car. The only part he figured that he would really need to be taught was how to wax the car. Silk carefully showed him how to wax in a way that he wouldn’t waste any wax. After they were finished, he stood about five feet away from the car and said, “Come here, Lil’ man!” When Champ did, Silk put his arm around Champ’s shoulder and said, “For the first time you did kind of good, huh?”

Champ replied, "Yeah!" There wasn't a spot on the Continental. You could see your reflection on the paint job, true spokes, as well as on the vogue tires.

He said, "Okay, do you know what you need to do now?"

Champ said, "What?" and Silk pointed over to a crowd of fellas who sat at a table, a good distance away. They were smoking and drinking. Silk asked Champ, "Do you see that fat mutha fucka over there?"

Champ asked, "With the jerry curl?"

"Yeah, Yeah." Silk replied. Then Silk told Champ, "Go over there and tell him to break you off."

When Champ approached the table, one guy asked, "Yeah, Lil' man, what's up?"

Champ looked at the fat guy and said, "Is that your car over there?" as he pointed towards the Continental.

The fat guy peeped at his car and saw that it was sparkling and said, "Yes, that is mine. Why?"

He looked at him and said, "I am finished with it," and then all the guys looked at it and sighed.

"Nah! Man, nah!" he yelled. Champ thought something was wrong.

He looked puzzled and then one of the fellas asked, "Champ, is that what Slim told you to come over here and say?"

Champ replied, "Yep!"

Then another fella said, "This Lil' nigga lying his ass off! Come on, Lil' man. Did he really tell you to say that?"

Champ looked at the fat guy then at the other one and said, "Nope."

The fat guy said, "So tell me what he told you to say."

Champ looked at him and said, "He told me to tell you to break me off." The fat guy just stared at him for a few minutes and Champ's knees started shaking again. It was quiet for a moment.

Then the fat guy asked, "Is that all?"

Champ continued by saying, "And for you to break him off, too!"

Then one of the guys said, "I like that, Lil' nigga. House, break him off!" as he did so he told the others that he liked Champ, too.

The guy said, "He a little shady, but he cool." Then he dug in his pocket and pulled out a big bank roll, opened it up and pulled out a five-dollar bill and handed it to Champ. He said, "This is for you." Then he pulled out a ten-dollar bill and handed it to Champ. He said, "This is for the car." He pulled out a twenty, a ten, and a five, and handed them to him and said, "This is for Silky."

Champ took the money and walked over to Silk's office where he sat behind a desk counting some money. He tossed the money on the desk in front of Silk. Silk picked up the money and asked him, "How much is this?" But Champ never said a word.

He looked at Champ for a moment or two then handed the money to him slowly, "Here, count it" he said. Without grabbing the money he looked at it, and then at Silk.

Champ grabbed the money out of his hand and sorted it as Silk looked on. He put the twenty on top, then the two tens, then the two fives and then looked at Silk; and without looking at the money he counted it as he flipped it, saying, "Twenty, thirty, forty, forty-five, and fifty." Then he tossed the money on the desk.

Silk looked at Champ for a moment and then grabbed a five from the money and said, "He gave this to you, right?" and he handed the five to him. "Now, you can go on out there."

Champ turned and walked out of the office. Silk stared at him as he left, mostly because he was surprised. He had thought that Champ couldn't count, but Champ showed him otherwise.

CHAPTER TWO

You know something? I pretty much liked my first day at the car wash, Champ thought to himself. He had fun while washing the cars; there was music playing, and they got tips for washing the cars. It was this guy whose car he washed named Jon Jon, who gave him a twenty dollar tip for his work. There were four sexy ladies in the car with Jon Jon. They all gave Champ a kiss on the cheek because they thought that he was cute and at the end of the day, Silk gave all of the boys fifteen bucks as their day's pay. Champ felt like the richest kid on earth because he had made himself thirty-five dollars in tips plus his fifteen dollars. The first thing Champ wanted to do was to buy himself some All-Stars. But the gang told him to save his money, because it would be a day or two before Silk could pick him up a pair from the shoe store. The day was over and they all went home.

At home, Ms. Katt had cooked some Kraft Macaroni and Cheese with fried chicken for dinner. Champ and Bo ate dinner, took baths and chilled out. They usually played Atari games after dinner but

they were a bit tired that day. At around eight o'clock the phone rang and Ms. Katt picked it up in her room. She called out to Bo and told him that the phone was for him. It was his girlfriend, Minnie. He brought the phone into his room, took the receiver from his mouth and asked, "You want a girlfriend, Champ?"

A big smile came over Champ's face as he replied, "Yeah!"

Bo handed him the phone. "Here, talk to her," he said.

Champ grabbed the phone and said, "Hello?"

There was a girl on the phone who asked, "Who is this?" When Champ looked at Bo he was standing in front of the dresser, silently showing him that she was eleven with big titties.

He answered, "This is Champ."

"How old are you?" she asked. He told her that he was eleven. He glanced at Bo as he covered up his face and dove onto the bed, trying to stifle his laugh.

"What school do you go to?" she asked.

Then Champ heard a girl in the background asking, "Is he cute, girl?"

He replied, "I am probably going to a school around here next year." He was not sure yet, since his mom didn't know about Ms. Katt yet, but he was hopeful. Then he asked her what school she went to and why she wanted to know where he would be attending.

"I go to a Catholic school," she replied. Then Bo whispered and told Champ that she had a boyfriend named Damian, and that he was in the sixth grade.

So Champ asked her if she had a boyfriend and she yelled, "Tell Bo to shut up, because I don't even go with him anymore!"

"You don't act like Bo, huh?" he asked her.

"How do Bo act?" she countered.

"He nasty!" Champ replied and started laughing. Bo and him talked on the phone with those girls all night, and eventually she told Champ that she would be his girlfriend. That was cool with him. The next day when they went to work, Bo told the gang that Champ and Minnie's sister, Kay, were going together. They all seemed astounded.

Bruce said, “So what! She ain’t going to give him no booty because I’m telling you now, she be playing hard to get and stuff.”

Busty said, “Nigga, shut up! Because you and Shantel don’t be doing nothing but rolling on each other!” and they all started laughing.

Bruce said, “Fuck you!” The boys then all got to work.

That day when they were all hard at work, it was just like the gang had figured. Silk had bought Champ a brand-new pair of high top, black All-Stars and told him to put them on and give him his old ones. Then he said to Champ, “Now you look like one of my boys.”

That day was pretty much the same as the last: wash, rinse, dry, and wax, over and over until something happened. There was a car that pulled into the car wash. It was a Cadillac, the sharpest one that Champ had ever seen. It was two-toned emerald green with white leather exterior and a matching leather top, with gold grill bumpers, door handles, an emblem, gold Dayton wires with vogue tires, with a fifth wheel tagging behind. In those days for a Fleetwood Brougham to be like that, the owner wasn’t working at a post office. He watched it as it coasted into the number five cover, and the driver hopped out of the car nice and easy.

He was a fella in his early thirties, well-groomed with a long jerry curl that ran past his shoulder, and a light mustache and beard. He closed the door and started walking toward Champ with a stride that evoked coolness, calmness and confidence. He wore a pair of tailor-made slacks with a matching long-sleeved shirt that was tucked into his waistline, and a belt that matched his shoes like Champ’s Pops wore. When he got to Champ, he said, “Just wipe it down, Lil’ man.”

Champ was still watching him as he walked by. He went to the bucket and got a wet towel, wrung it out then went over to the Cadillac. He started at the back and worked his way to the front. It was so clean that it probably wouldn’t need a car wash for the next ten years. He had wiped the whole car, including the rims. The only thing left to do was the windows. So he went back over to his bucket and got his window cleaner and went back to the car. He started on the windows, putting some water on the windshield and

cleaning it. Then he moved on to the side windows, and that's when he saw her. She was the prettiest girl that Champ had ever seen, and she was sitting in the back seat of the Cadillac, watching him. She had sandy brown skin, hazel eyes, and three long plaits hanging down her back. They stared at each other for a few moments before a lady in the front seat turned around and said, "Sit your ass down and leave that damn boy alone!"

Champ started back cleaning the windows. When the guy came back to the car, he handed him ten dollars and said, "Alright Lil' man. Thanks."

He replied, "Anytime." He got into the Cadillac and pulled away.

The rest of the day all Champ could think about was that girl and he wished that he could see her again. Since there weren't any cars to be washed, Champ caught himself a nice shady spot under one of the covers and chilled until Silk came out of the office and looked around for the gang, only to see that everyone was busy except for him. He called Champ to come over to him. When he got there he gave Champ a small paper bag and asked him if he had ever been in front of the fruit stand.

"Yep," Champ replied. He told him to take the bag to the Fruit Man. He told him to tell the Fruit Man that Silk said thanks.

Champ cuffed the bag under his arm and started toward the fruit stand, when Silk said, "Oh! And Champ?" He turned around to face him, "Don't forget the money."

Champ said, "Okay" and then continued on to the fruit stand. The man at the fruit stand gave him seventy dollars and two fresh peaches. He ate them on the way back to the car wash.

When Champ arrived, he gave the money to Silk. Silk said, "Alright Lil' man, good job."

That night after the car wash closed, Silk was sitting behind his desk in his office and the guy who was in the Cadillac sat across from him. On top of the desk was a stack of U.S. currency. Silk said to the guy, "You know, I heard that Truck pulled in another young gun?"

"Oh yeah?" commented the guy. "Well, he didn't mention it to me when I spoke to him." He tossed a stack of bills into a duffle bag,

counting one hundred and sixty two thousand dollars in total. Then he looked over at Silk and asked, “Well, did Truck put him in Potted Land?”

“I don’t think so,” Silk replied. “I saw him hanging out on the hot spot with one of Birdie’s boys from Pigeon Town. I don’t know what they are up to, but Truck knows that the hot spot is neutral grounds,” he continued. The guy looked at Silk strangely as he rested back in his seat. He wasn’t amused at all. “Maybe he was having himself a drink or something,” Silk continued, and noticed that the guy didn’t want to hear it or believe it. So he said, “Redd, just let it go. Just forget it.”

Redd continued to stare at Silk before he said, “Yeah, yeah. Let’s get through with this shit so that I can get outta here.”

Finally, at a quarter to three in the morning, they had finished counting the money which added up to one hundred and seventy five thousand dollars. Then Redd left. Silk stayed at the car wash that night. Redd didn’t go straight home after he left the car wash. Instead, he drove to Pigeon Town to see a fella by the name of Birdie. He figured that with the money Birdie had, he wouldn’t be hanging out this late. So he passed on over by his house and when he got there he knocked on the door and a nice-looking female answered it. “Oh! Hey Redd, how you doing?” she said.

Redd looked at the female angrily and replied, “Bitch! Get Birdie to the door before I shove my foot up yo ass!” and the girl didn’t say another word. She turned around and went to call Birdie.

Birdie was the kind of guy who would party all day, every day. He kept two or three cheap whores at his house, and Silk would call him a fake-ass sugar daddy pimp who pushed blow for a living. When Birdie came to the door, he wore a long, burgundy silk robe, which he was closing as he approached the door.

“Yeah, what’s up Redd? What brings you over to this area?” he asked.

“Look! You sugar-footed mutha fucka!” Redd yelled. “Is anything going on between you and Truck on neutral grounds?” he asked.

Redd took a step closer to Birdie, making sure he was in striking distance. Birdie's eyes widened as he stuttered, "N-N-No, Redd! I have nothin' going on with Truck!" he said.

Redd said, "What about this young gun Truck's got that's supposed to be holding the hot spot down?"

"It's some kid that flew in just last week from the Bay area. You got to believe me, man! I don't have shit to do with him!"

Redd stared at Birdie for a few moments. He knew that he didn't know anything about the kid because if he did he would have cracked under pressure. Before he left, he left Birdie with these words, "Don't end up like the last mark." And then he was gone.

After leaving Birdie's house, Redd thought he'd pass by the hot spot and peep things out. When he approached the hot spot, it was just like Silk had said. There was one of Birdie's boys, along with the new kid, hanging out in front of the hot spot and pushing blow. One or two days could be explained, but a week left no excuse. Redd pulled his Cadillac to the curb in front of the bar and got out with a long-nosed .44 magnum pistol in his hand. The two boys watched Redd the whole time, but they didn't expect anything until he rose the gun and pointed it at Birdie's boy...and then it hit him. Redd asked, "Do you work for Birdie?"

The kid replied, "Yep!"

As he nodded his head up and down, Redd shot him and said, "Not anymore." He then grabbed the new kid by his neck and directed him towards the Cadillac. Blood had splattered all over the new kid's shirt because Birdie's boy had been right next to him when he was shot. He opened the trunk of the Cadillac and put the kid in it. He closed it up, got in the car and peeled off.

The next day when the boys made it to the car wash, they knew immediately that something was definitely wrong. Big Bruce yelled out, "Damn! This mutha fuckas empty!" as they stopped in their tracks and stared at an empty lot.

Then Busty said, "Damn. Look at Silk's Eldorado!" which was parked halfway under the fourth cover. It was riddled with bullet holes, and the windows were busted out. The boys ran closer to get a better look at the car, and found that it was in very bad shape.

There were holes in the doors big enough for a baseball to go through. The radio was shot and the interior was ruined. Then they heard Silk's voice coming from his office.

They all went to his office and stood in the doorway. They heard him telling someone on the phone, "After I hit the first one, three more came tearing at me!" Then he noticed his boys standing in the doorway and told the person on the phone, "Hold up a minute, will ya?"

He dug into his pocket and pulled out a one hundred dollar bill and handed it to Big Bruce. He told them that they didn't have to work today, and said that he wanted all of them to get fresh haircuts. He told them to go by Big Charlie's, and that he would call him and have him waiting for them. Champ looked over at the trash can, where there was one of Silk's khaki tops stuffed in it. It was bloody, so he figured that's why he sat in his office wearing only his cotton tank top. He couldn't figure out where Silk had been hit, but he was certain that he had been.

They all headed over to Big Charlie's and got haircuts. Then they made their way to the clubhouse. On their way there, they stopped by Big Head Simon's. Big Head Simon was an old man whose wife, Ms. Corean, would treat the gang to a slice of apple pie from time to time. They both took a liking to the gang and nearly everyone who had been living in the neighborhood for the last twenty years spoke of the wildest experiences about Big Head Simon. They said that he was an old gangster who sold moonshine for a living, and carried a double barrel shotgun on the seat of his pickup. When the gang got to Big Head Simon's house, Ms. Corean was waiting for them on the front porch with a fresh baked apple pie in her hands, smiling at them. "I knew my boys were coming," she said.

"Hey! Ms. Corean!" they all shouted.

"Y'all just sit y'allse Lil' tails down and rest a little. Because y'all kids just run, run, run!" she ordered, but in a friendly manner. She looked at Champ and asked, "Well! Who is this?"

"That's Bo brother!" shouted Dusty. She cocked her eyes toward him and said, "What did I tell you about that?"

Dusty then put his hand over his mouth, and she looked at Champ. She asked, "Now, what is your name, Sweetheart?"

Champ looked up at her and replied, "Champ." She looked at him up and down and then said, "What a fine young man you is! I bet the girls just go crazy over you!" and the gang started laughing.

She then turned and yelled towards the house for her husband Simon, "Simon! Come out here and see Bo's brother!" as she handed all of them a piece of the warm, fresh apple pie.

Big Head Simon came out on the porch and looked at all of the boys. He asked Ms. Corean, "Who you talkin' 'bout is Bo's brother?" When he spotted Champ, he took a few steps back to look at him real good.

"Well, what do you think? Might be the next black attorney or doctor, huh?" she said.

Big Head Simon stared at Champ and replied, "Corean, I'ma tell you just what I told you about that fat knucklehead."

"Simon you don't say--" Ms. Corean tried to finish but Big Head Simon cut her off.

"Um," he mumbled. "I smell gangster all over him."

They all froze, because Simon nearly scared the life out of them. As a matter of fact, they didn't say a word for some time. After leaving Ms. Corean's house, the sun began to set. But it wasn't time for the boys to go inside. So they all decided to go and play around with the girls until it was time to go in. All the girls hung around Minnie's house. There were always a lot of women hanging around there because her godmother Janice fixed hair, and she stayed with her. When they made it to Minnie's house, there were a gang of girls there. They waved and giggled at the boys, and then one of the girls asked, "Which one of you is Champ?"

Champ was always stuck in the back of the crowd so that no one could see him, but it was just his luck. The gang stood aside so that he could be seen and said, "That's him, there."

The girls all started blushing as Busty yelled to them, "One of y'all go up in there and call Kay for me."

One of the girls said to another, "Nonny, go inside and tell Kay that Champ is out here."

While she was going to get Kay, the gang all found a spot on the porch and started talking to the girls. All of the gang talked to them except Big Bruce. None of the girls liked him because he was fat. So to pass the time, he would crack jokes about them constantly.

When the girl came back she stepped out on the porch but there was nobody else with her. She said, "Say boy!" And Champ turned around to look at her, "My momma want you!"

He looked at Busty and Bo with his eyes wide, and they started chuckling. Big Bruce said, "Go in there, man. She ain't gon' do you nothing." Then the rest of the gang began to say things like:

"What you scared fo?"

"Go in and come right out!"

"That's your girlfriend."

"They just want to see how cute you are."

Then the girls said, "Come on, boy! We gon' bring you in there! Boy, don't be scared!" Then they all crowded around Champ and took him inside the house.

He could hear Dusty in the background teasingly, "Oh! He is so cute!"

When he got inside the house, there were a lot of women getting their hair fixed. Some were under the hair dryer, and others were getting their hair rolled or hot curled. One lady looked at Champ and said, "Oh Jane Lee! He's a cute Lil' boy. Look!"

And then another lady turned around and looked at him and asked, "Do you like my baby?" Champ smiled and held his head down. She said, "Hold your head up and talk to me."

He held his head up and looked at her, trying not to smile. He just couldn't help it, and she started smiling back at him. One lady who was getting her hair rolled said, "Oh no, Jane Lee! He can't have my godchild!"

Then another lady asked, "Why he can't, Glo?"

She replied, "Cause that Lil' boy ain't nothing but a heartbreaker!"

Kay walked into the room and Champ knew that it was her right away, because he recognized the long plaits and the big titties. He

thought she was so fine. The lady looked at Kay and asked her, "Now, who do you want calling here; him or Damien?"

Kay pointed at Champ, "Him."

The lady that went by the name of Glo said, "Well, that's good, because I didn't like that bad ass other Lil' boy anyway!"

Then her aunt looked at Champ and asked, "You gon' take care of my baby?" He nodded his head up and down, still smiling, and then she said, "He can't stop smiling, Glo. Look at him."

"I see him blushing," Glo replied.

That was pretty much it. They went back on the porch with the rest of the kids and Champ told them that they just loved him in there. Once they were on the porch, they started talking to each other. She said, "Boy! You know all the girls around here been talking about you?"

"What they been talking about me for?" he asked.

She smacked him on the shoulder softly and said, "Because they like you, Stupid."

Then one girl yelled out, "She always want to hit people." Kay looked at her and rolled her eyes.

Then Champ told her that he didn't like any of the girls. She started laughing and said, "They said you are cuter than Donkey!" They all thought that was funny, too.

Donkey knew that he had a lot of girlfriends so he just smacked his lips at the remark, but his girlfriend Bianca who lived across the street replied, "He don't look better than Donkey!" as she gave everyone a crazy look. But she liked Champ, too!

That night, it had gotten late. Champ wanted to get a goodnight kiss from Kay, but he was too shy to ask her for one before they all went home. After they got home and settled in, they found out that something terrible had happened because Ms. Katt yelled, "Bo! Champ! Y'all come here and hurry up!" Bo and Champ rushed out of the bedroom to the living room where Ms. Katt was watching the nightly news. They both sat on the couch next to her and she told them to watch.

It was a broadcast of a gun battle in mid-city that had turned fatal. She explained to them that it was Silk who had been shot,

along with another accomplice who had been killed. The news reporter said that one of the victims had been rushed to Charity Hospital where he was under guarded supervision, and that his condition was undetermined. Everyone in the neighborhood loved Silk, even Ms. Katt. Tears ran down her face as she whispered, "Hang in there, Silk. Everybody is praying for you." The boys started crying as well. Even though Champ hadn't known him very long, he still didn't want to see him go.

Since Silk had been shot, the car wash stayed closed for over a week. As the boys walked through it, everything seemed strange. Nothing was right since he was away. Even the fruit stand was closed, and the barber shop, too. Busty said that they were probably trying to raise money to bury Silk whenever he died. Dusty asked him why he always thought like that.

He replied, "Silk told me to think of the worst things that could happen."

It was a Saturday morning; two weeks after Silk had been shot. Bo and Champ woke up early to watch the Saturday morning cartoons. Ms. Katt would get her rest on Saturday's so instead of a hot breakfast they ate cereal. At around nine o'clock there was a knock on the front door, and the boys ran to the front window to peep out. They saw the front end of Redd's Fleetwood Brougham, and that's when Bo went to the door and asked, "Who is it?"

"Sunshine," a lady replied.

"Hold up, I gotta call my Momma!" Bo replied, and ran into Ms. Katt's room to wake her.

She came to the door and opened it, saying, "Oh hey, Shiney!"

"Katt girl, I am sorry for waking you up early, but Silk sent me to get your boys."

Bo and Champ looked at each other, astounded. "Oh! Silk made it?" asked Ms. Katt.

"Yeah, girl," Shiney replied. "But he ain't gonna be able to walk no more, long as he living."

Ms. Katt then turned and told them to go and put some clothes on because she was going to let them go and see Silk. They went to their room, got dressed, and rushed out of the house with

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Sunshine. She had packed the whole gang into Redd's pretty green Fleetwood.

Sunshine was Redd's girl, the same lady who had been sitting in the front seat of the Cadillac that day at the car wash. She looked real good, as a matter of fact, and Champ stared at her the whole time from the house to the hospital. When they made it to the hospital she said, "Silky gon' be so glad to see y'all!"

It wasn't hard for them to find Silk; his room number was 916. When they entered the room, Dusty was amazed at all of the balloons that surrounded Silky's bed and door. They all followed behind Sunshine as she opened the door and said, "Here they go, Silk."

The gang walked into the room and Silk was sitting up in his bed, talking to Redd. He looked at them and smiled as they entered. Both sides of the bed were lined with balloons and flowers, which read "Get Well Soon." They all ran to his bedside and Busty nearly cried, "Silk, we thought you was gon' die!"

He rubbed him on his head and replied, "Nah, Busty. Silk is a soldier!"

Big Bruce replied, "That's what I want to be!"

Redd asked, "So you want to be a soldier, boy?" He looked at Bruce while rubbing his goatee.

"Yep!" Big Bruce replied. "Just like Silk!"

Dusty shouted, "But Silk, you told me you was a G!"

Silk and Redd looked at each other and smiled. Silk said, "Come here, Lil' Dee." That's what he called him at work, and as Dusty came closer to his bed the whole room became silent. Silk looked at him and said, "Lil' Dee, you right 'bout that. I did tell you that I'm a G." And then he looked around at the rest of the gang, "But I am a soldier in combat." Then he raised his hand up to point at the boys, "And right now, y'all are too young to be G's."

That's when Redd spoke out and said, "Y'all soldiers." All the boys felt proud.

Big Bruce whispered to himself, "Soldier boys."

Silk had been in the hospital for nearly a month before the doctor allowed him to come home. He stayed home for a few days

before he went back to the car wash. The car wash hadn't been open in nearly a month. So when it did reopen, there were cars parked everywhere. It seemed as if everyone who would usually bring their car over on a certain day was there on the day that Silk came home. It was like a big celebration. There was a barbecue grill set up outside the office with chips, sodas, and hot dogs. While the boys washed cars, Silk and Redd sat outside of the office greeting everyone who came. It seemed as if everyone that came had something for Silk. All the guys in silk shirts and pretty cars gave him money. All the women gave him flowers or a gift.

Champ had just finished drying a long, white Buick Riviera and had started on the tires with some Armor All when Redd's pretty green Cadillac showed up. It was his girl Sunshine, and that pretty girl who was in the back seat. There was no room for the Cadillac on the lot, so she parked it a distance down the middle of the block. Sunshine and the girl came walking into the car wash parking lot just moments later. Champ couldn't keep his eyes off her. She wore a sleeveless sundress with flowers on it, a pair of brown sandals, and she had those long plaits. She never noticed him watching her from the other side of the lot, and as much as he wanted to walk over and ask her name, he didn't. Champ didn't know the first thing to say to her so he just continued to stare at her. He figured that she'd be hanging around for the most of the day, so he thought that he would have plenty of time to talk to her.

Champ had finished the tires on the Riviera and was preparing to move on to the next car, which was a brown Cadillac Seville. He sat his bucket down and opened the door to do the inside because Silk had told him to always start on the inside of the car. He pulled the floor mats out of the car, and then used his small broom to sweep the floor of the car. All of a sudden someone asked, "What is your name?"

From the sound of that voice, Champ knew that it couldn't be anyone but her. So he turned around to take a look at her and she stood there with her arms folded across her chest. He asked her to repeat what she had asked. "I asked your name," she replied.

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He stood in front of her and said, "My name is Champ. What is yours?"

"Sand" she replied, and then looked over toward the office where Silk and Redd were having a few laughs. Then she looked back at Champ.

"Silk your daddy, huh?" he asked.

She looked Champ in his eyes for a few seconds and then started laughing. With the broom still in his hand, he looked at her with a curious expression. He asked, "What's funny?"

She looked him up and down and then asked, "You don't have a girlfriend, huh?"

Champ was speechless, because then he thought about Kay. She was his girlfriend, but he wanted Sand to be his girlfriend, too. So he made a serious face and replied, "I got a lot of girlfriends," and hoped it worked.

She yelled out playfully, "You lying your ass off!"

"Girl, I do!" he said. Then she told him to name one and when he began to stutter.

She replied, "Uh-huh. Look at you there. You can't even name one."

He just stared at her and tried to hold his smile back as much as possible. Then she asked him if he cared for a chili dog because she was headed to get one. He knew that she would be his. He said he would like one, and she turned around and started toward the food table to get the food. He finished the Seville before she returned. When she returned with the chili dogs and handed one to him, she said, "I don't know why you are so shy, because I know a lot of boys who don't have girlfriends." Champ bit down on the chili dog and looked at her. Then she asked "Do you have a phone?"

"Why? You want my number?" he asked.

Then she looked over at her Daddy, then back at Champ and said, "Because I'ma call you, Stupid!"

Then he asked her, "Are you going to be my girlfriend?"

She replied quickly, "Yep!" And he smiled.

Later on that day, Silk sat behind his desk in his wheelchair and the boys all copped a spot inside his office. Everyone had left, so

they shut the car wash down and gathered together in his office to find out what was so important that Silk needed to talk to them about. When they were all settled down in the office, he said, "I just want to tell y'all that, um...a lot of things is not going to be the same. Old Silk here been forced to sit down now." He looked down at his wheelchair. "I know that I been asking y'all to run a few errands for me here and there, and that y'all don't want to do it sometimes." They all attempted to say something. "Hold up!" Silk said. "Just listen to me," and he took a deep breath. "You see, it is going to be kind of hard for old Silk to do a lot of things," he said as he looked at all of the kids. "Things like go to the grocery store, payin' my bills, makin' sure my people get took care of, iron my clothes. And boys, the list goes on and on."

Silk opened his arms wide, and slowly he said, "Y'all got old Silk. Yeah, I got money, nice clothes, fly cars, 'n whores." He dropped his hands to his side and said, "But I ain't never had a family." When he said that, tears flooded the wells of all of their eyes. "There was never any love in it for me," he continued. "I didn't have anybody to tell me not to do this, and not to do that. Nobody to trust. I ain't had nobody to run to when I had a problem. New Year's to New Year's Eve, it was all about a dollar. That's why I want y'all to remember that even though the record broke, it never rained on Silk's party." Silk meant every word he said. They realized right then how much they meant to him and how much he meant to all of them, too.

Big Bruce stood up and walked over to Silk's wheelchair and said, "We'll be your family, Silk."

Silk looked around and said, "It's a long way to the hilltop. Y'all think y'all ready?"

The boys all nodded their heads and Busty said, "We soldiers, remember?"

Silk laughed and replied, "Yeah! Lil' man, I remember." They smiled, and that's when Silk said, "Oh yeah! And another thing I want to tell y'all. Save yo' money, because whenever yo' Lil' girlfriends ask to go to the show or the arcade you will have some money to take her and treat her nice." Then he looked at Champ

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and said, “Champ, I saw you over there putting your mack down on Redd’s daughter, Sand,” and the gang started laughing. Champ just smiled.

Then Dusty teased and cried out, “Oh, he is sooo cute.”

Silk looked at Champ with a sneaky grin and said, “Champ, you ain’t nothing but Silky Slim in his prime.” He rubbed his goatee and mumbled.

That night, Silk paid them and they all went home. For some strange reason, Champ found himself thinking about what Silk had told them about the ‘broken record at the party.’ He had to look at the television for a while to try and get it off of his mind, even though he didn’t have the slightest idea what Silk had been talking about. Hell, he didn’t recall anything going wrong with the music at the car wash.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Wayne Grind is one of the hardest working men in entertainment. He is from Franklinton, Louisiana, and gained his start and name as a promoter in the entertainment industry. With the mentality to Network and Grind, he has put on several shows in different markets, working with various artists such as The King of Swing Tucker, Big Pokey, Juvenile, Yung

Buck, Kelsey Nykole, Juicy Badazz, Karlie Red, and J Harden, just to name a few. He is CEO of WG Management/Consultant and Co-CEO of The Network Grind. His company The Network Grind is responsible for discovering rap artist Ed Da Realist from Richmond, VA. Wayne currently manages Super Producer Heartbeatz, and his company consulted with Lil' Boosie's mother while Lil' Boosie was incarcerated. Wayne Grind has a gift in discovering talent, and he loves to put people together to create something great. The Network Grind is a catalyst for the independent artist as well as a company that bridges people together for positive change, putting on different events for community, teens, and the homeless. The Network Grind has provided many Easter baskets for kids in high-risk neighborhoods, fed and clothed the homeless, as well as provided over 500 wigs for people suffering with cancer -- and that's only a few of the events his company has hosted.

Wayne's first love is for kids in high-risk neighborhoods. His mission is to teach the youth and guide them to a better way of life to prevent them from becoming a product of their environment. His goal is to send a strong message to help slow down the violence that has rapidly increased in many minority communities around the world. He doesn't use the phrase "Stop the Violence" because he realizes that before it stops, there has to be effective ways implemented to help modify the mentality of the youth. With consciousness and awareness, violence will decrease, resulting in high-risk neighborhoods being restored.

Mr. Grind was born and raised in Louisiana and throughout his youth, teen, and young adult life, he spent years in and out of trouble. After 13 ½ years in and out of jail, Mr. Grind decided enough was enough. Once he learned the right ways to deal with anger and found a love for God, he was able to implement positive change in his own life. He made it out to

Wayne Grind

turn a negative into a positive, but unfortunately, his 13 year-old son wasn't as fortunate. His son lost his life to gun violence, hit by a stray bullet during a shoot-out between two people in his neighborhood. So the hunger to save kids is one of Mr. Grind's primary focuses. If he can help stop even one mother or father from getting the news of tragedy, he is aiming to do whatever he can. He has just completed his first two non-fiction novels based on his life called *Loyalty, Love, & BETRAYAL: Parts 1 and 2 – Surviving the Hand That was Dealt Growing Up in the Hood*. He is excited to give his testimony and to give hope to young black men or to anyone suffering like he did.

If you would like Wayne Grind to speak at one of your events, you can book him at waynegrindpublishing@gmail.com.