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To :

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Hello Son,

Let's go ahead and discuss the "elephant in the room," the question that must loom large: "How the hell did I wind up in prison accused of taking a man's life?"

Although I would have much preferred to be able to discuss this face to face, there was just an incident that occurred in Miramar, Fl. yesterday that leads me to want to share my story with you now. For obvious reasons, I can't go into much detail, but it breaks my heart to think of how much misinformation is out there.... just recently, I found out that my own mom thinks that I killed a man with a brick, because he stole my hat, and one of my sisters thinks I took his life with a knife because he stole my trench coat (never mind the fact that it was in the middle of a Florida summer where the average temperature is 90 degrees!)

The fact is, a 3 time convicted felon pulled a knife on me, and he was dead before he hit the ground. I say that, not to boast son, but to indicate how quickly things took place, and how suddenly the tragedy unfolded.

The incident that occurred in Miramar yesterday, (12/5) which led me to mention this now, is the armed robbery that took place in Miami, the ensuing hijacking/hostage taking/ police chase and shooting that ended so tragically and dramatically. It's not that my case was anywhere near as dramatic, or chaotic. It just speaks to how suddenly lives can be changed, impacted and even "ended" after a devastating chain of events.

Not only that, but if you look at a map of where the incident came to its tragic conclusion.... it's only a bit more than a block from where you once visited me when I lived there in Miramar on a 2 and 1/2 acre ranch with horses, and a Lexus and Acura SLX in the driveway. That's a far cry from the 2 man cell from which I sit tapping out this message....

Before I headed up to Jersey in the fall of 2003, I was standing on the brink of what should have been an incredibly prosperous breakthrough in my life. I had just signed an exclusive contract with Jone (pronounced 'Jo-nay') Ansa to raise \$2 million for the independent film "Baby in the Family." Jone, was a Juliard educated, afro centric, award winning director. The film was based on a book by his wife, Tina McElroy Ansa, and was to star, among others, Alfre Woodard, Pamela Grier, and Todd Bridges. The budget would have been so low, because the stars were "collard green and cornbread eating friends" of the Ansas, and it was hoped that it would be the first in a series of independent, black films that would be produced without the use of Hollywood money or influence. I would have made 10 points on the \$2 million raised (\$200,000), and had the opportunity to continue raising the funds for any of the films that followed. That would have been only one of the projects I would be pursuing as CEO of Sirius Promotions. Your dad was on the verge of rolling with the big dogs like Russell Simmons, P Diddy, and Jay Z! (It was also the last time I spoke to Nina Lederman who'd congratulated me on the contract.)

At that point, I had been working 20 hour days, and was basically pushing myself to the breaking point! (big lesson learned!) Audrey and I had a falling out and I found myself heading up to Jersey for a cooling off period....

Unfortunately, at the time, that also meant that all of my work came to a standstill, since everything was in the harddrive of my desk top computer... and I mean everything! To compound problems, I'd even left my cell phone with all of my contact information, and so, basically, I'd left quite a few people hanging... including everyone associated with the film and Sirius Promotions. It was a real debacle son... but I had hoped it would be temporary. Hell, I'd even left in the middle of having new porcelain caps made, and I'd wound up losing the temporary ones. D'oh! (you can't make this shit up!! LOL)

So there I was, in Jersey. A week turned into a month. I was broke, and felt as though half of my brain was left in the hard drive of my computer in Miami, and I couldn't even smile right with those "capless nubs." My foot had slipped and the slippery slope became a rocky road. I knew that I would be able to turn things around, I always had, but I didn't know things would only be going from bad to worse.

I'll get into the details of how it happened at another time, but I wound up waking up in the hospital with a severe case of frostbite, and being told that I would likely lose 7 fingers! While recovering, Audrey and I patched things up, and I would be flying back to Florida after getting the o.k. from the Drs. in Montclair. I was staying with a friend down the street from the hospital...until his mom found out I was living "rent free" in the high rent district. On the day she said I had to leave, another friend said I could stay with her until I was cleared to head back to Florida. Things were looking

up, or so I thought. Son, that was one of the last times I spoke to you in Jersey... check this out!

The friend I was staying with happened to be a beautiful, Philippean dancer... she had a masters degree from N.Y.U., and was dancing at the club featured in the Soprano's called the Bada Bing. (told you, you can't make this shit up:-) Well, the day before the Superbowl, in Feb. 2004, I realized that i'd run out of Oxycontin prescribed for the frostbite, I would be able to get a refill the following Monday, so I had the brilliant idea to get a bottle of Dewar's to see me through. Duh!

During the pregame show, after only a few sips, I was out like a light! Meanwhile, a "friend" of Merideth, the dancer, had tried to get rough with her, and she had been calling me for help (some body guard, eh?:-) After she kicked him out, she came into my room and started screeching at me... "I was calling you and blah-blah!!" It was then that you called the cell phone that she had bought me... she snatched the phone from my hand and screeched "who is this?"

TBC 6,000 character cap

The elephant in the room (continued-part 2)

I knew it was you from the caller I.d., I can only guess what happened next... You must have given the phone to your mom. The next thing I knew, Meredith had calmed down, and after only a few minutes on the phone with your mom, it sounded like she was talking to an old friend. She must have explained something about how I was staying there while continuing to see the doctors and get hydrotherapy treatment for my hands, and how she was a dancer with a masters from NYU... I really don't know all that they discussed, because I used that opportunity to slink away and see what comfort I could find in my Dewar's White Label.

Merideth had completely calmed down by the time the call had ended, and actually apologized for being so upset. I have no idea who won that Super Bowl, because it wasn't long until the cell phone rang, and it was Audrey... I had never quite gotten around to telling her I had left my friend Adam's house and was um.. staying with a dancer from the Bada Bing!

"Where are you?" She asked... before I could answer, she said, "And who the hell is Merideth?" Needless to say, that conversation didn't end well....

When I was finally cleared by the doctor to seek further treatment for my frostbitten fingers in Florida, Audrey was not exactly ready to welcome me with open arms. When I arrived in Miami and gave her a call, all I heard was a loud "click." I had nine fingers bandaged like a mummy, and only my thumb was free. I couldn't shoot her a bird... so I threw her a thumb and kept it moving.

I'd once been the Exec. Director of a non-profit in Miami called Operation R.O.A.M. (Reach Out Across Miami), we dealt with emergency food, clothing and shelter issues, so I was able to get temporary housing that I once used to get for others. I had a friend that owned an interesting company, they used to make those messages you hear when you call a business and get put on hold... "Hello, your call is very important to us, please hold while.... etc." So I got a job not only selling that service to businesses, but often making the messages in the recording studio.

In no time I was able to get myself a little house in Hollywood, FL., I was doing my own hydrotherapy treatment for my hands, and had even been able to pay for some new caps for my teeth in cash, since by then I no longer had insurance.

Right before my birthday in June 2004, I had a run in with a knuckle head in Hollywood, and wound up chin checking him, he hit the deck right as a police car was driving by... d'oh! I wound up doing 30 days in the county, and when I got out, I had lost my little house in Hollywood, my job with the phone messaging company.... Once again I would be starting over, but it was really no big deal. Within days I'd found a new job and a place to live.... my pride was such that I refused to call Audrey, or even the church folks that I'd spent 14 years with (since Audrey was still going to that church).

July 4th, 2004, I spent on Ft. Lauderdale Beach with some friends and watched the fireworks... it was one big party til dawn! As the sun was coming out, I swam out about 300 yards, and I was going to tread water way out there as the sun broke the horizon... When I stopped swimming and tried to tread water, I was surprised the find I was standing on a sand bar... "Cool," I thought.

However, after a few minutes, as the sun cleared the horizon, the sand shifted under my left foot. There was a splash, and something hit me in the shin... bang! I'd been standing on the back of a nesting manta ray. I made it back to shore in record time, and the pain became intense. I wound up spending the next 2 weeks in the hospital, and almost lost my leg, which had swollen up to twice the size. Crazy year, eh? It began almost losing my fingers, now I risked losing a leg. When the overall swelling went down, I had to have an operation on the egg sized lump of poison/infection that had been left behind by the stinger.

When I was released from the hospital, it went into an assisted living facility, since I would need to have the dressing changed on a daily basis. It was there, while walking to and from a local store, that I met a homeless guy. He called himself "the crab man," and he lived under a bridge... he would catch crabs in a makeshift trap, and sell them for beer money. They had a barrel of clothes and a big supply of hygiene products at the A.L.F., so I would give him little care packages...

I was sharing a room with some long time residents, and there was n outbreak of lice at the facility, so I shaved my head (later that made for a whacky ass mug shot!). I had a dispute with a long time resident, and I was asked to leave. At that point, a reasonable man would have called Audrey, or some friends... but I was determined not to reach out for help, but to keep plugging away until I was back on top. (Looking back, it was foolish pride!) Instead, I was going to head over and get a room at the Salvation Army.

In order to do so, I had to hurry in order to register before 4 o'clock...

While heading to a bus stop, I ran into the Crab man... I told him what had happened, where I was headed, and that I would have to come back that way after registering in order to head over to the Broward General Hospital to get another referral to an A.L.F. (since my leg still needed dressing changes).

I didn't want to lug my back pack back and forth on the bus, so he walked with me as I stashed it.

When I came back, after locking in a the room, and getting ready to go Broward General, I discovered my back pack was missing. I was hot! Not only did it have some clothes/hygene, etc. It had the dressing for my wound and meds. I would later find out it also had as beautiful silver cross that I had on a rawhide chain.

Of course, since that was his area, once again I ran into the crab man. I figured he'd be the perfect guy to ask what he'd seen...

End part 2

Elephant.. (part 3)

I picked up a six pack of beer, since by that time, I was in no mood to head back to "Uncle Sal's" or even deal with the folks at the Broward General Hospital. I'd just go and hang out with some friends down around Ft. Lauderdale Beach.

The crab man and I stood behind a building and had a beer. He was rambling on about what a piece of "expletive" it was that took my back pack, while I was seriously considering calling either Audrey and going back to my house in Miramar, or even contacting the Pastor of the church I had attended for so long. When he bent down to grab another beer, I saw the rawhide shoestring that I had used as a chain for that beautiful silver cross I mentioned earlier.

"You bleep!" I said, "You took my shit!"

He must have panicked, because as he stood up, he pulled a knife from his pocket! I unleashed a series of blows, any one of which may have been lethal. I was horrified even before he toppled over, I knew what I had done... Tragically, his life was definitely over, and mine would never be the same.

Son, years later, in a book by Malcolm Gladwell called "Blink," I found out what must have happened, because I could never understand why I had reacted so viciously. When I first saw my chain, I must have gotten a spike of adrenalin. When he pulled out that knife, a second spike of adrenalin must have hit. The example he uses in the book helped me to wrap my mind around what must have happened. He asked the question, "Why would a policeman chase a suspect, and then when he caught him, even knowing that there were witnesses, pound the guy?" He said that first spike of adrenalin was released during the chase, and when he caught him, that second spike may have caused him to bypass the prefrontal cortex (where reasoning takes place), and go straight primal mode. A "reaction" vs. a "reasoned response." You could even compare it to the tragedy that just unfolded in Miramar, just one block from where I used to have that ranch. Those policemen, after that adrenalin filled chase, reacted by unleashing a fusillade of bullets in the middle of rush hour traffic. It's a miracle that more innocent people were not killed.

All I knew at that time, was that a nightmare had just unfolded. Not long before, there was a case that went to court dealing with self defense. It turned out that the law on the books at that time was "The Castle Doctrine," which meant that self defense was only admissible in your home, place of business, and possibly in your car. It all came to me in a flash, I was "bleeped!" A man was dead, and I was "bleeped."

As bad as things were at that moment, what I should have done was call the cops immediately, but I didn't. I was in shock, likely in what could be called a fugue state. The more time that passed, the worse things became. Eventually I called the police, and I had no intention of trying to "run." I just couldn't bring myself to talk to the police when they first showed up. Of course that only compounded my problem. I just needed time to think. Unfortunately, I couldn't think clearly. I was in shock.

Son, I've spent the past 15 years paying a very steep price for what I had done. The pain and remorse, at times have been almost unbearable. Unfortunately, I realized that it was not an isolated "bad decision." Although I had been blessed beyond measure in my 46 years of life until that point, much of that time had been spent taking those blessings for granted. I cringe to think of some of the poor choices I've made over the years.

I was blown away when you mentioned that one of your web series was called "Crucial Decisions." Even more so when I saw the titles, "Am I Faithful," "Am I a Killer," "Am I Wrong." Wow!

I'm sure you've heard this before, but it bears repeating:

Watch you thoughts, they become words watch your words, they become actions watch your actions, they become habits watch your habits, they shape your character!

Son, please understand, I didn't share this story with you as a way of justifying anything that I've done since the last time that I saw you. Absolutely no one is to blame for that fact that I've spent the past 15 years wearing these prison blues. Even though news reports were distorted, sensationalized and at times, plain wrong, it does not take away from the fact that I am responsible for taking a man's life. Was I faithful? No! Am I a killer? Yes! Am I wrong? Yes!

It's unbelievably painful to admit these things son, but God is not finished with me yet! I am a work in progress. I know what it is to cry out for mercy and experience His Amazing Grace! If it had not been for the strength and guidance that I have been able to find within the Word of God, trying to deal with the pain and loneliness that prison can produce would have been almost unbearable. It would have been like trying to fight the lightning with a slingshot, each flash would have only revealed how hopeless the battle. And in the darkness between the flashes, doubts would have echoed like rolling thunder, and the tears fallen down like rain.

I know that there are always going to be people who view me through different lenses, depending upon which headline they may have read, or what rumor they may have heard. For many, I will always be a convicted felon, a killer, or even a dead beat dad. We tend to judge others by their worst examples, and ourselves by our best intentions. But there's something I want you to know son, as I look back upon a life that has been filled with amazing blessings, experiences and opportunities a life that has been filled with mistakes, blunders and failures, one day stands out as one of the most magical. It was 32 years ago, on Dec. 8th, 1987. It was the day I watched you being born! That day, for me, was a gift of God, and I tear up to think of all the opportunities I have missed since that special day, but I thank God for the chance to share our tomorrows!

I love you Son,
Dad

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