

# **Seven Black Men**

**by Phillip W. Weiss**

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## **Characters**

**Will Bosby – actor and academic**

**L. K. Sampson – former football star**

**Mujabbah Kalih – former boxing champion**

**Nighk Byson – former boxing champion**

**Kim E. Broun – former football star**

**Milt Haimberlain – former basketball star**

**Dyger Woots – golf star**

**This is a one-act play consisting of three scenes.**

**Disclaimer**

Although this play is inspired by actual persons and events, it is a work of fiction and should be construed as such. Any similarity to any persons living or dead is unintended and entirely coincidental. The dialog contained herein is the product of the author's imagination.

**Synopsis:** Seven famous American black men discuss the role of race in defining their identities.

**This play is dedicated to the life of Paul Robeson: actor, athlete, activist, scholar and champion for justice.**



**Scene 1**

*Time: the present*

*Place: a room*

*Setting: Seven black men are sitting at a table. Each one is famous and successful. Although they have known of one another, this is the first time they have personally met.*

**WILL**

My name is Will Bosby. I'm an actor and a scholar. I have a Ph. D. in education. I produced and starred in one of the most popular television sitcoms in history and became a role model for all aspiring African-Americans. I'm also a veteran of the US Navy and something of a lady's man.

**SAMPSON**

I'm L. K. Sampson. I'm an ex-football player. I was the first player to rush for over two thousand yards in a season. After I quit playing football I became an actor. On the negative side, I've had some brushes with the law involving some minor misunderstandings.

**KALIH**

If you are a boxing fan you probably already heard of me. I was born Charlie Kay but later on became a Black Muslim and changed my name to Mujabbah Kalih. I was three-time heavyweight champion of the world. I was stripped of my title after I refused to be drafted into the army.

**NIGHK**

I'm Nighk Byson. I'm just a regular guy from Brooklyn, street smart and tough. I was the youngest and most intimidating heavyweight champion in history. Later on I served time in the pen. But that's in the past.

**KIM E.**

My name is Kim E. Broun. I was one of the first black super stars in professional football. I led the league in rushing eight times and won a championship. I quit football while at the top of my game and became an actor. I'm an old man now, but still have things to say.

**MILT**

I'm Milt Haimberlain. Some consider me the greatest professional basketball player in the history of the game. I'm the first and so far only player ever to score four thousand points in one season and one hundred points in one game. I'm also a prolific lover.

**DYGER**

My name is Dyger Woots. I have won eighty major golf events and fourteen major championships, and during my career have made over a billion dollars in winnings and endorsements. But I've also had some domestic issues which have set me back. Hopefully I'll be able to get back on the winning track soon.

**NIGHK**

What are we doing here?

**SAMPSON**

Somebody sent me an invitation to attend a special event. Is this the event?

**KALIH**

I got the same invitation. So, here I am.

**WILL**

I have a feeling that we all received the same invitation.

**SAMPSON**

Says on the invitation, quote, you are cordially invited to attend a special event. This event will discuss the relationship of the successful black man in a white dominated society, closed quote. It sounded interesting to me, so I said to myself, Why not? What else am I doing? My life's already a disaster.

**DYGER**

That's your fault.

**SAMPSON**

I didn't say it wasn't, but I will tell you right now: I never murdered my wife.

**MILT**

You've been saying that ever since you beat the rap. You know you got off only because the jury was all black and the judge was a joke.

**NIGHK**

Hey, I got some experience with the legal system too, and let me tell you, it is stacked against the black man. I know, I spent three years in jail for something I didn't do.

**KIM E.**

But the bro here beat the rap, and he's black, so how come you went to jail and he didn't?

**NIGHK**

He had the best lawyers money could buy. I had some court appointed putz.

**KALIH**

You guys repulse me. Real lowlifes, that's what you are, carousing around with white women ...

**NIGHK**

In my case, the lady was black.

**DYGER**

Black, white. What's the difference?

**WILL**

All the difference in the world. I've had fifty women accuse me of raping them, and all of them are white.

**KALIH**

That's what happens when you mess around with white ladies. They come back to bite you, badly. That's why I stayed away from them.

**DYGER**

I wish I did that.

**KALIH**

Look at you. You're half black, half Chinese ...

**DYGER**

Half Thai ...

**KALIH**

Whatever, my point being that you don't even know what you are.

**WILL**

Hey, Kalih, all of us are black, including Dyger. Look at the color of our skin. That says it all.

**KIM E.**

Big deal. Skin color don't mean squat. Blackness is a question of culture.

**SAMPSON**

Don't mean anything to me either. I became a star because of my talent, not because of my skin color.

**MILT**

But that don't matter. People still see the color of your skin – which is black – and that puts you immediately behind the eight ball.

**KIM E.**

Can that pool talk. Talk plainly. What are you trying to say?

**MILT**

I am talking plainly. I used a metaphor to try to make my point.

**KIM E.**

Which is?

**MILT**

That we are stigmatized.

**KALIH**

You believe that crap? That's what the white people want you to believe. That we're no good. Me? I was up front about where I was coming from. I even changed my name.

**MILT**

You did that just to make a lot of noise.

**KALIH**

I did not. I did it out of conviction. Personal beliefs.

**DYGER**

Don't make me laugh, brother. You made the noise you did to avoid military service. Be honest. Admit it.

**KALIH**

I did no such thing.

**WILL**

Yes, you did. I served four years in the Navy, state side. You could have done the same thing too.

**KALIH**

Your situation was different.

**WILL**

No, it wasn't. I could have said up yours, I'm not serving this racist country.

**MILT**

But at the time you weren't a star. They would have thrown your ass in prison.

**WILL**

But I didn't give them cause to do that. Instead I served. I didn't grandstand like my friend over here did.

**KALIH**

You wanted to play the Uncle Tom? Fine. I'm not you.

**NIGHK**

Who are you calling Uncle Tom? I wanted to make money, and made a ton of it.

**WILL**

What good was it? Now you're a bum.

**NIGHK**

I'm no bum. I worked my way up from the street to become champ. But it's easy for you to talk. You're an actor. Me? I went into the ring and put it on the line.

**WILL**

Acting can be a tough way to make a living too.

**KALIH**

Acting? Tough? Don't make me laugh. Have you ever been in the ring?

**WILL**

Yeah. I boxed when I was in the Navy.

**KALIH**

Big deal. You fought amateurs. I went up against the best in the world.

**MILT**

I did some boxing too. I liked it.

**DYGER**

All that brute force stuff turns me off. Me, I like the finesse that goes along with playing golf.

**NIGHK**

Golf is a pussy sport.

**DYGER**

Not when you're on the eighteenth hole and ten million dollars is riding on one shot, it isn't. And please stop getting on my case.

**NIGHK**

Hey, we're just talking, Okay? No need to cop an attitude.

**DYGER**

Just because I don't get my head bashed in does not mean I'm not a man.

**MILT**

There's more to being a man than being tough.

**KIM E.**

I'm not cool with that macho garbage either. Too phony.

**KALIH**

But that's how people see us, and it scares them.

**KIM E.**

You mean white people.

**KALIH**

I mean all people. Look, I'm a Muslim and I believe in peace. That's why I refused to be drafted.

**WILL**

And you paid the price.

**KALIH**

I did, but you think I would have been treated that way if I was white?

**MILT**

But you weren't white and you broke the law.

**NIGHK**

We've all broken the law. Isn't that right, Sampson?

**SAMPSON**

Why are you asking me? I was found not guilty.

**NIGHK**

In LA you were, not in Vegas.

**SAMPSON**

That was different. There the judge had it in for me.

**MILT**

That's right, blame it on the judge. Why can't you take responsibility for what you did?

**SAMPSON**

I didn't do anything.

**DYGER**

So, you got convicted for nothing?

**SAMPSON**

That's right. For nothing. All political. Anybody else would have gotten a slap on the wrist. Instead the judge threw the book at me. It sucks. And that is racist.

**KIM E.**

I was a major football star too, and I managed to stay out of jail.

**MILT**

You had your run-ins too. What about all those women who complained about you assaulting them.

**KIM E.**

Bunch of shake down artists, that's all, trying to capitalize on my fame.

**NIGHK**

That's what I said too.

**KIM E.**

You see, you understand what I'm talking about. That shows that you're cool.

**WILL**

I'll tell you, being famous can be rough. You really have to watch yourself.

**KIM E.**

But being famous can be very lucrative too. So would you rather be poor and unknown, or rich and famous?

**MILT**

Isn't becoming rich and famous the American dream?

**SAMPSON**

It sure was for me. I wasn't playing football for nothing.

**MILT**

You mean you didn't play for the love of the sport?

**SAMPSON**

Are you joking? No way.

**MILT**

No. I'm not joking. Why would you think that I'm joking?

**SAMPSON**

Hey, cool it, man. It's just a saying.

**KIM E.**

No need to get so touchy. We're just talking here.

**DYGER**

About what?

**NIGHK**

I was never much for talking. I let my fists do the talking for me.

DYGER

Man of action, right?

NIGHK

You got it. That's what I've believe. Don't say it, do it.

WILL

I think all of us have been guided by that principle.

SAMPSON

I did too, and look where it got me. Nowhere.

KIM E.

You were a great player, almost as good as me.

SAMPSON

Thanks, bro, but I think I was a little bit better than you.

KIM E.

I won a championship, you didn't.

SAMPSON

But I ran for 2,000 yards in one season, playing for a mediocre team.

KIM E.

That's the problem – you think you're such hot stuff. That's why you never won a championship.

KALIH

That's right. You had it all and you blew it, badly. You had the money, the fame, the notoriety, and you flushed it down the toilet.

SAMPSON

That isn't true.

**WILL**

It is true. In fact, it's true for all of us.

**MILT**

Speak for yourself, buddy. I'm happy with my life.

**NIGHK**

That you bonked twenty thousand women? How did that help improve the image of black men?

**MILT**

Showed that we can compile impressive stats. I also scored four thousand points in one season.

**WILL**

You see? Black men are supermen. We can do anything we want.

**DYGER**

I never thought race was a factor in my career.

**KIM E.**

A half black half Asian man playing a game dominated by white men and you never thought that race was a factor. Whatever you say.

**DYGER**

No need to get so condescending with me.

**KIM E.**

It just sounds so ... stupid. You think that people weren't judging you by a different standard?

**KALIH**

I know that in my case race was a huge factor in my career.

**MILT**

That's because you made it a factor. If you had kept your mouth shut the issue wouldn't have come up.

**KALIH**

Don't be naive. If I hadn't brought it up, I'd be just another Uncle Tom nigger doing the bidding of the white man, and I wasn't going to have any of that, you hear?

**MILT**

Get this straight: I'm no Uncle Tom and I don't do anyone's bidding. I was well paid for what I did, and so were you. So you have no cause to complain. And please, don't use the n-word again. It offends me.

**KALIH**

Between bros the n-word is not a derogatory term. That you find its use offensive just shows how white you've become. And you honestly believe that people are color blind?

**MILT**

Let me tell you something, bro. You have no idea what you're talking about. You think using the n-word is cool but it's not. White people love it when we call each other that word. It confirms and legitimizes every negative stereotype they have of us. Even at the height of Jim Crow the use of that word brought shame, even to the most hardcore racists. Now you hear and see that word everywhere: in movies, television, online, and now from you, a man who changed his name in an attempt to refute what that horrible word signifies. And you accuse me of being white. Why? Because I was paid money from white people to entertain the public? That makes me an Uncle Tom? No, that makes me a worker.

**DYGER**

Look: people are not colorblind. Okay? But as long as you're producing, then they're not going to throw race in your face.

**KALIH**

So, what you're saying is that if you hush up and put on that water melon smile and do your job, everything will be cool.

**DYGER**

That's right, as long as you're making money for them.

**SAMPSON**

Until something goes wrong, then they'll turn on you faster than a bolt of lightning, and shove that watermelon down your throat.

**NIGHK**

Is that why your wife was chasing you down the road with a golf club in her hand?

**DYGER**

That was all hyped up by the news.

**NIGHK**

I don't think so. Maybe somebody put in the word to her, tipped her off, and all of a sudden you were no longer the fair haired boy. You became the evil, deceitful monster who's a phony and a cheat.

**DYGER**

I never claimed to be perfect.

**WILL**

But you were marketing yourself as being perfect, and the public doesn't like to be lied to.

**KIM E.**

That's right, and that goes double when you happen to be black.

**KALIH**

Double-standard, man. If you're white you're a bum, but if you're black you're a criminal and a threat. It's political.

**WILL**

Politics of race. I heard that before, but to tell you the truth I'm not sure what it means.

**SAMPSON**

But you're the guy with the Ph. D. So you should be explaining what it means to us.

KIM E.

Just another slogan.

MILT

Meanwhile we were given opportunities that blacks in the past never had. So things can't be all that bad.

NIGHK

Given opportunity? Nobody gave me anything. I made my own opportunities. I came up from nothing. No advantages.

WILL

None of us had advantages.

DYGER

That's right.

WILL

Except for you, Dyger. You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth.

DYGER

No I wasn't. My father was a sergeant in the Army.

KIM E.

Who was able to get you on TV when you were three.

DYGER

I really miss my father. He was a great man.

NIGHK

At least your father was around. I never knew mine.

MILT

That's tough going through life not knowing your father.

**KALIH**

Well, I knew who my father was. But we didn't get along too well. He didn't like my attitude.

**SAMPSON**

Even when you won that Olympic medal?

**KALIH**

Even then. He didn't approve of anything I did.

**WILL**

It sounds that he was a proud man.

**KALIH**

Proud and angry. Always put down, always kept in his place. Never given the opportunity to really better himself. Real injustice.

**DYGER**

That's sad. But my dad was there for me.

**KIM E.**

You were lucky. A lot of black men can't say that.

**WILL**

I don't know about that. My father was a there for me. He was a professional man, certainly responsible. So, I can't totally endorse this stereotyping of all black men as being a bunch of irresponsible thugs.

**SAMPSON**

But this is the image of black men that is fed to the public. All black women are on welfare, all black men are pimps. All crap.

**NIGHK**

Some of it is the truth. Where I grew up in Brooklyn, almost no one knew their fathers.

**KALIH**

But that was where you grew up. It didn't make it true everywhere.

**MILT**

Look, I'm from Philly and ...

**WILL**

I'm from Philly too.

**MILT**

Too bad we never crossed tracks when we were kids. We could have been friends.

**WILL**

Didn't work out like that. You went to college, became a basketball star. I took a different road.

**SAMPSON**

That took you to the same place. Here with us. Losers' Lane.

**WILL**

Speak for yourself. We're not losers. We're winners. We've all made a ton of money. How's that being a loser?

**SAMPSON**

Because we are stigmatized, marginalized, and de-humanized, no matter what we do and no matter how much money we make. In fact, the more money we make the more we are hated and despised. Our displays of wealth are perceived as showboating and our money as ill-begotten. No one takes us seriously, except when we act out, and then out comes the race card to de-legitimize us and put us back in our place.

**WILL**

I still feel like I'm a winner.

**SAMPSON**

Delude yourself all you want.

**NIGHK**

Being black comes with a ton of problems.

**WILL**

Everyone has problems.

**NIGHK**

Ours are bigger.

**SAMPSON**

When I was playing football, I thought the party would never stop. Man, I thought I was on top of the world.

**MILT**

Me too. I was making money, being hailed as the greatest basketball player in the world, yet it wasn't enough. I still was under pressure to prove myself.

**KALIH**

That's because while you were scoring points other guys were winning championships.

**MILT**

That's true but they had better supporting casts. There was nothing I could do about that. I was still the best player. And that's what kept bothering me. The press kept on comparing me to them when in fact there was no basis for comparison.

**SAMPSON**

Same thing happened to me. People would ask: Where's your championship ring? I'd tell them to get lost.

**DYGER**

You would say that to reporters?

**SAMPSON**

Well, I didn't exactly use those words, but still I was annoyed.

**KALIH**

Notice how the press would play black men off against each other?

**NIGHK**

That was more than coincidental. You know, divide and conquer.

**WILL**

Look how dominating the black athlete has become in sports. Maybe the system isn't as rigged as it used to be for the black man.

**KIM E.**

I have to disagree with you there, bro. The black athlete is open to more exploitation now than in the past. There is much more pressure on him to excel. If he fails, he is lambasted mercilessly, labeled as a failure, his "work ethic" is called into question and his motives impugned. Let me tell you a little story. This was when I was still playing football. I was in this bar having a drink, minding my own business. Then this scruffy looking white dude, who I had seen hanging around the locker room at the stadium after the game, comes over to me and asks, "What's it like to be black?" Normally, I would have told the dude to get out of here. After all, who was he to be asking me a question like that? What are we? Freaks? Mutations? I'm a human being too. Why pose a question that separates me from others and calls attention to my skin color? I thought about decking him, but I wasn't about to let him provoke me. I couldn't afford that. Being a big star and being a black man, I had too much to lose by acting out, especially in public, which is what this guy was trying to get me to do. But since he asked me a direct question, I figured I'd give him a direct answer, so I told him, "Being black in this racist society sucks." So the guy says to me, "Hey, man, I can dig it." Coming from a white man, I found that comment to be patronizing. What white person could ever possibly understand what it must feel like to be black? It took all my willpower to restrain myself from hauling off on the guy. Instead, I stayed calm, and with all the dignity I could muster, I replied, "But you're not black, so you can't possibly understand. And why would you want to tell a black man such an idiotic thing like that anyway?" Then one of his buddies comes over and says something like, "We're big fans of yours and we were just trying to make conversation." I said, "Yeah, right," and then, while still maintaining my cool, told them, in graphic language that even you guys would have found shocking, where they could stuff their conversation. That ended the discussion. Both of them gave me dirty looks, quickly finished their drinks and slinked away. No damage was done, that is, none that was visible. Two white men trying to use me to provoke a racial incident, for reasons that would have benefitted them but would have been disastrous for me. That's what happens when you're famous and black. That's why you always have to be on your guard. They're always looking to pull you down, put you on the defensive and use you to confirm their own racist attitudes. It's just the way it is.

**NIGHK**

So we're targets for every bigot with an axe to grind. Big deal. The paychecks are big and are even getting bigger, so somebody out there must like us.

**KIM E.**

We're the hired help, nothing more, and we are expendable. Remember: people are fickle. Look what happened to that mealy-mouthed right wing know-it-all on that cable news channel who was the number one rated news commentator in the country. After reports went public about his sexual improprieties at the network, they fired his butt, fast, while he was on vacation. Being one of the biggest draws on television didn't stop the network from summarily kicking him out. And he was a white guy. Meanwhile, the attacks are getting more vicious, the insinuations more vitriolic and the rhetoric more vulgar.

**MILT**

I think you're right. When the white man dominated in sports, you never heard about drug testing. Now, that's all you hear about.

**SAMPSON**

But white athletes are affected by that too.

**MILT**

But not as disproportionately as it affects black athletes. Let me tell you, if I was putting up the numbers today that I put up when I was playing, they would have accused me of being on drugs.

**WILL**

Well, were you on drugs?

**MILT**

No way, man. I was as clean as a whistle. When I was playing that stuff didn't even exist.

**SAMPSON**

There's always been drugs. Uppers, downers, pain-killers, they've always been around, and used.

**MILT**

The only drug I took was booze. That was my drug of choice.

**KIM E.**

Mine too, and cigarettes. At that time, smoking was cool. Not like today. Maybe it would be better if they brought back nicotine. Might lead to less abuse of performance enhancing drugs.

**DYGER**

Bad idea. I can't stand tobacco. I never smoked and I never will.

**NIGHK**

You must be the only black man on this planet who never smoked. I don't know what I would have done without my cigarettes, especially while I was fighting. I finally quit when a doc told me that it was clogging up my lungs.

**DYGER**

Good for you. You did the right thing.

**NIGHK**

Yeah. Then the next thing I was arrested for rape. Maybe I shouldn't have listened to that doc. I would have done better if I had stuck with cigarettes and not fooled with that woman. At least cigarettes don't complain after being used.

**DYGER**

Are you really that callous?

**NIGHK**

No, man. I was just joking. I did what I did. It had nothing to do with me cutting out smokes. She was a foxy-looking lady; I liked her and I thought she liked me.

**WILL**

The mind can play tricks on you.

**NIGHK**

And on your dick too. It had nothing to do with tobacco.

**KALIH**

Drugs have always been a problem, in sports and in society. When I became a Muslim, I renounced the use of drugs, alcohol and all other substances not prescribed by a medical doctor.

**WILL**

There's no need to bring religion into this.

**KALIH**

I'm not bringing religion into this. I'm just telling you what I did to fend off the kind of attacks that we're talking about now.

**WILL**

When you publicly changed your name and announced that you were a Muslim, you made religion part of the equation.

**KALIH**

What equation? I'm not talking about math.

**WILL**

It's an expression. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

**KALIH**

I had to go public. It was matter of survival.

**NIGHK**

I'm not sure I follow you, my man. I'm Muslim too, but I never made it into big deal.

**KALIH**

That's because you didn't have to. I did that for you.

**NIGHK**

You didn't do anything for me, okay? And let me tell you something else: I have no doubt that I would have demolished you in the ring.

**KIM E.**

Two Muslims fighting each other. Now that would have been a huge draw.

**WILL**

Playing up the religion angle is dangerous. It should be kept private.

**SAMPSON**

When you're famous, nothing's private. I know.

**KALIH**

That's only if you don't care about protecting your privacy. Maybe you still craved the attention after you retired from football.

**SAMPSON**

No, that's not it. Still wanting to make a living doesn't mean having to become an open book to every reporter looking for a story.

**DYGER**

But that's the price you pay. To the media you're a story, a paycheck. Either you deal with it or drop out.

**SAMPSON**

You should have followed your own advice. The press hasn't treated you too well.

**DYGER**

Nor you either. Don't compare what happened to you with what happened to me.

**SAMPSON**

Why not? We're both black, both successful, both married to white women, both ...

**MILT**

You two chumps, marrying white women. You were asking for trouble, and you got it, both of you.

**SAMPSON**

You were never married so who are you to talk?

**MILT**

That's exactly why can talk. You think I didn't have white women hitting on me? You think I wasn't tempted to go your route? Well, if you think that, you're wrong. That's why I stayed single.

**NIGHK**

Maybe you're a man-grabber who was fronting as a lady's man to protect your image.

**MILT**

You know, my man, you're lucky I'm a gentleman or I might take offense at what you said.

**NIGHK**

You want to do something about it? Try me. All talk, that's all you are. You know, bro, if you're so great then how come you won only two championships while the other guy you played against won eleven?

**MILT**

Very simple, my good man. Now he was a great player, and also a good friend of mine, but he had a better supporting cast. You see, while he was part of a team I WAS the team. Big difference. I had to carry all the weight. He didn't. If I had played on his team, I would have won fifteen championships.

**NIGHK**

That's nothing but talk. Just like you and all those women you claimed to have banged.

**MILT**

Back off. Okay? If you do not stop, I may have to take you up on your offer.

**WILL**

You two guys, cool it. We can't have black men fighting each other.

**NIGHK**

What are you talking about? Fighting is part of our culture. It's about manhood. That's why white people are so afraid of us.

**WILL**

No, it's not. That's what the white man wants you to think. You got to stop thinking like that. If you act like a brute, then you'll be treated like a brute.

**NIGHK**

What? If a black man sticks up for himself, he's a brute?

**WILL**

I didn't say that. All I'm saying is that when black men get violent, that's just reinforcing the negative stereotyped that white people have of blacks

**NIGHK**

Who cares about stereotypes? If I'm upset, I'm gonna let people know it. I'm not a slave who has to suck up to the white master.

**KIM E**

Let me tell you something. I should have done what the brothers are doing today when they take the knee.

**WILL**

But for what reason?

**KIM E**

To protest racial injustice.

**WILL**

What injustice? You were a star. The people loved you. What more did you want?

**KIM E**

To be acknowledged that I was a man, not just a "black" man.

**MILT**

I can dig that. People paid to watch me play but I think what they saw in me was some kind of big, gawky black freak.

**WILL**

How do you know that?

**MILT**

Because I'm black, that's how I know. Okay? You think white people didn't notice my race?

**WILL**

But you were admired.

**KIM E.**

The same way people admire a race horse.

**NIGHK**

It put bread on your plate.

**KIM E.**

And always made me choke. I couldn't be myself.

**WILL**

Are you serious?

**KIM E.**

Yes, I'm serious. I didn't have the guts to be honest, to tell people how I really felt.

**KALIH**

Well, I did.

**SAMPSON**

And what did it get you? Grief.

**KALIH**

It also got me respect.

**SAMPSON**

You already had respect. How much more respect did you need?

**KALIH**

I'm talking about self-respect. That I could finally look at myself in the mirror without feeling ashamed.

**WILL**

You could have fooled me. I don't remember you acting like you were ashamed of anything.

**KALIH**

Don't you play me that way, okay? You all know what I'm talking about. Hypocrisy. Being a sell-out to my people and to my race. I was being complete phony and I couldn't take it anymore.

**WILL**

Who isn't a sell-out? We're all trying to make a living. Even white people have to deal with that.

**KALIH**

It's not the same. When whites suck up it's for personal reasons; when blacks suck up, they are re-confirming their historical subservience based squarely and exclusively on race. No white person has to deal with that. One morning I woke up and that little birdy inside my head told me, you know what you have to do, now do it.

**SAMPSON**

For which you paid a price, one that I wouldn't have been able to afford. Besides, I wasn't looking to make any political statements.

**KALIH**

I hear what you're saying, bro, and but I had to do what I had to do.

**NIGHK**

You didn't have to do anything. You were just showboating, spouting off, trying to whip up interest in your career, fighting a bunch of chumps.

**KALIH**

I didn't duck anybody.

**NIGHK**

That's because there was no one out there worth ducking.

**KALIH**

Man, you are ignorant of history.

**NIGHK**

But what you're talking about isn't history. That fight in Manila was a joke. I would have decked that clown in one round. And that fight in Africa? A complete farce. You pull that rope a dope garbage on me and they would have had to carry you out of the ring, maybe in a coffin. You sure those fights weren't fixed?

**KALIH**

That shows how little you really know about boxing and about who I fought.

**NIGHK**

All I know is that I would have demolished those guys.

**KALIH**

Now who's full of talk? You lost the title to a club fighter and when you made that so-called come back you became a laughing stock. No wonder you started hitting on women, to make up for your failures in the ring.

**NIGHK**

That's a low blow, and you know it.

**SAMPSON**

You know, Mujabbah, it's easy to fix a match.

**KALIH**

The same thing can be said for a trial. For instance, yours.

**SAMPSON**

I was found not guilty fair and square. Nobody was bought off.

**KALIH**

You're telling me that the trail of blood from the crime scene to your truck was some kind of hoax?

**SAMPSON**

It was planted.

**KALIH**

By you.

**SAMPSON**

You are so wrong!

**WILL**

You were found not guilty. So why are you becoming so defensive?

**SAMPSON**

Because I've been hearing that same trash for the last thirty years.

**DYGER**

And you'll keep on hearing it. Questions were raised about the legitimacy of the trial and the jury's findings.

**SAMPSON**

My not guilty verdict was a victory for justice, okay?

**WILL**

Justice for whom?

**SAMPSON**

For me. And who are you to talk anyway? Doping up women and then fingering them.

**WILL**

Those are allegations.

**KIM E.**

Serious allegations. Man, if you wanted women so badly, why didn't you just hire some hookers?

**WILL**

These women voluntarily came over to my place.

**KIM E.**

You lured them and you know it. You just won't admit it.

**WILL**

I am very proud of the way I have lived my life.

**KIM E.**

As a phony. You and your middle class image. What a sham!

**WILL**

It was not.

**NIGHK**

It was too. You tried to pass yourself off as Mister Family Man and Mister Intellectual, just to get over on whitey.

**WILL**

I refuse to accept that. Unlike you, I did not rape anybody.

**NIGHK**

At least I owned up to what I did and served my time. You don't have the guts to do the same.

**WILL**

I don't need to because I did nothing wrong. I am innocent.

**KIM E.**

That's what they all say.

**WILL**

Well, it's true.

**KIM E.**

That that's what they all say?

**WILL**

No. That I'm innocent. These women were trying to take advantage of me, get over on me, to capitalize on my fame.

**DYGER**

So, what you're saying is that you were nothing to them; they just wanted to use you.

**WILL**

That's right.

**DYGER**

So, did you ever ...

**WILL**

I'd rather not discuss it.

**NIGHK**

You are one sorry excuse for a black man. Man, let me tell you, I had so many ladies that I had lost count.

**SAMPSON**

Including white ladies?

**NIGHK**

Them too. In fact, they wanted it the most. It was unbelievable.

**SAMPSON**

Meanwhile you got yours too, by that black lady who complained about you to the police.

**NIGHK**

She wanted it, so I gave it to her. I couldn't say no.

**DYGER**

Women kept coming on to me too. After a while it was overwhelming. When I first started out, getting laid was a struggle, but once the money started rolling in, I had to hire an entire staff just to keep the women, and some men too, away.

**SAMPSON**

Men too? Are you gay?

**DYGER**

I'm not gay. I received all kinds of letters and emails and gifts from guys saying how much they wanted to meet me and do all kinds of stuff.

**SAMPSON**

Like what?

**WILL**

Stuff. Do I have to draw you a picture?

**SAMPSON**

We live a depraved world.

**MILT**

Nothing wrong with meeting ladies. Isn't that what life is about? Having a good time?

**SAMPSON**

So, for you, that's what life is about: screwing women?

**MILT**

I guess so. Don't tell me you're one of those touchy-feely guys. Big strong guy like you?

**SAMPSON**

No, man. No way. I've had my share of babes, but after I met my wife, that all changed.

**WILL**

And it seems not for the better.

**SAMPSON**

I loved my wife. She was everything to me. I still miss her.

**KALIH**

Then why did you kill her?

**SAMPSON**

Because ... Hey! Screw you!

**KALIH**

You were about to say something, then you stopped.

**SAMPSON**

I didn't kill anybody! Is that clear?

**KALIH**

Whatever you say. You were found not guilty, and aren't juries always right?

**NIGHK**

A jury found me guilty too. Just like they found you guilty, in Las Vegas.

**SAMPSON**

That was pure politics. All I wanted was my stuff.

**DYGER**

I remember a few years ago I was guest at a show and I saw someone actually trying to sell one of my old golf clubs. That gave me a weird feeling.

**SAMPSON**

How much was he charging?

**DYGER**

Fifteen thousand dollars for a piece of junk.

**SAMPSON**

I don't think it's fair for anyone to be capitalizing on us like that.

**WILL**

A lot of stuff in this life isn't fair. Things happens.

**SAMPSON**

I don't know how you can dismiss that stuff so easily. It outrages me.

**KIM E.**

There's other more important stuff to be outraged about. Black men being targeted by the police, rotting in prisons, abusing drugs, chronic unemployment.

**NIGHK**

Now you're sounding like a social worker.

**KIM E.**

Because I'm telling the truth?

**NIGHK**

No, because you're sounding completely phony. If you really cared, then you'd be doing something about it.

**KIM E.**

I'm not a politician.

**NIGHK**

Then stop sounding like one. Let me tell you something. I know we have issues. We've made money and been successful, but still we've had problems. Is it us or the system or what?

**DYGER**

I've asked myself the same question, and I still haven't come up with an answer.

**MILT**

Problems? Speak for yourself. I've had no problems.

**DYGER**

You bragged about all the women you "dated." What was that about?

**MILT**

It was part of my autobiography. I was trying to sell a book.

**DYGER**

So maybe what you were saying was an exaggeration?

**MILT**

Everything I wrote in the book was the truth.

**KIM E.**

Yeah. Right.

**WILL**

That's what we're known for – servicing ladies. Doesn't matter what else we do. To others, all black men are just a bunch of studs.

**KALIH**

That's racist.

**WILL**

Yeah, I guess so. But that's the way things are, and it's not going to change.

**KALIH**

But do we want it to change? When I was in the ring I didn't worry about about that crap. I was too busy making money.

**DYGER**

Me too. It's only now that I'm thinking about things.

**KIM E.**

When I was a kid the only thing I thought about was playing football. That was my joy, my passion, and I was good at it. I got involved with the ladies only later, after I stopped playing.

**MILT**

If it weren't for sports I would have been a nobody. Who do you think would want to have anything to do with a seven-foot tall black man?

**NIGHK**

But there's more to life than brawn. We have brains too.

**SAMPSON**

But the public's not interested in our minds. We're the modern-day gladiators.

**KIM E.**

I'm no gladiator. I played for the love of it, then it became all business, and so I quit.

**NIGHK**

And you went into movies. I watched a couple of your movies. Boy did they stink.

**KIM E.**

Come-on. They weren't that bad. They did good at the box office.

**NIGHK**

Not because of you.

**KIM E.**

Precisely because of me. I was box office. My name sold.

**NIGHK**

But nobody really knows who you are as a person.

**SAMPSON**

Who cares? We all were out there making money. That's what it was about. There's nothing else.

**DYGER**

There were the fringe benefits.

**NIGHK**

Which became headaches and landed me in jail. I should have never invited that Hollywood babe to my room.

**KIM E.**

From what I read and heard, she really asked for it.

**NIGHK**

I thought so too. And when she complained to the police, boy, was I surprised. In fact, I was shocked. I thought this was nothing but a shakedown, and was willing to pay.

**DYGER**

How do you think I felt when I saw my wife coming at me with a golf club?

**KALIH**

But you should have seen that coming. You were playing around with other women and finally got caught. You're lucky she didn't shoot you.

**SAMPSON**

It's amazing how these women go bonkers. They're so sweet and charming and sexy when we meet them, and then after we marry them, they go crazy. I know, I lived through it.

**WILL**

Maybe you made her crazy. There she was, this dainty white lady living with this big burly black man with an attitude.

**SAMPSON**

I did not have an attitude.

**WILL**

Don't make me laugh. What black man becomes a success without an attitude?

**MILT**

I made it to the pros because of my talents, not my attitude. Nobody ever complained about me as a person.

**WILL**

They didn't have to because you were playing the game.

**MILT**

Exactly, I played the game and I played it well.

**DYGER**

I played my game well too, and look at me today. I haven't won a tournament in years. And my personal life is in shambles.

**WILL**

Do you think that people really care about you? If you can't make money for them, then forget it, you will be gone immediately, and if you mess up, it's on you, not them.

**NIGHK**

So?

**WILL**

So, just remember who you are: black men living in a white society, populated by people who despise your blackness.

**SAMPSON**

Why are we so hung up on race?

**KALIH**

That's what the white man taught us, to keep us down.

**NIGHK**

I don't think so, bro. Maybe the white man started this jive, but the fact is that black people and white people don't look the same. We are different.

**DYGER**

But should that really matter anymore? Haven't we gotten beyond the point where race should really matter?

**WILL**

Apparently not because we're talking about it now, with no white people here to prompt us. So maybe this is something that is now so ingrained in our brains that we can't get rid of it.

**SAMPSON**

When I was playing, nobody ever treated me differently because I was black.

**KIM E.**

How do you know that? You think they would let you know what they were up to?

**SAMPSON**

Maybe when you were playing it was different, but I was treated fairly.

**KIM E.**

Only as long as you were able to play and produce and make money for them.

**SAMPSON**

I don't know about that. To tell you the truth, once I started playing football, I never really had much to do with black people.

**KALIH**

That's when your problems began. You didn't know what you were. In fact, do you know what you are now?

**SAMPSON**

Of course I do. I'm a black man.

**NIGHK**

Black on the outside but white on the inside. Are you ashamed of your blackness?

**SAMPSON**

No, I am not ashamed of my blackness, as you put it.

**DYGER**

But you're not proud of it either.

**MILT**

I bet that deep down you'd love to be white.

**DYGER**

You know I sometimes wonder how my life would have been if I was born white.

**MILT**

You're already white, in every way except skin color. Let me explain. I knew this white guy. He worked for the welfare department in Philadelphia. He was the only white person in the office. He worked there for years. He was around black people all the time. He even lived in a black neighborhood. All his friends were black. He even had a black girlfriend. One day he asked me, with absolute seriousness, if he was a black man. By being around blacks all the time, he was losing his sense of identity. He didn't know what he was.

**KALIH**

So what did you tell him?

**MILT**

I told him he was a white black man, and the same applies to you too, just in reverse. That's why people were so shocked when they found out about your running around and cheating on your wife. That's a black man thing, so your behavior was out of character.

**DYGER**

Don't white men do that stuff too?

**MILT**

Yeah, they do, but with them it's different. It's considered an aberration, but with us it's considered normal. Deplorable, but normal. It's called a double standard. That's why when I wrote that I was intimate with twenty-thousand women, no one came right out and said that's impossible, but if a white man had made the same claim, he'd be laughed right out of the room, and maybe even sent to a mental hospital for observation.

**KALIH**

I think Milt is on to something. You know, when I changed my name and religion, the press went wild. They tried to bury me in mud. They called me every name under the sun. They were using every means at their disposal to destroy me, but if I had been white, they would have left me alone. They would have wrote me off as merely a silly white man who is just acting out, but because I was black, I became a threat.

**KIM E.**

I toyed with the idea of repudiating Christianity and becoming a Muslim, but the time wasn't right.

**KALIH**

The time is always right to be true to yourself. You just didn't believe.

**KIM E.**

No, you're wrong. I did believe, but I also needed the money, so I kept my mouth shut and did my job.

**NIGHK**

Which was to entertain white people, who loved to watch you do something that they could not do, at least not as well as you could.

**KIM E.**

I had the opportunity to play. That's something I never took for granted.

**WILL**

That's exactly the point. If you're white, you don't need to feel grateful, but if you're black you're expected to feel as if somebody is doing you a favor, even if it's really the other way around.

**MILT**

People say that I revolutionized the way basketball is played. They say I was the dominant player. They say that after I played, the game was never the same. But they're judging me as a player, not as a person. As a person, they thought I was nothing but a talented freak.

**DYGER**

Nobody ever said that to your face. Right?

**MILT**

No, they didn't.

**DYGER**

So, what you're saying is all speculation. Do you read minds?

**MILT**

No, I do not and I'm glad I don't. What's goes on inside someone's head is totally private.

**NIGHK**

Until they open up their mouths and start flapping their tongues.

**SAMPSON**

That sounds sexual. You thinking dirty thoughts?

**NIGHK**

No, man. That's just an expression. You're too hung up on sex. That's what got you into trouble. You let your wife get the best of you.

**SAMPSON**

I straightened her out from time to time.

**KIM E.**

By beating up on her? We heard the tapes that were played at the trial.

**SAMPSON**

It wasn't as bad it sounded.

**DYGER**

It was probably a lot worse. She wouldn't have called the police if things were not bad. The problem is that what you did made all black men look bad.

**SAMPSON**

I didn't do anything.

**WILL**

Back to that again. Look, we're not here to judge you. We're here to talk about us and who and what we represent.

**SAMPSON**

I don't represent anybody, man. I'm no politician and I'm not running for political office.

**WILL**

But you are a public figure, and as such your actions are scrutinized all the time.

**NIGHK**

I represent myself, period.

**WILL**

Man, you are so wrong it's not even funny. And you say you're from the street?

**NIGHK**

I never said that.

**WILL**

That's your image you project, and in this society image counts for everything.

**KIM E.**

Like being black.

**MILT**

We can't help that. We are what we are.

**KALIH**

But other people don't like what we are.

**SAMPSON**

So that brings us back to our original issue, race.

**NIGHK**

This circular talk is beginning to get me dizzy.

**DYGER**

I've made a huge amount of money being the man who I am. Until now, I never saw myself as being a black man in a white man's sport.

**NIGHK**

Golf is a sport? To me, it's nothing but a game. Boxing is a sport.

**DYGER**

Boxing is barbaric.

**KALIH**

Listen, Dyger, when you say that you're crossing that line. Some of the greatest athletes in history were boxers.

**DYGER**

I don't mean any disrespect, but ...

**KALIH**

You did mean disrespect, otherwise you wouldn't have said what you said. You don't see me going on making fun of golf, which, to me, is a sissy game.

**DYGER**

Hold on now! Now you're crossing my line. Golf is no sissy game, okay. Try playing it and then come back and we'll talk.

**KALIH**

I'm not saying that golf doesn't require skill. But let's see you play golf while somebody's giving a right upper cut to the jaw.

**MILT**

You're comparing apples and oranges.

**KALIH**

What about pears and lemons?

**SAMPSON**

You guys don't know what rough is until you've been tackled by eleven guys who want to clobber you.

**MILT**

At least you football guys wear padding. In the world of basketball, we play with no padding at all.

**KALIH**

Isn't basketball supposed to be a noncontact sport?

**MILT**

Supposed to be, but it's not. Every time you drive to the basket you get hit, hard.

**KIM E.**

But in football, hitting is the point of the game; in basketball it's a foul.

**MILT**

Those fouls still hurt. I can tell you that from personal experience. But I have to agree with you guys about golf.

**WILL**

You see, this is what I'm talking about. Blacks have this reputation for having brute strength, which is why for us, golf is not a legitimate sport. For blacks, it's a question of machismo.

**KIM E.**

Machismo is a Spanish thing, and there are no Spanish at this table.

**WILL**

No, it's not a Spanish thing. It's a black thing. Blacks historically have felt the need to prove themselves on the field of battle, so to speak. A black man playing golf just seems so out of place. No offense, Dyger.

**DYGER**

None taken.

**WILL**

Even though I just called you a phony?

**DYGER**

You asked me a question, so I answered. What did you want me to say?

**WILL**

No self-respecting black man likes having words put in his mouth.

**NIGHK**

Be cool. The bro is just trying to provoke you.

**KIM E.**

He is being cool.

**WILL**

There is a time to be cool and there's a time not to be cool. When we're around white people, that's when we have to be cool, but amongst ourselves there is no need to keep up pretentions. There's nobody here to impress. We're all in the same bag.

**MILT**

That's just his personality.

**WILL**

No, it's not. It's conditioning, pure and simple. Otherwise he wouldn't have lasted a second out on the golf course.

**DYGER**

Why are you talking about me like I'm not even here?

**WILL**

Because you're acting like a phony.

**SAMPSON**

Stop playing with the guy's head. You're just a cheap entertainer who got lucky. So shut up. You're as phony as they come, trying to sound so authoritative and superior. All you're doing is posturing.

**KALIH**

Isn't that part of being black?

**MILT**

You mean like when we do trash talk?

**KALIH**

Yeah, trash talking, like I did all the time.

**WILL**

That's right, posturing. That's how we assert dominance. White people find that both terrifying and intriguing. I love when they try to copy us, but they never can quite get it right. For them it's not natural. As long as we do it to ourselves, they're okay with it, but try it with a white man, and it becomes a threat.

**DYGER**

I think there's more to being black than that.

**WILL**

You think so?

**DYGER**

Yes, that's why I just said what I said, or were you not listening to me.

**KIM E.**

When I was making movies, I had to suck in my attitude to keep my job. That's just the way it is.

**KALIH**

I didn't suck up to anybody.

**NIGHK**

And it cost you.

**KALIH**

But I kept my dignity and self-respect.

**WILL**

You really think you earned the respect of other people? You were behaving like an uppity black man with a huge chip on his shoulder. That's exactly what white people expected from you, and you did not disappoint. They got off on it. They found you both scary and fascinating, certainly not boring. You made for great entertainment.

**MILT**

Wait a minute. Kalih was scoring political points for our people.

**WILL**

No, he wasn't. He just made matters worse. His acting-out behavior just confirmed the stereotypical image of the black man as being a conceited scowling malcontent.

**KALIH**

I resent that statement.

**WILL**

It's the truth. If you can't handle it, that's your problem, not mine.

**KALIH**

You keep on flapping your mouth like that I'll make it your problem.

**WILL**

You see! That's what the world loves to see: black men beating up on each other.

**MILT**

You're wrong. We're civilized and we don't need to act out.

**WILL**

I know that, bro, but that does not fit with society's image of us. In fact, it seems almost unnatural. Indeed, in our racist, sick, perverted, and violence-loving society, watching black men getting clobbered is as normal as apple pie.

**SAMPSON**

I never liked apple pie.

**WILL**

Okay, then blueberry pie. Is that better?

**SAMPSON**

I'm cool with that.

**WILL**

But all this brings up another question; what kind of example does that provide for all the young black men growing up today?

**NIGHK**

What are you talking about?

**WILL**

I'm talking about being a role model. Not all black youth are cut out to be sports stars.

**MILT**

They're not? That's news to me.

**WILL**

What about blacks who become schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, even politicians? One even became Secretary of State and another a four-star general, and another President of the United States.

**KIM E.**

Big deal. Bigger the job, bigger the sell-out. All the talk of integration was about getting the black man to think and act like a white man, which doesn't do it for me. I'm a black man, not a white man. Look what it did to Dyger.

**DYGER**

Hold on there, bro. Nobody didn't do anything to me. I was always true to myself and to my heritage.

**KIM E.**

Which was?

**DYGER**

Being black. That's why I'm here.

**KIM E.**

Flashing that big smile of yours, always being seen with white people, getting married to a white woman, running around with white girl friends, and you're saying that you are black? Blackness is more than just skin color. It is an attitude, a way of looking at things, and a way of life.

**DYGER**

Listen, big shot, when you organize a golf tournament, call me and I'll be whatever you want me to be, okay. Those white people were paying me big money to play their game, and I played it well.

**NIGHK**

Nobody's knocking your skills, brother. You revolutionized the golf game. Because of you golf is now more popular than ever.

**MILT**

Which shows that a black man can make a difference.

**SAMPSON**

But at the price of forfeiting your identity, and even much more than that.

**KALIH**

What are you driving at?

**SAMPSON**

I'm talking about life itself. The anxieties and tensions that we black men are under have a lethal effect on our health. Plus, and let me be frank ...

**NIGHK**

You're not frank ...

**SAMPSON**

Very funny, bro, but I'm trying to make a serious point, which is that when a black man speaks out, he's risking his very life.

**KIM E.**

That was true in the past when you had Jim Crow and white men were bullying and intimidating us with impunity, but we're finished with that.

**SAMPSON**

You're deluding yourself. I spent years in jail for some petty stuff that if I were a white man, I would have been charged with disorderly conduct and sent on my way. It's political. That's why so many black man are languishing in prison today.

**WILL**

They are in prison because they committed crimes.

**SAMPSON**

No. They are in prison because they are treated in a disproportionately harsher manner. You got millions of people coming into this country and they are displacing blacks in the work force, and as a result blacks and especially black men, are becoming expendable.

**WILL**

I'm a professional entertainer and I'm not expendable.

**NIGHK**

We all are. I'll tell you: I had little formal education. Everything I learned I learned the hard way, and I made it big, and then I made some mistakes, and what do I have to show for it? Nothing! My fame, my money, my power, my glory gone, like it never happened.

**WILL**

That's a sad story.

**NIGHK**

But true, and for a black man, it's a bitter pill to swallow. We are the product of centuries of racism. My blackness is a label I can't shake off. I hate it!

**WILL**

But you're stuck with, man. It won't come off.

**MILT**

We're all in that same boat. I want to be judged as a man, not as a "black" man.

**SAMPSON**

We all do, but it doesn't work that way. But aren't we guilty of the same thing? The way we judge ourselves and others based solely on race?

**KALIH**

No! We are the victims! We are the ones who were kidnapped, raped, put down, enslaved, mocked, berated, and de-cultured. Then Mister Lincoln said that we were free! Free to do what? It's amazing that blacks even survive, much less succeed.

**KIM E.**

Success. I've tasted it, we have all tasted it, and isn't it sweet! There was a movie, The Sweet Smell of Success. They must have been thinking of us when they made that movie.

**MILT**

I bet you never even saw the movie because if you did, you'd know that the movie wasn't about success. You just got that from the title.

**KIM E.**

Since when do you know so much about movies?

**MILT**

You surprised that a tall, gangling black man knows something about movies? That's your racism.

**KIM E.**

Hey, man, I'm no racist.

**KALIH**

You're so brainwashed you don't know what to think. Listen, you're a black man brought up in a white world where we are at best tolerated. If white people could, they'd get rid of us, but they can't. There are simply too many of us and we have no place to go. They're stuck with us, and us with them. So the way they deal with us is by brainwashing us into thinking that we're stupid and incapable of intellectual thought and that the black man is dependent on the white man for everything. That's how they control us.

**SAMPSON**

Nobody's brainwashing me.

**NIGHK**

That's right, bro. Black or white, I was the champ and I was a huge success. You're telling me that all the cheering and the money wasn't real? To me, it was real. It was my way of proving that I am somebody, and not just a black face in the crowd.

**WILL**

Don't get all puffed up now, okay. That smell of success that you got high on has different aromas, some of which stink. Man, I was an internationally famous television star, the epitome of middle class values, millions of people practically swearing by me, and now look at me. My life is a disaster.

**SAMPSON**

Yet, we are alive and we are surviving, and in this world, that is no small accomplishment.

**NIGHK**

But I don't want just to survive. I want to excel, get to the top, have it all, and for a while I was up there. I was champ!

**KALIH**

Then you became a chump. You started getting sloppy, lost your focus, got all cocky ...

**NIGHK**

Like you weren't cocky?

**KALIH**

But I could back it up, you couldn't. So you went from cool to fool, and if I remember, you went down fast. To tell you the truth I got so worried about you that I actually thought about visiting you.

**NIGHK**

While I was in prison?

**KALIH**

No. That wouldn't have been cool. I mean afterwards, when you were still trying to find yourself.

**SAMPSON**

I could have used a little of that buddy care too, buddy.

**KALIH**

You! Don't make me laugh. Your arrogance was too much for anyone to bear.

**SAMPSON**

Me? Arrogant? You must be mistaking me for someone else.

**KALIH**

No mistake, bro. You were so smug, even at your trial. Hiding behind your lawyers like you were some kind of white banker or politician who could buy his way out of anything.

**SAMPSON**

I didn't buy my way out of anything. I didn't do it. Don't you believe me?

**MILT**

I was too busy enjoying life to follow your case.

**DYGER**

I was out on the golf course with my father practicing my golf.

**WILL**

At that time, I still had a career to attend to.

**NIGHK**

I don't know what I was doing at the time, but the last thing I would have wanted to do was watch you squirming on television.

**SAMPSON**

I can't believe it. Is that how little you guys care about me?

**WILL**

It's not that we didn't care. It's that ... maybe you got it right. Maybe we didn't care.

**SAMPSON**

Whatever happened to black solidarity?

**WILL**

That's nothing but a myth created by white politicians to scare white people into voting for them. The fact is that all of us are wrapped up in our own problems.

**MILT**

You can leave me out of that. I've enjoyed my life.

**WILL**

Yeah, humping women and then bragging about it. How empty is that?

**MILT**

Maybe to you. To me, I call it having fun. I paid my dues, so I have the right to enjoy the fruits of my labor.

**WILL**

To become a laughing stock?

**MILT**

Nobody's ever laughed at me. You're just jealous.

**DYGER**

Excuse me, Milt, but any of us can get women if we want. Why did you have to write a book about it?

**MILT**

For the money.

**DYGER**

You set practically every record in the history of basketball and you still needed money? What happened to all the money you earned?

**MILT**

Women! That's what happened.

**WILL**

Is this obsession with women a problem only for black men?

**MILT**

That's a loaded question. If we say no, then we can be accused of being queer and if we say yes, then we'll be accused of being shallow. I think all men are obsessed with women. I like the company of women. What's wrong with that?

**DYGER**

I don't see women as being a problem. Rather, it's the way we relate to them.

**MILT**

I relate to them just fine. You never heard of any women complaining about me, have you? So, I must be doing something right.

**NIGHK**

Being obsessed with women has nothing to do with being black. But you know what, smart guy, maybe you asked the wrong question. Maybe the women are the problem. Whores, prostitutes, call girls, dancers, escorts, actresses, call them what you want: they flaunt what they have, and we notice it. At least I do. I'm a man. I can't help it.

**DYGER**

Are we going to start demonizing women now? Remember, guys, we all have mothers.

**KALIH**

You leave my mother out of it. Okay?

**KIM E.**

Nobody's insulting your mother. We're talking generalities, not specifics. You think I want you calling my sister a whore? Of course not. But to some guy maybe she is, or at least he thinks she is. It's all relative.

**DYGER**

What does Einstein have to do with this?

**MILT**

Einstein? Who mentioned Einstein?

**DYGER**

He's talking about relativity.

**KIM E.**

Listen, Mister Golfer, we're not talking nuclear physics, okay. So keep Einstein out of this.

**NIGHK**

I loved my mother. She was poor, but she tried her best.

**KALIH**

To raise the likes of you, she had to be special.

**NIGHK**

She was. But my other mother was boxing. She taught me about all about life.

**KIM E.**

While you were being punched in the face?

**NIGHK**

And dishing it out too.

**WILL**

Why are blacks so pre-occupied with violence?

**MILT**

Is there anything that black men do that's right with you? Are we all just a bunch of maladjusted fools?

**WILL**

Hey, I didn't say that.

**MILT**

But you implied it.

**WILL**

Listen, bro, don't put words in my mouth. Okay? Whether you like it or not, the vast majority of inmates in prison today are black. That's a fact.

**NIGHK**

In a racist society. That's a fact too.

**SAMPSON**

Not all blacks are failures. What about all the black entertainers and doctors and lawyer and teachers?

**NIGHK**

**Bunch of phonies. Sucking up to the white boss.**

**WILL**

**Can't you be middle class without being a sell out?**

**MILT**

**Sure you can. I did it.**

**NIGHK**

**You're just a tall black freak. Congratulations.**

**SAMPSON**

**I did it too.**

**NIGHK**

**You were charged with a double homicide, spent years in prison, and you're telling me that you're middle class. I don't think so.**

**SAMPSON**

**Stop judging me, man. That's not right. I'm a black man who became middle class.**

**NIGHK**

**Oh, stop your bragging. You're ashamed of what you are, still a street nigger.**

**MILT**

**I asked that we not use that word!**

**NIGHK**

**It's part of the language.**

**WILL**

**I agree with Milt. That word is just too harsh and too offensive.**

**KIM E.**

Such a bunch of prima donnas. You act like you never heard that word before.

**DYGER**

We've all heard it, too often. I don't need to hear it again.

**NIGHK**

All I was trying to say was that the bro is refusing to be honest with himself.

**SAMPSON**

You're wrong, bro! I never forgot my roots.

**NIGHK**

In fact, all of you are phonies, acting like you're so prim and proper, as if you're white.

**WILL**

If by roots, you mean where we're from, that's something no one ever forgets.

**MILT**

What's the point of going down memory lane? We all moved on. I was born and raised in Phillie. So what?

**WILL**

Our roots are more than geographical. They are cultural too.

**SAMPSON**

Whenever I hear that word culture I grit my teeth. It's such a loaded word.

**WILL**

It can be, depending on how it's used.

**SAMPSON**

I came from a good family.

**KIM E.**

That produced you.

**SAMPSON**

What do you mean by that remark?

**KIM E.**

You think you're someone a parent could be proud of?

**SAMPSON**

Yes, I am. I made something of myself. I excelled in my chosen profession and became a rather popular actor and entertainer.

**KIM E.**

But then you messed up.

**SAMPSON**

If I did, it's not because of my roots.

**KIM E.**

I guess I can say the same about myself. My life has been good. I've played ball, got married, had kids, caroused around a bit, worked in movies, it's been a good ride.

**DYGER**

You know, I couldn't have had a better set of parents. My father was a career army man and my mother a very loving woman. I was brought up well. I owe all my success to my father. He believed in me.

**WILL**

So, if we came from such good families, then why are our lives such disasters?

**KALIH**

Get off your high horse already, before I knock you off. What the hell do you know about my life? Until today, we've never met. So how can you talk about me?

WILL

There were rumors.

KALIH

All sewer-talk from the press. I've been a good father, a wonderful provider. My kids never had to worry for anything.

DYGER

Mine too.

NIGHK

I've taken good care of my kids.

WILL

So you're current with the alimony payments?

NIGHK

Of course.

WILL

For some reason I find that hard to believe.

NIGHK

Don't believe me. What do I care?

WILL

Alright, then we're all good, responsible parents, except for Milt who played it smart. *(All laugh)* We're all decent, law abiding guys. But we're rebels, too. That's what gotten us into trouble.

MILT

Not rebels: entertainers, performers.

KIM E.

That's right. Showmen, but symbols, too, of the gifted black man who could run faster and jump higher than anyone else.

**DYGER**

And hit a golf ball further and straighter too.

**KIM E.**

That too. You showed them, Dyger.

**DYGER**

I guess I did, but now I'm on the sidelines, and I don't know what to do with myself.

**KIM E.**

That's the problem. None of us know what to do with ourselves. We were jocks, and what's a jock supposed to do when their time is up?

**SAMPSON**

Me and you became actors.

**KIM E.**

Yeah, but it wasn't the same, at least not for me it wasn't. On the field I was practically a god; in the movies I was just another actor, and not a very good one at that.

**SAMPSON**

I watched a couple of your movies. Like that war movie set in World War Two. You were good. And that western, you almost got the girl.

**KIM E.**

That's the problem. Almost. Got upstaged by that white actor who couldn't even ride a horse. He needed a stunt double, who, by the way, happened to be a bro.

**MILT**

You don't say.

**KIM E.**

I do say. But it was a pay check and I needed the money, for alimony.

**NIGHK**

So you manned up. Me, I got hauled into court.

**KIM E.**

Why didn't you just do the right thing and pay?

**NIGHK**

Pay those bitches? No way. They were trying to take me for everything I had.

**KIM E.**

But you had kids, man.

**NIGHK**

So what? I still had to survive. These women didn't love me, they didn't care about me, and they didn't give a flying leap about me. They put out because I had money, and they wanted to cash in. But they were sneaky. They acted like they loved me and I fell for that. I have feelings too.

**KALIH**

You do?

**NIGHK**

Yeah, I do.

**KALIH**

You shameless fool. Why can't you be honest? You're embarrassed only because a judge had to publicly order you to pay.

**NIGHK**

And lost my home in the process. Believe me, I felt more than just embarrassment.

**KALIH**

You should have been thinking with your head, not your schlong. Banging women, getting them pregnant. You thought you could get away with that? Not have to deal with the consequences?

**NIGHK**

**Aw, can that talk. I'm a man. Stop preaching at me.**

**KALIH**

**Are you really a Muslim?**

**NIGHK**

**I am.**

**KALIH**

**You should have answered the call earlier.**

**NIGHK**

**I answered it when I did, and it helped me. It was a personal thing. At least I didn't make a big deal about it like you did.**

**KALIH**

**I didn't make a big deal about it. It was the press that made it into a big deal, and then afterwards vilified me and made me out like I was a traitor.**

**MILT**

**Because you refused to be drafted. You were breaking the law.**

**KALIH**

**Wrong! By forcing me to go into the army the government was violating my freedom of religion.**

**KIM E.**

**So, you becoming a Muslim had nothing to do with trying to avoid the draft?**

**KALIH**

**That's right. It was a profoundly spiritual event.**

**DYGER**

**My hat's off to you. You pulled it off, and you won your case.**

**KALIH**

Thanks, bro.

**SAMPSON**

Does being a Muslim provide a peace of mind?

**KALIH**

Yes, and I'll tell why. Because it's the one true faith that allows me to be who I really am instead of playing a role imposed on me by the white man through Christianity.

**SAMPSON**

My father was an ordained minister. If he were still alive, he'd be distressed by what you just said. Christianity is the religion of love, while Islam is the one of hate.

**KALIH**

I take offense at that remark. First, I didn't mean any disrespect regarding your father, but you asked me a straight question and I gave you a straight answer, and in turn you attack my religion, a subject that you really know nothing about.

**SAMPSON**

Maybe I was a little off base with that remark about Islam, but for me, religion did not figure into my life. There was no way I was going to become a minister. I was too busy playing football. I only mentioned my father because the subject of religion came up.

**WILL**

So, you repudiated the teachings of your father.

**NIGHK**

What are you talking about, man? Nobody repudiated anybody. All of us were exposed to religion. So what?

**KALIH**

But for me, Christianity, with all its talk of salvation and what not, offered no answer to the question of how a black man can make his way through life and keep his identity and sanity and survive in a white dominated racist society.

**SAMPSON**

I don't think so.

**MILT**

Me neither. But I remember when I was growing up, the minister of my church was one of the leaders of the community.

**KIM E.**

That's the way it used to be.

**WILL**

It still is. It was the church that held neighborhoods together, and still does today.

**KIM E.**

Have we lost our ways?

**SAMPSON**

Don't get sappy on me now. Save that junk for the movies.

**WILL**

I'm serious, bro. The church gave the black communities cohesion and hope.

**KALIH**

No way. The black churches were a sham. They were clones of the white churches, that's all. Look, my parents were church going people and what did it do for them?

**WILL**

They were able to raise you, and they did a great job.

**KALIH**

**My parents were hardworking people who never had the opportunities to go even further because they were brainwashed into believing that they needed to know their place. I hated it. Just thinking about it now makes me feel outrage.**

**WILL**

**So, converting to Islam made the memories less painful?**

**KALIH**

**No. It didn't. But it gave me an outlet through which I could demonstrate my anger without doing something really awful.**

**KIM E.**

**No wonder you became a boxer.**

**KALIH**

**I never liked boxing. But I was good at it and so I went in that direction. I am not by nature a violent man.**

**NIGHK**

**You're not a violent man? Fine. I am. I hit people for a living and loved it.**

**KALIH**

**That's where we differ.**

**NIGHK**

**No. You only think we differ. We're the same.**

**KALIH**

**I never raped anyone or spent time in prison.**

**NIGHK**

**You had your brushes with the law too, so don't come off as being so high and mighty.**

**DYGER**

I think we've all had brushes with the law.

**WILL**

Typical story for the American black man.

**MILT**

I never got into trouble.

**WILL**

There's always the exception.

**SAMPSON**

How did you manage that?

**MILT**

I guess I wasn't the wash out you guys are.

**SAMPSON**

Now who's acting so superior? Maybe you just didn't have the balls to assert yourself.

**MILT**

I did that on the basketball court. That was enough for me.

**SAMPSON**

But there's more to life than just playing sports.

**MILT**

There is?

**SAMPSON**

Yes. Except I didn't realize that until much later.

**MILT**

Well, for me, playing sports was everything.

**WILL**

And women too.

**MILT**

Yeah, women too.

**WILL**

What a sad, empty life you have led.

**MILT**

Who are you to judge me? Look at you, scores of women coming out of the wood work complaining about you.

**WILL**

All sensationalist lies.

**MILT**

You mean over forty women are lying about you? They're all liars?

**WILL**

That's right. They came by, I gave them drinks and then we got to know each other. No big deal.

**NIGHK**

While you were married?

**KIM E.**

But what about that squeaky-clean image you were selling to the public?

**WILL**

Am I the only one who's ever socialized with ladies?

**KIM E.**

**But your image was based on a lie!**

**WILL**

**That's your opinion, and please don't judge me.**

**DYGER**

**We can't help but judge you.**

**WILL**

**None of you are in a position to judge me. We've all done our share of partying.**

**MILT**

**So it's okay that I humped twenty thousand women?**

**KALIH**

**You guys are really beginning to disgust me**

**WILL**

**Get off your high horse. You turned your back on your own country.**

**KALIH**

**The country that stripped me of my title, due strictly to politics. And I'm supposed to love this country?**

**WILL**

**Keep in mind that we're public figures and once you go public, you're fair game for every shill, con-man and reporter looking to make a quick buck at our expense.**

**KALIH**

**Can't disagree with you there. I remember that one TV reporter. He built his entire career on hyping me. I knew he wasn't doing it because he loved me.**

**NIGHK**

Maybe he did love you. Weren't you always telling people how pretty you were? Maybe he wanted to take you up on that?

**KALIH**

All that stuff was part of my hype.

**NIGHK**

Still, you're not a bad looking guy.

**KALIH**

I wish I could say the same for you, but if I did I'd be lying, and I'm not a liar. It goes against my religion.

**WILL**

By that you mean Islam?

**KALIH**

What other religion would I be talking about?

**DYGER**

The more you guys talk about religion the more you're losing me.

**KALIH**

So get lost. Who needs you? Go back to your golf course and go wrap a club around your head.

**NIGHK**

I take my religion seriously.

**SAMPSON**

Good for you. But who cares?

**NIGHK**

There's only one true god and that is Allah, and Mohammed was his prophet.

**MILT**

That's good to hear. Now can it. Last thing I need is to have anyone preaching at me, be he Jew, Muslim, Christian or whatever.

**WILL**

That's not the way it used to be. Blacks had a much more respectful attitude toward the church.

**MILT**

The church is important when things are going bad for blacks. Right now, I have no need for it.

**SAMPSON**

I don't mind preachers preaching at us, just as long as they keep the sermons short. There's nothing worse than a preacher going on and on about how much we need the Lord.

**KALIH**

All sweet talk meant to keep blacks down.

**DYGER**

I am so grateful that I'm alive now and not, let's say, seventy-five years ago. Back then, forget it. I would have been a Nobody. No way would they have let a black man on to the golf course.

**SAMPSON**

Did any black men ever try?

**DYGER**

You know, I really don't know.

**SAMPSON**

For all we know back then there might have been a black man with golf clubs, just like Dyger, who was begging just for a chance to play but never got the chance. That's sad.

**KIM E.**

The same can be said for any sport. If I had been alive after World War One, I seriously doubt that I would have been given a chance to play.

**WILL**

But who lost out the most? Us or the country?

**KIM E.**

Us. We were denied opportunity.

**WILL**

But the country was denied the opportunity to see the best players in the world, which made the sports that people were paying to watch a sham.

**KIM E.**

So what about the country? We, as black people, were put down and kept down, period.

**KALIH**

Until I came along.

**NIGHK**

Some savior. As soon as you changed your name the country wanted to hang you.

**KALIH**

But I stood fast and today I'm considered a hero.

**WILL**

Maybe things aren't as bad for blacks as we think.

**MILT**

I wouldn't go that far, but things did improve enough for us to make a buck.

**SAMPSON**

Making the buck. That's what it's all about. I once heard this pro wrestler say, "You live by the buck and you die by the buck." To me, those were profound words of wisdom.

**KIM E.**

It just shows that anyone can be a philosopher.

**MILT**

Hear that, Dyger? Inside of you is a philosopher.

**DYGER**

Well, you know I did go to college.

**MILT**

I did too, but it sure wasn't to study philosophy. I was there to make money for the university.

**WILL**

And for that you were well rewarded.

**MILT**

Later. Not while I was playing for the school.

**WILL**

They gave you a scholarship, right?

**MILT**

Right. But I was no scholar.

**KIM E.**

For some reason, I cannot visualize you hitting the books and writing term papers.

**MILT**

What are you saying? That my going to college was a fraud?

**KIM E.**

That's right, and you just said it.

**MILT**

I was asking a question.

**KIM E.**

Hey, I attended a major university on a football scholarship. I was there to play football, not learn nuclear physics. They had other programs for that.

**MILT**

That doesn't mean we didn't learn anything.

**KIM E.**

We did. The value of our bodies as a tool to make money.

**NIGHK**

For some reason that doesn't sound so good.

**WILL**

I think what the bro is trying to say is ...

**KIM E.**

I don't need you to translate for me, okay? I'm talking plainly and if you don't understand what I'm saying, that's your problem.

**KALIH**

I thought going to college was supposed to improve your mind. I only heard that because I never went to college.

**NIGHK**

I didn't either.

**KALIH**

I guess that's why me and you are two smartest ones here.

**SAMPSON**

Don't be such a wise guy. I went to college, and even graduated. Without my football scholarship, I would have never made out of the neighborhood.

**KALIH**

Maybe I should have gone to college.

**SAMPSON**

On what? A boxing scholarship? I never heard of a school offering a boxing scholarship.

**KALIH**

How come schools are willing to dish out money for football and basketball but not for boxing? That's not fair.

**WILL**

Boxing has a negative image. Two people pounding on each other.

**KALIH**

Oh, and twenty-two people pounding on each other is okay?

**KIM E.**

That's different. It's a team sport and the goal is to score, not to destroy your opponent.

**NIGHK**

Then how come in every game someone has to be carried off the field?

**KIM E.**

It's a contact sport, so that's bound to happen.

**KALIH**

Boxing is contact sport too. They're both contact sports.

**DYGER**

Thank goodness I got into golf.

**NIGHK**

Did anyone ever tell you that you're nothing but a pansy? You sure you're not really white?

**DYGER**

No, not one drop of white blood.

**SAMPSON**

Blood is red.

**DYGER**

It's an expression.

**SAMPSON**

Here's another expression: Up yours!

**DYGER**

What brought that on?

**SAMPSON**

Everything you say. In fact, your very presence here deeply annoys me. I wish you would leave.

**KALIH**

Hold on there, bro. No need to cop an attitude.

**SAMPSON**

I don't even know why he's here. You got black skin but there's just nothing about you that's black. All of us here came from the neighborhood. You came from ... somewhere else.

**DYGER**

I too am black. I'm as black as anyone here.

**NIGHK**

No you're not. You're half Chinese.

You mean Thai.

DYGER

What's the difference?

NIGHK

A lot.

DYGER

Wait a minute. I've met Chinese and Thais and to me they all look the same. So what are you saying?

NIGHK

I already told Kalih said that I'm half Thai, not half Chinese.

DYGER

Stop your damn nitpicking. Thai. Chinese. Who cares? You're half-Asian, right? No wonder the bro lost his cool.

NIGHK

I didn't lose my cool.

SAMPSON

You got hot under the collar.

NIGHK

Stop playing with me. I'm real, the dude there isn't. Why don't you just go back to your white friends?

SAMPSON

Like all your friends aren't white?

DYGER

I know white people but they're not my friends.

SAMPSON

DYGER

Did that include your wife?

SAMPSON

You mean my late wife and you keep her out of this. How I do miss her. She was so sweet.

DYGER

I think you better do a reality check on your memory.

KALIH

You know, there's a lot more important stuff to talk about.

DYGER

Like what?

KALIH

Like our health. People take us for granted, treat us like we're indestructible machines, and we're not. I'm in constant pain. And no one cares.

SAMPSON

Man, sometimes I can barely walk. The pain got so bad that I had to quit football.

NIGHK

I used to believe that nothing could hurt me.

MILT

That's how you think when you're young.

WILL

It's how you got to think to get you going.

SAMPSON

But it's crazy. We get hit, we get injured, it's reported on the news and all people care about is when is he going to return?

**KIM E.**

And also if he's faking it. Then he's accused of malingering or having a bad attitude or being selfish or not being a team player or being a head case.

**MILT**

You notice how many black men are accused of that garbage? That wasn't the case when I was playing.

**KIM E.**

In those day the black athlete knew his place. If he acted out, especially in the public, he was gone.

**SAMPSON**

I did some griping when I was playing, but it was about wanting more play time.

**WILL**

The coach must have loved you.

**SAMPSON**

We had a good relationship.

**KIM E.**

While you were able to produce.

**MILT**

That was the bottom line. Could we produce? That's all they were interested in.

**KIM E.**

For which we were well paid.

**MILT**

Of course we were well paid, but was the money worth it if it destroyed our health in the process?

**SAMPSON**

What was the alternative? Not to play? Not take the money? Go out to the real world and actually get a normal job? Would any of us been happy with that? I wouldn't have.

**DYGER**

It's amazing what money will get you to do.

**SAMPSON**

But you were playing a sissy game.

**DYGER**

That required walking several miles every day and playing under all kinds of weather conditions. Remember, golf is played outdoors, not in an arena.

**KALIH**

I tried playing some golf, and I have to admit, it's a lot harder than it looks. It's especially hard on your knees and lower back.

**DYGER**

That's why most golf players sooner or later ruin their knees and back and have to have surgery.

**SAMPSON**

Still that's not the same as taking a hit on the head or being tackled, hard, by a two hundred fifty-pound guy charging at you helmet first.

**DYGER**

What can I say? People paid huge amounts of money to watch me play. If you don't like it, so what?

**NIGHK**

Who do you think you are to be sounding so high and mighty? Your career went down like the sinking of the Titanic. You must have lost at least a billion dollars' worth of endorsements. At one point you were being touted as the greatest golfer in the history of that so-called sport, but you blew it! You and your golf. You had it all and now you have nothing.

**KIM E.**

I think you're being unduly harsh on the brother. He made some mistakes, but in this society, if you're black the mistakes are greatly magnified and the retribution much greater and the society much more critical and unforgiving.

**DYGER**

What happened to me had nothing to do with race or with golf.

**KALIH**

I'm surprised at you. After all that has happened to you, you still think that race isn't a factor. You think that your entire history of denying your essential blackness, and your decision to earn a living in what was, and still is, a white-dominated sport was merely just coincidental? Do you not understand that your preoccupation with white women and hobnobbing with white people, and your phony smile and pretentious humility, was nothing but a pathetic masquerade?

**SAMPSON**

With golf being part of that phoniness?

**WILL**

You shouldn't knock how someone makes a living. Besides, you've had your own identity issues too.

**SAMPSON**

First, I'm not knocking how he makes a living. Then again, I wouldn't knock how a whore makes a living either.

**WILL**

You'd be a fool to do that. Besides, that comment was uncalled for.

**SAMPSON**

Can't I speak my mind? Isn't that what we're doing here?

**WILL**

Of course. But let's not start demeaning each other.

**SAMPSON**

Nobody's demeaning anybody. As for my so-called identity issues, I never sought to hide who I am. I was always true to myself. I never tried to come off like I was "white."

**DYGER**

Meanwhile you married a white woman, just I like did, and lived in a mansion in a fancy neighborhood, made movies and was laughing all the way to the bank. You were no different than me.

**MILT**

Enough of this foolish bickering. You both made lots of money and both ran with white people. So what? You're still black. That is something you can never deny, that we could never deny, no matter how much we may try. So what's the problem?

**SAMPSON**

No problem. I just don't like someone trying to compare golf to football where people actually sustain real and serious physical damage. Don't forget that being exposed to danger is something that is uniquely part of the black experience in this country. Historically, blacks have worked the most dangerous jobs and have done hardest physical labor, and as a result have shorter life spans.

**DYGER**

That could also be due to lifestyle choices.

**NIGHK**

Here we go again, blacks being their own worst enemies.

**DYGER**

I didn't say that.

**MILT**

You did say that, in so many words. Because of what I did for a living, my knees are shot, I have arthritis and I'm on pain meds. But that doesn't make me my own worst enemy.

**SAMPSON**

That goes for all of us, except maybe for Will, being an actor.

**WILL**

I have my own medical issues too.

**MILT**

That's not what I'm talking about.

**WILL**

You know, sometimes acting can be rough.

**MILT**

I've been in a couple of movies. Nothing to it. If you forget your lines, they use cue cards.

**WILL**

I remember in one scene I was in a fight with another actor. He was playing a burglar who had broken in to my home.

**SAMPSON**

Of course, the thief was black.

**WILL**

Actually, he wasn't.

**SAMPSON**

Then they were being politically correct. Or maybe you're not remembering the story right. Maybe you were playing the burglar.

**WILL**

Not likely. I was the star of the show. Anyway, in the fight scene I took a bad fall.

**SAMPSON**

Why no stunt double?

**WILL**

I don't know. Probably wanted to save money.

**SAMPSON**

That figures. If you were white they would have used a stunt double.

**WILL**

That's hard to say.

**KIM E.**

He just said it.

**WILL**

I heard him. Maybe being black has its challenges, but it was being black that helped you beat that double murder rap.

**SAMPSON**

Like I said before, I didn't murder anybody.

**NIGHK**

But you were really upset that she was seeing other men.

**SAMPSON**

I didn't like it, but that doesn't mean I would kill her.

**NIGHK**

I don't know what I'd do if I saw my wife, or even my ex-wife, screwing around with another man. I might freak out too.

**SAMPSON**

I never freaked out.

**DYGER**

But didn't you stalk her?

SAMPSON

No!

MILT

You mean peeping through the window watching your wife ...

SAMPSON

You mean my ex-wife.

MILT

... with another man didn't make your blood boil?

SAMPSON

How would you feel if you saw me with your wife?

MILT

I'm not married.

SAMPSON

Okay, then girlfriend.

MILT

If I'm done with her, then good, she's yours.

DYGER

Do you hear yourself? You're talking about women like their objects to be used and then discarded.

MILT

Aren't they?

DYGER

Are you playing with me?

**MILT**

No, man, I'm not playing with you.

**DYGER**

Women are human beings, just like men.

**NIGHK**

We know they're human. But do they think we're human? Women are taught to hate men, especially black women. That's why we gravitate to the white ladies. They're more appreciative of us.

**SAMPSON**

My wife was white.

**DYGER**

So was mine.

**WILL**

My wife was black and we've been married for decades.

**KIM E.**

While you were trying to dope up and molest every white woman on the planet. What does that say about your so-called successful marriage?

**WILL**

I never called it successful, just long.

**KIM E.**

Well, that it's lasted so long is a tribute to something.

**WILL T**

Thank you ... I think.

**KIM E.**

Don't mention it, bro.

**WILL**

Ever since my son was murdered I've contemplated committing suicide.

**KIM E.**

When I heard about that I was shocked, and also saddened.

**NIGHK**

Violence. We live in such a violent society.

**WILL**

And we're part of it. Immersed in it.

**SAMPSON**

All of us have known violence. Look what happened to my wife.

**NIGHK**

And that lady who I raped. She was victim too. It just took me a while to admit that I was the perpetrator.

**WILL**

So, black men are the problem?

**MILT**

I never assaulted anybody. But I was mugged once.

**KIM E.**

Who would be crazy enough to mug a big guy like you?

**MILT**

When a little guy is holding a gun to you head, he suddenly become very big. You got to remember that we're all targets.

**KIM E.**

Was the guy black?

MILT

Yes, he was.

KIM E.

Black on black crime. We're our own worst enemies.

DYGER

I hate that term black on black crime. Crime is crime, period. It's not black, white, yellow, brown or any other color, except maybe red, for blood. And that's the one color that's the same for every human being on this planet. And when we get cut and bleed, it's as if the whole human race has been cut.

WILL

Well said, my man. Inside of you is the poet.

DYGER

I'll take that as a complement.

WILL

It was meant as one.

KALIH

Professor, whatever you say. I'm tired and it's time for me to go home.

KIM E.

Looks like this get together is breaking up. I'm going to the bar down the street for a drink. Anyone care to join me? I'm buying the first round.

WILL

Since you're buying, I'm in.

NIGHK

Include me in, too.

DYGER

And me.

**SAMPSON**

I can use a drink.

**MILT**

I say, never turn down a free drink. How about you, Kalih? You still want to go home?

**KALIH**

I'll join you guys, too. One drink won't hurt.

**KIM E.**

Great! Looks like the party's just getting started.

End of scene 1.

## Scene 2

*Time: 2:30 AM*

*Place: a bar.*

*The seven men have been drinking for hours. They are having an animated discussion. They are now speaking in rhyme.*

**NIGHK**

We can do  
anything we want  
because we're black  
and because we're smart.  
While being slaves  
things sure were rough,  
it taught us how  
to act real tough.

**SAMPSON**

That's right, I say,  
we'll set the rules,  
and if whites are miffed,  
then screw those fools.

**WILL**

But wait, my bros,  
about the whites,  
why should we have  
to cause them frights?

**KALIH**

To integrate is a fantasy,  
sheer lunacy and hypocrisy.  
Jim Crow was bad  
we all agree,  
but acting white  
is just not me.

**DYGER**

But a bro  
became the president,  
and he was cool  
like Mister Kent.

**KIM E.**

Big deal, I say,  
that made things worse.  
Scared lots of whites  
who went reverse.

**WILL**

That's why we gotta  
act real nice,  
and bring down walls  
and break the ice,  
'cause if we don't  
the whites will say,  
"Do mark my words,  
we'll make you pay."

**SAMPSON**

But dig it, bro,  
we're all strung out,  
we're marginalized  
and have no clout.  
And furthermore,  
I think you'll agree,  
the whites want us  
to leave them be.  
We don't like them,  
they don't like us,  
we play their game  
but still they fuss.

**DYGER**

But that's because  
they won't engage  
with blacks who  
they believe have rage.

**NIGHK**

Too bad for them,  
I must now say,  
they made their bed  
and now must pay.

Pay you, you say?  
That's your reply?  
That's just jive talk,  
You must be high.

WILL

So what do you  
want us to do?  
Play Uncle Tom  
and be the fool?

MILT

No, dear bro,  
you twist my thought.  
We must reach out  
yet not be bought.

WILL

Can their rules  
and reaching out,  
that's prissy stuff  
which brings no clout.

SAMPSON

But if we don't  
play by the rules,  
then whites will  
treat us just like fools.

DYGER

You talk as if  
We're down and beat,  
no need to fret,  
we own the street.

NIGHK

The street is good  
but not so cool,  
when only blacks  
are in that pool.

DYGER

Perhaps you don't  
like being black,  
if that's the case  
why don't you pack?

MILT

I did not mean  
to act the pest.  
I love you guys,  
you're all the best.

DYGER

I love you too,  
my dear good bro,  
fraternal joy  
which makes me glow.

NIGHK

Screw you, I say,  
and can that crap.  
You're drunk, you fool,  
so shut your trap.

SAMPSON

Oh shut yours too,  
you piece of ice,  
The bro was being  
Kind and nice.

WILL

## SAMPSON

And once again  
 I have to say  
 Screw you to all  
 that white man hay.  
 We have to take it  
 to the street,  
 where we are kings  
 and call the beat.

## NIGHK

The bro is right,  
 and listen to this:  
 by keeping the street  
 we'll attain real bliss.  
 For the street is more  
 than just a place,  
 it's a state of mind  
 which defines our race.

## KIM E.

Have you gone nuts,  
 Or even worse?  
 The street is just  
 an empty purse.  
 It's just a place  
 To live and die,  
 Where people work  
 And groan and sigh.

## SAMPSON

No, dear bro,  
 you're way off base,  
 the people live  
 in a real fine place,  
 that needs a little  
 sprucing up  
 to make it shine  
 like a fine gold cup.

**KALIH**

Now listen here,  
you silly fool,  
you make it sound  
like the street's so cool,  
that all we need  
are piles of cash  
to make street life  
a first-class bash.

**MILT**

What you just said  
is really true,  
if we can't beat them,  
we'll join their crew.  
We'll play their game,  
Outside and in,  
The goal of which  
Will be to win.

**NIGHK**

Okay, my bro,  
Your strategy  
Is cool as long  
As whites do see  
that they must deal  
with black folk too,  
as human beings  
with rights to sue.

**WILL**

But we gotta tone  
our rhetoric down.  
Stop acting hard  
Which makes whites frown.  
It makes them  
Feel they have the need  
to call the cops  
and make us bleed.

**NIGHK**

The modern black  
is not a crook,  
that's racist junk  
in any book.  
For me, I wouldn't  
hurt a fly,  
for we're the prey  
and that's no lie.  
We're tased,  
we're shot and  
even slain,  
when we're unarmed  
and caused no pain.  
There's a war out there  
against us blacks,  
to push us down  
onto our backs.  
But we'll stand tall  
and persevere,  
and never ever  
live in fear.

**DYGER**

Your message is really  
way off base,  
you see a war  
which is based on race,  
but you are wrong,  
and I'll tell you why: it's  
the marketplace where  
the problems lie.

**MILT**

You're wrong, my bro,  
it's race real clear,  
the marketplace is  
just a gear  
to buy us off  
and make us feel  
that being black  
is no big deal.

**SAMPSON**

We had eight years  
to make things right,  
and go from dark  
unto the light,  
but things occurred  
that made our dream  
a murky mix  
of mud and steam.

**WILL**

I say to you,  
my learned bro,  
that now you sound  
like a foolish schmo.  
The system that  
you now revile  
is the exact same one  
that made you smile,  
it made you rich  
beyond all need,  
you played a game  
that gave you feed.

**SAMPSON**

And yet today  
just look at me,  
The system kicked me  
on my knee.  
It kicked me hard  
Till I was down  
Then treated me  
like a silly clown.

**KIM E.**

Hey, you screwed up.  
You were not cool,  
You were treated  
Just like a fool,  
And this despite  
Your big success

Which should have  
Made you feel largesse  
but instead made you  
get all wound up  
and act like a  
malicious pup.

### SAMPSON

What do you want  
for me to say?  
I made mistakes,  
and had to pay.  
But with you guys,  
All things are cool,  
I can be myself,  
Both champ and fool.

### WILL

I second that,  
my good fine bro,  
we are black men  
and here can crow.  
The party is  
about to end,  
and we will part  
each one a friend.  
And to the throng  
who watched us talk  
and seemed to care,  
and did not balk,  
you all are urged  
to come again  
to our place  
where men are men.  
And share with us  
a jug of gin,  
and shoot some dice  
and maybe win,  
that would be nice,  
you would agree,  
so come on by  
and let's par-ty.

End of scene 2.

## Scene 3

*The stage is empty. Will enters and speaks to the audience.*

## WILL

I bet you're wondering what became of us. Well, maybe I ought to let them tell you themselves. (*The other six men enter the stage.*)

## DYGER

I'm making something of a comeback on the golf circuit. I almost won a major tournament. It feels good to be back. Also, I have a really fine lady in my life. No, she's not my ex-wife and yes, she's white. If that's a problem for you, then so be it. Right now, I think I'm back on the right track. If I'm careful and don't repeat certain mistakes, then things should work out for me just fine. Maybe I'll win another major.

## MILT

Nothing special to report. Just hanging in there, taking things day to day. People, mostly old guys who knew of me when I was playing, still stop me on the street and say hello. It's nice to be remembered. Sometimes I think about becoming a coach, but I'm a doer not a teacher. What I know about basketball I can't teach. As for my life in general, I've done enough talking. If you're interested in learning more about me, go buy my book.

## SAMPSON

I had some legal issues that landed me in jail. All I wanted to do was recover some personal stuff that some guy stole from me and then wanted to sell. Instead, the judge threw the book at me. All politics. The system is still out to get me. Think what you want about me. All I know is that I'm no murderer, and if anyone says otherwise, just don't say it to my face. I don't need the aggravation, and if you see me in the street, just keep walking. I have nothing to say to you or to anyone who thinks I'm a liar. Just leave me alone.

## KIM E.

I'm glad just to be alive. Sometimes I watch old movies of myself when I was playing. Wow. It's hard to believe that the guy in those movies is me. I had great moves, but more importantly I played on a great team. If I was playing today, I'd be making millions. The players today don't know how good they have it, especially the black players who want to rock the boat. Let them do what they want. I'm too old to argue with them. They'll have to learn the truth the hard way.

## KALIH

Recently I've been having problems with my memory and speech. That's what happens when you make a living in the ring. The doctors think that my symptoms are caused by some kind of disease of the brain, but I know the truth. When your head is used as a punching bag, your brain gets rattled. Still, I have no regrets. I was a black man who refused to knuckle under. The country that once reviled me now lavishes me with honors. That's vindication enough.

## NIGHK

Kalih is right. Boxing can be hard on your brain. Luckily, I still got all my marbles upstairs. At least I think I do. I guess I was born with an exceptionally hard head. However, that did not keep me out of prison. After I served my time, I had to do something with all my pent-up rage. I did not want to become just another black man consumed by anger, so I hired a public relations guy who happened to be white. He helped me reinvent myself. Today, I'm considered a personality. Can you believe that? Me? A personality? A guy who made a living by beating people with his fists? I still feel twinges of rage but now I show it with a smile. I've even appeared in a few movies. In this country, anything is possible, even for an angry black man, as long as he maintains self-control and projects a friendly image.

## WILL

*(To the other men.)*

Thank you, gentlemen *(To the audience.)* As for me, I was convicted of sexually assaulting a lady who I had invited to my home. For me, a quiet evening of socializing turned into a legal nightmare. No surprise there. I'm not the first black man who ever suffered a miscarriage of justice. Just because I popped her a couple of pills and she happened to be white doesn't mean I was up to no good. I have nothing but the utmost respect for women, black or white. I have instructed my attorneys to file an appeal. Hopefully my conviction will be reversed and my liberty restored. If not, I may die in prison. Whatever the outcome, my reputation is ruined and that causes me immense sadness because as a public figure who became a role model for aspiring blacks, I feel I let a lot of people down. *(Pause.)* There you have it. Seven black men. Rich. Famous. By opening ourselves up to you we brought you into our lives. In his book *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, quote, "The hope of liberty had always been allowed to the slave to cheer the hardships of his condition. But the Americans of the South are well aware that emancipation cannot but be dangerous, when the freed man can never be assimilated to his former master," close quote. I wonder if Mister de Tocqueville ever spoke to any slaves or ex-slaves to get their side of the story. How does he know what they hoped for or how they coped with their so-called condition, one that was imposed on them by force? Such presumptuousness. How did the French cheer the hardships of their condition while the Germans were raping France? How did the Russians cheer the hardships of their condition while the Bolsheviks were oppressing Russia? Dumb question. Oppression is nothing to cheer about. At least the French got back their country and the Russians recovered their

property rights. What compensation did the ex-slaves get? Nothing. We became sharecroppers. The Jews got compensation. The Japanese got compensation. So, the blacks should get compensation too. I know what you're thinking. I'm just another conniving black man playing the race card to try to get a hand out. Well, you're wrong. As slaves, we were considered valuable property, so much so that our masters fought a war, even declared themselves an independent country, to keep us enslaved. They knew a good thing when they had it and they weren't about to give it up without a fight. Then, while the war was going on, we were so degraded, the mentality of the slave so deeply and firmly embedded in our minds, our sense of self-worth so corroded by centuries of negative conditioning, that while our masters and overseers were getting their butts whupped by the North we couldn't even free ourselves without help. We had to wait for Mister Lincoln to do it for us. Then our ex-masters left us destitute. We made them rich and in return they reduced us to serfs and landless refugees. I say unfair. I know. White people had it rough too. Who could not but feel compassion for the tens of thousands of families, including President Lincoln's family and indeed even our ex-masters' families, who lost a loved one during that awful conflagration, but slaves had it rougher because we were shunned. The divisive effects of our slave past still haunts us today. On September 5, 2018, United States Senator Cory Booker stated, quote, "Children in this country still encounter a different experience of America based upon the color of their skin and not the content of their character," closed quote. However, I digress. Please forgive me. Maybe Mister de Tocqueville's comments were a reflection of his own biases. Maybe deep down he wanted the United States to fail. Now, my purpose is not to take issue with Mister de Tocqueville or his book or incite one race against the other or make a case for reparations. That's for politicians to do, and I'm not running for office. I have enough issues to deal with. Instead, I leave it up to you to decide whether de Tocqueville was right: that America is doomed to be forever divided into two groups, one black and one white, or that America, in the inimitable words of the pledge of allegiance of the United States, is in fact one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

**KALIH**

Liberty and justice for all? For the sake of the country, I hope so. Let history be the judge.

**MILT**

Good question. I await the answer.

**DYGER**

Your comments provide me food-for-thought.

**KIM E.**

Powerful words. I wish I had said them.

**SAMPSON**

You should have been my lawyer.

**NIGHK**

Right on, bro. You should have been the judge at my trial.

**WILL**

*(To the other men)*

Okay guys. Our business here is finished. Time to pack up and leave. *(To the audience)* I hope you found our discussion entertaining and worthy of your time and attention. Take care and have a good day. Oh. Before I forget, one other thing. Don't believe everything you read, watch or hear in the mass media, especially about me. I'm vilified, demonized, and publicly maligned, but don't forget, I also made people laugh, not at me but with me. For a black man that's no small accomplishment. Thus, in my own humble way I bridged the racial gap and made this country a better place. In fact, all of us here did. Knowing that makes me feel good.

The end.

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