

Qaadir Muhammad

English Composition I – Draft # 3

December 3rd 2018

Far Gone

In the year 2004, I was a nine year old who was excited to spend the weekend hanging out with a friend of mine. It was a Friday and that also happened to be the date that the friend whom I spoke of, Brian, would be getting a visit from his cousin. Brian him moved away from a couple months back. They used to live on the same block until he came to my neck of the woods two years ago. We decided to come together and play a game we thought was our own making, free for all basketball. Each shot that you made went toward your own score. But to keep neutrality we made a rule that no player could help another make the basket. It kept things competitive and balanced. That day it was sunny, and the breeze gave you the nicest blast of air when your body was overheating from all the movement. The court we were playing in was divided into two parts all surrounded by a green cage and separated down the middle to create two sides. The flooring was colored darker green with sharp whites to outline the court markings. Both sides of the cage being full sized for two separate groups to play at the same time, and usually both are taken up right away. The grown-ups always laid claim but today it was empty. It finally gave us kids a chance to see what an actual court was like instead of some kiddie little stand set-up in the driveway. Today like I had hoped was supposed to be a good day.

Instead I was being sht talked by someone shorter than me because he wanted to call a foul due to a shot I made over his head. He said I elbowed him on the way up, but I knew for a fact that wasn't true. But every time I tried to argue he upped his disrespectful factor. At that point I understood that we didn't know each other and sometimes smack talk happens but something about his vibe was rubbing me the wrong way. I looked over to my friend, Brian, waiting for him to intervene as his relative continued to berate me. If they weren't related, I would have already let my arrogance loose. But I wasn't gonna do that to someone who my friend rarely got to see.

"Whatever nigga, I didn't elbow you. Maybe you should watch yourself when playing someone taller? Every time you try to block me it feels like a fly is getting in my way."

What I had said that time obviously got under the boy's skin. Because now he was exposing that damage by removing his shirt as some show of power. I always hated how people did that. The last thing I needed to see is some shirtless elf trying to call himself bossing up on me. It was embarrassing for everyone there or at least it was for me. Instead of saying anything further I rolled my eyes as I used the ball as a source of ventilation for my anger. I clinched it tightly with my fingers while tapping against its surface with my thumbs.

"Say something else, nigga, and I PROMISE I'll slap your sht."

Now that really got me irritated. The moment the word 'slap' was pat toward me I immediately looked in Brian's direction. Only to spot him standing there utterly nonchalant about the whole thing just watching it all go down.

"Are you serious dude? You gonna let him talk to me like that?"

"I don't know what you're talking about man."

"What is going on, did I do something to you? You're not acting like yourself at all."

"That's a lie. I am myself all the time, this right here IS the real me."

After he said that to me, I was just stuck standing there with my mouth gaped open in surprise. This always happened. Whenever I got around friends who happened to be around people that they preferred they started to act differently. Or as we called it around my way, "flipped the script". They would show off more, act all big and just generally tried to imitate a persona that would gain them favor in the eyes of people they thought was cool. It always confused me because I hung out with my own siblings around other people all the time. But I never felt the need to act any differently. At this point I was just tired of the whole scenario. I've driven down this road too many times and I was just tired of traveling it. So, with a slanted eye I darted my irises between the both of them before admiring the ball one last time. Spinning it around to observe the design.

Then I beamed the ball into Brian's hands. He caught it but I could tell by the wince in his eye that it definitely hurt his wrist in doing so, and that brought me satisfaction. Walking out of the court I only said these few words as I passed by Brian, looking at him intently the entire time.

"Well if this is the real you I never knew you then, so have fun." And I was gone.

As I walked to my house that day I was tossing a decision back and forth in my head while each foot passed over the other. Should I still talk to him or would it just be a waste of time? It had happened so much already, people coming around me and treating me like a convenience. Brian had been the first guy to hang out with me despite me always being on my own. Everyone else could be playing a game of tag, and instead of joining them he'd rather come climb trees around the neighborhood with me. I didn't just see him and wanted to believe he had been the friend I was waiting for, he made me think it possible over time. Two years in I felt we were forming a brotherhood, something I often seen my older brother having with his own friends and I wanted that for myself. Finally, I felt that I had met someone on my level when it came to just, being a friend for someone. Every time a friendship fell through the cracks, I blamed everyone else. But I also know that things happened to me because of my own desperateness. I had been dealing with being around people who only came around me because the ones they really wanted to be around weren't available. Whenever the other kids wanted entertainment, they knew I would open myself up to be made a fool of for a good laugh. But all I knew was that everyone was laughing, and I just wanted to laugh with them, not even knowing it was at me. I would have things taken from me, so they

could laugh at my reaction and even have those things broken so they could laugh even further. Whenever they wanted to argue they would accuse me of thinking I was better than them because of the faith I followed. I didn't talk like them, so they would accuse me of thinking they were stupid. I was never into being a "bad kid" so when they talked about being juveniles I would fade out of the conversation. Me being quiet on those subjects just made them even more angry than speaking up against it. Eventually no other kids in the neighborhood wanted anything to do with me because to them, I was weird and different. It had been like that for a long time, a repeated cycle of longing. Every kid's nightmare I would later learn. Except this year, at the age of nine I wanted different for myself. Was I really gonna let Brian drag me back into that same miserable cycle? Not chance. So today was gonna be the last day me and him ever spoke.

Some would think this a drastic decision, but it was easy for me to make in that moment. Because I had dealt with that scenario more times than I had cared to count. I was a one way street and my brothers knew it and scolded me for being a "doormat". To prove to them and to myself that I wasn't to be walked over I had to start making decisions to make myself stronger than the environment that was bringing me down. I had already walked away from a slew of kids, making some who were "friends" now enemies. I just didn't want Brian to become part of that total. But that moment proved he was no different and he should be dealt with like the others.

A few days after that my mother would come pass my room and tell me that Brian had stopped by, but after that day I wasn't too interested in hearing what he had say. Until one day he walked up on me whilst I was sitting on a brick construct that had

a full view of the whole block I lived on, looking up at the clouds. The moment was kind of surreal because that's how we met. At that time he was sitting where I was, and he was upset because he had lost his basketball. I was the one who found and returned it to him. We started hanging out every day after. You see, he was the new kid on the block at the time and didn't know anyone. I knew how that felt and me being the person I am, refused to let someone else go through the same thing I did when they didn't have to. Its weird how some things can come full circle, however. As that ball that I gave him that started our friendship also happened to be the same ball I threw at him signaling the end of it. Or so I thought.

"Hey man.." his voice was low, carrying his words with a sense of regret. He took a seat next to me and I was half tempted to leave, but I didn't.

"Back to being yourself yet..?" I asked bluntly. Not even looking in his direction as I addressed him. His answer would set the tone for how long the conversation would last and if it was gonna be friendly at all.

"Look man I'm sorry about the way I was acting, I don't know what came over me bro." and the apology comes out. I had to admit, I was shocked.

"Is that gonna happen every time, bro? I always told you how I hated that stuff and then you did it."

"There won't be a next time.."

And then I paused. He comes over to apologize, and there I was ready to mend the friendship. But the way he said that was just hanging in the air. Was that him agreeing with me or was he talking about something else?

“What..?”

“I’m moving. I just wanted to say sorry before me and my family left.”

Again, like before I was thrown off. By the time he finds me to apologize he’s also telling me he’s moving away? Why come and find me? Why leave me on this note? I was so confused and angry. More than anything I was hurt. It had been more than three weeks we had stopped talking at that point, and it was mostly my fault. All that time I had wasted trying to prove how I didn’t need anyone and now one of the only friends I had left is leaving me. I didn’t know how to feel then and sometimes I still think about it now. Not spending the time we had left because I was too angry will always be something I regret. That period of my life will also be a big part of me. Because that was the moment I decided that I would never turn on myself in being who I was for everyone else. Maybe I would never someone who could be to me, what I can be for everyone else. But if that was a quality I had, it would be one that I would strengthen and hold onto tightly. Always ready to forgive, always ready to be there and always ready to give a hand.