

Chapter 1 – First Major CrashOut

COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS UP! It felt like those words were all I could hear—echoing from every direction, even vibrating through the walls that surrounded me. I was frantically pacing inside the house, phone pressed to my ear, begging my cousin Lil Stevie in pure panic to find me a ride. I needed to escape the flood of law enforcement closing in.

I peeked out the back window and saw detectives and marshals. Then I checked the front and saw even more officers, looking like a full SWAT team. Deep down I knew it was over, but I still pleaded with my cousin to swoop me up, to somehow carry me to safety. Then—click—the line went dead. The noise outside seemed to move right into my ear, blasting like a 15-inch speaker.

This was the second time in my life when everything slowed down, and I became painfully present in the moment. I heard everything: the pounding of my heartbeat, the rhythm of the woman's breath beside me, my homeboys shifting in the attic, the police shuffling around the backyard and side of the house. The clock ticked in slow motion. Cop scanners and radios crackled. A helicopter hovered above. I even heard faint whispers, random voices carried from nowhere.

The walls were closing in. It felt surreal, like a bad dream—but I was wide awake, trapped, with no escape.

As time slipped away, every plan and escape route had been exhausted. My mind began replaying the night before: screams, yells, fights, bloodshed. Then silence. Then the chaos of a high-speed chase, ducking into sheds and trailers, fleeing with a car loaded from top to bottom with stolen goods. I remembered the tire blowing out when we hit a curb, sparks flying as the rim scraped concrete, the driver still pushing full speed in desperation.

Somehow, on foot, we got away—at first. Hours later, we celebrated like soldiers returning from war. Back at the safe house, cooking noodles on the stove, we counted money, drugs, and electronics. The feeling was euphoric, like we had just completed a mission for the U.S.

Army and been awarded a Purple Heart by the president himself. For six hours, life was good.

Then reality hit. My partner J peeked out the back window and said, “We hit.” My heart dropped like a ton of bricks straight to my stomach. That was the moment it all set in—I was headed down a long road. Just months before, I had been a top-recruited junior power forward, fresh off the 2008 state championship, with a bright future.

I tried to push the thoughts away as I frantically dialed my cousin in Salt Lake. When he answered, I was broken—defeated, scared, heartbroken, devastated, and hurt all at once. Still, I managed to tell him I was in Orem, off the 800 North exit. “Hurry tf, cuz, or I’m hit like dog shit,” I begged. He promised to find a ride and head my way.

That conversation gave me a flicker of hope, enough confidence to believe maybe I could escape again. But I couldn’t have been more wrong. I was in for a rude awakening. My life was about to twist upside down—and never be the same again.

Life behind bars improved when they transferred me from DT to a youth prison in Ogden. Although I was still crushed inside, I walked with gratitude, knowing things could have been far worse. I was blessed: one of my teammates’ fathers, a well-off doctor, stepped in and retained a high-profile attorney who fought hard for me. And the oldest member of our crew took most of the blame, shielding the rest of us from the worst.

Because of those two factors, I was sentenced to no more than four years in youth detention. If I had been tried as an adult, I would have been facing closer to ten. I was blessed beyond measure, and that blessing gave me the hope I needed to survive my new journey behind bars.

But when I finished my time and returned to the streets, I was lost—and hungry for destruction. I hadn’t changed. In fact, I might have gotten worse. My dream of becoming a Division I athlete, maybe even an NBA player, had died. All I saw now was the streets, and I wanted everything the streets had to offer.

My first mistake was giving myself a Plan B while locked up. I told myself, “If you don’t make it hoopin’, you can just make it in the streets.” That promise was one of the worst lapses in judgment of my life. Sure enough, I lived Plan B to the fullest—and it led me down a dark, unfulfilling path of incarceration, betrayal, let down, pain, and a false sense of achievement.

It wasn’t until 2016, when I held my first child—my baby girl, Rythum—that I began to see life differently. Having her instantly made me less selfish, more mature. She became the foundation for the man I would eventually grow into.

As of 2021, the incarceration rate in the United States was approximately 0.7% of the population. To the untrained eye, this might seem like a small percentage, but when you take a moment to do the math, it becomes astonishing. With an estimated 332 million people in the U.S., 0.7% means a staggering 2.3 million individuals are currently locked away behind bars. That’s 2.3 million lives disrupted. 2.3 million people are disconnected from their families, communities, and futures.

And for what? Anybody who’s been through the criminal justice system, either firsthand or through someone they love, knows it’s not just flawed—it’s broken. It’s a system that profits off incarceration, one that feeds off human lives for monetary gain while doing very little to rehabilitate or heal.

A System Designed to Fail

The prison system in the United States is not built to rehabilitate; it’s built to recycle. It disproportionately targets minority communities, capitalizing on systemic racial and socioeconomic inequities that have existed for generations. Instead of addressing the root causes of crime—poverty, lack of education, limited job opportunities, and mental health issues—the system prefers to lock people away and throw away the key.

Here’s a hard truth: the recidivism rate in the U.S. is 40%. That means nearly half of the people who leave prison will be back within a few years. Imagine that—someone serves their time, gets released, and is thrust back into the same circumstances that led them there in the first

place. No tools, no support, no guidance. Is it any wonder the cycle continues?

This isn't just a statistic—it's a reality. For every person incarcerated, there's a ripple effect. Children grow up without parents. Families are left to pick up the pieces. Communities lose potential leaders, creators, and healers. Breaking this cycle isn't just important—it's essential. And it starts with one simple truth: change begins with you.