#### DRAFT 3

### **Book of Holden: Scriptures from the Sideline**

A witness statement from inside the game. A collection of lived truths, written in the margins of coaching, fatherhood, and becoming.

#### TRACKLIST

Scriptures from the Sideline

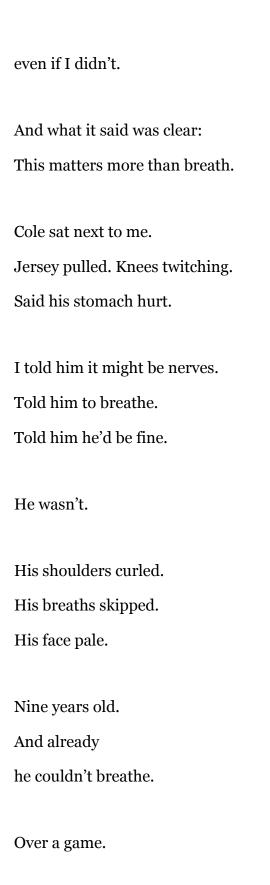
1.01 Moment of Clarity - 03:24
1.02. I Used to Love H.E.R. - 11:12
1.03. Cold Rain - 01:17
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1.05. HiiiPoWeR - 04:01
1.06. Smile - 10:22
1.07. Stakes Is High - 08:17
1.08. Re:Definition - 08:31
1.09. Sixteen - 02:04
1.10. UMI Says - 12:25
1.11. Still Feel Me - 12:18
1.12. Outro - 06:17

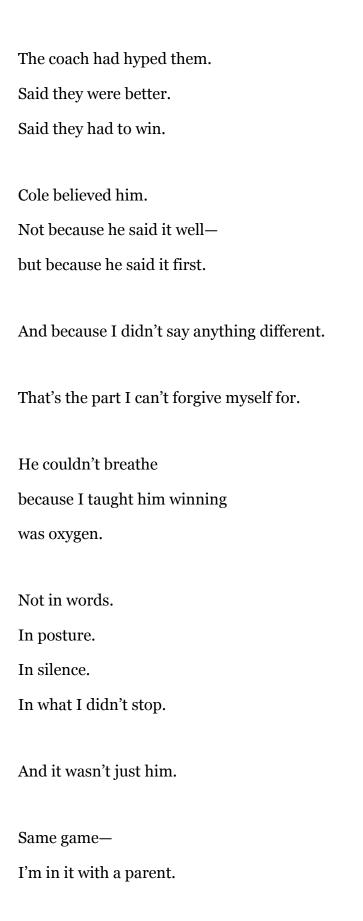
### **Chapter 1: Moment of Clarity**

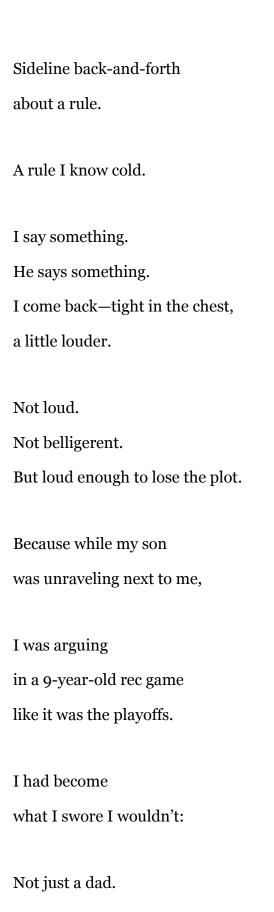
"I dumbed down for my audience to double my dollars / They criticized me for it, yet they all yell 'holla."" — Jay-Z

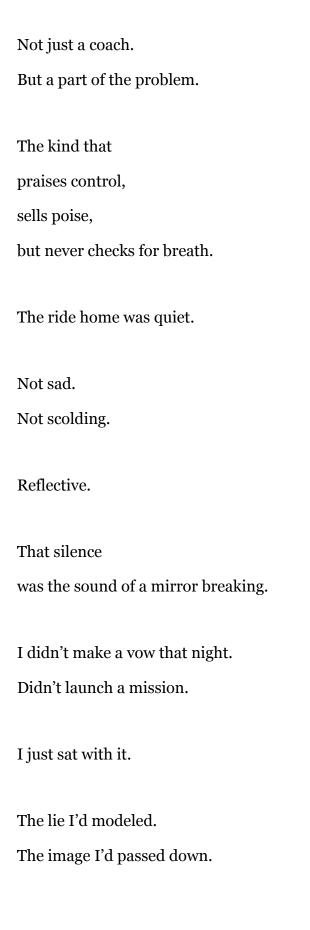
I didn't show up to that game as a coach.
I showed up as a dad.
But everything about me still coached.
My posture.
My presence.
My silence.

It all said something—

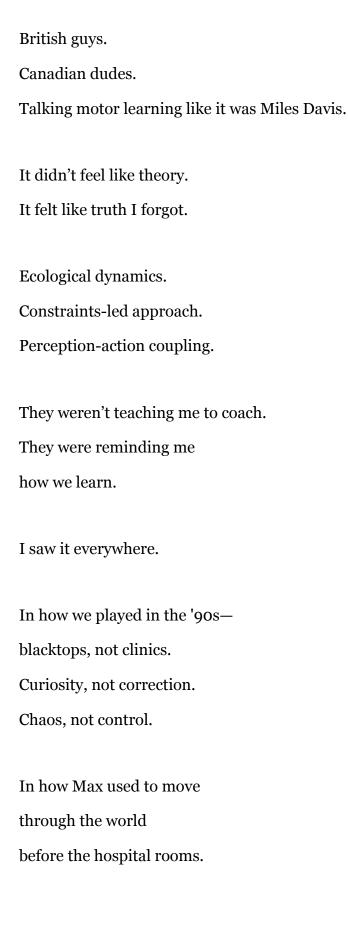








A coach
preaching freedom
while performing pressure.
A father
saying "play free"
while modeling control
in every breath he held in.
That was my moment of clarity.
Not a decision.
A fracture.
So I studied.
Not drills.
Not plays.
Learning.
Unlearning.
Late nights.
YouTube spirals.
Podcasts.



In how Cole
lit up when I backed off.
Max Potential wasn't born from branding.
It came from breath.
Or more honestly—
the lack of it.
Now?
I still coach.
I still train.
I still teach.
But I sit different.
I watch different.
I breathe.
Because I know
what silence costs.
And what presence protects.
I'm not here for applause.
Not trying to go viral.

I'm trying to last.

Because I remember
what it feels like
to not be able to give your kid

his breath back.

I'm here

so the next kid

can breathe.

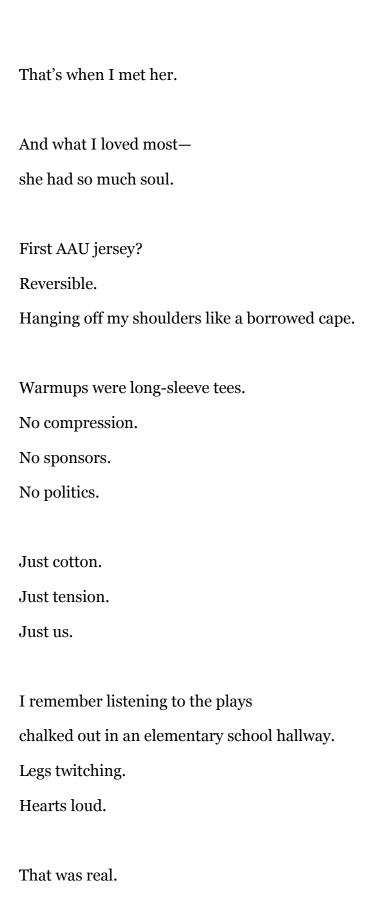
## Chapter 2: I Used to Love H.E.R.

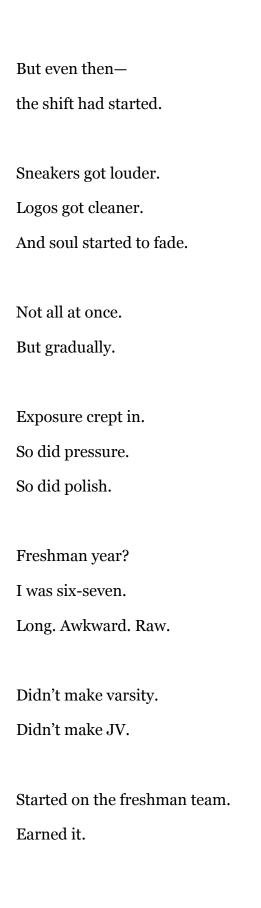
"I met this girl when I was ten years old /
And what I loved most, she had so much soul."

— Common

I met her in the street.
Thether in the street.
Not a driveway.
Not a gym.
A street.
A crate nailed to a telephone pole,
leaning like it had been watching us for years.
The backboard—splintered plywood.
The rim?
Bent coat hanger energy.
But to us,
it was everything.
We shot till the wood gave.

Till the ball lost air.
Till sunset made the asphalt glow.
No cones.
No coaches.
Just noise.
Just rhythm.
Just soul.
We didn't know what we were doing.
And that's why we learned.
We were six.
Seven.
Maybe eight.
Later, Count Basie Park felt like the Garden.
We'd bike down, pick up games with kids three years older.
Earn our stripes.
Wait our turn.
No parents watching.
No trophies.
Just joy.

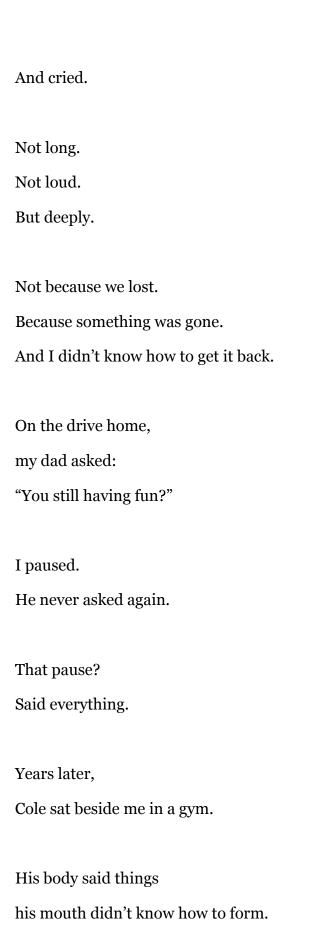




Sophomore year?
Came back two inches taller.
New coach.
Got the start.
Looking back,
I probably didn't deserve it.
But height got me in the door.
Not hunger.
Not readiness.
Structure rewards surface.
Not soul.
Then came the AAU tournament.
Six games.
Three days.
Championship right after the semifinal.
No break.
They had a bye.
They had three future NBA players.

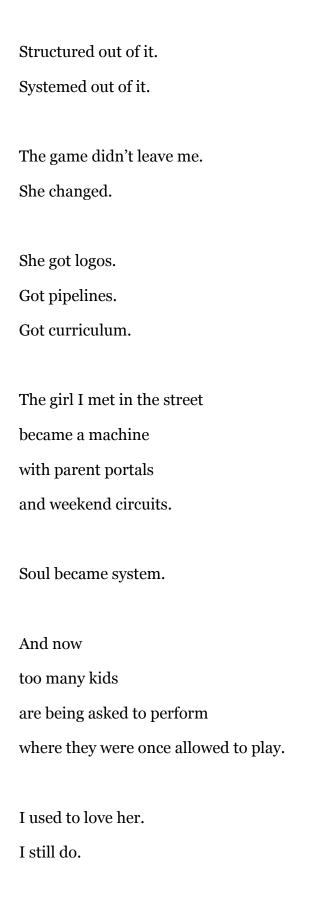
By halftime,
I was done.
Coach asked if I was ready.
I laid down at the end of the bench.
Didn't speak.
Didn't move.
He said I was done for the day.
And I felt
both seen
and sacrificed.
Another time—
freshman year again.
Didn't play.
Not a second.
No explanation.
Just silence.

Sat there wondering if I belonged.
If I ever would.
My shoulders?
Tight.
My chest?
Bruised.
The silence?
Louder than the buzzer.
There was a hotel bathroom.
Another tournament.
Another game.
Three games in one day.
Coach said we had a fourth.
I walked into the bathroom.
Closed the door.
Sat down—
fully clothed.



I'd seen that posture before.
Slumped.
Defeated.
Quiet.
I'd seen it in mirrors.
And it cracked something in me.
Because I gave him the game
like it was a gift.
But the version I handed him
wasn't the girl I met on the block.
It was someone else.
Polished.
Packaged.
Posed.  I didn't fall out of love with her.
raintium out of love with her.

I was coached out of it.



But I don't recognize
who she became.
Not yet.
But I'm trying to bring her back.
One breath at a time.
One kid at a time.
One real smile—
the kind you don't coach—
at a time.

## **Chapter 3: Cold Rain**

"Freedom fighters / We're freedom writers like Bob Moses / The chosen, freedom writers like Voltaire."

— Talib Kweli

I didn't fall out of love with coaching.
I fell out of sync with the version of myself
that was doing it.
The louder I got,
the less I heard.
I was still showing up,
but I wasn't seeing anything new.
Still drilling.
Still correcting.
Still performing clarity
instead of becoming clear.

Then something broke—
but not all at once.
It cracked
the way glass cracks
before it shatters.
Subtle first.
Then undeniable.
It started when I asked a simple question:
"Why are they doing that?"
Why are they shooting before they're balanced?
Why are they rushing to pass when pressure shows up?
Why does their body collapse after a mistake?
It wasn't defiance.
It was pattern.
It was protection.

That's when I realized:

Perception drives action.

Not knowledge.

Not drills.

Not cues.

How they see the world is how they move in it.

So I stopped obsessing over correction and started watching perception.

I studied the pause before the pass.

The false step before the help rotation.

The shoulder sag when they didn't get the ball.

I stopped watching the skill and started watching the story underneath it.

That's when it all opened.

Because once you start watching for perception, you stop coaching for compliance.

You start coaching for

awareness.

Adaptability.

Attunement.

I remember standing in front of a whiteboard, sketching out a new practice plan, and thinking—

"What if this whole thing is upside down?"

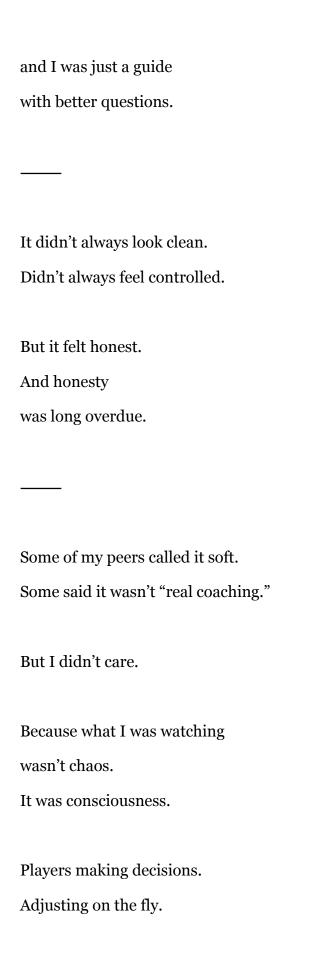
What if the problem isn't the player?
What if it's the environment I've built
that's limiting their freedom to learn?

That's when I found the research. The ones nobody told me to read. Ecological dynamics. Constraints-led approach. Nonlinear pedagogy. Not trendy. Not marketable. But true. They weren't preaching structure. They were describing emergence.

And I couldn't unsee it.

I started designing practices
that made players problem-solvers—
not pattern followers.

Started creating situations where the game was the teacher,



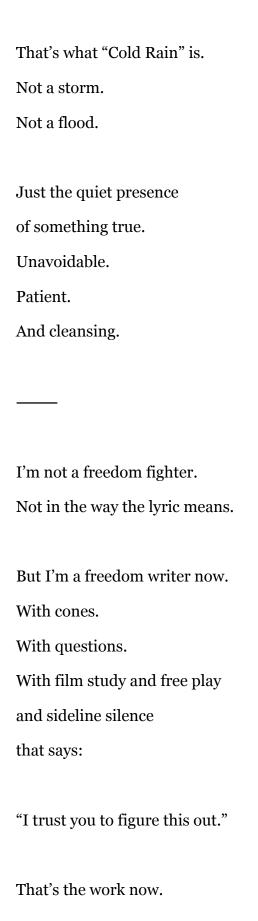
Tuning into the rhythm of the gym.
They weren't waiting for instructions.  They were creating solutions.
And for the first time in a long time, they looked free.
That's when I realized
I wasn't just coaching differently—
I was living differently.
Less obsessed with being right.
More interested in being present.
Less focused on performance.
More curious about process.

I wasn't shouting plays anymore.

For recognition. The "aha" moment when a kid felt something before they could even name it. That was the win. I didn't need to control every rep. I just needed to build a space where reps could evolve. Where players could bump into the truth instead of memorize it. Where learning was messy because life is messy and movement should be too.

I was listening for breath.

For rhythm.



I don't coach to control.
I coach to reveal.
And that revelation comes slow.
Drip.
Drip.
Drip.
Like cold rain.

# **Chapter 4: Thieves in the Night**

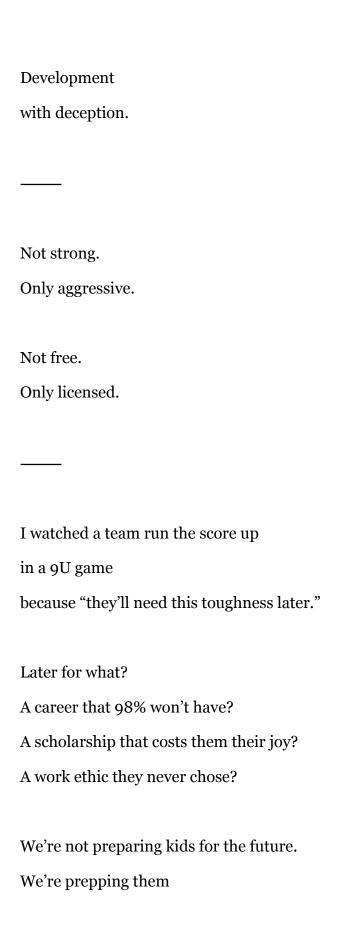
"Not strong, only aggressive / Not free, we only licensed / Not compassionate, only polite / Not whores, but who's solicitin'?"

— Black Star

They say the system is broken.
It's not.
It was built like this.
On purpose.
They say kids are soft now.
They're not.
They're responsive.
To stress.
To surveillance.
To control wrapped in a hoodie that says "grind."

We say we're building character.
But whose definition are we using?
We say "team first."
But punish them
for not being stars.
We say "family."
But bench them
for missing practice
after a funeral.
That's not accountability.
That's branding.
We've replaced play
with programming.
Expression

with exposure.



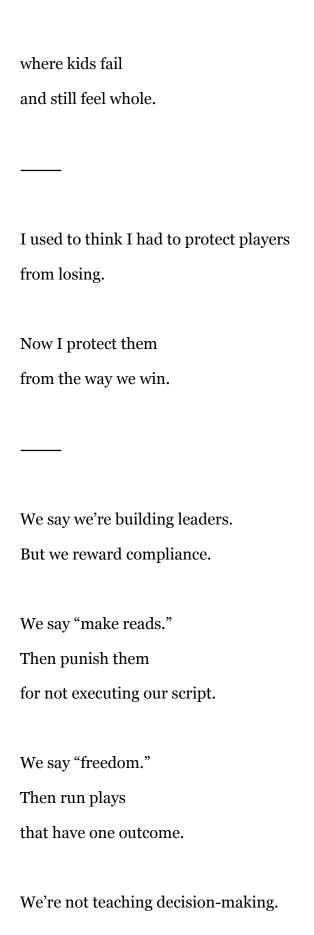
for the same trauma we swallowed and called resilience.

We parade them like assets then post them like losses.
All for clout.
All for projection.
All for a version of success that never measured breath.

You know what's rare?
A kid smiling
while playing hard.

You know what's rare?
A coach who listens
more than he lectures.

You know what's rare?
An environment



We're teaching obedience with a ball in hand.

I've heard coaches say,

"He doesn't listen."

What they mean is:

"He doesn't conform."

I've said it too.

Until I realized

the problem wasn't their ears.

It was our ego.

If a kid disobeys the system we built wrong, are they failing— or refusing to fake it?

We stole their chaos

We make them memorize.

and called it culture.
We stole the game
and sold it back
like a license.
But I'm done playing that role.
I'm not here
to sharpen them for a machine
that devours joy
and prints out recruits.
I'm here to build systems
that make breath visible.
That make failure recoverable.
That make pressure feel like information—
not indictment.

Because the real thieves
move quietly.
Not strong.
Only aggressive.
. 55
Not free.
Only licensed.
And I'm not here to watch kids
lose themselves
while chasing praise
from coaches
still chasing ghosts.
I don't need them to be perfect.
I need them to be present.
<del></del>

And presence

doesn't show up on a box score.

But you can feel it
in the way they move.
In the way they listen.
In the way they recover
without flinching.

That's the goal now.

Not production.
But presence.

Not polish.
But possibility.

Not fear-based obedience.

But decision-making
built on breath.

I'm not trying to go viral.

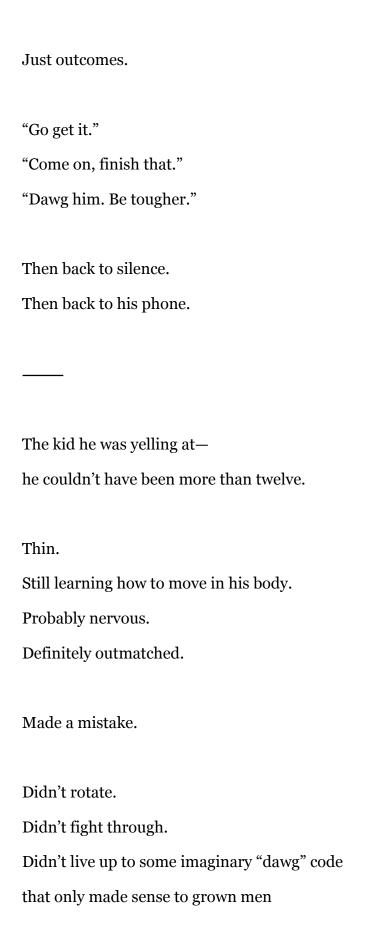
I'm trying to build kids
who know who they are

when the play breaks down.

# Chapter 5: HiiiPoWeR

"The sky is falling, the wind is calling / Stand for something or die in the morning."
— Kendrick Lamar
He strolled in late.
Didn't say much at first.
Didn't introduce himself.
Didn't even look like a coach.
Just a guy in sweats,
phone in his pocket,
checking scores
like he was managing a fantasy team
not mentoring kids.
The game started.
He barked some instructions.
Nothing about spacing.

Nothing about reads.



trying to relive something
through middle school bodies.
"Soft!" he shouted.
"Be a dawg or sit down!"
No clipboard.
No huddle.
No teaching.
Just performance.
And the rest of the team?
They didn't laugh.
They didn't nod.
They didn't pile on.
They just froze.
Not in loyalty.
In fear.

Because they knew
he wasn't coaching.
He was searching
for control.
And they didn't want to be next.
I didn't say anything.
Didn't pull him aside.
Didn't start a conversation.
I just walked out.
Not in protest.
In refusal.
It didn't make me feel noble.
It made me feel complicit.

Because I'd coached like that.

Not always.

Not loudly.

But subtly.

Focused on outcomes.

Selling discipline.

Performing care

while suppressing curiosity.

I wasn't a bad coach.

I was a perfect product.

Trained to value winning more than wondering.

Trained to control before connecting.

And that day,
in that gym,
watching that man yell
at a child
while checking his phone—

I saw the whole thing
for what it was.
NT 1.1
Not broken.
Built.
That was the day
I stopped asking how to be better
in their system.
And started building a new one.
I wrote one sentence that night:
g
"You are not here to prepare kids for systems that harm them."
1 1
Everything else followed.
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No more "kill spots." No more "dawg talk." No more barking from the sideline while pretending it's about effort. If a kid misses, we ask why. If a kid looks off, we stay close. If a kid fails, we make room. So they can try again without carrying shame.

This isn't rebellion.

This is return.

Return to rhythm.

Return to real leadership.

Return to breath.
Return to building gyms
where presence matters more than posture.
Some coaches didn't understand.
Some didn't speak to me after meetings.
But one did.
Quietly.
Privately.
Said,
"You made me think, man."
That's it.
That's all.
And that was enough
to keep going.

Because the sky is falling.
The wind is calling.
And I'm not dying in the morning.
I'm standing.
Here.
Now.

So the next kid doesn't have to unlearn everything we trained into them in the name of winning.

## **Chapter 6: Smile**

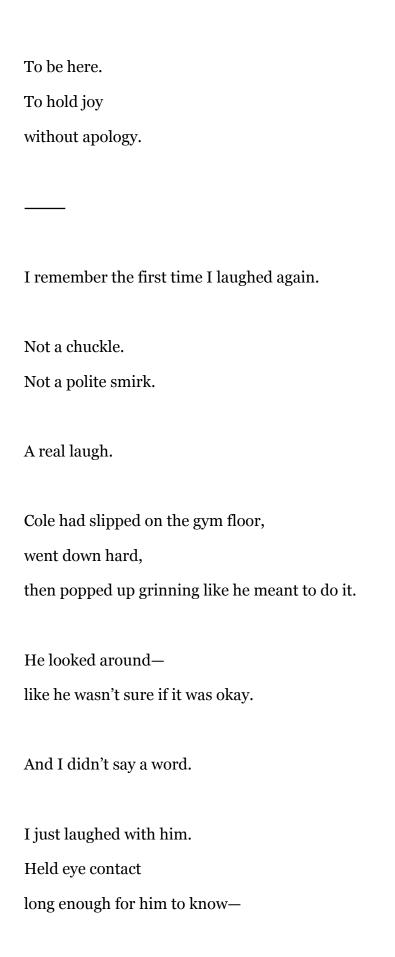
"I often wish that I could save everyone, but I'm a dreamer."

— Scarface (feat. 2Pac)

The first time I smiled after Max died, it scared me. Not because it hurt. Because it didn't. For a second, the weight lifted. And I felt light. And then I felt guilty. How could I laugh when he's not here to? How could I let go of the heaviness

I told myself I had to carry

to honor him?
But the truth is—
the heaviness wasn't the tribute.
The presence was.
And presence
means staying open.
Even when it breaks you.
Even when it makes no sense.
Even when smiling feels
like betrayal.
That's what this chapter is about.
Not pretending.
Not performing.
Choosing.



You're safe here.
That moment did more than any drill I've ever run.
Because joy
isn't a reward.  It's a requirement.
If joy isn't part of the system,
it's not a development model.  It's a slow extraction.
Max taught me that.
Not in theory.  In practice.

He once came out of his room

with two different shoes on.	
One Jordan. One Croc.	
Said,	
"They both feel right."	
And then just kept it moving.	
That was Max.	
Unbothered. Unshakeable.	
Unscripted.	
He wasn't unaware of what was happening.  He was just unwilling to let it define him.	
That's not denial. That's clarity.	

Now I carry that forward. With Cole. With my players. With myself. When they laugh, I don't rush to refocus them. I take a beat. Because that sound that unforced joythat's data too. That's rhythm. That's restoration. We always talk about safety. But most programs treat it

like an insurance clause.

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"They're safe here...
as long as they don't disrupt practice."
"They're safe here...
as long as they perform."
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That's not safety.

That's surveillance.

Real safety means

they can cry.

They can pause.

They can laugh

mid-rep

and not get punished.

Real safety means they can smile without calculating the cost.

Some days,

Cole's body carries something

he doesn't know how to say.

He doesn't throw fits.
He gets quiet.
Withdraws.
Goes internal.
And everything in me
wants to fix it.
Frame it.
Coach it.
But I don't.
I just stay near.
And if I can,
I make him laugh.
Not to change his state.
To remind him
he's allowed to feel all of it—
and still be held.

That's the work now.

That's the dream I still carry.

I often wish that I could save everyone. But I'm a dreamer. And this is how I keep dreaming. By showing up on the days that ache. By smiling when the silence softens. By protecting the possibility that joy

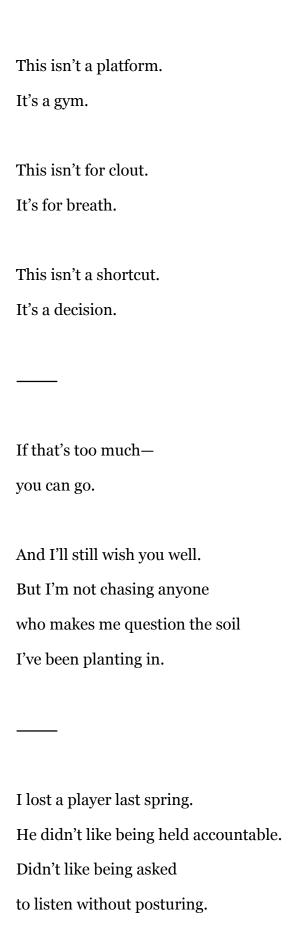
can survive this.

# Chapter 7: Stakes Is High

"Stakes is high / You know them stakes is high / When we talkin' 'bout the vibe'
— De La Soul
They asked me
why we didn't play more tournaments.
I told them:
"Because we're building rhythm, not resumes."
They asked why their son didn't get more highlights.
I asked if they'd watched the practice film.
They hadn't.
That's when I knew—

they weren't here for growth.

They were here for exposure.
And that's fine.
But not here.
Because if we're gonna do this,
if we're gonna build a system
that lets kids breathe,
then we have to protect the air.
The vibe is sacred.
And sacred things require boundaries.
So I stopped explaining myself.
Started clarifying.



Didn't like when joy required presence,
not performance.
And when he left,
I didn't beg.
I didn't vent.
I blessed and released.
Paganga yan gan't build a gultura
Because you can't build a culture
and be scared of losing players.
That's not culture.
That's codependence.
That's codepondence.
I wrote a code on the board.
Not rules.
Words.
JOY
PRESENCE

## **ENERGY**

## **INTEGRITY**

We signed under them.
Kids, too.
That's the real contract.
That's the real culture.
One weekend,
a coach poached one of my players.
DM'd him.
Sold him a dream.
Called us soft.
I read the message twice.
Never responded.
Because you don't fix the system
by fighting its clones.
You fix it
by building something it can't touch.

I don't need revenge.
I need rhythm.
And rhythm takes time.
Takes consistency.
Takes vibe.
So now,
when a parent asks,
"What's your edge?"
I tell them,
"We play. We grow. We breathe."
If that's not enough— we're not a good fit.

But if it is?
Then welcome. You just found the rare thing.
A gym
where kids smile without flinching.
Where they miss and try again
without apology.
Where they lead from joy,
not fear.
This isn't about being different.
It's about being aligned.
Because the stakes?
They're high.
Every time we let fear run the system,
we lose the kids we claim to be developing.

Every time we make performance the price of belonging,
we betray the reason we started.
So I stopped marketing.
Stopped adjusting.
Stopped trying to make it palatable.
I just built.
And kept building.
Now?
The kids echo the right way.
Their breath fills the room.
Their vibe sets the tone.

I don't coach out of scarcity anymore.

I coach like we already have everything we need.

Because	we	do.
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If we protect it.

The stakes are high.

But so is the bar.

And the vibe?

That's non-negotiable.

## **Chapter 8: Re:Definition**

, , ,	nto a tragedy / Exhibit level degree on the mic, passionately."
	— Black Star

I've seen play turned into tragedy.

Not from loss, but from overstructure.

From systems that look like care but feel like control.

From coaches who script joy out of the game

one clipboard command at a time.

I've watched a kid shrink in front of me-

not because he failed,

but because he was never free.

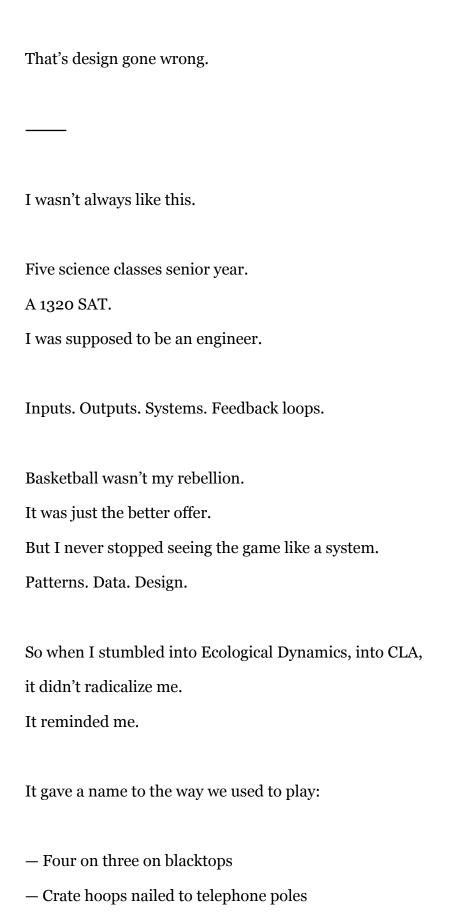
He followed the rules.

Played the role.

Ran the sets.

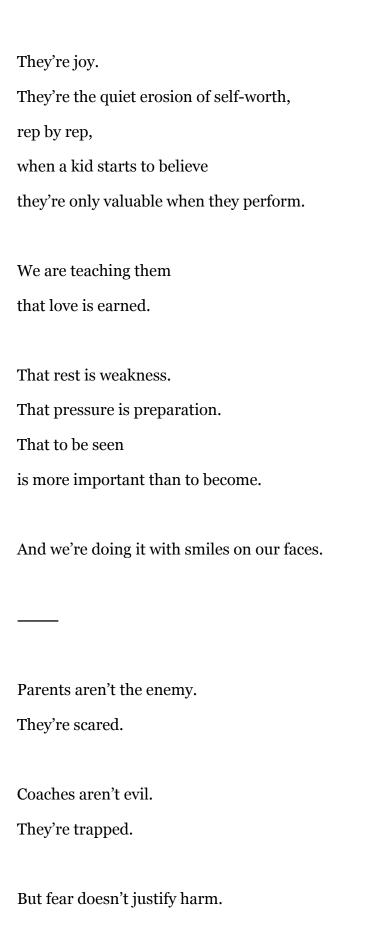
And still, somehow, became less.

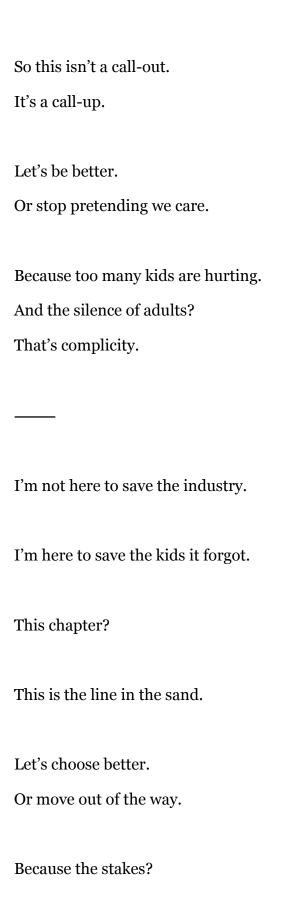
That's not development.



— Uneven numbers, weird bounces, real decisions
We didn't call it "constraints."
We just called it basketball.
Now I teach through constraint.
Not because it's easier—
but because it works.
I ask players questions.
I design problems.
I set parameters and let them adapt.
I don't hand them scripts.
I give them contexts.
And at first?
It's messy.
Kids look confused.
Parents get nervous.
Coaches pull me aside.







They've never been higher.

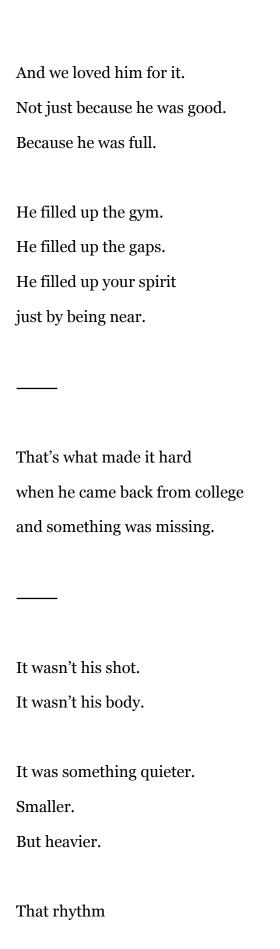
# **Chapter 9: Sixteen**

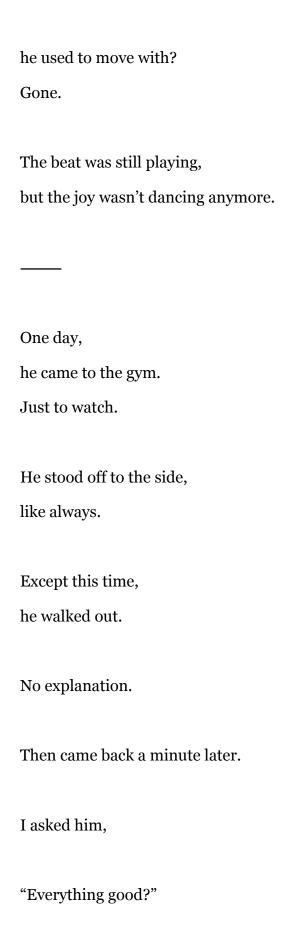
"Sixteen ain't enough."

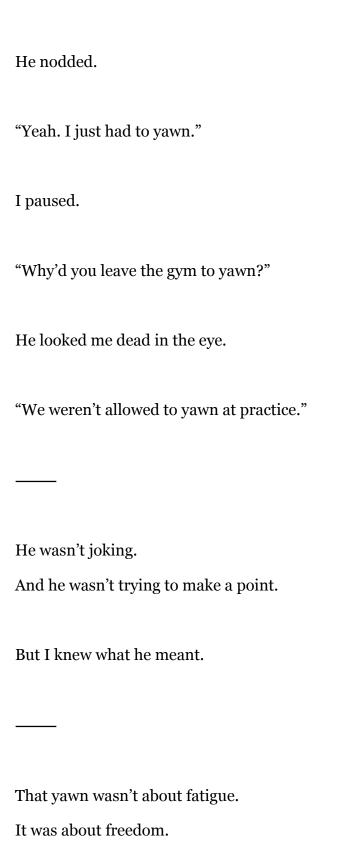
— André 3000

When he was younger,
you might've called him quiet.
Respectful.
Polite.
A coach's dream.
But that wasn't the full picture.
He wasn't shy.
He was watching.
Waiting.
Reading the room.
And once he trusted you?
You couldn't get him to shut up.

He was funny.
Quick-witted.
Sharp without being cruel.
He had the kind of timing
you couldn't teach.
In his movement.
In his mind.
In his mouth.
Everything he did had rhythm.
He didn't just play the game—
he played with it.
He moved like joy
had been hardwired into his muscle memory.
Like smiling was a skill he had mastered
before the first rep.







And the fact that he left the gym
to do something as human
as take a breath—

That told me everything
about what the game had become for him.

He didn't quit.

He didn't fail.

He just changed.

Or maybe

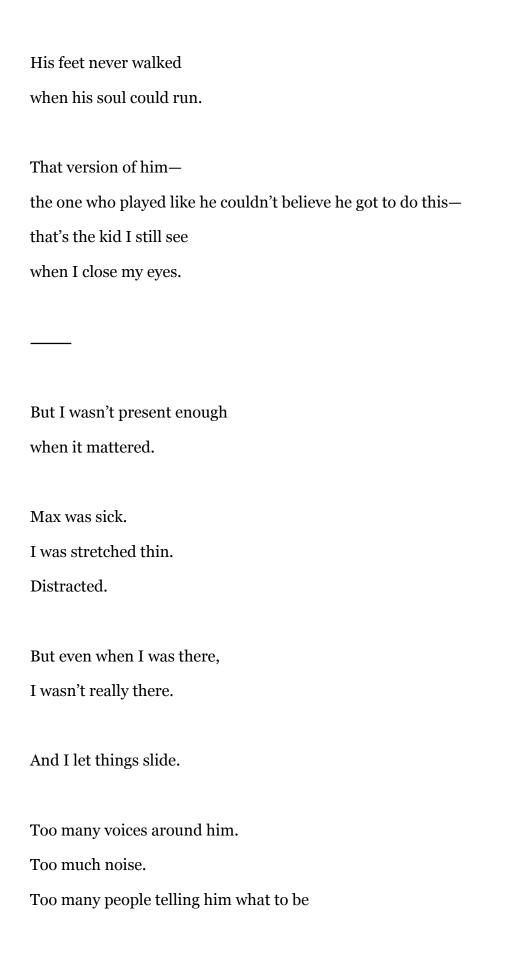
he learned to survive
in a system that didn't make space
for who he really was.

I remember the last time I coached him.

He was electric.

Bouncing across the floor

like joy had a destination.



instead of making space for who he already was.
He started training in third grade.
The joy was real.
At first.
But the reps added up.
The structure got tighter.
The space for laughter shrank.
And by the time college came,
it wasn't about playing anymore.
It was about surviving.
The system didn't break him.
But it drained something
he didn't know he'd need later.

The freedom to be full.

The safety to be himself.

The ability to yawn
without having to leave the room.
I should've known.
I should've done more.
I should've built a gym
where he didn't have to earn joy
with perfect behavior.
Where his voice
could be as loud as his game.
Where yawn meant tired—
not punished.
Sixteen ain't enough.
Sixteen games.
Sixteen sessions.

Sixteen months of light before the dimming started.

Now when I see him,

he still smiles.

Still makes me laugh.

Still offers glimpses

of who he's always been.

But there's a part of him

I haven't seen in years.

And I helped bury it.

Not out of malice.

Out of neglect.

Out of trust in a system

that never earned it.

This chapter isn't about blame.

It's about cost.

About all the ways joy gets edged out by polish,
by pressure,
by performance.

Sixteen ain't enough.

But if I could get those reps back—
one more summer—
I'd run the kind of practice
where he could laugh
until he couldn't breathe.

And never once have to ask permission to yawn.

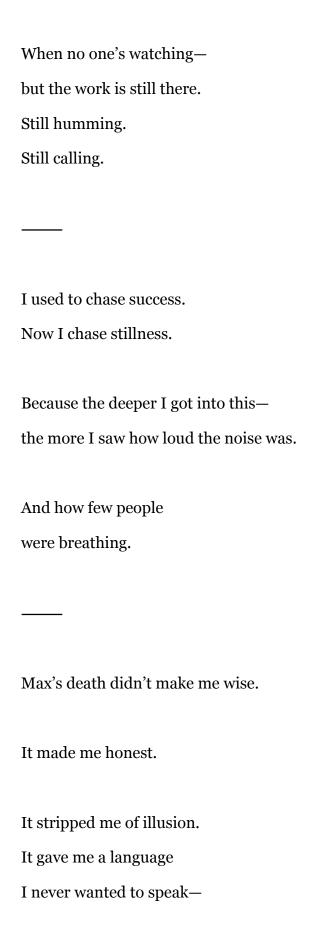
# **Chapter 10: UMI Says**

"My Umi says, shine your light on the world. Shine your light for the world to see.
— Mos Def
Carrying this mission
feels like walking with cracked ribs.
Not broken.
Just aching.
Every breath costs something.
But I keep breathing anyway.
Not for validation.
Not for branding.
Because I know what silence steals.
I've watched it work.

On Cole.
On Max.
On myself.
This isn't about fixing the system anymore.
It's about refusing to disappear in it.
I don't coach to be a savior.
I coach because someone has to hold the light
when the gym goes dim.
There's a kind of clarity
that doesn't speak at clinics
or post reels.

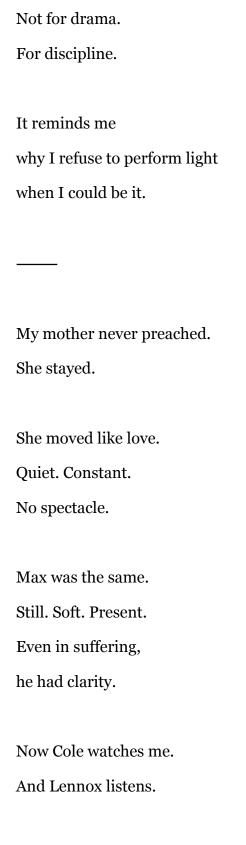
The kind that moves through you when the gym is empty.

When the cones are picked up and you're the last one out.

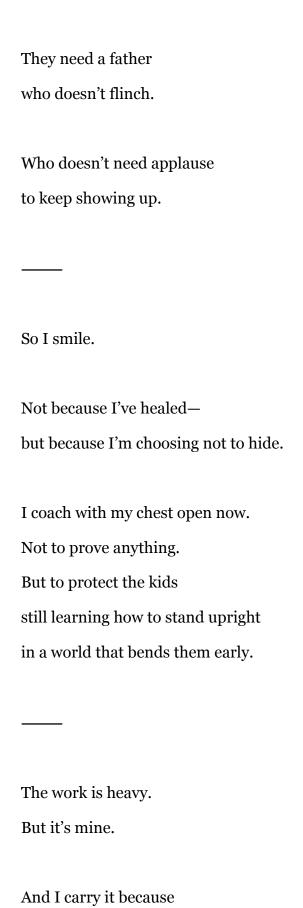


but couldn't unlearn.
It taught me what matters.
And what never did.
So now, when a kid is quiet,
I don't assume they're fine.
When a parent shrugs,
I don't let it slide.
When a teammate lashes out,
I don't just call it "edge."
I stay.
I ask.
I pause.
Because breath doesn't shout.
It waits.
I remember the pain.

I let it walk beside me.



They don't need a superhero.



Umi said shine.
And I believe her.
Even when the light hurts.
Even when it doesn't reach.
Even when I can't see the reflection—
only the obligation.
This chapter isn't about coaching.
It's about presence.
It's about knowing I can't save everyone—
but I can love like I'm trying.
That's the light.
And it still shines.

# **Chapter 11: Still Feel Me**

"Now the road to the riches is taking me longer / It ain't kill yet so it making me stronger / I don't know if it's the hate, frustration, or hunger." — Jadakiss
There's a clarity that only comes
once the fire dies down.
Not the kind that yells.
The kind that waits
to see who's still listening.
That's where I am now.
Not on a pedestal.
Not on a podium.
Just standing.
Still coaching.
Still building.

Still carrying names—

some that are gone,

some that are growing.
They used to call me intense.
Cold. Unrelenting.
Now they just call me consistent.
Because I'm still doing it.
Not for rankings.
Not for the photos.
But because the kids still show up—
and someone has to show up with them.
My fuel used to come from three places:
Hate.
Not spite.
Memory.
Of who didn't believe.
Of what wasn't said.

What wasn't given.
Frustration.
With the games behind the games.
The fake care.
The adults who say "development"
but chase clout.
Hunger.
For honesty.
For peace.
For air.
They're still with me.
Just softer now.
Not fuel.
Compass.
The grief never left.
It just changed shape.
Doesn't punch me in the chest anymore.

Now it walks beside me.
Quiet.
Steady.
I see Max in the pauses.
Not just his memory—
his mirror.
Every kid I coach
is someone's Max.
So I protect what I can now.
I never got to finish the conversation with my father.
Cancer ended it
before it could start.
So I stay now—
for the ones who can't speak.
For the ones still learning
what it means to stay.

Nobody told me real manhood is presence. That strength isn't what you endure. It's how you love through it. I don't coach to be a savior. I coach so my kids will say: "He stood for something." So they'll know what love looks like when it's built not just felt. There are days I want to rest. Disappear. Turn off the gym lights and just be somewhere quiet.

But I stay.

Because Umi said shine.

And shining doesn't mean loud.

It means refusing to let the world stay dim

just because it's easier

to sit in the dark.

A friend once told me

Jay-Z said everyone has genius.

Mine isn't hype.

It's clarity.

I see the pain.

I see the systems.

I see the silence behind the performance.

And I still show up

with joy in my hands

like a lantern.

That's my genius.
And it comes with obligation
To the block.
To the borough.
To the baseline.
No one sees the light work.
They see the clips.
The trophies.
The posts.
But the real work?
It's internal.
Invisible.
It's the labor of presence
when nobody claps.
And I do it anyway.

Because even when the light is heavy,		
it's still mine to carry.		
This chapter isn't about coaching.		
It's about presence.		
About knowing I can't fix everything—		
but I can refuse to disappear.		
I can't heal every system.		
But I can love within it		
like I'm trying.		
And that matters.		
That's the light.		
And it still shines.		

Chapter 12: 0	Outro
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"I'm nothin' like you rap dudes / I'm a man with my own flaws / But I stand for somethin' / That's more than your downloads or your applause." — Nas		
There's a moment—quiet, unscripted—		
when you realize you've done the work.		
Not all of it.		
Not perfectly.		
But enough to know		
you're not who you used to be.		
That's what this is.		
Not a mic drop.		
A mirror.		
I didn't write this to be liked.		

I wrote it because I couldn't stay silent.

Because I saw my son lose his breath—
and realized I'd been teaching him to hold it.

Because I watched kids cry through games and called it resilience.

Because I coached for reputation when I should've been coaching for restoration.

Because I was part of the problem.

And I decided to become part of the rebuild.

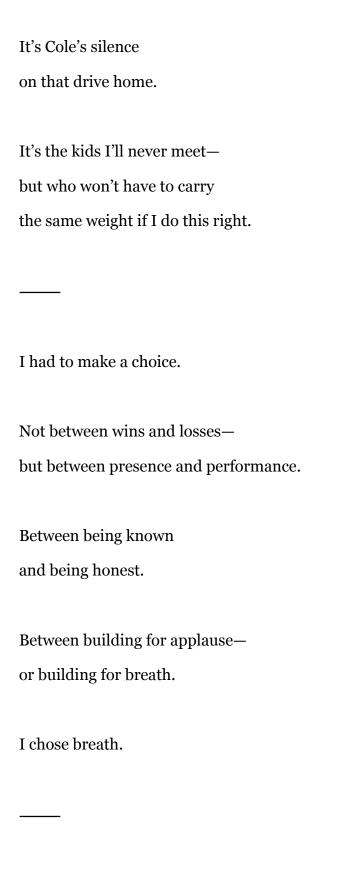
This isn't a book about drills.

Or programs.

Or systems.

It's a record of what broke— and what I'm building in its place.

It's Max's name stitched between the lines.



There's a story I haven't told many.

During Max's treatment—his most painful one we had the Airbnb booked. The private jet ready. The world was shut down. But we were going. That's how far I was willing to go to give my son a shot at life. So when people ask why I'm so intense about coachingabout youth basketball, about clarityit's because I've already been where everything else fades away. And what stays? Is breath.

The leaders we trust with our kids shouldn't be the loudest.

They should be the ones
who still carry their own silence
with reverence.

I've had chances to cash in.

To chase clout.

To brand something sleek and scalable.

I said no.

Because Max taught me what matters.

Because Cole still watches.

Because Lennox is still learning.

This book wasn't written for industry approval.

It was written for the kid biting his nails in the layup line.

For the parent in the stands with a lump in their throat, unsure if they've done too much or not enough.

For the coach wondering if the system they're in is breaking the very kids they swore to build up.

I've been in gyms where nobody felt me.

But the kid who needed me?

He did.

That's the only echo I'm chasing.

Here's the story.

I laid it all out.

Still building.

Still breathing.

Still feeling.

And if you don't know...

# TRACKLIST

Scriptures from the Sideline

Moment of Clarity – 03:24

I Used to Love H.E.R. – 11:12

Cold Rain - 01:17

Thieves in the Night – 03:17

HiiiPoWeR - 04:01

Smile - 10:22

Stakes Is High - 08:17

Re:Definition – 08:31

Sixteen - 02:04

UMI Says - 12:25

Still Feel Me - 12:18

Outro - 06:17

#### LINER NOTES

# 01. Moment of Clarity - Jay-Z - 03:24

There's something surgical about this track. Jay isn't just spitting—he's revealing. "I dumbed down for my audience..." is one of the most honest bars in rap. This song gave me permission to admit what I'd been performing, who I was trying to impress, and how much of myself I'd hidden behind the mask. It's not loud. It's not triumphant. It's a breaking point for me, just like the track was for him.

#### 02. I Used to Love H.E.R. – Common – 11:12

This one hit me the first time I heard it, and it still does. It's not just about hip-hop—it's about falling in love with something pure, only to watch it get distorted by culture, money, and ego. That's how I felt about basketball. What I was handed, what I passed down, what I had to reckon with. I wasn't betrayed—I became part of the betrayal.

# 03. Cold Rain – Talib Kweli – 01:17

"Freedom writers like Bob Moses." That line always shook me. The idea that writing—even coaching—could be liberation work. This song isn't a hit, but it feels elemental. Cold rain doesn't flood. It doesn't scream. It just doesn't stop. Neither did the questions.

# 04. Thieves in the Night - Black Star - 03:17

This song stays with me. "Not strong, only aggressive. Not free, we only licensed." I heard that and had to sit still for a minute. It named something I felt but hadn't put into words. The illusion of strength we sell to kids. The permission we mistake for freedom. This one feels like the quiet that comes before a storm—and the storm never stops.

## 05. HiiiPoWeR - Kendrick Lamar - 04:01

This felt like a call to arms the first time I heard it. Kendrick's urgency—the refusal to look away, the hunger to stand for something bigger than yourself—it lit something in me. I wasn't walking out of that gym to make a point. I was walking out because I couldn't stay and still recognize myself.

### 06. Smile - Scarface feat. 2Pac - 10:22

There's this weariness in Scarface's voice that I've always felt underneath the surface of joy. Like smiling isn't about being okay—it's about surviving long enough to choose joy anyway. I held so much guilt after Max passed, like smiling too soon was disrespectful. But eventually I let go. This track reminds me that joy can hold pain without erasing it.

# 07. Stakes Is High - De La Soul - 08:17

There's clarity in this song that I didn't have words for at first. It made me think harder about what I was actually building. Not just programs, but beliefs. It's easy to get lost in the machine and call it culture. This track made me pause. Ask better questions. Let go of trying to be seen and focus on what I actually stand for.

## 08. Re:Definition - Black Star - 08:31

This one's all edge and urgency. That beat grabs you, and the bars don't let go. It reminded me that we don't always need new answers—sometimes we just need to stop lying about what's not working. I was done polishing broken models. This song helped me feel okay about burning old frameworks down to build something breathable.

### 09. Sixteen – André 3000 – 02:04

The sadness in this song cut through me. "Sixteen ain't enough" wasn't just about bars—it was about constraint. About all the things that don't get said when the space isn't safe. I've seen kids who follow every direction, hit every mark, do everything "right"—but you can feel what's missing. Not because they can't speak, but because they've learned how to survive in silence. I know that feeling. I coached that way longer than I want to admit.

#### 10. UMI Says – Mos Def – 12:25

This is the slow breath. The sit-still-and-listen song. "Shine your light on the world" sounds simple until you try to live it every day. I hear Carrie in this song. I hear my mother. I hear Max. It reminds me that presence matters more than volume. That leadership doesn't have to be loud. That care is a practice, not a post.

### 11. Still Feel Me – Jadakiss – 12:18

There's something unshakable about this track. Not in its bravado—in its insistence. "I'm still here." That's what I hear in it. That first game at Ranney, I wasn't doing it differently yet, but something had started shifting. I was watching myself now. That felt like a beginning, even if no one else could see it yet.

## 12. Outro - Nas - 06:17

I've replayed this one more than almost any other. "I'm a man with my own flaws / But I stand for something..." That's it. That's all I ever wanted this to be about. Not perfection. Not performance. Just clarity. Just presence. Just staying close enough to the breath to recognize yourself when it's time to speak.