# Chapter 10: UMI Says

“Shine your light on the world.” — Mos Def

Carrying this mission feels like walking with cracked ribs.  
  
The kind of pain you can’t point to—but you feel it every breath. It doesn’t stop you from moving, but it changes how you move.  
  
That’s what this has been.  
  
Not just a business. Not a brand. A burden I chose to carry because I knew what it felt like when no one else would.  
  
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There’s a silence that comes with clarity.  
  
Not the comfortable kind. The kind that stretches. That hollows you out. That makes you wonder why you’re the only one seeing what’s really happening while everyone else just nods along.  
  
But I don’t want applause. I want breath. For Cole. For Lennox. For every kid who’s learned to hold their breath just to survive the sideline.  
  
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Max is the reason I can’t let go.  
  
When his treatment failed, when the jet was ready, when we were on the brink of something miraculous that never came—I felt something snap inside me. A line between what matters and what doesn’t.  
  
And since then, every time I see a kid play in fear, I see my son on that hospital bed. I see all the things we do in the name of love that have nothing to do with care.  
  
I can’t undo that pain. But I can hold space for the ones still here.  
  
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People ask why I smile so much now.  
  
It’s because I’ve seen what silence costs. And I refuse to live like I didn’t.  
  
Smiling is my act of rebellion. Of remembering. Of breathing for the ones who couldn’t.  
  
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We talk about toughness. About resilience.  
  
But the truth is, most boys are taught to bury their feelings under jumpers and defense. To hide their pain until it becomes rage. To confuse silence for strength and vulnerability for weakness.  
  
Nobody ever told me that real manhood is presence.  
  
That strength isn’t what you endure. It’s how you love through it.  
  
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I don’t coach to be a savior.  
  
I coach so that one day, my kids will say: “He stood for something.” And they’ll know what love looks like when it’s built, not just felt.  
  
There are days I want to rest. Days I want to disappear. But I stay. Because Umi said shine.  
  
And shining doesn’t mean being loud. It means refusing to let the world stay dim just because it’s easier to sit in the dark.  
  
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A friend once told me that Jay-Z said everyone has genius. My genius isn’t hype. It’s clarity.  
  
I see the pain. I see the systems. I see the ways we’ve sold childhood for clout—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.  
  
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No one sees the light work.  
  
They see the fire. The output. The posts. The practice clips.  
  
But the real work? It’s internal. It’s invisible. It’s the emotional labor of holding space when nobody else wants to.  
  
And I do it anyway.  
  
Because even when the light is heavy, it’s still mine to carry.  
  
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This chapter isn’t about coaching.  
  
It’s about fatherhood. Leadership. Presence.  
  
It’s 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 Style Rationale

Chapter 10 is constructed as a quiet beam. The prose here is restrained, lyrical, almost meditative. After the build of Chapter 9, this chapter needed to feel like a slow breath. Like a man who is still carrying, still grieving, but has come to peace with the weight.  
  
The voice is intimate, direct, almost whisper-level. The structure leans into poetic pacing, line breaks offering space for reflection. It’s not just a stylistic break—it’s a tonal shift that repositions the narrator not as the builder, but the bearer of the light. That contrast is intentional and essential.