# Chapter 9: 16

“Sixteen ain’t enough.” — André 3000

Sixteen ain’t enough.  
  
Sixteen bars can’t hold the full verse. Sixteen sessions can’t build the full player. Sixteen months of pain can’t capture what we felt trying to save Max.  
  
Sixteen ain’t enough.  
  
It’s too tight. Too measured. Too rehearsed. And the truth? It never fits inside the lines.  
  
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I’ve lived too much to compress it.  
  
The system gave me a stage—but no voice. It taught me how to perform, not how to feel. It rewarded control, not clarity. Obedience, not ownership.  
  
And I’ve watched kids go through the same.  
  
Coached them. Trained them. Sometimes hurt them.  
  
And now I’m doing something different—not because it’s popular. But because it’s the only thing that lets me sleep.  
  
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When Max relapsed, everything narrowed.  
  
There was an experimental treatment in Texas. Our insurance didn’t cover it. The price tag didn’t matter. The pain didn’t matter. Nothing did.  
  
We had an Airbnb ready. A jet lined up. COVID had shut the world down, but we were going anyway.  
  
Because when it’s your kid?  
  
You stop asking if it’s enough. You just go.  
  
That treatment didn’t work. But it gave me a new metric for what matters.  
  
And that metric follows me into every gym.  
  
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Now when I coach, I’m trying to reach kids before the break happens. Before the silence swallows them. Before they start biting their nails during warmups and pretending it’s just nerves.  
  
Cole didn’t have a full-blown panic attack that day. But his stomach turned. His voice got quiet. His shoulders tensed. And I saw it. Because I knew it. Because I’ve worn it.  
  
And yeah—I told him to stop biting his nails.  
  
But what I really meant was, “You don’t have to carry this the way I did.”  
  
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I’ve said things I regret.  
  
I’ve judged a kid for missing a layup and called it softness. I’ve praised effort that looked like anger and told myself it was “dawg.”  
  
And I’ve had moments—real ones—where I watched another adult do the same thing and caught myself nodding.  
  
Not because I agreed.  
  
But because I remembered.  
  
Because I’m still unlearning.  
  
If you’re reading this? I probably still am.  
  
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During one of Max’s treatments, the one that hurt the most, I sent my wife out to grab lunch. It was her birthday. June 17th.  
  
I didn’t want her to see him in that much pain.  
  
Earlier that morning, I’d posted something on social media about a college coach getting three months in prison for his role in a recruiting scandal.  
  
A guy who runs one of the big AAU circuits saw it and thought I was celebrating the sentence. I wasn’t. I was surprised it was that light, given the charges. I wasn’t rooting for prison. I was shocked at the optics.  
  
He didn’t ask for clarification.  
  
He called me—while I was sitting next to my son, who was in agony. And he cursed me out. Loud. On speaker. In front of my wife. And then he hung up.  
  
That’s the kind of leadership that defines youth basketball in too many places.  
  
And that’s why I’m building something else.  
  
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I don’t need retweets.  
  
I need restoration.  
  
I don’t need applause. I need kids who breathe easy.  
  
That’s what Max taught me.  
  
That’s what Cole reminds me.  
  
That’s what every kid in a system that trades love for performance still carries in their body.  
  
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CLA and Ecological Dynamics didn’t make me this way. They gave me the language.  
  
I’ve always felt the tension. The contradiction. The lie.  
  
Now I have a framework to name it—and a method to change it.  
  
And no—I’m not yelling anymore. I’m building.  
  
And I’m still spitting.  
  
Still here.  
  
Still fighting for a version of this that doesn’t break the ones who love it most.  
  
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Sixteen ain’t enough.  
  
But it’s a start.  
  
And I’m not done.

## Chapter Style Rationale

Chapter 9 is written like a final verse—tight, urgent, declarative. The pacing leans poetic, with deliberate white space and short paragraphs that mirror the cadence of a track running out of room. It’s confessional, not performative. Honest, not polished.  
  
This chapter had to feel unfinished—on purpose. It reflects a man who’s still in it, still learning, still shedding old skin. It doesn't resolve because it’s not meant to. It’s the breath before the next build. It had to carry weight—but not closure.