

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 1 - TIARA'S INTRODUCTION

My name is Tiara James, but my friends call me T. I'm your around the way don't take no shit from no one type of girl. My slanted eyes, butterscotch golden complexion, shoulder length hair and hour glass shape has coined me the label "a dime piece."

I grew up in the streets of Boston, Massachusetts also known as "The Bloody Bean." People seemed to think that Boston was full of good colleges and minimal hoods, that's not the case at all. New York has its five boroughs: Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx and Staten Island. Boston has four, Dorchester, Mattapan, Roxbury and South End. I grew up in Dorchester, borderline Mattapan also known as "Murderpan."

It was like any other hood. Violence, robbing and killing ran the streets. And either you ran with it or you ran from it. Growing up, I tried to observe everything and rise above it but sometimes you just fall victim to everything around you.

I was born in Norfolk Virginia and moved to Boston after my mom left and divorced my abusive, alcoholic father. My mom had two kids by my father, me and my brother Trè James. Trè and I witnessed my mother being abused countless times at the hand of our father. One time in particular my father was beating my mom with closed fists as if he was in a Mike Tyson fight. He was on top of her punching her defenseless body, blow by blow to her chest and face. Trè must've had so much anger built in him from witnessing all the other ass whippings that he went in the closet to get the bat that he used for baseball practice and showed his skills by knocking my father in the head.

I couldn't believe what I saw.

One blow to my father's head sent blood streaming down his face like a waterfall. My father managed to take the bat from Trè, but the guilt from hitting my mom caused him not to retaliate, instead he just left.

Later that night he came home drunk out of his mind.

His clothes smelled like he had taken a bath in Tequila and he could barely keep his balance.

My brother Trè and I were watching TV with my mom in her room when my father came in the room yelling and cussing.

"All y'all get the fuck out of here, I'm tired and I want to lie down!"

My mom hated when he cursed in front of us and the agitation showed on her face.

"Just calm down. Let the kids watch TV for a little while."

My father considered what my mom said as "back talk." He told her that she should never back talk a man and if any woman ever does than she deserved to get her ass whooped.

At that moment it was like the air had been sucked out of the room.

We all knew what was coming next.

He told my mom to lift her head up so that he can see the lips that she used to back talk him with. Slowly she closed her eyes and tilted her head up to the ceiling. With no hesitation my father punched her in the mouth and three teeth flew to the wall. The fact that Trè and I were sitting on the bed watching him hit our mom didn't seem to bother him one bit.

Scenes like this were actually normal for us, well for me anyway. Usually my mom didn't fight back; she just cried and begged him not to hit her again. Shortly after, my father ended up leaving only to return and apologize but something told him that my mom was fed up this time. He had the door of their room cracked open.

I stood at the cracked door peeking in to see what he would do next. He took out a gun out of the bureau and put it to my mom's head.

"Woman, if you ever leave me or think about leaving me, I'll kill you." He cocked the gun back and if looks could kill, my mom would have been dead.

Ma sat perfectly still with the gun pointed at her temple. She was facing the door and I could see her looking at me.

She didn't know what to do or say so she sat there with tears pouring down her blank face. I'll never forget the look in my mom's eyes. She was fed

up and scared for her life. I went into my room and tried to go to sleep but I was scared for my mom's life as well as Trè and mine.

Daddy finally fell into a drunken sleep and that night, my mother pulled herself together and decided that she had taken her last beating. She had us pack our bags in the middle of the night and we made our get away. My mom was crying as if somebody died while we drove away from what was now about to be our old life. All my mom kept saying to Trè and I was, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry!"