

Excerpt from *The Truth You Can't BeTray* © 2006

By Tray Chaney

in Collaboration with Yolonda D. Coleman

SEASON THREE EPISODE ONE

When Art Meets Life Part I: Being Down.

I got a call while visiting the production office for *The Wire*. It was my right-hand-man Zeek. He had just come home from jail like a week before the phone call. We kept in touch through letters, but he wanted to know how everything was going since I was on *The Wire*. You know--- was I totally different now 'cause I was in the limelight?

As soon as I got off the set, I called Zeek and we linked up. Imperial Park Apartments was where kicked it. The convenient store was on the corner. It was owned by a young, black dude named Rick. He kept it simple and named the store Rick's Mini-Mart. Near Rick was the spot where we got our shape-ups, the neighborhood barbershop Barber One.

We loved hanging around there when time allowed. Man I was happy to see my homeboy Zeek. I hated to hear that he was locked up, but he stayed in behind bars. I never thought he committed any crimes that serious for the police

to lock him up. But hey, breaking the law is breaking the law.

Zeek and I were sitting in my car reminiscing about old times when a dude named Kevin walked up. Kev used to go to school with us. We kicked it, talked about *The Wire* and then he eased his way into the neighborhood gossip.

"Man, don't worry about what Black said," Kevin just came out the blue with that statement.

"Man, what are you talkin' 'bout?" Zeek asked.

Black was a tall dark skinned dude who lived around Imperial Park.

"Oh you didn't hear? Chicago and Black got into it 'bout a chick Chicago was trying to holla at! Chicago was out numbered by Black and his crew. So Chicago was going to get back at him that Tuesday night." I couldn't believe bammaz were still fighting over girls.

Kevin kept talking 'bout how Chicago didn't want him to say anything to me or Zeek 'cause if we heard, we'd be on it.

Okay, so here is where things get funny. I'm an actor portraying a wild character on TV and I was living the life in reality. I was leading a double life, one on camera and one off camera. My parents didn't know this side of me. I could get down with the best of them in the streets, but

being busy sort of kept me out of the life. As violent as the content is on *The Wire*, it was becoming a life saver.

I couldn't punk out, despite all I would put on the line. Black and his crew were around the corner from us. So Zeek and I started to brainstorm on how we were going to handle things.

My cousin, Boo, pulled up and said, "Tray did you hear what happened between Black and Chicago?" It was on now 'cause everyone knew.

"I was waiting for Chicago to come around here with the rest of the crew so we could get Black," Boo exclaimed.

"Why you need all these people for one fool?" Zeek asked.

I was sitting there thinking the same thing.

"You right! We gone handle this right now!" I sound like I was on the set---right on cue.

We made a stop at Crazy Ed's crib. He was the friend we went to for a very specific reason. We weren't coming to hang out and drink Capri Suns. Crazy Ed kept heat. Whenever we knocked on his door, he knew what was up.

Crazy Ed was a family man with a girlfriend and two little ones. They all lived together. He seldom came outside unless he was on his way to work. Ed was the most

unsuspecting dude---despite the full beard, he had an innocent look about him. He looked like the kid you'd invite over for dinner if his mom's locked him out. You felt bad for him, but your family just loved him. Any way, we knocked on the door. Crazy Ed looked out the peephole and saw us. By the time he opened the door, he had on leather gloves and was like, "Alright, where we going?"

Me, Boo, Zeek and Crazy Ed headed to where Black and his crew were chillin'. As we got closer, Boo kept saying how he was going to knock Black out. Some other choice words were used, but I'll reserve that for your imagination.

Black and his crew, sure enough, were rolling dice on the corner. When they saw us, the crap game stopped instantly!

"What cha'll wanna do?" Black asked with both hands out flexin'.

The next thing you know this dude named Big Lou punched Boo in the face out of no where! This was a shock 'cause Big Lou hung with us on occasions. We thought he was our friend. I guess he was doing what he had to do so he wouldn't look bad with his *new crew*. Whatever.

The next thing we saw was Zeek hit Big Lou and they went toe to toe. Boo rushed Black and I started helping

Zeek beat on Big Lou until Big Lou fell to the ground. Crazy Ed chilled making sure nothing got outta hand. Then Big Lou lifted his shirt and starts reachin'. This fool pulled out a 44 caliber.

POW! POW! POW! Big Lou started buckin' all over the place.

The gun went off and everyone hit the ground and froze. Crazy Ed reached for his gun. Then Zeek surprisingly pulled out a 9 milometer. I didn't know what was getting ready to go down. I wish there was someone to yell *Cut* or *That's a wrap until tomorrow* or somethin'. No voices from the studio speakers yelled to my aid. This surely wasn't television. I couldn't change the channel 'cause I was in the thick of things now.

After struggling with Big Lou, Zeek got his gun. At that point, we kicked, punched and stomped Big Lou until blood was flying everywhere. Big Lou was sprawled out in a puddle of his own fluids. He was helpless. Zeek made it worse and grabbed Big Lou by his head and stuck the gun in his mouth. He cocked it back. I started sweating, Zeek started yelling.

"Tray, should I pull the trigger? Let me kill this nigga!"

Zeek was begging for confirmation.

Everyone was quiet. I grabbed Zeek by his hand and said, "Man, you just got out," I spoke lightly. "Don't do it."

Zeek finally let Big Lou go. Big Lou walked off and eventually collapsed in the middle of the street. The whole neighborhood looked at us. We were covered with Big Lou's blood. We started to hear sirens and an ambulance. It was time to jet. This was one scene I didn't want to repeat again. It was just way too much going on in one moment. I really needed a commercial break from this episode of my life.