

## **The Reverend Isaiah and Satan**

Sunday, the Lord's Day—12:00 noon service in the Church of the Sanctified Chosen Ones. Time to pray and repent. Jamaal's church has the most colorful conglomeration of sinners the world has ever seen, but they are genuinely sincere about repentance on Sunday. Parents make sure they take their children to service because, in reality, they are the ones the adults are praying for. They're trying to protect them from themselves and the latest cultural craze they feel is dragging them down the path of destruction.

Usually some of the sistahs with the big hair sing and some of the brothas in their Sunday suits preach, but this particular Sunday was unique. After the introduction of the choir with two songs, the minister Reverend Isaiah took to the pulpit. He looked like a man on a mission, a man hell bent on getting his message across. He gripped the Bible firmly and raised his eyes and looked around the congregation. They could feel his gaze ... looked like he was counting the number of teenagers there. He had those piercing eyes that when they reached you they forced your head to look in another direction, mostly down. You knew this sermon was going to be pure fire, and everyone sensed he was going to burn them—the teens!

### **A Sermon on Rejection**

He began preaching about teenagers and their drinking, their pregnancies, their violence and their drugs. He'd probably been saving it all up for this late springtime sermon because he knew the prom was approaching—and you know what that brings! He went on and on about the dangers of these vices and how our youth was being swallowed up in the mire of these evils. Then he went and did it, something that struck the ears of the young congregation like a wrong note in a gospel song. Even Taneeka in the back of the church grew taller when she heard it. Nehemiah started shuffling his feet when he caught it; you knew if it weren't for church, he'd be looking to stuff the Reverend into the trunk of his car. Kevin put down his prayer book, a chemistry text. Stanley looked like he was ready to squeeze a neck. That nice teddy bear look was gone!

Tyrone the Tornado actually woke up. Tiffany and Lacquelle stopped mumbling hate rumors, and Sandra stopped praying aloud to the Holy Spirit.

The minister caught himself. You could see he was trying to think of a way to soften what he had said, but it was too late. So, he decided to say it again ... this time even louder and with more enthusiasm. He was in it too deep to back out now. He even waved his arms like he was parting the Red Sea for the ancient Israelites. He did it; he said it, and it was a savage war cry, a call to arms.

“Rap music is no good; it is evil. It is the workshop of the devil!”

His arms were flailing, and his voice went on that roller coaster ride only a seasoned preacher could take. It was a fine tuned instrument.

Reverend Isaiah: Today we have this Rap music ... music that plays into the hands of the devil. It is the music he uses to tempt us, to bring us down, to tear us apart as families, to destroy our communities, our peace, our happiness and our future. Rap music is the music of Satan himself. It must be stamped out, destroyed, buried forever if we are ever going to get back to God. Yes, my brothas and sistahs, I will say it loud before the Almighty, we *must* destroy Rap music; we *must* not listen to it; we *must* take it away from our children’s ears; we *must* resist its lures and pleasures; we must *negate* its message to sinfulness and destruction of our youth, especially our young women. There is no room in our community for this abomination, this sinfulness, this language of the devil. This is the way he communicates with our youth today. This is the way he infiltrates our society and tempts us to the ways of darkness. We must *stomp* him and his music out. We must *protect* our children from the horrors of hell. And we must do it *now*! We must join hands, and sing to the Lord, and pray for the strength to terminate what the evil Destroyer has placed in front of us to bring us down to the fires of hell. Do I hear *Amen*! Do I hear *Praise the Lord*! Yes, Lord, we have come to destroy Rap music, the music of the Devil himself! *Hallelujah*!

There was complete silence. Not a word. Not a sound for the longest time. Then it began ... a slow rumble, like water turning the corner of a canyon, coming straight at you. It got louder and stronger. It was the teenagers! They were stirring up like a nest of African honeybees. They swayed and searched around for a leader to direct them, a Moses to lead them through this desert, a David with his slingshot to lead them through

this valley of the shadow of death. They looked at each other pleading for someone to respond ... and for the longest time no one did.

Then, from one corner of the back of the church a young man arose from his seat—quietly, a young man who was happy just praying alone and staying within himself today. But now that was over! He rose from his seat with a glow of fire; his eyes were burning coals. It was as though he was possessed by you know whom. It was Desmond, champion rapper, defender of the music world, Grand Master Supreme; it was Desmond who stood tall and fierce. He began to move towards the preacher with that determined walk—like he was coming to take back the land that was rightfully his. Now the preacher, he dropped a few shades and stepped back, which surprised them all because he was a strong person who feared no living man. But here came Desmond, and it looked as though he too feared no man, not even this master minister. A battle was coming, you could sense it, you could feel it, and it was going to be big time!

### **A Young Moses**

Desmond reached the preacher's pulpit, and the man of God stepped back even farther when Desmond asked if he could speak to the congregation: "I don't need no mic neither."

Finally, here was the representative they needed. Here was a young Moses who was filled to the brim with passion and wasn't afraid to spit ... speaking before the Pharaoh.

The preacher nodded and gave Desmond his space.

Young Desmond placed his hands on the pulpit like he had been preaching his whole life. He stared into the eyes of the congregation. You could see he was ready to do battle. His chest was heaving and his fists were clenched tightly—he spit his freestylin!

### **Dear God**

They say that money is the root of all-evil  
But you know my homies is just good people

Well, we out to git that money all day  
And every day it's a sequel with no pay  
Am I a sinner cuz I go out to the club wit my friends?  
I drop 100 in the collection plate and the priest gets a Benz  
Sistah Gloria seems to catch the Holy Ghost every Sunday  
But shez swingin' down the pole at happy hour on Monday  
Preachers preach about life, every day in their sermon  
But if I talk about the streets, then they label me "Urban"  
I pick up the 9, the Feds they wanna lock me away  
He pick up the mic, the preacher gonna have his say  
Wut I'm tryna say is all of our hands is unclean ... you see  
If they wusn't, then we wouldn't be in church now, would we?  
If it were songs about God that my words paint  
Would I still be a sinner, or would I be a saint?  
MLK said we "free at last" and "we must stand tall"  
But if I can't be free wit my music, I can't be free at all  
So forgive me father, for I have sinned  
I have a dream to succeed, but I just can't win—AMEN !!!

### **Close the Good Book: It's Over!**

There was silence, but not for long. The entire teenage congregation rose to its feet and stomped and hollered like the Holy Spirit had just descended on their young shoulders. Desmond stepped back with his hands at his side, and with that thousand-yard look on his face he walked directly to the back of the church and right out the door. He had set them straight ... or so he thought. He had done what he was chosen to do. He had let the elders know that this was the new generation's approach to God. It was a scream, a plea, a prayer for help in the best way he knew how—Rap. Moses indeed!

The older members were shaking their heads from side to side, asking the Almighty to forgive the teenagers for their blindness. The ladies with the wide brim hats were raising their hands and eyes to the heavens in supplication, pleading for wisdom and

strength. The Reverend Isaiah looked like a deer in the headlights ... completely frozen, and about as surprised as any man could be. He wanted to say something, but he couldn't get his mouth started. Clearly it was a shock to him that a community member so young could be so articulate and fierce in expressing what he believed so honestly and with such conviction. He knew better than to continue his battle today with Satan's game of scrabble—Rap.

Services ended shortly after this encounter when the Reverend dismissed the parishioners and with good reason. What else could the good minister try to convey today? No, it was better left to another time when he could gather his thoughts and come back with a response that would have more appeal to his young congregation. Service was done! The teenagers filed out with a sense of pride that someone had spoken up for them. The elders—they reflected a sense of doom in their demeanor. Yes, church service in Spring Valley was not in the realm of the ordinary; it was extraordinary each and every Sunday!