

Free Sample



MASK OFF: TWO FACES - FREE SAMPLE

Back in Miami, Zion laid in a hospital bed with a mask completely covering his face. For a moment, he almost forgot where he was. His mind was consumed with thoughts concerning the last year-and-a-half and what brought him there in the first place. As he laid there, he was haunted by all the jacked-up memories, including when his right-hand man, Shein, was killed by Ricardo. *Why was his girl so damn naïve and curious that she chose to roam around in the pits of Hell with the enemy?*

After Shein was killed, it was only a matter of time before the Feds caught on to the fact that he was in the game, so they went after his brothers—Sharmel and Rein.

“Those muthafuckin’ crooks! That’s the shit that pisses me off. I know damn well they were getting paid in full. Where the fuck is the remorse?” thought Zion.

Zion’s heart hurt for Mrs. Handsome the most because she was not cut out for what went down. She lost her husband, then her son. Now, her other two boys are doing 15 years in the joint. What really messed her up was Little Saint no longer has anyone to look up to. It was just her mom and her now. Thank God for Shamel’s wisdom before he died. He had a separate life prepared just for his mom and little sisters that the Feds couldn’t touch. Everything they owned was legit. The house and businesses were untouchable.

Meanwhile, Unique's mind was so controlled by that nigga, Ricardo, she forgot what side of town she lived on and what was supposed to be important to her. Before long, Zion was informed she was not doing well. She was deeply in love with Shein and had a hard time handling the fact that **she** was the cause of his murder and that he was really gone. Unique started tricking, doing all kinds of drugs, and even turned into a snitch. Zion was in complete shock when he heard *that* shit! Unique was beautiful and still had the innocence of a child, even after all she had gone through. One might've thought Shein stole her innocence — **and they would've been wrong**. He truly loved her. But that damn Ricardo? He turned her **OUT**! Word on the street was that she had contracted HIV. Her mother couldn't take it anymore, so she moved out of the state and left Unique to fend for herself.

Zion felt his blood begin to boil as he thought about Shein's demise. *"That dude, Ricardo, was the one who took my boy out. He and his crew were also the ones who tried to kill me that day Shamel and Rein were sentenced, and I was leaving the courthouse. Shit, they nearly took my face off! Payback is a bitch, though."* He forced himself to relax before he set off all the bells and whistles of the machines he was attached to. He achieved success not a minute too soon because in walked the doctor and a nurse.

"Zion, are you awake?" the doctor asked.

"Yes, I am," came his mumbled reply. For over a year, he had been in and out of the hospital getting surgery after surgery. Today, he was **finally** ready to get the mask off his face.

The nurse was next to speak. *"I am going to press the button now to lift your bed so the doctor can remove the mask."* Zion felt the bed move but couldn't see anything at first.

"I am going to start removing the mask now, Zion," the doctor calmly stated.

He nodded his head yes, indicating that he understood, and closed his eyes. He was so anxious to see his new face. The nurse rubbed his back and spoke gently to him, saying, *"I know this is going to be very emotional for you. You have been in a very deep sleep and heavily-sedated on drugs for a few days."*

In his head, Zion screamed, **"A few DAYS?!"**

Once the mask was removed and he was permitted to look in the mirror, he honestly felt like the old him. It had been five years since that punk, Ricardo, blew off his face. Zion felt good about his new look, especially since he grew out his hair. The dreadlocks he now had fit perfectly with the fierceness of his face. He was ready to get out of that hospital to handle his business on the outside.

"Zion, I need you to follow all of these procedures carefully. Keep your head elevated and apply ice to minimize the swelling." The doctor paused briefly before continuing. *"Don't smoke or be exposed to second-hand smoke during your recovery."* The doctor noticed Zion slightly raised a questioning eyebrow. *"Finally, please take your pain meds as directed. If you have any problems, call or come in to see me immediately."*

After the medical duo left the room, Zion reached for the phone to call his aunt because he needed a ride home. For some strange reason, no one answered. *"She's probably out running errands. After all, it is Saturday,"* he said aloud to no one in particular. He had no other option, so he pressed the button for the nurse's station. When one responded, he asked her to call him a cab to take him home. There was nothing in him that made him want to stay in there a second longer than he had to.

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Once home, Zion couldn't help but admire the immaculate grounds that surrounded his mansion. The landscape held the design of a maze which spelled out the name **"BELLA."** It wasn't something one could see with the naked eye from the ground, but it was clearly outlined when viewed from the second-story balcony facing the front lawn.

He opened the door to his 2.4-acre storybook replica of a French Norman estate, walked into the kitchen, and was greeted by a stack of mail resting on his black Angola granite counter. As he flipped through the mail—**bills, bills, and more bills**—he came across a letter from Shamel Handsome. He set all the other mail pieces aside and took the letter with him into the living room. He took a seat on the black Italian leather sofa and ripped open the envelope.

*"My dude. He's the **only** one who knows where I am. Not even Rein knows,"* Zion mused. *"Rein was my partner, but he doesn't have much heart like his **brother.**"* A smile formed on his face as he began to read:

*Dear Zion,*

*I hope when this letter reaches you that you and your family are in the best of health. Yea, man, they fucking got me. Those muthafuckas finally got me. It's all good, though. I was facing some heavy time — 30 years — but my lawyers got that shit down to fifteen. Fuck it. I'll take it. How have you been? How's the car business? I am sure it's very successful because cats like you always make that money.*

*I am writing to ask you for a favor. My baby sister, Saint, is headed down to the ATL. You remember my little sister, right? Well, she's not little anymore and is quite a beautiful young woman. Dudes are steady tryin' to holla at her, but they already know she is off-limits to them. She already knows, too. Hell, I taught her well! Anyway, man, she's going to see if she can try and sell those six brownstones. Since I'm in for a while, she and MaDukes will need that money to maintain. While there, she's going to be staying with one of my ex-soldiers from back in the day. You feel me? His mom and mine are best friends, so I trust the cat. But you know the rules: You can't trust a cat too much. I need you to be my eyes, just in case dude decides to fuck up and start actin' shady. I have enclosed a picture of her. His address is 589 Ovalene Lane.*

*Please keep your eyes open at all times. I'll be catchin' up with you.*

*Later, Bro. Stay up!*

*Shamel*

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# *End of Sample*

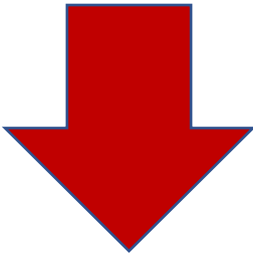
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