

A Taste of Fate:

**ULTIMUS
PRIMED**



a novel, by
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William Ashanti Hobbs

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Excerpt – *The Truth, Steel and Precious Flesh*

The ankle returned to its normal size and color within the next two weeks. Overjoyed, Darius celebrated by giving Kendra the business at the Four Seasons hotel in Miami (no way was he letting her anywhere near his loft and his clothes). He had her sniffing and fanning her reddened face, neck and chest as he fell victim to the cool thread count of the Egyptian sheets. He eased his conscience of wasting an orgasm for the firm by having a long-awaited encounter with Sharon Tisdale, a high school crush who worked on the yearbook staff and was responsible for the many photos of him that showed up on the pages. He found the mother of three in a weakened state after she caught her husband with what was clearly a younger version of herself. Sharon, a computer programmer, got it twice. According to his journal, he was now down to 96, which made Josh ask the obvious, as they had lunch at Buffalo Wild Wings to talk about it:

“Did any of it fulfill you?”

“Yeah. I came! In high school, I was crazy about her country ass.” Darius sucked buffalo sauce from his fingers. “I mean, after all these years... It had that soft, easy musk that’s like a magnet to your face.”

Josh took a peek at the run of sports scores from a nearby flat screen on ESPN. “Nicely put. Run down the campaign.”

Darius leaned forward. “Alright, I went down on her of course. Had to. Kissing it, blowing hot breath on it, then the external speedbag.”

Josh lifted his hands up as if working a speedbag in a gym. He made the sound of a speedbag being struck and rebounding against its platform. “Oh yeah, bddddd!”

Darius pointed at Josh. “Yes Rocky Balboa, but with the tongue of course, no hands. Imagine saying the word love, and stuttering the hell out of it.”

“First class, no coach for this one, huh?” Josh took a swig of his beer. “Go on.”

“Then I did this alphabet pattern on it and she was done in about five minutes. She never had a blended orgasm and was curious, so I brought her an Njoy G Spot Metal Wand. 7.5 Inches of polished steel.”

Josh’s eyebrows lifted. *Steel?*

Darius grinned and stuck a buffalo wing in his mouth. *You have no idea.* “Used that for the G spot and a finger for the clit. Her toes were throwing up gang signs. Dried off, gave her a lazy walk it out stroke with the 80-10-10 pace until she begged me to go all in.”

“Sweet, whatever that is.”

“Got going with the lift stroke, flipped her ass over for a taste of the homeland, Batkuti Cacao.”

Josh pumped his fist as if he were giving a burly Hulk Hogan ‘right on, brother!’ “Aww, bro! How’d she take it?”

“I usually reserve that shit for shy women. She’s definitely that.” Darius grabbed another buffalo wing. “She kept looking back over her shoulder like, ‘how you doing that?’ Then she got up on her knees and started bucking back.”

Josh bumped fists with Darius. “You’re like a psychiatrist through your cock.”

Darius grinned painfully. *Cock. White folks.* But then, he thought, this giddiness in Josh, this hanging on of every word from him, felt quite comfortable. “I doubt I’d get that again so I flipped her over to her back ‘cause I wanted to see her face. I wanted to see how she’d changed through the years and if I could bring out that girl I used to hug on in fifth period.”

Josh nodded. He had been there. He knew the feeling.

“She put her nose to my neck once when I did it. It was right before we went to state. No one was in the hallway. It was like fate. Me and her on hall pass.” Darius caught himself sighing and feeling his posture relax. “I grabbed her ass, cradled it. She felt up my back. I kissed her oily forehead.” His movements slowed down as if retelling it all suspended him in water. “She adjusted her glasses and brushed up on my dick with her belly. This bitch hardly ever looked me in the eye, man – ever and suddenly, all that! I thought I would explode!”

Josh remained quiet as if trying to picture the moment.

“I gave her more lift strokes with some variation, dragging it out at angles. The showstopper was a latin merengue that faked her out so she couldn’t brace for it.”

“Had her pronouncing all those vowels, huh?” Josh’s voice was more calm and subdued. He awaited Darius’ answer with a slight, longing grin.

“Yessir. My ankle was back on point. She was so appreciative and receptive. I was in my zone.”

“So why is she a bitch then?”

Darius rubbed his eyes. “What?”

“You called her...” Josh paused. “You tell her about the condition?”

“No, why?”

“No I think she would have torn you apart from the passion, man.”

Darius squinted. That would’ve made it... *too emotional*. “I didn’t need all that. She just separated from her husband, man.”

Josh took another swig of his beer. He eyed Darius over the rim of his glass; *That emotional shit... that you really want... It’s still like that over here, bro.*

Darius checked his phone, the flat screen, people coming in at the front door to avoid Josh’s glare. “Yeah but...” he scratched at his jawline. “I got your back when it changes.”

“Five years in, Darius. You said my Cuban sexpot would be a bitch in three.”

“Any green card issues?”

Josh grinned and shook his head; *You moron. You just don’t know.*

Darius’ nostrils flared. That look on Josh’s face... The dynamics were shifting again, where he felt inferior to Josh. Sure, he could feel where he could be headed with all this love stuff, sort of, but feared it was unattainable. And why? Because he wanted a woman with skin and hair that smelled like his, a walk into his own chemistry, but black love had too much attitude, too much baggage held as one’s own identity. Too

many sold on the idea of anger as their only true source of strength.

Sure, he'd seen black couples who were simply assholes, be it teenagers slurping down a smoothie with two straws in the Sawgrass Mall to a husband and wife sipping champagne from flutes at a yacht party in Miami Beach, deliberately alienating others with inside jokes or coochie-cooing in front of single friends to make them jealous. Everything he had seen about out loud love from his own people seemed so selfie-staged and pre-packaged. It reminded him of the empty rap music he had an even a harder time enjoying lately; like Jay Z's money or Rick Ross's status, a decent relationship with someone seemed to be more of an accessory to overstate an individual's importance or overall desirability. That kind of love seemed to be little more than companionship that served as a convenient means to taunt and punish people that didn't like them in the first place. Celebrating it simply for its own power and grace seemed sensible but... imagining black people under fifty doing that had a Tom-Hanks-and-Wilson-the-volleyball-from-that-Stranded-movie feel to it.

And that power-couple nonsense... ugh, nothing but a stamp to congratulate a professional black woman on finding a man with a career worth mentioning next to her own. A phrase thanking two hollow, self-important negroes for relaxing their schedules and egos enough to procreate and stand together in the same picture frame. Dry, sad and desperate politics replacing sipping coffee together in a hammock, getting a quickie in on airplanes and writing, through the years, one's name, in cursive, into the other's soul.

The fabric of Darius' polo began to itch. He had to admit (to himself) that black couples fawning all over each other with that over-demonstrative, camera-ready canoodling was suspicious. Annoying. Just negroes trying to prove something to others, moreso than simply being something unto each other. But did that make what he envied in Josh, an honest love from what he could see, something inherently Caucasian?

“Dude, this thing's got you off your game. You're usually so smooth, now you curse at everything. You can only transcend your situation, this disease, by doing it.”

Darius tore a wing in half with his canines. He shrugged his shoulders. *Doing what?*

“Finding a woman you want to make something lasting with and doing just that! What other way would you want to spend your remaining orgasms?”

Darius laughed and turned towards the flat screen. Anything, to not hear the next words out of Josh's mouth.

“You need to do what you've been avoiding your whole life, what your job and whatever it is in your past has kept you blocked from; A full out relationship where you give your all.”

Darius flinched. He thought of Crissi Green, who never gagged, wanted kids but left to go back to family in Chicago and never returned when her “cousin” took sick. Then before that there was Rachel Babineaux, the bowlegged dream from Louisiana that dumped him as soon as he blew his chances in the NFL. There were others before that, all leading back to 1997. “You ever trusted a woman and...” Darius snapped his fingers, remembering Josh's ex-wife. “You did. Remember?”

“Yeah and she blew it. Sucks for her right now, too.” Josh’s mouth got tight around the edges. His voice grew a bit sharper.

Darius drank in the repressed anger, the background noise of ESPN, the passing chatter of others... the noise. *That’s better.*

But Josh went on. “Hey, she’s sharing Mr. City Councilor with three other women in Hialeah. Sharing that’s better than a full life with a guy in management at Home Depot for her. Hey, she’s phony like that.” Josh shrugged his shoulders as if to say, ‘hey, what are you gonna do about it?’ “I learned from it.”

Darius thought of his ankle and ran a hand across a goose-pimpled forearm. “I ain’t got flesh to waste in this world. I like to learn without the scars.”

Josh leaned forward with a look so serious that Darius had no choice but to accept that the balance between them had changed for good. “Face it, the game has changed, Darius. It’s time you transformed with it.”