Book Outline Rough Draft – “The Hood”

INTRO… “The Creed of Law”

1. Detail the culture, community, and creed that shape Lawrence, aka “Law.” Readers see Law’s world… his friends, his habits, his Chicago neighborhood.
2. Loyalty is the undertone of most of Law’s behaviors. His firsthand experience taught him that when loyalty is broken, people either end up in jail like his father, Bill (aka Rogue), or dead like his brother, John.
3. At the same time, like most teenagers, Law thinks he’s invincible. He thinks he’s smarter than his father and brother were and is willing to play the game of life.
4. “Deeper Than That”
5. Law’s mom, Sheila, is a God-fearing hardworking nurse. Law was 11 and already introduced to his ‘hood creed by the time Sheila “found the Lord.”
6. However, she’s spent the past five years trying to teach him that life is deeper than what he’s come to know.
7. The two have ongoing debates on whether a ‘hood creed can be true loyalty to black people if it’s underlined outcome is hate.
8. “I Hate U”
9. Bill asks to see Law before his 17th birthday. He’s been trying in his own way to parent him from prison.
10. Sheila’s brother is stern and has been reinforcement in Law’s life. There are glimmers of hope for Law from those who try to fill-in the parenting gaps, but it’s not the same.
11. During the visit, Bill confronts Law about his behaviors that mirror what landed him behind bars. (“I hate you, Rogue…” “No, son. You hate yourself. It’s like you’re a student at Hate University.”)
12. “Warning Shots”
13. Law’s sitting on the porch with friends. They know he’s not as streetwise as he thinks, but he’s learning.
14. A cousin says Law’s at a crossroads. Either he goes deeper and up the ranks with more risks, or he retreats.
15. Does Law heed the warning or stay the course?
16. “Far from the Tree”
17. Law displays behaviors too close to his father’s past. (“Apples don’t fall too far from the tree.”)
18. A near-death encounter pushes his mom to her last resort.
19. Law is sent to live with relatives in rural Tennessee. (Old lynching tree territory.)
20. “Too Big for Your Britches”
21. Law reluctantly moves to Tennessee to save his own life.
22. He quickly experiences culture shock but plans to lay low just for a while until he can return home.
23. Another cousin takes Law under his wing. (Flipped image of the other cousin.)
24. “The Hood Has Two Faces”
25. Relatives warn Law to leave some of his “city ways” back home. They reveal that they live just 25-miles shy of a town historically known for lynching, and still home to Confederate flag-flying Klansmen in the 21st century.
26. A local news tragedy sparks debate on race relations.
27. Law is confronted by the deadly combination of loyalty and hate from another “hood;” the one worn by the KKK.
28. “What’s the Difference?”
29. Law finds himself angry and offended.
30. He’s questioned about why he’s mad when he’s on the receiving end of loyalty and hate from racist whites in Tennessee, when he often used the same deadly combo against other blacks in Chicago.
31. His internal conflict that has been slowly emerging finally comes to a head.

VIII.

IX.

X.

* Reminisce
* Different environments can lead to different perspectives.
* Someone has to be the catalyst for change. Someone has to break the cycle in our community.

INTRODUCTION (who, what, when, where, why, how?)

My name is Law, but I never follow rules. I've always been told I'm a natural born leader, but the only thing leading me is surviving the streets of Chicago. I'm six months from seventeen, but everyone in my family is afraid I won't make it. All I can say is I'm here today. At least I've already outlived four of my boys; and I've never been in jail. That's more than I can say for my older brother, John, and the stories I hear about my dad. The last time I saw him on the street, I was nine years old. So part of me doesn't even remember the everyday, Bill. Why does everybody think it's my responsibility to break the mold? How can I when the mold around me is rock solid concrete? Anyway, I'm the type who lives in the moment. So if my moment's up, then fine. But me, me... I AM the Law! I set the course for my own path. I live by my own creed: My people; my hood.

I’ve always set my own tone, and I like it that way. My 79th Street Corridor is my set. The four-block radius of Marshfield Avenue to Wood Street are now black and blue, but cross the invisible boundary line to the other side of the (Ashland) and that color combo will get you bleeding the same crimson those boys represent. It’s like an imaginary chess board. One wrong move in the wrong box, in the wrong color can get you killed. That’s what happened to Dwayne last summer and Joe the winter before last. I guess they were just trying to live an ordinary day and forgot to toe the invisible lines. Ride by low and quick? Yes, you can survive that on a good day. But low and slow, either you’re on a mission to equal a score or must be looking for trouble. Either way, that’s how they both got gat.

Dwayne was trying to flex for some girl and forgot where he was at the same time. Turns out, he was tryin’ to holler at dude’s girl who runs that whole pocket of the hood. He didn’t know. Or knowing D, maybe he didn’t care.

Joe on the other had was all about the rims. He had just got a new pair of 20” dubs and wanted to sport them on his new Dodge Charger. Everybody knew it was him from the blue ghost lights he installed to the undercarriage and custom iridescent paint job across the hood. Yeah, everybody knew it was him. So the one time he decided to forget the invisible lines, thinking it was cold and nobody was trying to do anything crazy a week out from Thanksgiving, he got caught in a cross fire. They set him up. Shame, though.

Me, I’m not stupid to get caught up like that. And I’m not scared none either if I do. I carry at all times and roll with those who do the same. Ain’t nothing out there stronger than my hood.

My Mom keeps asking me if I’m in a gang. I always say, no. She wouldn’t understand. I know she loves me. I can tell she’s mad and scared for me all at the same time. The way she yells my name from the porch when she sees me at the corner with Reggie is classic, “Lawrence Trenton Davis!” I get teased when my whole government name gets called out. She just doesn’t understand. They’re just as much family as she is to me. John and Pop’s ain’t out here to watch my back on these streets. Somebody has to do it. I figure, it might as well be them.

Mom’s so worried about me being lock up. But heck, we’ve all been on locked down for the past year and some change. It took some dumb mark named George Floyd to get these fools to remember to come outside and live their lives. Now they’re out here in the streets shouting, Black Lives Matter. Since when? They didn’t matter when folks popped D just last summer. And where were the protestors when they got my boy Joe? I ain’t seen none of ‘em then, not even to pay their last respects.

Blacks been killing Blacks all my life in one way or another. I don’t think I’ve ever known a time when it wasn’t that way, at least not in my hood. So now just because this white cop put his knee on a brother we all worked up. Now we woke! Ya’ll can miss me with that.

To me, George was weak. How you just let anybody pin you to the ground like some caught wild animal? He was just a dumb mark. Marked by the police before he even stepped foot out his door. We all are. That’s why I don’t roll out in these streets alone. Somebody’s watching my back at all times, and I’ve got theirs.

Chapter 1 ---

“Law. Law? Are you dressed for school?”

“Mom, why are you checking on me like I’m still a little boy?”

“Because sometimes you still act like one,” Sheila said. “Besides, I don’t want not one more call from that school saying you were tardy for first period class.”

“It’s a study hall, Ma,” Law said, emerging fully dressed out of his bedroom. “Who needs a study hall first thing in the morning?”

“Someone one like you who didn’t finish his homework the night before, that’s who.”

“Look Ma, we’re doing good that I even still go to school. Do you know how many of my boys don’t even show there face there no more?”

“They’re not my concern. You are, Law. Don’t you have any other clean clothes to wear? You used to wear all kinds of colored shirts, all the fancy name brands, too. Now if it’s not a crisp clean white T-shirt and them sagging jeans, it’s not a part of your wardrobe. What’s that all about?”

“Ma, it’s nothing. It’s just what all my friends in my crew like to wear. Do we have any Fruit Loops left,” Law asks while opening the oak wood kitchen cabinet?

“Your crew, huh. I’m watching you, Lawrence, and you better not be in a gang!”

“So now just because I wear a white shirt and blue jeans, I’m in a gang? What makes you assume that about your only son?”

“What makes me assume it is that you’re my youngest son, not my only one. Little John may not be with us anymore, but he’s always in my heart. And I know full well what took him away from me and it started with something as simple as a white T-shirt, Law.”

“Okay, why our talks gotta be so heavy first thing in the morning? Ma, don’t worry so much. I’m good.”

“I hope so. I just know that when I’m looking in your hooded brown eyes they’re just as mysterious as your father’s, and all he seemed to know how to do was keep secrets from me. I just don’t want that for you...”