

ONE FATAL SIP

Today was the first day of Donte's new life. It was the day that he would undoubtedly get his life on the right track. As he awoke that morning, he felt fresh, revitalized, like he could take over the world. It was truly going to be a great day. Donte rolled over in his brand new Dreamcloud Hybrid mattress he had just purchased the day before. This was his first night sleeping in his newfound sleep paradise and it was as if he was in heaven while he slept. He usually checked his phone after rolling over but this morning was different. His phone was not on his nightstand. "That's confusing," he thought to himself. He rolled over and was startled again. He had forgotten about the woman he had met the night before; Candace. She was in deep sleep too. That's when Donte knew the mattress was one of the best purchases he'd made in a long time. He figured he'd let her rest after the night they had last night. He thought searching for his phone would be more important so he quietly slipped out of bed, and began rummaging through his pants from the night before. There was no phone in the pants so he looked under the bed but he didn't see it there either. Now he's thinking the phone may be in the bed or around the house but Candace hasn't said anything since he woke up and he made a little noise which could have awoken the lightest sleeper. "Candace??," he called out her name as he nudged her. There was no response. "Candace, you good?" Again, he called out to her and she didn't say anything. Donte isn't normally the type of guy who's quick to panic but he's very nervous at this point. A non-responsive stranger in his home with no phone in sight could make even the calmest person freak out.

Donte races out of his bedroom frantically and into the living room. He can hardly believe his sight as he enters the trashed living room and sees his belongings all over the floor. "There had to be a break-in. Right? I wouldn't do this to my own place!" Thinking how he could have slept through a break-in of this magnitude, he deliberates going into the basement to retrieve his Winchester SXP Defender his father bought him the past Christmas. "What if someone's down there," he thought to himself. "They could have the advantage over me!" Donte went against the idea of going into the basement and went back into his bedroom instead. Candace still hadn't moved from her position. He checked her pulse and realized his greatest fear. Candace had no pulse. In almost an instant, Donte began putting his clothes on from the previous night. He grabbed the keys to his custom 2013 Jeep Wrangler JK Sport, his wallet, a pair of sunglasses, and the \$2,000 worth of cash out of his safe. Thinking where he'd go once he got to the car, three places came to mind. His brother Damien's, his best friend Tye, or a cheap motel where he could lay low while he figured all of this out. He still needed a phone so he figured one of

those Tracfone minute phones from Walmart would do for now. He knew what he wanted to do first but before he could rush out to the car, he heard a knock at the door. He wondered who it could be and was reluctant to answer. He peeked out his blinds and to his pleasant surprise, it was Tye. Donte quickly opened the door and pulled Tye in. "Whoa, dude watch the shirt! You know how much this cost? This Amiri bro!" Donte knew how much an Amiri ran these days and was impressed by his friend's fashion choice. "Amiri, really g? That's nice. Let me feel the sleeve again.. OK my boy!!! I see you!!" Realizing that there's still a dead woman in his room, Donte quickly had to regain his senses. "Yo, man!!, Tye exclaimed. That's beside the point right now. How drunk did you get last night? Where did you end up? Where's your phone? What's going on,..?" Looking at his friend with a look of bewilderment, Donte could not recall a single detail. "I, I..., I don't know man. I kinda blacked out after we got back to your place. I don't even know how I ended up back here but come look at my living room bro. Someone was in here last night."

Donte and Tye retreated into the living room and Tye couldn't believe what he saw. "Yo man, for real.. how wasted did you get last night? You do this?" Tye was in such disbelief already but Donte still knew about Candace in his bedroom. Seeing how his friend had reacted to the living room being junked, he could only imagine how he'd react if he saw Candace dead in his bedroom. He decided right then that he had to get Tye out of his apartment and stick to his original plan. "No bro! Why would I trash my own place?," Donte responded. Maybe Candace and I got into a fight last night, he thought. "I don't know man, but this is all a little weird if you ask me," said Tye. "Imma go." "Perfect!," Donte thought to himself. "He's leaving and I ain't even gotta kick him out!"

"Can I use your bathroom though g?," Tye asked. Donte almost said yes but remembered his bathroom was connected to his room and if Tye went in, he'd certainly discover Candace. Before he could tell his friend no, Tye was already making his way to the bathroom. "YO!!," Donte screamed! "If you ask, ain't I'm supposed to answer first?" Tye pushed the bedroom door open and saw Candace face-down, in the same position Donte had found her in. She had no clothes on so Tye closed the door immediately. "Oh shoot, I see you my boy," said Tye approvingly. "Yeah, she was all over you at the club last night too! I knew you was gone snag that!" Donte had no idea what to do but he knew he had to play it cool. "Come on man! You being rude, busting in my room like that. You lucky she sleeping right now." Donte grabbed his friend and started walking him towards the door, thinking to himself how natural his act might've looked. "My bad, my guy!!! I didn't know and you ain't said nothing since last night so how I'm supposed to know you was wit' her? I know you be busy, doing what you do." Tye has

no idea what Donte is facing at this point so he keeps his chatter going. "Teach me your ways D, bro. You always snagging some bad shorty when we out. I can't even get a number, they all be acting stuck up and..." Tye starts to walk back toward the living room. "Look, Tye..." Donte says as he cuts his friends path off, "You gotta go bro. I got some things to take care of. We'll touch base a little later on today, I'll hit you up."

"Alright, but you gotta tell me about last night bro. I know you had a GREAT time!" Tye says. Tye is getting ready to exit Donte's and stops in his tracks as he opens the front door. "Yo bro.??", Tye calls out to Donte. "What's going on?" Donte comes to the door and sees Tye looking in the direction of his truck. "Where you gone go with flat tires g?" Donte cannot believe it as he walks to his truck to see his tires slashed. "Wow!," Donte yells in frustration. "I mean, this getting a lil' weird now, what's going on?" Tye asks. Weary of his neighbors being nosey, Donte grabs Tye and quickly rushes back into the house. They retreat to the living room and sit on the couch. "Alright bro look. I'm going to tell you something and you can't trip on me. I already got a lot going on in my head so I can't have you making it worse," Donte explains to Tye. Tye nods his head in approval as if to say, "Fasho bro, what's going on?" Donte is very confused about who would vandalize his car but tries to explain to his friend the compromising position he is now in. "So, when I left your house last night, I didn't have my phone. I was tipsy so I had Candace drive to the crib. You know, we came in, did our thing, and went to sleep. I woke up and I tried to wake her up too, but she didn't move bro. And she ain't got no pulse. I think she dead in there bro." Tears start to fill Donte's eyes as he continues on with his story but to his surprise, Tye's demeanor was stoic as he stood there listening. It was almost as if he had already knew what happened. "Calm down bro," Tye tells Donte as he walks towards the kitchen. He goes in the refrigerator and grabs two beers. "Are you serious?," asks Donte as he looks at his friend in amazement. "After what I just told you, you wanna drink?" "Yes," Tye replied. "I don't see why we shouldn't. This just got REAL serious. I wasn't expecting none of that. I think we both should take a drink." As unbelievably flustered as he was, Donte agreed. He took the beer from his friends hands and they both sat on the couch, cracked their beers open, and took a sip together. Donte had no idea what was about to come next. Tye found himself dragged into his friends problem and he wanted to help him solve it, but he didn't know if he truly could.