



MIKE TYSON
UNDISPUTED TRUTH
MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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WITH
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About the Publisher

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ALL THE OUTCASTS –
EVERYONE WHO HAS EVER BEEN MESMERIZED,
MARGINALIZED, TRANQUILIZED, BEATEN DOWN,
AND GOTTEN THE WRONG END OF THE STICK.
AND INCAPABLE OF RECEIVING LOVE.

PROLOGUE

I spent most of the six weeks between my conviction for rape and sentencing traveling around the country romancing all of my various girlfriends. It was my way of saying good-bye to them. And when I wasn't with them, I was fending off all the women who propositioned me. Everywhere I'd go, there were some women who would come up to me and say, "Come on, I'm not going to say that you raped me. You can come with me. I'll let you film it." I later realized that that was their way of saying "We believe you didn't do it." But I didn't take it that way. I'd strike back indignantly with a rude response. Although they were saying what they said out of support, I was in too much pain to realize it. I was an ignorant, mad, bitter guy who had a lot of growing up to do.

But some of my anger was understandable. I was a twenty-five-year-old kid facing sixty years in jail.

My promoter, Don King, had kept assuring me that I would walk from these charges. He had hired Vince Fuller, the best lawyer that a million-dollar fee could buy. But I knew from the start that I was in trouble. I wasn't being tried in New York or Los Angeles; we were in Indianapolis, Indiana, historically one of the strongholds of the Ku Klux Klan. My judge, Patricia Gifford, was a former sex crimes prosecutor and was known as "the Hanging Judge." I had been found guilty by a jury of my "peers," two of whom were black. Another black jury member had been excused by the judge after a fire in the hotel where the jurors were staying.

But in my mind, I had no peers. I was the youngest heavyweight champion in the history of boxing. I was a titan, the reincarnation of Alexander the Great. My style was impetuous, my defenses were impregnable, and I was ferocious. It's amazing how a low self-esteem and a huge ego can give you delusions of grandeur. But after the trial, this god among men had to get his black ass back in court for his sentencing.

But first I tried some divine intervention. Calvin, my close friend from Chicago, told me about some hoodoo woman who could cast a spell to keep me

out of jail.

“You piss in a jar, then put five hundred-dollar bills in there, then put the jar under your bed for three days and then bring it to her and she’ll pray over it for you,” Calvin told me.

“So the clairvoyant broad is gonna take the pissy pile of hundreds out of the jar, rinse them off, and then go shopping. If somebody gave you a hundred-dollar bill they pissed on, would you care?” I asked Calvin. I had a reputation for throwing around money but that was too much even for me.

Then some friends tried to set me up with a voodoo priest. But they brought around this guy who had a suit on. The guy didn’t even look like a drugstore voodoo guy. This asshole needed to be in the swamp; he needed to have on a dashiki. I knew that guy had nothing. He didn’t even have a ceremony planned. He just wrote some shit on a piece of paper and tried to sell me on some bullshit I didn’t do. He wanted me to wash in some weird oil and pray and drink some special water. But I was drinking goddamn Hennessy. I wasn’t going to water down my Hennessy.

So I settled on getting a Santeria priest to do some witch doctor shit. We went to the courthouse one night with a pigeon and an egg. I dropped the egg on the ground as the bird was released and I yelled, “We’re free!” A few days later, I put on my gray pin-striped suit and went to court.

After the verdict had been delivered, my defense team had put together a presentence memorandum on my behalf. It was an impressive document. Dr. Jerome Miller, the clinical director of the Augustus Institute in Virginia and one of the nation’s leading experts on adult sex offenders, had examined me and concluded that I was “a sensitive and thoughtful young man with problems more the result of developmental deficits than of pathology.” With regular psychotherapy, he was convinced that my long-term prognosis would be quite good. He concluded, “A term in prison will delay the process further and more likely set it back. I would strongly recommend that other options with both deterrent and treatment potential be considered.” Of course, the probation officers who put together their sentencing document left that last paragraph out of their summary. But they were eager to include the prosecution’s opinion, “An assessment of this offense and this offender leads the chief investigator of this case, an experienced sex crimes detective, to conclude that the defendant is inclined to commit a similar offense in the future.”

My lawyers prepared an appendix that contained forty-eight testimonials to my character from such diverse people as my high school principal, my social worker in upstate New York, Sugar Ray Robinson’s widow, my adoptive mother, Camille, my boxing hypnotherapist, and six of my girlfriends (and their

mothers), who all wrote moving accounts of how I had been a perfect gentleman with them. One of my first girlfriends from Catskill even wrote the judge, “I waited three years before having sexual intercourse with Mr. Tyson and not once did he force me into anything. That is the reason I love him, because he loves and respects women.”

But of course, Don being Don, he had to go and overdo it. King had the Reverend William F. Crockett, the Imperial First Ceremonial Master of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine of North and South America, write a letter on my behalf. The Reverend wrote, “I beseech you to spare him incarceration. Though I have not spoken to Mike since the day of his trial, my information is that he no longer uses profanity or vulgarity, reads the Bible daily, prays and trains.” Of course, that was all bullshit. He didn’t even know me.

Then there was Don’s personal heartfelt letter to the judge. You would have thought that I had come up with a cure for cancer, had a plan for peace in the Middle East, and nursed sick kittens back to health. He talked about my work with the Make-A-Wish Foundation visiting with sick kids. He informed Judge Gifford that every Thanksgiving we gave away forty thousand turkeys to the needy and the hungry. He recounted the time we met with Simon Wiesenthal and I was so moved that I donated a large sum of money to help him hunt down Nazi war criminals.

This went on for eight pages, with Don waxing eloquently about me. “It is highly unusual for a person his age to be concerned about his fellow man, let alone with the deep sense of commitment and dedication that he possesses. These are God-like qualities, noble qualities of loving, giving and unselfishness. He is a child of God: one of the most gentle, sensitive, caring, loving, and understanding persons that I have ever met in my twenty years’ experience with boxers.” Shit, Don should have delivered the closing arguments instead of my lawyer. But John Solberg, Don’s public relations man, cut right to the chase in his letter to Judge Gifford. “Mike Tyson is not a scumbag,” he wrote.

I might not have been a scumbag, but I was an arrogant prick. I was so arrogant in the courtroom during the trial that there was no way they were going to give me a break. Even in my moment of doom, I was not a humble person. All those things they wrote about in that report – giving people money and turkeys, taking care of people, looking out for the weak and the infirm – I did all those things because I *wanted* to be that humble person, not because I *was* that person. I wanted so desperately to be humble but there wasn’t a humble bone in my body.

So, armed with all my character testimonials, we appeared in Judge Patricia

Gifford's court on March 26, 1992, for my sentencing. Witnesses were permitted and Vince Fuller began the process by calling to the stand Lloyd Bridges, the executive director of the Riverside Residential Center in Indianapolis. My defense team was arguing that instead of jail time, my sentence should be suspended and I should serve my probation term at a halfway house where I could combine personal therapy with community service. Bridges, an ordained minister, ran just such a program and he testified that I would certainly be a prime candidate for his facility.

But the assistant prosecutor got Bridges to reveal that there had been four escapes recently from his halfway house. And when she got the minister to admit that he had interviewed me in my mansion in Ohio and that we had paid for his airfare, that idea was dead in the water. So now it was only a matter of how much time the Hanging Judge would give me.

Fuller approached the bench. It was time for him to weave his million-dollar magic. Instead, I got his usual two-bit bullshit. "Tyson came in with a lot of excess baggage. The press has vilified him. Not a day goes by that the press doesn't bring up his faults. This is not the Tyson I know. The Tyson I know is a sensitive, thoughtful, caring man. He may be terrifying in the ring, but that ends when he leaves the ring." Now, this was nowhere near Don King hyperbole, but it wasn't bad. Except that Fuller had just spent the whole trial portraying me as a savage animal, a crude bore, bent solely on sexual satisfaction.

Then Fuller changed the subject to my poverty-stricken childhood and my adoption by the legendary boxing trainer Cus D'Amato.

"But there is some tragedy in this," he intoned. "D'Amato only focused on boxing. Tyson, the man, was secondary to Cus D'Amato's quest for Tyson's boxing greatness." Camille, who was Cus's companion for many years, was outraged at his statement. It was like Fuller was pissing on the grave of Cus, my mentor. Fuller went on and on, but he was as disjointed as he had been for the entire trial.

Now it was my time to face the court. I got up and stood behind the podium. I really hadn't been prepared properly and I didn't even have any notes. But I did have that stupid voodoo guy's piece of paper in my hand. And I knew one thing – I wasn't going to apologize for what went on in my hotel room that night. I apologized to the press, the court, and the other contestants of the Miss Black America pageant, where I met Desiree, but not for my actions in my room.

I can't repeat everything because I am limited in my ability to comment on my own trial owing to U.K. law. Then the judge asked me a few questions about being a role model for kids. "I was never taught how to handle my celebrity status. I don't tell kids it's right to be Mike Tyson. Parents serve as better role

models.”

Now the prosecution had their say. Instead of the redneck Garrison, who argued against me during the trial, his boss, Jeffrey Modisett, the Marion County prosecutor, stepped up. He went on for ten minutes saying that males with money and fame shouldn't get special privileges. Then he read from a letter from Desiree Washington. “In the early morning hours of July 19, 1991, an attack on both my body and my mind occurred. I was physically defeated to the point that my innermost person was taken away. In the place of what has been me for eighteen years is now a cold and empty feeling. I am not able to comment on what my future will be. I can only say that each day after being raped has been a struggle to learn to trust again, to smile the way I did and to find the Desiree Lynn Washington who was stolen from me and those who loved me on July 19, 1991. On those occasions when I became angry about the pain that my attacker caused me, God granted me the wisdom to see that he was psychologically ill. Although some days I cry when I see the pain in my own eyes, I am also able to pity my attacker. It has been and still is my wish that he be rehabilitated.”

Modisett put the letter down. “From the date of his conviction, Tyson still doesn't get it. The world is watching now to see if there is one system of justice. It is his responsibility to admit his problem. Heal this sick man. Mike Tyson, the rapist, needs to be off the streets.” And then he recommended I do eight to ten years of healing behind bars.

It was Jim Voyles's turn to speak on my behalf. Voyles was the local attorney hired by Fuller to act as local counsel. He was a great guy, compassionate, smart, and funny. He was the only attorney from my side that I related to. Besides all that, he was a friend of Judge Gifford's and a down-home guy who could appeal to the Indianapolis jury. “Let's go with this guy,” I told Don at the beginning of my trial. Voyles would have gotten me some play. But Don and Fuller made a fool out of him. They didn't let him do anything. They shut him down. Jim was frustrated too. He described his role to one friend as “one of the world's highest-paid pencil carriers.” But now he was finally arguing in court. He spoke passionately for rehabilitation instead of incarceration but it fell on deaf ears. Judge Gifford was ready to make her decision.

She began by complimenting me on my community work and my treatment of children and my “sharing” of “assets.” But then she went into a rant about “date rape,” saying it was a term she detested. “We have managed to imply that it is all right to proceed to do what you want to do if you know or are dating a woman. The law is very clear in its definition of rape. It never mentions anything about whether the defendant and victim are related. The ‘date,’ in date rape, does not lessen the fact that it is still rape.”