

THE MONSTER WITHIN

I often have discussions with my homeboys, my komrades; the misguided youngsters I'm around, about being true to who they are. I mean, who they really are.

As loyal participants in the criminal lifestyle, i.e., Gangstas, Hustlers, Players, Pimps, etc., we get so caught up in the labels that we attach to ourselves, and the images that we create, we forget who we are inside. We lose sight of the values and principles we were raised with. Our nicknames or monikers, whether we earn them or we give them to ourselves, serve as a sort of avatar that we not only hide behind, but, we find comfort and security in.

When we are initiated into the gang and the lifestyle it encompasses, we affix a new name to the "being" that we will from then on be known as. We may be born, "John Smith", but as newly christened gangbangers, we become, "Crazy Boy", or, "Killer", or whichever name we are given or so choose.

As we indulge in daily activity; the lawlessness and chaos we invite, we feed our insatiable egos and build upon that name with fame (infamy) and notoriety, the fuel of attention that we crave. Any principles or morality we may have learned from our parents as, "John Smith", is negated, as "Crazy Boy" is fed from the trough of peer acceptance, fraternal respect, and attention from the opposite sex.

In a lot of ways the contrast between our authentic self (John Smith) and our created self (Crazy Boy), is similar to the story of, "Frankenstein". We create an alter-ego, our "monster" of sorts, that we get so lost in the awe of, that not only do we lose control of it, but, the monster can, and usually does, end up destroying us.

In the case of the monster created by the scientist, Dr. Frankenstein, the doctor wanted to create the "perfect man". His intention was to use the best of everything, that is, the strongest legs and the most capable hands, the heart from the most charitable person and the brain of the intellectually prodigious. Though his intentions were truly altruistic, it was the folly of his trusted assistant that altered his plans. While retrieving from the doctor's laboratory the brain of choice, the assistant dropped it, thus destroying it. For fear of reprisal from the doctor, the assistant grabbed the very next container that held a brain, and brought it to the doctor. This brain was from a certified lunatic. Unbeknownst to Dr. Frankenstein, he inserted the brain and reanimated his "perfect man". Much to his dismay, he'd created a monster that he could not control, and ultimately died by the hands of.

The monster that Dr. Frankenstein had created, had given life to, killed him.

When we create our alter ego, our "Crazy Boy", we get caught up in the attention that is subscribed to it. Now, when we do our dirt for the sake of the gang, to uphold the vows we took, it's "Crazy Boy" who receives the praise. With each brash adventure our notoriety increases. Our ego is ecstatic! Soon, we cease to identify with who we were, "John Smith", and only wish to be acknowledged as our alter ego, our

monster, "Crazy Boy". As we go through our trials and tribulations, our activities and agitations, its our monster that receives the adulation. The monster has now taken over our authentic self.

We've lost. The person we were and the monster that we are now, are as different as night and November. Its only if we are fortunate to live long enough to mature, that our authentic self can have hope. If we can reconcile who we were, the person we were created to be, with the knowledge of right and wrong, only then can we destroy the monster.

Unfortunately, we often get chopped down in our prime. Whether its death in the streets or life in prison, we rarely get the opportunity to take back what is ours to reclaim: ourselves! Its much more difficult to destroy the monster than it was to create it. If left alone, "Crazy Boy", can forever alter "John Smith's" progress. Even if "John Smith" can eventually destroy the avatar of "Crazy Boy", the imprint that "Crazy Boy" leaves behind is far too indelible.

To kill the monster within we must first be willing to confront the issues that compel us to rebel on our authentic self in the first place. In order to destroy the monster, we must destroy the need for the monster.

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