

*"Why my niggaz ain't get that cake  
Why is a brother up North better then Jordan  
That ain't get that break...  
Why they gotta open your package and read your mail  
Why they stop lettin' niggaz get degreaz in jail"*

JADAKISS 'WHY'

# Meet Joe Black

Words By Susan Hampstead

**D**amn! Kiss couldn't have said it any better. Listening to these lyrics evoked immediate thoughts of penitentiary legends such as Ron Jordan, Jonesy and the infamous Joe Black, known for his sick skills on the court. To my surprise, Joe Black, the b-ball guru, is also the storytelling genius I hear so much about through our readers. Yet another incarcerated brother like J.M. Benjamin, Bonta and Derrick Williams who have been sweeping the underground nation with their photocopied legal writing paper manuscripts—causing a stir like the mixtapes of the prison system. Don Diva, forever reppin' the struggle and the hustle, put the word out there and got ol'boy to holla at us.



**DD:** If the letters weren't coming from all parts of the country I'd a thought you put dudes up to it. I finished reading Street Team and Squeeze. Incredible! You funny as hell. I think they're actually the first gangster stories that really have the reader laughing like that. You had jokers on the subway staring at me like I was crazy. You would think I was reading a script from the Chapelle Show or something.

**JB:** Thank you. (laughs)

**DD:** Don't try to sound modest now. You must talk mad smack out there. You know you the man don't you? You can't play ball without an ego. Not the way I heard you were putting it down.

**JB:** Nah, actually I don't rap much. I let my actions speak for itself. But what's up? You like that with the pen yourself. I've been reading Don Diva from day 1 and you funny too. You killed it with the Old Dirty Bastard interview though.

**DD:** Thanks, but back to you—we only got 15 minutes and a page. When you sent me Street Team and Squeeze you said you had a bunch of others. What are the names of the others?

**JB:** Movin' Violation, Rotten Romeo, Thug Passion, Penn Ball... I got a bunch that I don't even have titles for yet.

**DD:** So is it safe to say that there are some positives about your incarceration?

**JB:** Absolutely! I'm in the best shape of my life, mentally and physically. I found a second true talent in writing—of course basketball is my first. I no longer have a fetish for illegal cream. That alone is a hell of a habit to kick. I've met crazy good dudes from all over the world.

**DD:** How the hell are your stories all over the countries' prison system?

**JB:** Prisoners travel. Especially in the feds. Cats get my joints and take it with them to their next spots. Photo copy it there and so on and so forth. You know they call the federal prison system Fed Ex. You get shipped all over.

**DD:** Wow! I ain't gonna front though Mr. Bliz-ack (laughter), your books don't have the usual "message" that the other street stories do. Don't you feel it's important to tell a message to your readers?

**JB:** Maybe if I was out on the street and my joints were in Barnes and Nobles. If I was out there doing book signings or something. I'm locked down and have been for a minute. My readers are prisoners and underground cats. I'm just kicking stories, reality fiction. Tales that leave you wondering if it's really fiction—but I'll never tell. (laughter) My readers don't complain that there isn't a message. You're the only one commenting on that—and aren't you from the suburbs? (laughing) I'm not Robin Hood, I'm from the hood. I write to tell

stories that people can relate to.

**DD:** Well rumor has it that you are in Barnes and Nobles. That you are a ghostwriter for some of the gangster books out there now with other author's names on it.

**JB:** Damn. Stop the press. (laughing) That's what's good around there? I thought this was the anti-snitch magazine? I plea the fifth.

**DD:** Well if you are a ghostwriter you certainly didn't hand over your best joints. The joints you sent me were way better than those.

**JB:** Yo, you wilin' out. I'm only here to entertain not start no book beefs. Matterfact, you need to scratch that last question.

**DD:** You got that. (Opps) Well you entertained me, that's for sure. I get more free books sent to me than Roc-A-Fella gets demos and your joints definitely stood out to me. I know you'll do big things when you touch before the decade is up. What you gonna do when you first come home?

**JB:** I'm going to the yard for a milkshake! (laughter) ●