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Iceberg Slim: Portrait of a Pimp

By Unknown

- In this book,
I will take you, the reader,
With me into the secret
inner world of the pimp.
I will lay bare my life
and thoughts as a pimp.
The account of my brutality
and cunning as a pimp
Will fill many of you
with revulsion.
I regret
that it is impossible
To recount to you all
of my experiences as a pimp.
Perhaps my remorse
for my ghastly life
Will diminish to the degree
That within this one book
I have been allowed
to purge myself.
- If prostitution is known
as the oldest profession,
Then pimping
is the second oldest profession.
- Right now, it's been
taken out of context,
Because mainstream has adapted
and adopted that word
And adopted
the formula of pimping
And thinkin'
they know what it is.
But pimping is a player
Sending a bitch to the corner
to get money.
There's a fascination
With any time you don't
have to work for money.
Whoever's doing
the least amount
For some cash,
that is fascinating.
It's, like, what-
what's he do?

She does the work,
he gets-
I gotta figure out how
to get into this, you know.
- You had to know
how to control
And how to operate a stable,
How to dazzle, befuddle,
Bewitch, entrance,
And hypnotize a woman.
And not only one woman,
but eight, nine,
And to keep them
in harmonious effort.
And if you think
that isn't a job, my friend,
You ask any married man.
Iceberg slim is the name
That is synonymous
with the pimp game.
He's a writer
who lived an incredible life
And wrote books
that I grew up on.
Every single time
I talked to him,
Because he was my god.
- Runs the ladies,
has the rap,
The clothes, the jewelry,
the drugs,
Has done time.
Street cred
by the truckload.
- Iceberg slim was a guy
who actually lived the life
That he was writing about.
- Pimp might be
my favorite book of all time.
Yeah, I checked that out.
The p-I-m-p.
Pimp had a big impact
on the game,
To give basic instructions

of how to play the game.
If was just amazing,
the thought of that.
It was just fascinating.
- He would paint
beautiful pictures
Using ugly paint, you know.
You know, he was, like,
looking around
And just finding the beauty
and the appreciation
Of wherever you are,
Be it in the ghetto
or a high class neighborhood
And showing that
it's okay to stumble,
But it's not okay to fall,
you know.
Always get back up
and you keep going.
- His books told the truth
about the life.
There was no one more eloquent
than iceberg slim,
Or no one more poetic
or more accurate
In terms of describing
where he came from.
I was in a bar,
And there was a fella
arguing with another fella.
And this fella
drew a gun
And fired at the fella.
The bullet
went through my hat.
I was full of cocaine
at the time
And I didn't react,
So my friend said,
man, you were so cool.
He says, you were icy.
And they called me
iceberg slim.

thick thighs,
but she full of surprises
I swear
this bitch is shady
it's what I know
sex on her mind
all the time
and you think
that that's your baby
you don't know
you a good guy
that's living a lie
but she dove
and played your safety
that's what I know
if you cool
and she's satisfied
how come that bitch
just paged me?
you don't know
- When you're dealing
with pimps and hos,
They have to look the part.
So as a kid, you know,
Some preacher walks in,
it's, like, yeah, whatever.
Some pimp walks in,
and, you know,
You could hear a church mouse
piss on the carpet
It's so quiet.
- The first stages
of my own street poisoning
Happened when I was a boy.
My mother had a beauty shop
And she catered
to a colony
Of black hookers and pimps.
And these fellas
would be decked out
In all their finery
with all the diamonds
And all the rest of it,
and of course their women.

- A pimp
was held in regard,
Like an athlete
or entertainer.
He wasn't like an advocate
of peace or violence.
He was more of less
like a hero.

- A pimp is judged
by his flash.
You know what I mean?
His cadillac, his house,
his jewelry,
His clothes.

That's how you size up
a pimp economy.

- Well groomed,
smelled good.
You know, everything,
'cause you're trying
to outmatch this female.
You want that woman
to look at you
And say this is the finest man
I've ever seen.

- I mean,
immaculate dresser.
I mean, hair coiffed.
Brand new cadillac
every year.

When you're a kid, you know,
If somebody had a brand new
cadillac every year,
He was something.

- And that was the first time
that I was impressed.
Because you must remember,
Back in those days,
if you were black.
Your opportunities
were so narrow.

- A black person
born during that time,
What you were dealing with

was almost beyond words.
Those race riots in Chicago
Started because a black kid
Swam into an area
that was whites only.
- Since the time when
she was six months pregnant,
My father had begun
to show his true colors.
After my birth,
he got worse
And had the stupid gall
to suggest to mama
That I be put on
a catholic church doorstep.
Mama naturally refused,
So he hurled me
against the wall in disgust.
I survived it
and he left us.
- He came from
a single parent home.
His mom, you know,
by hook or by crook,
She needed to put food
on the table, you know,
And to put food
on the table,
She had to be out and about
in the world to do so.
And it was just unfortunate,
you know,
That she, you know,
entrusted her baby boy
Into the hands
of the wrong person.
In the opening of pimp,
The way that he describes
his initial foray
Into the world of pimping
Is through
being sexually abused
By his babysitter Maude.
- I remember more vividly

the moist odorous darkness
And the bristle-like hairs
tickling my face
And most vividly,
I can remember my panic
When in the wild moment
of her climax
She would savagely
jerk my head even tighter
Into the hairy maw.
Right off the bat,
He's subjected or dominated
By a forceful woman
who sexualizes him.
He's taught about the whole
nature of sexual dominance
And then later,
he has negative experiences
With his mother.
She hooks up with a man
named henry upshaw,
- A successful man,
loved her to death.
Loved her and loved her son.
It's the only man
in iceberg's life
That he talks about,
identifies with
And talks about in not only
a respectful way,
But someone who really
touched his heart and soul,
Because he really cared
about him
As a human being.
With henry upshaw,
things were idyllic
Until his mother
met a con man named steve.
- He was one
of mary's customers
In her beauty shop.
He was
a real slick hustler,

And he essentially
hustled her
And convinced her
to leave with him to chicago.
- His mother falls for the con
on henry upshaw
And fucks up everything.
Fucks up everything.
Fucks up all the stability.
Fucks up, like,
his, like, one shot.
Really.
It's the only shot he's got.
- What's so upsetting
to iceberg
Is not just
that his mom
Has ripped him away
from a mooring,
From a foundation
that he's found,
But the way she does it.
- I can never forget
that morning
When mama had finished
packing our clothes
And henry lost
his inner fight
For his pride and dignity.
He fell down on his knees
And bawled
like a scalded child,
Pleading with mama
not to leave him.
I will never forget
her face,
As cold as an executioner's,
which she was
As she kicked
and struggled loose from him.
Then, with an awful grin
on her face,
She lied and said,
henry, honey,

I just want
to get away for a while.
Darling, we'll be back.
- To see his mother betray
the only man he ever loved,
He learned that there's
one thing I'm not gonna be
Is those guys.
I'm gonna get her
before she gets me,
'cause I know
she's gonna betray me.
- She then conspires
with steve
To take off
her ex-husband's loot.
- From that, he lost
all respect for women,
In a sense.
It's, like, even you
fell for this shit?
And in a sense,
she created the pimp.
When the money runs out
And she's essentially
outlived her usefulness,
Steve starts to show
his true colors
And he starts
kicking her ass.
And this steve is, like,
One of the cruelest
motherfuckers
I've ever seen in a book.
Like, he murders
this kitten,
Like, right in front of 'em.
Like, who does that?
- Steve had stomped on three
and a half years of our lives.
I would soon be 14.
On August 4th, my birthday,
Mama came home
from the hospital

With her broken jaw wired
And her body
covered with bruises.
Steve attacked her
with his fists and feet
And then escaped
through the grimy catacombs
Of the ghetto.
- She was alone
in the streets,
Trying to find work.
We're talking about
during the depression
When people-
not only black people-
People were suffering.
She left iceberg
by himself a lot,
Isolated in this
little place that they had.
He discovered the streets.
The slide was greased.
I was starting
my long plunge
To the very bottom
of the grim pit.
My trip downward
really was cinched
When I met a petty hustler
who was very likeable,
And we became pals.
My hustler pal
was called party time.
He had a head
full of wild risky hustles
He wanted to try.
He needed a partner.
- Party time, he was this
real knowledgeable brother,
So he was able to give ice
the rundown.
He was able to break it down
into the simplest terms,
Like, you know, and not

become cross with him
If he didn't
catch on right away.
- Even though
I had started to rot inside
From the street poisoning,
Amazingly, at 15,
I graduated from high school
With a 98.4 average.
- I got a scholarship
to go to college,
And I got it by daydreaming,
But I was able to retain
enough of the information
So that
the black tuskegee club
Sent me to tuskegee
during the depression.
- This is the home
of booker t. Washington,
One of the most powerful
black leaders ever.
- Immediately, because I was
already street poisoned,
I started bootlegging
on campus.
In alabama, okay?
So I got expelled.
I was sent home.
So my mother sat down,
And her words of wisdom,
come back to me now.
She says, bobby,
apparently,
You like to run
and associate with bad people,
With street people.
She says you can become
a criminal lawyer,
She says,
and make 'em pay you.
She said, bobby,
get your education.
Become a criminal lawyer

and get a license
To associate with the people
That you admire
and like so much.
Have you ever heard anything
more wise than that?
He's out of tuskegee.
He's in milwaukee.
He comes across a woman
named pepper ibbetts.
Bobby beck thought he was
the slickest guy on earth,
But as slick
as he thought he was,
Pepper ibbetts
was even slicker.
As fast
as he thought he was,
She was 10 times faster.
She was older than he was.
She was an ex-prostitute.
She had been around.
She had married a white guy.
She had money.
She introduced him
to cocaine.
She turned him out.
I was just a hep punk.
I wasn't in her league.
That freak bitch
cajoled and persuaded me
To do everything
in the sexual book.
What a thrill
for a dog like her
To turn out
a tender fool like me.
If pepper had lived
In the old biblical city
of sodom,
The citizens would have
stoned her to death.
She had his nose wide open
And she had him jumping out

the window, so to speak,
And doing things
that he normally
Probably wouldn't have done.
- He later got double-crossed
into prison,
It was pepper
and a cop named delansky,
Along with
an unknown heist man.
He got charged with
accessory to robbery.
An 18-year-old black man
Being sent to reformatory
back in the 1930s and 40s
Would have been
very, very likely
Subjected
to all sorts of racism.
At that time,
many of the guards,
Or probably most of them
would have been white.
They knew that
they could push them around,
Perhaps
physically abuse them.
He probably got treated
very, very poorly.
- It was there,
in the dormitory,
That I got the insatiable
desire to pimp.
I was a member of a clique
That talked about nothing
except whores and pimping.
I began to feel
a new slickness and hardness.
He's like a sponge.
He's soaking up
all these stories
And all the game these
different guys are running down,
And he's plucking out

the best parts
To apply to what
he's trying to do.
- He wanted to master
manipulating the psychology
Of the hos,
of the women,
When he started to realize
that the best pimps-
That is to say
the most successful ones-
Were the ones with the coldest,
with the least emotion.
The real iceberg heart.
- With good time,
I was free, slick, and bitter.
No more small towns for me.
I was going to the city
to get my degree in pimping.
When you're black,
my friend,
And you get twisted,
One's ego
Needed to be thought of
as great and grand,
And this was a way to do it,
To have
your own little kingdom.
- When I first got
to chicago,
I had this wild dream
Of picking the brain
of the town's top pimp,
And eventually I did.
In retrospect,
I suppose I could say
That I wanted to be
like god
For a whore, you see.
- Chicago at that
period of time
Was profoundly saturated
With every kind of element
you could think of.

There were
very, very good people
And very, very bad people.
- I come from that life,
and I come from chicago.
Every street had a gang,
And all we saw
were machine guns
And dead bodies every day.
Harlem and watts and compton,
man, was like boystown.
That was nothing
after chicago, man.
Chicago was rough, man.
- During those days
in the forties,
You could either be a barber
You could be a lawyer
if your parents had money,
You could be a boxer,
you could be a musician,
Or you could be a pimp.
We saw pimps everywhere.
Serious, serious pimps.
I don't mean
jheri curl pimps.
- Baby bell
was the big pimp in chicago.
- Baby bell
was phenomenal, man.
He was big time.
It's a level
that players wanna reach.
Baby bell used to travel
with 32 pieces of luggage.
Do you hear me?
And he used to have
white women.
And this was at
an early time
When this was a no-no.
- Once you're in the street,
you need father figures
'cause you don't just

walk out in the street
And become the greatest pimp
in the world by osmosis.
You need to learn.
So in a way,
a cat like baby bell,
You know, bell
is like a father figure
As well as a teacher,
as well as a professor,
You know, a mentor.
I became a pimp
Primarily because of
the influence
Of well-heeled pimps
and other hustlers
During a period
of dire poverty in my life.
And I feel that
I was influenced
By the flashy glamour,
The infestation of diamonds
on these hustlers,
And also
by their big flashy cars.
And I wanted
a sense of importance.
- There was an area
on the south side of chicago
Called 39th
and cottage grove,
And basically it was
a red light district.
And iceberg slim
Was one of the neighborhood
role models.
When I first heard
iceberg slim,
My impression of him
was a towering intellect.
He was talking about
The economics
of sexual intercourse
And how he looked upon

what he was doing

As a broker.

- You know,

a lot of people think

That top pimps are dummies.

That's not true.

They're just perverted.

I've never known a top pimp

who didn't have a high iq.

- Actually, I think

he would have been

A good salesperson.

Do you now how it takes

a lot to sell a woman,

To make a woman

sell her body.

- Most of the prostitutes

that I've known

And the ones

that I've controlled

Were fascinated

and bewitched

By my phony glamour,

Of the poisonous

pimp charisma,

And they lived in

my reflected glory, so to speak.

It gave them

a sense of importance.

- What is the life

of a prostitute like?

It's got to be holy hell.

The booby traps

in the street,

The death traps

in the street for a prostitute,

Her life-

the life of a prostitute

Is filled with tension

and the pressure of the pimp.

I hope you won't mind

Asking you in here

for a drink

After meeting you

on the street there.
Slim tells his girls
They can leave
whenever they get ready.
But they don't wanna leave
'cause he's too good to 'em,
But they must get the money.
Otherwise, you're fired
or something like that.
Can you imagine
a pimp firing a whore?
My total image of myself
Was that I was some sort
of black evil svengali.
- When you look
at old pictures of him,
You see this face,
This mask he wore.
There was no emotion,
no emotion whatsoever.
His foot had no problem
Finding its way
to a woman's ass.
- Iceberg
had no hesitation at all
About taking
two lines of cocaine
So he could
slap up his bitch, you know.
- Brutality
was the name of the game.
First of all,
You'd spell out
your rules and regulations,
And if any of those rules
were broken,
You had to punish 'em.
- He would visualize
being cold as a refrigerator,
Being cold as a freezer,
Where he would be able
to guard his emotions
Against rival pimps, cops,
his women.

They were never able
to read him.

- I've had
hundreds of women.
I've never admitted to one
that I ever had a problem
Or that anything worried me.
And that's the secret.

- He said
he was a psychopath.
He said he got a thrill
out of degrading women
And hurting them,
brutalizing them,
Keeping a relentless
psychological
And physical pressure
on them.
I wanted that thrill,
That voluptuous sensation
of controlling
A stable of women.

- He had to grab
that intellect,
Grab that spirit,
grab that hope
And he was-

I don't think
There was anybody
better at it than him.

- He said the hardest thing
for me to do every day
Was to say something
to my stable
That would confound
their mind
To mentally
keep them in check.

- At the end of the day,
there's only one game.
It's you either work
for somebody
Or you have people
work for you.

Pimping is no different,
you know.
If you really break it down
to the lowest level,
It's using your finesse
and your charisma
To convince somebody to do
what you want them to do.
- You can't be
a normal person,
Not and succeed
in that life.
And you've got to be
absolutely unflappable.
What you do literally
Is play god.
- When you have
five or six hos,
Every one of them
thinks their man is god.
He said, that's why you don't
have sex with them very often.
You've got to be god,
And, hey, if she can touch
god any time she wants,
Then he's not god anymore.
The life of a pimp
Is unremitting tension
and pressures.
A pimp lives on
the precipice of disaster.
I think he's the most
hated and feared creature
Of the underworld.
- All of us, honey.
All of us.
- To try to actually
control a female
Who's basically a criminal,
A robber, a thief,
To get that to operate
under your motivation
Is not an easy thing to do,
you know what I'm saying?

So I tell cats,
I'm, like,
you'd do better selling drugs.
At least a key of dope
Won't wake up
in the middle of the night
And kill you for something
you said to it early that day.
- Holding a stable together
requires the pimp
To keep each individual member
of the stable
In apparent competition.
- Because of the nature
of the prey-
And I don't have to tell
you gentlemen
How cunning they are-
The enemy.
Your word got to be law.
Even if you tell
that female,
I'm not gonna accept you
or georgia you
Or give you any love
until you give me my money.
You got to mean that.
You gotta keep
your gang live
And let 'em know
that you're down
And that you
about your money.
- It's a skull game.
Pimping is a skull game.
It's a game
of manipulative psychology.
And believe me,
To really be a pimp
takes a lot.
The average man
walking up and down the street,
He may be
under the impression

That he can pimp,
But when
he's put to the test,
He'll flunk.
- My brother,
my older brother shabazz
Had, um...
When he got out of jail,
He changed his name
from charles to shabazz.
He became a 5 percenter.
And, you know,
there was korans
And a bunch of, you know,
islamic literature,
And then
every iceberg slim book
Was right next to it.
It was December 1945.
For seven years,
I devoted myself
To getting hip
to that pimp's book.
I had thought and acted
like a black god.
Six months later,
sweet called me.
He said, berg, I got a wire
the fbi's quizzing whores.
They're trying to build
A five or six count rap
against you.
- He's picked up for
violating the mann act.
Two of his women-
His bottom woman
of many years, phyllis,
His first woman, turned
states evidence against him.
He was incarcerated
in leavenworth,
The alma mater
of machine gun kelly
Bugs moran, al capone.

- Iceberg slim writes about
a psychiatrist in the 1940s
That he encountered
in prison.
The psychiatrist came from
a psycho-analytical background
And believed that pimps,
particularly black pimps,
Had a real hatred
of their mothers.

- The person that had
the greatest effect on him
Psychologically
was his mother.
He didn't want
to keep hurting his mother,
And yet
there was a part here
That was a divided soul.
Because there were
also parts of him
That were angry
at his mother
And held things
against his mother,
Which really psychologically
Had some things to do with
the way he treated other women
And his utter
disrespect for women.
My reputation coming up
Before I got
street poisoned,
All of my mother's friends,
All of my associates'
mothers and fathers,
They all thought
I was the most charming,
The sweetest-
they used to talk about,
Oh, your son is so sweet.
Oh, he's such a gentleman.
You see what I mean?
So to get from that "a"

To the horrific "z"
of pimping
Required more of me
Than it did
the average person.
Which I think played out
In his very, very
direct experiences
With some of the girls
in his stable,
Including the girl
who he beat violently,
And at the same time wanted
to nurture and hold and hug.
- But I always had
that suckers streak in me.
I don't mean that
it compromised my pimping.
But it was always there.
- You can't just
dog a woman out
And just gorilla pimp
a bitch to death.
There's gotta be some compassion
to pimping in there,
Some soft side, some tender
loving pimping in there.
Because if you constantly
with the women,
You gotta have
a natural feeling for 'em.
They give you money.
You respect 'em.
You actually being
a father figure to 'em.
- 28 years old,
he's released from leavenworth,
He's back on the street
flat on his ass.
So automatically,
his first thought is, like,
Okay, I gotta get
my pimping game back up.
- He has

no other alternative
But to turn
to strong-armed robbery.
And within a month, bam,
he's back in the slammer.
He's sentenced to cook county
house of corrections
For a year.
They put him on
the coal pile.
Never done a hard day's work
in his life.
A pimp on a coal pile
is like oil and water.
So good Friday 1947,
he escaped.
- He's a fugitive
from justice.
He's running all over
the midwest
With eight prostitutes
And he's an addict
of heroin and cocaine.
- Did you make
a lot of money?
Oh...
But where'd it go?
In my arm.
In a blizzard of cocaine
Up my nose.
All kinds of clothes.
Spending it across the bar
in cabarets.
- Dope is maybe one of
the greatest pimps to ever live,
Because anybody
who uses dope
And gets hooked on dope,
You're a ho
and the dope is pimping you.
When you're in the life,
You never realize that
you're going to get old.
That never occurs to you

Because the drugs
keep you in a trace.
By the late 1950s,
He's got his girls
in whorehouses,
He gets busted,
they run his fingerprints
And find out
he's an escaped convict.
- His run in the game
is over.
He's sentenced back
to the house of corrections.
He does nine months
in solitary confinement.
- I looked around
my new home.
It was a tight box
Designed to crush and torture
the human spirit.
I raised my arms above me.
My fingertips touched
the cold steel ceiling.
I stretched them out
to the side.
I touched the steel walls.
The mattress cover
was stained and stinking
From old puke and crap.
It wasn't just the cell.
It was the sights and sounds
of the misery and torment
On the row.
- At the end
of the fourth month,
My skull was shaking
on my shoulders
Like I had palsy.
- He said that
he would have to do things
To strengthen his mind
To keep from going crazy.
- His writing
may have actually begun

In that prison world
in that setting
Where he started
creating stories,
Whether about his own life
or fictional ones.
- He said, I had to play
mental games with myself,
And I had to have
certain conversations
To just keep me going.
He said, because
I was determined
That the man
was not going to break me.
I could
just lay right down
I tell you, children,
I could lay right down
He had a lot to cope with.
His best friend,
joe "party time" evans,
Was killed.
Baby bell was dead.
- He gets a letter
from his mother,
And that she's very sick
And that he needs
to get out to los angeles.
- I had come to a decision
in that awful cell.
I was through
with pimping and drugs.
I had found out that pimping
is for young men,
The stupid kind.
I got insight that perhaps
I could never have hoped
to get outside.
I could see
the terrible pattern of my life.
Mama might die in california
at any time.
I had to get to her

before she died.

I had to convince her

I loved her.

I had to get there

As much for myself

as for her.

- Here he is, he's struggling

trying keep his sanity,

And during this time,

He finds out

they may tack on more time.

He may not get out

when they tell him

That he's

supposed to be released.

- In order

to secure his freedom

On the day that he

is supposed to be released,

He writes a letter

to the warden

In which he makes

a legal sounding plea

For his release.

- Using the pen

and the paper

To get somewhere in life

for the first time

Was cathartic for him.

This is when he became

a writer, in effect,

And that writing,

then and later on,

Enabled him to leave

the penitentiary,

Enabled him to leave

the life of crime behind

And so through writing,

He really did

change his life.

- Writers are born

and not created,

So that gene,

that genius gene

Has always been there
somewhere inside of you.
It just takes something
to trigger it.
- He says I hated
being in the steel casket
Where they locked me away,
But they saved my life.
Because if I had tried
to continue on,
I wouldn't have lived.
He said, so I knew
That I was going to leave
the street life alone
And do whatever I had to do
To straighten up
And lead
a different kind of life.
love and happiness
making it right
love and happiness
making it right
love and happiness
making it right
- Los angeles becomes
the end point of his journey
Because he's trying
to get back to mama.
I had no one except mama.
My coming to her
had been like a miracle.
It was the magic
that gave her strength.
She told me
that I should get married
And have children.
- I had come out here
to california
'cause I was just bored,
so I came out here.
I had worked
for a hamburger stand
And this guy started-
stopped by there

And he looked like
a professional to me,
Either a doctor,
a lawyer,
Or a president
of some bank.
Impeccably dressed.
Shoes shined,
the car spotless.
Just unbelievable.
And he said
could I take you somewhere
Where you could eat something
besides a hamburger?
I said, what the hell.
So we go and we eat.
And I drank too much,
Which I usually did
back in those days.
I drank all of my whiskey
And all of
anybody else's whiskey
I could get my hands on.
And I got sick
Like I have never been sick
before in my life.
And he took me
to the emergency room.
The doctor said
that I was, um...
I was four months-
around four months pregnant.
I said,
you've got to be lying.
And he said, no.
And then I started crying,
and bob came in.
He said, what's the matter?
I said, didn't they tell you
what's wrong with me?
And he said, yeah.
I said, and who's gonna
help take care of me?
And he said, I am.

So he took me
over to the apartment
Where he was living
with his mother.
She married a man
that worked for the railroad.
His name was beck.
That's why bob took beck
as a last name.
When he brought me in there,
Then of course immediately
The wheels started turning
in her mind,
And she would go back
And she would say, baby,
you get away from him.
Bobby's no good.
He's my son.
I love him.
He's no good.
And I asked him
what was she talking about?
He said, I'll tell you,
But now's not the time.
She was an old woman,
And she died,
And I have never
in my life
Seen anybody suffer
the way he did
The day his mama died.
In June I had robin,
And then 15 months later,
I had camille.
We were so broke,
so he started exterminating.
He said, I don't know
how to do anything.
He figured that was
the only thing that he could do
Without going back
into the life.
All he wanted was me
And the children sometimes.

They were totally
my responsibility.
- She was, like,
the head of the house.
She was the person
that gave discipline.
She was the person
who made meals, rules.
- Anytime the children
did something wrong, honey.
Or I'm gonna tell mommy
And all this kind of crap.
He was a great dad.
I mean,
he could have been better,
But we could all be better
than what we are.
From what he came from
And to what
he was trying to do,
He didn't have
any experience with kids,
And then suddenly
he has four
And three are girls.
That's-
Three of them are girls,
And he was in a position
his entire life
Of putting his boot
in the back
Of every single female
that he came across.
- My dad used to say
it was a curse.
This must be
my sentence before death,
The three of you.
When we were younger,
They lived on
90th and crenshaw
In a black neighborhood,
And someone threw a brick
at melody when she was four.

It hit her in the head.
She's, like, a four-year-old
baby playing.
I think that that scene
in his mind
Kind of set the stage
for, wow.
I've got these mixed kids,
This white woman,
And people are angry.
- It took 14,000 troops
to bring an end
To what both negro
and white leaders called
Insurrection by hoodlums.
- When they had
that terrible riot,
It was bad.
He told me to keep
the children in a bedroom
And keep that bedroom locked
And I wasn't
to come out of that bedroom
Until I heard his voice.
'cause he was scared
to death
Something was gonna happen.
He said, you have to realize
I ain't never, ever
gonna be accepted
In the white world,
And we'll never
be able to live
Anywhere except on
the outskirts of the ghetto,
Where there's
a mixture of people.
The census takers,
They don't even count
people in the underworld.
That's what
I liked about it.
You see?
I didn't have

to be bruised and wounded
In my efforts
to make a living
By coming in contact
with white society.
I was never reminded
that I was a nigger.
All day long,
He would go and kill
those roaches and rats
And shit like that.
He would come in
nasty and sweaty and...
He hated it.
Even then, though,
This man could not get up
and go out in the streets
Without putting on
a pair of dress pants
And a dress shirt
and a goddamn hat.
When he got home
from canvassing,
As he called it,
to find other jobs,
He'd want to talk.
And he would tell me
these outrageous things
And I said, a woman would
go out and sell herself
And give the money to a man?
I said, you're out
of your goddamn mind.
And then he would talk about
the different experiences
That he would have.
I said, you know what?
Give me a note pad.
You start talking to me,
And I'll start
writing it down.
And I did.
After I put
the children to bed,

It was in there.
And then he'd say,
You think you can get
any typing done tonight?

And 12:

and turn that typewriter on.

- She could type
160, 170 words a minute.

- And he was really
animated.

- Yeah.

- And excited.

- And he would act out
the whole book right there.

- He would be telling me
what to write down,
And I'm sitting in a chair
and I'm writing,
And he's standing-
do you-

And all up in my face.

He was a consummate actor
absolutely.

- She could put
this thing together
And act it out with him.

It was
an amazing experience.

I wish that all of you
could have seen it.

- We could finish
each other's sentences.

His stories, they were
so fascinating to me.

I felt that if they were
that fascinating to me,

They obviously
were going to be fascinating
To more than

a million people.

I had seen the ad
in the sentinel,

The black newspaper

for los angeles.
Holloway house
was running a little ad
For black writers.
At that time,
There was no venue
For a talented
young black author period.
- When you're attached to
something like holloway house,
It's such an iconic place
Because of the fact
that they are the doorway
For so many
unique american voices
Like joseph nazel,
donald goines,
And odie hawkins.
Bentley morriss I think
Should be considered
a pioneer in one sense
But a drag in another.
- Bentley is this really
epic personality.
He was interested
in a trajectory
That kept him
under the radar
Of fabulous success.
- Holloway house
first came into being in 1961.
We felt that
we could...Not compete,
But at least be a part
of the world of publication.
Now, we're not hardcover.
We're paperback,
Which is the low ring
of publishing.
- It was
a third-tier publisher,
Which would,
at that point in time
Lock you out,

freeze you out
Of the new york
literary scene.
- I thought
he did a lousy job
Bringing out books
with lousy covers.
He did almost nothing
to promote the books.
They were almost sold
by word of mouth.
- They were sold in drugstores
and newsstands.
That's how you find
your holloway house books.
- They didn't want
to call their books
African-american books.
They wanted to call them
books from the black experience.
- Bentley is not a racist
in any kind of way.
If they could find a way
That you could make money
for them,
They didn't care
who you were.
They were willing
to exploit anyone
Who could make money
for them.
We were not proselytizers.
We weren't
socially inclined.
We were in the business
to make money.
But with it
was the additional caveat
Of you're doing
something good.
You're doing
something important.
And, hey, you know,
that's a great formula.

- I asked bob
why he didn't find out
What these people required
And let's see
if it's sellable.
Because if it's sellable,
Then we're setting here
struggling like this
With no money
to feed the kids,
No milk money,
no cigarette money,
No nothing, barely
getting by on the rent.
We don't have to live like-
'cause writers make money.
And I got
100 pages together.
And he took it
to bentley morriss.
- I can see him at the door
at this moment.
Just immaculate.
This extraordinary
human being
Of about- I think
about 6-3 in height
Came and said he's an author
And he'd like to leave
a manuscript.
The editor at the time
Was a chap by the name
of milton van sickle.
He read it,
brought it in to me,
And I said, wow.
It was such a revelation
To receive a book
with such intensity
And with such truthfulness.
- Bentley morriss
gave us a \$5,000 advance.
And we were down to five.
You got \$5.00,

Somebody gonna cut you
a check for 5 grand,
What are you gonna do?
Are you gonna give them
that portion of your work
And then promise them
That the rest of it will be
delivered within two months?
And that's what we did.
Certainly, him coming up
With the nom de plume
of iceberg slim
Was an extremely clever
writer's device
Because it tells you
right in the name,
Slim, okay,
he's good looking.
He's cat-like.

Iceberg:

He's cold, cold, cold,
And only the tip
of the iceberg showed,
Just what
he wanted you to see.
Most of it
was hidden from view.
He said, no, on the street,
they call me cavanaugh.
That was my name.
Cavanaugh.
- Everybody
was enthralled by the book,
And we figured, let's go.
- Pimpwas
the first real book
About the street life,
And the first
real black experience
Put into a book form.
- You had james baldwin,
for example,
Or ralph ellison,

very literate black writers
Who did not reflect
the nitty gritty
Of life on the street.
Iceberg slim
was the real thing.
If was insightful
in terms of
The life of the street
itself.
He'd take something
very gory or simple,
But he'd bring poetry
to it somehow.
- The delivery
is so poetic in nature
That you are
falling in love with the words
Even though that
they are word of violence
And words of turmoil
and terror.
It was so intriguing.
Here I am, a little girl,
a young girl,
And I'm reading this stuff
about pimps
And drugs and prostitution
And, you know, your imagination
just goes haywire.
- Just doesn't sound
like anything else
Or feel like anything else.
It's a snapshot
Of things you're never
gonna be able to see.
- You crack any page
on the book
And read out a paragraph
And it's the craziest shit
you've ever heard.
It's not just the game,
it's the pain of the game.
- He really tells you

where this pimp is from
And takes you
into everything
This pimp has gone through
And what has made this pimp.
It was raw.
To be able
to write about such things
In a way that captures
the essence
Of what has transpired
As well as giving these events
a certain literary flair
Is, I think,
what makes pimp stand out.
Unrelentingly brutal.
And iceberg slim's writing
is so vivid and so clear,
He makes it all inescapable.
The whole book's gripping.
You cannot put it down.
- The shit was so deep-
written in deep slang,
You know, a lot of people
even heard that
And didn't know what the fuck
iceberg was talking about,
And that was the cool part
about it, you know.
- His publisher didn't
understand the damn book.
I said to him,
these terms that you use,
Catching, blowing, tricking,
Bitches, bottom woman.
I don't understand
what you're talking about.
So I asked bob
Would he endeavor
to compile
A section of glossary
In definition
of some of the phrases.
He said

he'd be delighted to.
- Chili pimp is defined
as a small time pimp,
Probably only has
one ho working for him
And he's new to the game.
The bottom bitch
is the pimp's main woman
Who runs all the other hos.
Vic or a trick,
that's a mark or a victim.
Why a trick?
The trick pays for something
That a real man
gets for free.
That's the trick of it.
- And then when he did that
and I reread the book-
And I reread it
many, many, many times-
And I had the glossary
to refer to,
I felt I knew
what I was reading.
- He really laid out
the etiquette of the pimp,
The gentleman of leisure.
You know, how flamboyant
and how fly
Can this lifestyle be?
- There was obviously
a romantic element
That appealed
to a young black man
Of, gee, that'd be
a great life to have.
- The way he articulates
his words
And through his lifestyle,
It makes pimping seem fun.
It makes pimping seem like
It's the coolest shit
in the world.
But really it's not.

It's a tough sport.
- When you're
street poisoned,
A youngster reads the book
and he rationalizes.
You see, we must have
a rationale for stupidity.
Any time
we do something stupid,
We first got to
convince ourselves
That we got to do
that stupid thing.
So they rationalize.
Oh, this stud,
I'm hipper than this.
I won't get cracked,
you know.
I won't get caught.
I won't go to the joint.
I won't go to the penitentiary.
I won't use drugs.
I won't use heroin.
I won't get hooked.
I won't be a junkie.
I'll be cooler, you know.
Sure, the dude is righteous,
But I'm more righteous,
you know.
I'm more together
than this dude.
This dude is old, you know.
You see?
This is the rationale.
That's unfortunate.
In l.A., where I've been
living the last 10 years,
Just hordes of youngsters
approach me on the street,
And they try
to pick my brain
For the hidden treasures
They think are buried
inside my skull.

And I always
slap their wrist
Before they reach for it.
- He just wanted
young black people
To realize that your head
can help you
Get on a higher plane.
And he de-glamourized it.
He took all the glamour
out of that.
- We felt this was gonna be
an unusual book,
And so we pursued
unusual methods.
And there was a chap
by the name of joe pyne
On kttv
Who ran wild interviews
Of the most bizarre
and off-beat people,
But he had
an incredible audience.
And so we called kttv
And presented to them the
possibility of this author.
Would he like to do
an interview?
He put him on,
and all hell broke loose.
- This is not one of
the reverend's evil spirits.
Our guest masquerades
under the name of iceberg slim.
Many of you
remember his story
Of his days
as a procurer
Or if you will a pimp.
Now he leads
a respectable family life.
Iceberg slim
has gone straight.
For this reason, he continues

to hide his identity.

It really pained you

to go straight.

- Oh, yes. This is
a better bag, as they say.

- You don't miss
all that excitement, huh?

Oh, of course not.

I mean...

- You get to keep
your money now.

- That's right, and pimp
is a runaway best seller.

Is that right?

- They can't keep them
on the stands.

- We couldn't keep
the phones silent.

We didn't have time
to punch 911 if we had to
'cause calls were coming in.

Where can I buy the book?

When we got

that box of books

And he brought 'em home
with pimp,

You should have seen
the dance that I did.

And I said,

I told you, goddammit.

Look at this.

Didn't I tell you

this was a book?

Didn't I tell you?

And he said, so what
should be the next one?

He returns now

To tell us about

the most incredible con man

He ever knew:

A blonde-haired,

blue-eyed negro

Called white folks.

You're not putting us on,
are you, slim?
No, that's factual.
One of the things
That slim is incredibly
brilliant at doing
Is being able
to impersonate
The voices
of many people at once.
How did he get that name?
Because of the fact that
he could pass over the line,
Of the color line?
That's right.
"white folks"
was a term applied to him
By his friends.
His enemies
in the black ghetto
Called him trick baby.
- The name of your book
is trick baby.
That's right.
- Here's what's great
about trick baby.
It's the structure of it.
Because
what it starts with is
Iceberg himself
being in a jail cell.
And in comes what seems
to this white cat
And then, iceberg then
proceeds to tell you this story,
But the story is told
from first person
From white folks
point of view.
Iceberg slim's talent
Is the ability,
the uncanny ability
To be able to memorize
these snippets of conversation

That he's had
throughout his life
And construct them into
narratives and characters.
- The book is
an incredible adventure story
Of the con as
it's played in the street.
And, I might add,
Because it's told
in first person,
It's classic noir structure.
- I haven't had a chance
to read this,
But he knows
I read his other one
And I just got this one
at this moment.
If this is anything
like your first book,
It ought to really do well.
- When a book
reaches the level
Of a motion picture,
The capability
for exploitation is enormous.
In 1972,
trick baby became a film.
Trick baby,
Iceberg slim's
best selling gut story
Of the world of the con,
The hustlers,
the high-rollers,
And the hatchet men
who made it up.
- His white skin
gives us a slick edge.
I catch the black marks,
he catches the honeys.

- Trick baby:

Iceberg slim wrote it
The way he lived it.

It's his world,
sometimes brutal,
But always real.
Rated "r."
See it.
Trick baby came out
in January 1973
From universal pictures
And was really
one of the first
So-called
blaxploitation films
To be based on
a true story.
I wasn't really a fan
Of the black exploitation
films that I'd seen,
And I didn't consider
trick baby to be one.
It was a con man story.
- There were lines
of pimps and hustlers
Around the block
in every city
To see this film.
- We got \$25,000
from universal,
And he came home with it.
He cashed the check
And brought it
all in cash, naturally.
And he threw a full-length
white mink coat
Out on the bed
And then
all these \$100 bills.
He said, so what
do you think of that?
And I said, we can
get the hell out of this house.
And I said,
and what is this?
He said, a white mink coat.
And I said, I never told you

I wanted a white mink coat.
I don't like coats.
You're gonna wear this one.
So I got
a \$10,000 white mink coat.
- I never saw robert
in a state of euphoria.
It was all very even,
But he went from
this platform of literati
Into film.
He experienced
that moment in the sun.
- Well, I actually
tried to pimp
With an iceberg slim book.
I'll never forget one time,
one of my partners named gary,
We had some hos, you know.
So I got
in my little pimp suit,
You know what I'm saying?
So we showed up,
so, you know.
We chopping 'em.
We, like, yeah, baby.
You know,
we real live pimping.
You know, it's pimping
jumping off.
But these was real hos,
so they'd been around pimps.
So of course they knew,
you know.
So we trying to pimp on 'em,
And, you know, in the middle
of the pimping,
We running into
the other room,
Breaking iceberg slim
books open, like, yo,
And then running back.
Yo, bitch.
What the hell?

You bitch, you know.
And they, like, how long
have you been doing this?
The next day,
the two hos woke up
And stole his car.
- After he wrote trick baby
in 1967,
He published
mama black widow in 1969,
The story of
an african-american homosexual.
- Homosexuality
in those days was taboo.
If you were in the closet,
you were in the closet.
- He really took
those characters
From the depths of society
And brought them
to the audience that he had.
- I was especially interested
in his book of essays,
The naked soul
of iceberg slim,
Which was
a collection of his thoughts
On political
and cultural issues.
- He also has
a letter to his father,
In which
he tries to invite him
Back into his life.
- Some of the chapters,
if you read them intensely,
Literally draws tears
'cause they're so confessional.
- After the naked soul
of iceberg slim,
He publishes death wish
in 1977.
It's a story
about the mafia.

He shows
an artistic maturity
By being able
to envision lives
That he did not necessarily
directly have contact with.
- In the book,
the character trick baby
Basically is willing to play
a deep hustle
Or a deep con.
After reading the books,
Somebody said,
you know dude got an album.
I'm, like, what?
- I was stalking hos
in the center of town
right in the middle
of the square
waiting for my man
'cause I had a plan
to cop some reefer there
and I was flying
fairly high
just standing there
digging the hos
Oh, shit.
I mean, it was just, like,
his voice
And the way he-
bitch, dry your tears.
Now we had a voice
to add to the words.
As kids, picking that
little bit of life up
Changed our whole style.
We got turned out.
I mean, my whole crew
got turned out.
- The very life
that had shaped him
And the very life
that he could then turn around
And write in a literary way

and reflect on,
Which should have then
catapulted him out of that life,
At the same time, then,
Because he's writing for
a third tier house,
Even though
those books are selling,
He has to still then
step back into the life
Just to put food
on the table
At the same time
that he's writing about it.
That's, like,
the double life,
The double life
of robert beck.
- The first time
I really saw slim
Was in the parisian room
On la brea and washington
here in los angeles.
And he would sit there,
And then
his ladies would come in
And they would
give him money.
But one night,
I hear this commotion.
I run back there
in the back
To see what is going on,
you know.
He said, this bitch
bring me 50 fucking dollars
And she been gone all day.
And he said, bitch,
Where in the fuck
you been all day?
She said, well,
I had my period
And I just
didn't feel well.

He said, you ain't got
lockjaw, have you?
- You think
he was still pimping?
Because someone
told you that, huh?
Pimping who?
What would be the reason,
though? The purpose?
Like, a stable of girls
Going out and-
who told you that?
He used to move, like,
these hookers into the house.
- Well, they were
his assistants.
- They were, like,
supposed to be assistants-
Or publicists.
- But there was a lot of
traffic between the rooms.
- I'd have to say 150%
that is not true.
My mom was psychotic.
There is no way-
I mean, yeah,
he had sex with other women,
But making money
off of them?
Mm-mmm. Reformed.
Airtight willie & me,
A collection
of short stories,
Is his last book to be
published by holloway house
In 1979.
- For each one
of those books,
We were getting advances
from bentley.
And then royalties
And bentley would pay whatever
he wanted to on royalties.
- Well, the royalty statements

of holloway house
Are really comical because
you know that they're a farce
And they have no bearing
to any kind of reality.

I'm happy when my, you know,
when my beer money comes

In the form
of my royalty check.

- Well, we were
a small house.

We had very modest
type of financing.

We'd lay it on the line
to the author,

This is what we pay,
And if you can live with it,
We'll become partners.

It was never that an author
was working for holloway.

It was always a partnership.

- How many authors did not
take you up on your offer?

None.

- There's a story
told about bentley

Where one of his writers
goes to him.

Listen, I know
you're cheating me

And you need
to pay me more.

And bentley
sat behind his desk

Got up,
walked to his window,
Looked down at the street,

down at melrose below
At the cars going by

And saying, you see
that street out there?

Yes.

You know, there are scores
of writers down there.

I could throw a rock
down there
And kill 20 writers.
I don't need you,
you know.
If you want to continue
to be published by me,
You shut the fuck up
and take what I give you.
He sent me down there
When bentley
had to be motherfucked
'cause bentley wouldn't send
the goddamn royalty checks out.
- Then he started
looking at the breakdown sheets
And he was, like,
they sold?
But the checks don't add up.
- Don't reflect it.
- Don't add up to the numbers
of books that are sold.
- They always received
the amount of money
That they should
have received.
We did an honest job.
We never took advantage
of our authors
Because they were,
in effect,
Our bread and butter.
Holloway would receive
many calls
For personal appearances,
book signings, and so on,
And we would take advantage
of every one
Because it was additional
promotion and merchandising.
- He was definitely
out of the house a lot
When the books
started taking off.

That was the distance
between my parents
Was him just kind of off,
You know, becoming,
you know, this writer.
Actually a pimp again,
is what she would say.
You know,
he's back out there
And then she's left at home
with four kids.
She was unhappy,
And that made for
an unhappy union.
- You have no idea
what it was like.
I had four kids to feed,
Wash clothes,
house to clean,
Typing to do,
And he's been diagnosed
with diabetes,
So I've got that trauma
Taking care of him.
My mom was drinking a lot,
And really sad and depressed
With my dad's philandering
around town and things.
I believe
a lot of depression set in
During that time, too.
- He should have been
better to me.
However,
he wasn't mean to me.
And I was the one that
always started the arguments,
And when they got
really heated,
He was the one
that would leave the house.
- My mother used to call
my father a god
When they were arguing.

She would say you're god,
so you must know everything.
And it wasn't
a term of endearment.
She did want a little bit
of the limelight
And kind of wanted
to travel
And do things with him.
She probably wanted more of
a celebration with our lives
As far as just, like,
Now we have, like,
you know, a nice house,
And it only made him
more distant.
He was a total loner.
The only one that he had
That came
on a consistent basis
Was r.G. Armstrong.
And he and r.G.
Used to sit in there
And write movie scripts.
I said, bob, why aren't you
writing a novel?
You haven't written a damn thing
since we've been in the house.
Why aren't you writing?
How many more times
I have to go up there
And motherfuck that jew
And make him give me
some more money
To feed these children?
And then I got
a part time job.
And then he quit writing
altogether.
And I told him,
I said, uh-uh. No, baby.
We ain't pimping me,
all right?
I never paid a man's rent

in my life,
And I goddamn sure
don't intend
To start paying yours now.
You either do
what you know how to do,
And let's get some money
rolling in here,
Or you lay here
on your dead ass
And I'm moving out
with my children.
And I did.

- He didn't want to leave
his family.

That's all he had.

That's all he worked for
was us.

- Yeah, I think my mom-
- he didn't just do that-
Hold on. Hold on.

- I think she's the one
that wanted to leave town.

- He didn't do that shit
for any other reason
But for his kids
and his woman.

Mm-hmm.

- And he had to leave
because of her,
Because she was crazy
and she was out of her mind.

- My father didn't know how
to be in a relationship,
Whether it's with a woman,
with a buddy,

I mean,
certainly not children.

- I still
have not been able
To unearth what it was,
But there was some need
that he had for me
That just crushed him

when I left.
'cause he didn't think
I was gonna do it.
He just did not believe
that I would leave him.
Toward the latter years,
He was living
in a one-room efficiency
Over at 48th and crenshaw.
The sugar diabetes
had taken its toll,
And he was married
at that time
To another woman.
After I read death wish,
I wrote him a letter
thanking him for writing it
And I never expected
a response.
Oh, I had put
my phone number in the letter,
And a couple weeks later
he called
And we just started talking.
- But he only let her
come by and visit.
We was more in isolation,
Almost in seclusion.
- I think his health
was really deteriorating,
And it was happening
for some time,
I wanna say
a good six years
Where he was
going through dialysis.
Once your body
is failing on you,
That pretty much takes away
from your creativity.
But, you know,
he really did
Care about what
was going on in the world.

It was really important,
world events.

It was really important
that we had the tools
To enter whatever
was happening in the world.

- You have to have
a realization
That when you exploit
your own kind,
That you are in effect
counter-revolutionary.

That you are hobbling
and crippling
The struggle
of black people,
Of freedom and dignity.

- He was my god.
Are you kidding me?

I knew
that he knew shit
That people...Don't know.
Don't know,
would never figure out,
Or even try.
Because they didn't have to.
Because they had
a support system,
Something that he never had.

I mean, when
I got arrested that time-
That was the only time
I was arrested
when he was alive.

It's been many times
since then.

Oh, boy.

- Anyway, I got arrested
with 10 kilos of cocaine
And a million dollars cash.
So they called my father
'cause they wanted
to give me 50 years.
I thought that would be

a scary phone call to make,
But it wasn't 'cause
he just took it all...
Uh-huh, and then
what did you have
In your possession,
my dear?
Nothing, dad.
I swear. I wouldn't lie.
And he was, like, okay.
I'm gonna call
the prosecutor right now
And plead your case.
And he did,
and I couldn't believe that.
And he didn't let anything
stand...
Get in the way of him
being able to deliver himself
Unto you if you needed it.
He was very supportive
As far as, like,
giving you kind of...
An insight
on what will come,
Being a girl,
being a woman.
When I was a teenager,
I didn't want to hear
anything he had to say,
As any teenage girl,
But he was giving me love.
I didn't think
it was love back then.
I just thought he was,
you know,
This non-existing father.
But now, obviously,
yeah, that was love.
It was the third day
of the riots,
Los angeles,
with the rodney king thing.
And it was pretty evident

That my father
was not doing well.
Gangrene had set in
Because of the diabetes
in his foot,
And he was gonna
have to have
Some parts of it amputated.
- Melody called me
at the office,
And she said
daddy's in the hospital
And they want
to take his leg off,
And he refused to let 'em
take his leg off.
And I said, melody,
call your dad back
And tell him that
I will be there to see him
And tell him
I said good night.
And he died that night.
Every time
that I put my hand out
To try to show him
That the animosity
wasn't as strong and as raging
As it had been
in the beginning,
Something bad
would happen to him.
I was in France.
By the time I got here,
he was already dead,
And I knew it
when the plane hit the tarmac.
I got a call from betty,
And she said, leon,
daddy's gone.
- I was one of the pallbearers
at his funeral.
I know they never have
women pallbearers.

- But she was
right in there.
I was right in there.
- I never got a chance
to be an adult
And kind of apologize for
being estranged from him.
He died with us
on bad, bad terms,
Which, you know.
Everyone has regrets, so...
- No one would know that he
was as influential as he is,
Even today, 20 years later
after his death,
By the way that he lived
and the things that he had.
He had nothing.
- If I had known
it was that bad,
I think
I would have gone
And said that's okay,
I'll take care of you.
I don't think
I would have let him-
I don't think I would have
let him stay like that.
I don't believe
that I would.
I couldn't because
he was part of me.
I mean, we made
iceberg slim together.
It wasn't
a one-person process,
It was a two-people
process, you know.
He was a wonderful person,
And I love him
And I miss him.
- Iceberg slim books
will always sell well.
They always have sold well,

and when we order them,
We order, you know,
50 or 100 at a time
To make sure
that we never run out.
Sometimes
somebody will come in
And literally
pick up one of each
Because people wanna
pass them along to their friends
And have the entire set,
so it's interesting.

- The acceptance
of iceberg slim
Has been literally
universal.

If I'm correct,
I believe
it's 8 or 10 languages.
International publishers,
in the main,
Are all people
of high repute,
That felt that there was
a great deal of worth here.

- He used to say,
I could have been anything.
I could have been somebody.
I said, what the hell
do you think you are?
You're a writer
That's ready by millions
and millions of people.
You are somebody.

- To describe the life
of iceberg slim,
I would say
it's not a story
To glamourize
a player's life.
It's rather
a story of redemption.

- His contribution

to african-american literature
Hasn't been touched
by anyone.
He was literally an icon
in this genre.
- Iceberg slim
represents change.
He represents-
he's like a beacon of hope
For anybody who's living
in impoverished conditions
That wants to change,
you know,
And is looking
for that outlet.
- I am a new york times
best selling author,
And if it wasn't
for iceberg slim,
I probably wouldn't even
have a platform.
He's one of the pioneers,
no doubt about it.
- The book company's
called cash money content,
And we definitely proud
of the fact
That we publish
iceberg slim books.
I think it's important
that we protect his legacy.
These books will live
forever, guaranteed.
- Those of us
that know iceberg slim
Will put him with baldwin
and chester himes,
Richard wright
and alex haley, even.
As the wrap gift
For every movie
I've ever done,
I give out copies of pimp
to the whole cast and crew.

All the questions of life
Can be answered
if you read this book.
- From reading iceberg slims
and really getting into it,
I knew that that
was the only way

To tell a story:

To tell both sides of it.
Whenever you would listen
to an ice-t record,
It's the game,
but it's the b-side, too.
- He really had, like,
a big heart,
Even though
he never showed anyone.
I think that his heart
Was absolutely bursting
inside of him half the time.
You know, brother beck,
Your autobiography,
pimp, which you wrote,
It may have encouraged
a lot of young brothers
To become pimps.
How do you feel about this?
- I think
it's very unfortunate
That there have been many
misguided young black men
Who should know better,
Who missed the whole message
in the book,
And that was
that nothing good
Came to me
except the penitentiary
And a heroin habit
And misery
And the complete waste
of my life.
I stupidly tried

to get something for nothing.
And any time that you try to
get something for nothing,
You're gonna suffer...
One way or another.
this is a man's world
this is a man's world
but it wouldn't
be nothing
nothing without a woman
or a girl
you see,
man made the cars
to take us over the road
man made the train
to carry the heavy load
man made
the electric light
to take us
out of the dark
man made the boat
for the water
like noah made the ark
this is a man's,
man's, man's world
but it wouldn't
be nothing
nothing without a woman
or a girl
man thinks about
a little bit of baby girls
and of baby boys
man make them happy
'cause man
make them toys
and after man
make everything
everything he can
you know
that man makes money
to buy from other men
this is a man's world
but it wouldn't
be nothing

nothing,
not one little thing
without a woman
or a girl
he's lost
in the wilderness
he's lost
in bitterness
he's lost