

Jake Lee

Shannon Gramse

WTRG A211 Writing and the Humanities

4 February 2024

The Potential Light at the End of the Tunnel

“See, I don't wanna think of suicide so please don't take the lockey off my door,” says Isiah Rashad in the song “Heavenly Father” (0:30-0:35). Rashad goes deep on personal issues and other hardships he has to deal with during his time growing up. Looking at this song critically and structurally, how does Rashad weave this quilt of lyrics to compile his different hardships into a song with both a heart-wrenching story and a lesson to other listeners?

Rashad was born on May 16, 1991, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, into immediate hardships being raised by a single mom and struggling for money. Growing up, Rashad didn't have a plan in life, jumping from job to job just for gas money. In the tenth grade, he became inspired to pursue music after he listened to the album *ATLiens* by the group OutKast, and he started to make music in his cousin's studio. Eventually, Rashad signed to the record label TDE in 2013 and released his debut album in 2014 named *Cilvia Demo*. The song “Heavenly Father” would blow up and become the most streamed song on the album.

“Heavenly Father” establishes a timeline of Rashad's past and current life. In his dialogue before the chorus, he speaks on the exhausting lifestyle and culture he was born into with the lines “See, I been tired of fuckin' all these girls and I've been tired of spendin' all this dough, and if I give my story to the world, I wonder if they'd book me for a show” (0:36-0:40). Not only is he highlighting a type of life some people envy but immediately after he goes into his life as a struggling artist. This theme will continue to ring throughout the song.

Furthermore, the chorus repeats twice using the line “Heavenly Father, why are you so far away” (1:19-1:35), which is not sung by him. This line paired with the beat sampled from the song “Lord Hold Me in Your Arms” by The Crowns of Glory gives an eerie juxtaposition of an upbeat feel with heartbreaking lyrics. It seems like Rashad lays out his desperation to merely survive during his youth and sees his “Heavenly Father” as not just an entity but also the idea of hope, hope which is seemingly fading away with his youth. After the chorus, Rashad continues to outline his hopelessness with addiction “Now I’m praying’ that I make it 25, baby call the doctor for my health, and no is kinda hard to say to drugs” (1:35-1:43). This will lead to his eventual self-harm and attempts and attempts at ending his life as he is speaking to the viewer, almost as a cause-and-effect situation.

Coming to the conclusion of the song, the backing track gets condensed down into a single bass line that somehow makes the song feel dry and lifeless. As the song continues to conclude Isaiah seems to be talking to his past self and summarizing his deteriorating mental health almost lecturing himself on his draining mindset: “You never had nothin’ but fuckin’ dreams, you just caught up in the hype, that fashion, so it seems...” (3:10-3:16). Looking back on his past and how he was just a kid with dreams and when he got attention, he didn’t handle it well, only focusing on what the ideal image the public wanted him to be. When the song ends Rashad repeats the line “Yeah, I’m so misrepresented” (3:48). He has acknowledged the change he has made rejecting the past ideas that he mentioned at the beginning, giving the song a great overall wrap-up.

“Heavenly Father” tells a story of regret but also the rebirth of an artist, a man, and a person. Rashad has opened up his mind and put his past mind onto writing and made something beautiful. When it comes to the writing and imagery, he keeps it clean and real; nothing has been

sugarcoated in this song. Not only does Rashad tells a story of a past of drugs and the cycle of depression, but he also gives a lesson on dealing with them and rejecting ideals that are so ingrained into our different cultures and societies. Rashad is a very talented artist with a lot of potential to become bigger than he already is, and with the writing skills he has there is no doubt that he can go to heights never dreamed of.

Work Cited

Rashad, Isiah. "Heavenly Father." *Cilvia Demo*. Top Dawg Entertainment, 2014.