

Of being martin black



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Looking out on the morning rain had a deeper sentiment to Martin Black as it was commonplace to witness syringes, yesterday's snack cake from the rundown community convenience store, and a mish-mash of broken child toys streaming down the thoroughfare in a mad torrent of rainwater beside this Los Angeles tenement. Yes, Martin Black understood mourning rain, with the delight of an angry black widow and the stamina of a legless cheerleader. "Martin Black!" The shout echoed through the decrepit corridor leading into the ramshackle family room where his mother spent so many of her waking hours. His mother was a real hospitality chef, just a drizzle of her favorite afternoon soaps and a pinch of cheap cologne that stunk up the staunchly decaying household interior like a sweetened dose of rotten flesh. "Martin Black! Mama needs a foot rub. These damn corns are killin' my tired feet. Get your rump out here and help Mama right now!" The sound of her liquor-induced garble was barely coherent while the echo of her ignorance pounded against the paint-deprived walls. Mama, as she demanded he call her since as long as he could remember, had dropped out of middle school at age 13 in order to pursue a romance with an older high school sophomore. After Jimbo (that's what the neighborhood gangs had labeled her first husband) received a single gunshot wound to the chest, Mama not only lost the love of her life but was forced to take employment at the local hair salon since the local school board considered her a high-risk distraction to the educational process. Of course, Mama lasted only two months before striking a red-headed regular boasting a stylish bouffant (and a disrespectful mouth, Mama had said) with a bottle of AquaNet, plucking out her left eyeball. What's in a name? Martin suddenly asked himself as he grabbed the dull scissors and a bottle of peroxide from the dispirited bathroom shelf and

hurried down the hallway to play master surgeon to a foul-smelling bump of foot fungus. Welfare, it seemed, was timid about providing sustenance for toe jam. “ Coming, Mama.” The sound of it was self-demeaning. As Martin glided slowly underneath her lifted foot, ready to tackle the hideous project of removal, Mama rambled on about her son’s lethargy and lack of value to the household, demanding he pursues a job at the local convenience store. “ It’s high time, Martin Black, that you start earnin’ some ya keep around here!” “ Mama, you know the neighborhood links my name to Daddy’s. Nobody wants me to work in their businesses. I’ve been thinkin’, Mama, about takin’ the Greyhound to Colorado and getting me a job on the pipeline.” Martin suddenly felt the piercing ache of a blunt wound to the palm of his hand as Mama violently swung her feet out of the creaking and hideous flowered recliner. Her abrupt and unusually adept motion caught him completely by surprise as he tumbled backward viciously, tipping over her life’s blood in the process: the 18-inch black-and-white console set that regurgitated her worthless dramas all the day long. “ You’re gonna gimme 40 bucks for that boob tube, you ungrateful, selfish little heathen!” Mama concerned herself not with Martin’s gaping flesh wound, instead of lurching to the fallen console to rectify her welfare-induced playwrights that brought her such sustenance for her lifestyle of sloth.