

# **HUSTLE & FLOW**

**AN ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY  
BY  
CRAIG BREWER**

Original White Shooting Script  
Revised: 6/24/04 (White)

IN DARKNESS, we hear the sound of a struggling air conditioner. Three circles glow red - the reverse side of an old Chevy Capri cigarette lighter as it burns to life.

A subtle 808 pounding is heard: BOOM... BOOM... BOOM...

D.JAY

See, man ain't like a dog.

Pop! The pounding stops.

The lighter ejects. D.Jay lights a cigarette and speaks to someone sitting shotgun in his parked car. D.Jay is an intense looking, black man in his thirties.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

I'm talkin' about *mankind*, not man like *men*, cuz men... well, we a lot like a dog. You know we... piss on things. Sniff a bitch when we can, get a pink hard-on like they do. And we territorial. You know, we protect our own.

(a quick drag)

But, man... he know about death. He got religion. Got a sense of history. Dogs don't know shit about birthdays or Christmas or that one day God gonna come callin'. So they walkin' through life, you know, carefree. But people like you and me, we always guessin'. Always wantin' to know "what if", naw what I mean?

D.Jay scans the street quickly and turns back.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

So when you say to me, hey, I don't think we should be doin' this. I gotta say, uh-huh. I don't think we should be doin' this neither. But we ain't gonna get a move on in this world layin' in the sun, lickin' our ass all day. We men. I mean, you a woman, but we *man*.

(D.Jay leans back,  
confident)

That said... you tell me. What'chu wanna do with your life?

Although she is white, NOLA opts to wear long blond mini-braids like most of the black topless dancers at the local clubs. She is, to her best recollection, 20 years old.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

Nola thinks. Struggles. Shrugs. Thinks some more. An idea.

NOLA

I don't know. I guess I could...

D.JAY

Hold up.

A car pulls alongside of D.Jay's Chevy. A beady-eyed, bearded man with pasty white skin examines Nola.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

How it go, Cuz? Like what ya see?

(He continues to stare)

It break down to 20 in the front. 40 in the back.

(no answer)

Hello?

(D.Jay turns to Nola)

Hey. Go'on over and explain it to this mother-fucker.

Nola steps out of the Chevy wearing yellow hot pants and platform high heels. She marches towards the trick's car and climbs in. D.Jay watches the car drive off as he takes another drag.

It's a slow, hot day in Memphis.

CUT TO:

2 OPENING CREDITS

2

CUT TO:

3 INT. D.JAY'S CHEVY - DAY

3

\*

D.Jay and Nola are driving downtown in the Chevy. Nola is daydreaming while D.Jay tries to find a good tune on the old, push button, radio. Nothing sounds good - commercials.

D.JAY

Nothin' but jive and junk.

4 EXT. ARNEL'S CLUB - DAY

4

\*

D.Jay's beat-up Chevy rolls on shiny rims as it turns into the parking lot of ARNEL'S CLUB - an urban Juke joint.

\*

INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - DAY

5 \*

Nola and D.Jay enter through the front door just as ARNEL tosses a babbling DRUNK at them. \*

D.JAY \*

Goddamn! \*

Arnel is short and small like a black bulldog, but he's full of spit for a man in his fifties. He shouts at the drunk. \*

ARNEL \*

Pull that shit again, nigga, and I'll black boot ya to hell. You heard me! \*

The drunk tries to shout back, but D.Jay grabs him by the hair and tosses his ass out. \*

D.JAY \*

Get on, now! \*

ARNEL \*

Thanks, D. \*

Nola watches with wide eyes as Arnel examines the blood soaked face of the assaulted patron.

ARNEL (CONT'D) \*

Take an angry drunk over a crazy one. Angry drunk, you see somethin' like this comin'. But them crazies...

(puts bar towel on the man's nose)

Just hold that towel on it. We'll get'cha stitched.

(crosses to D.Jay)

I think that sun out there is bakin' peoples brains.

D.Jay leans on the bar. Nola climbs onto the stool and spins around like she is a five year old.

NOLA

D.Jay, he keep the air on, and all, but it don't do nothin' but blow more hot air in my face. So I just stay sticky all day long...

D.JAY

(frustrated)

Just say it's hot.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Always gotta walk around the block with  
yo trap smackin' just to get a yes or no.  
It's hot. Period. Boom.

Arnel hands Nola an orange pop and D.Jay a beer.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

ARNEL

Wanna see my kitchen?

D.JAY

I'll take a peek.

CUT TO:

6 INT. ARNEL'S KITCHEN - LATER - DAY

6 \*

Arnel and D.Jay huddle in the back storage room of the kitchen - Arnel already has his wallet out.

D.JAY

You lookin' for a half or a full "O?"

ARNEL

Ounce'll be good. Fourth comin' up and all.

D.Jay reaches into his back pocket and removes an ounce of pot in a clear sandwich bag.

ARNEL (CONT'D)

Hey. You remember that sticky herb you brung up to my brother's house for Play-offs?

D.JAY

(holds up the bag)

That ain't this, now. That's a whole 'nother zip-lock bag. Fuckin' prime product you talkin'. I use them "yellow-and-blue-make-green" bags on that shit.

ARNEL

How much notice you need?

D.JAY

Little Italian dude from Nawlin's bring me up an elbow every couple a weeks. What? You need a bag?

ARNEL

We got some big company come up in here for the fourth. Thought you may wanna get you some money.

D.JAY

Big company?

ARNEL

You remember Skinny? Skinny Black.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

Shit. I know who Skinny is. We go back in the day. Boy was hustlin' his underground tapes down at the drive-in out the back of his Cutlass.

ARNEL

Not no more, he ain't. You know that last one he put out went platinum.

D.JAY

(thinks on that)

Eh, now Platinum, that's more special than gold, huh?

Arnel shoves the bag into his pocket and then pulls out a modest roll of cash.

ARNEL

He big time now... but he still Memphis, you know. He and his brother Tigga hook up with they friends every July. I shut the place down, make it all private for them and they buy up my stock. No shit. They clean me out.

D.Jay is suddenly preoccupied. His expression turns serious, sullen.

D.JAY

Yeah. I know Skinny. He may not... I mean, you know we went to different schools and all... but... yeah, I know Skinny.

ARNEL

You wanna make a dollar, best get up here with that good shit. Those boys ain't gonna want none a'this dirt weed.

D.JAY

You tryin' to hurt my feelings?

ARNEL

Just helpin' out a friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. KING OF CLUBS - NIGHT

7

A clap of thunder as the bottom falls out of the sky. The KING OF CLUBS sign glows bright red through the rain. Rap pounds the walls from the inside.

INT. KING OF CLUBS - NIGHT

8

D.Jay enters, holding his over-shirt above his head to stay dry.

MICKEY is barely audible as he chatters into the microphone from his DJ booth.

MICKEY

(into the mic)

We gotta two for one goin' on through the next two songs, folks. Any of these lovely ladies will be giving two dances, two dances, fellas, for the price of one. We got Luscious. We got Phoebe. We got Lexus comin' up on satellite one.

(notices D.Jay)

'Sup, D. Comin' down, huh?

D.Jay nods and crosses to the main stage. Dancers are writhing around the various buckets and pans on the stage collecting rain dripping through the roof.

D.JAY

(to a dancer)

Where Lexus at?

\*

The Dancer points. D.Jay turns and finally locates LEXUS. She is straddling a trucker in a chair. Her bikini top glows bright orange across her ebony skin, her hair is braided, stretching down her arching back.

\*

D.Jay motions her over. Lexus keeps hustling with a smile, surreptitiously flipping off D.Jay. He then grabs Lexus by the arm and pulls her off the customer.

LEXUS

Excuse me! You see me workin'?

D.JAY

Where you at?

LEXUS

I ain't at nothin'. Done three dances all day.

(CONTINUED)



D.JAY

Don't tell me that. They some  
homely, ugly-assed, toothless  
hos in here pullin' in green  
and you sayin'...

LEXUS

You think I can come in here,  
snap my fingers, make these  
punk asses throw they money  
at me every night. It just  
don't happen some days. Shit,  
D. I ain't even gonna make  
pay out.

MICKEY

(over the mic)

Alright, guys, let's put your hands  
together for the lovely Lexus.

Lexus starts walking toward the stage.

D.JAY

It's like I say, you can't be  
picky on a Wednesday. You  
gotta take what they  
slangin'.

LEXUS

Every bitch in here got some  
playa, tellin' 'em how they  
can hustle they tricks better  
than we hustlin'. Bunch'a  
side-seat drivin', mother-  
fuckers. I'll make my dollar  
just let me do my thang.  
Shit, I'm old school!

D.Jay waves her off and walks away. Lexus pulls herself up on  
the pole and hangs upsidedown.

CUT TO:

9 INT. KING OF CLUBS - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

9

The conversations are loud and full of laughter as D.Jay  
sells a quarter ounce bag to a dancer in the dressing room.

Lexus is getting dressed at a leisurely pace. D.Jay grabs her  
head as she sits to put on her shoes and puts it up to his  
stomach.

D.JAY

You hear that? That's my empty gut sayin'  
hurry the fuck up.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. KING OF CLUBS - D.JAY'S CAR - NIGHT

10

Nola awakes from the back seat, sitting up slowly as Lexus  
and D.Jay hop in the front seat.

(CONTINUED)

LEXUS

I ain't doin' day shift no mo, I don't care if I gotta get a cab to drop my ass off. I ain't workin' with them skank-assed trucker-bait hos no more.

D.JAY

You gonna work day shift if I say. Ain't no reason...

NOLA

(to D.Jay)  
You said, you was just runnin' in. I known y'all's gonna take your sweet fuckin' time... I'd a come in.

LEXUS

(to D.Jay)  
You know Trudy ain't work day's no more. It just don't make sense. Tellin' me she made five hundred dollars... You heard me? Five hundred last night off some guy who makes cotton...

D.JAY (CONT'D)

She ain't made five hundred dollars. Who? Trudy? Bitch gotta birth mark on her face look like a map a Texas. She trickin'.

LEXUS

She ain't trickin'.... all she did was dance for him.

Suddenly there is a loud pound on the window. Lexus screams. D.Jay looks out to see HAROLD - a skinny, pale-skinned, junkie, wearing a few layers of thrift store wind-breakers.

LEXUS (CONT'D)

What the hell-fuck?!

HAROLD

(from outside the window)  
Hey, D.Jay. It's Harold, man. It's me.

D.Jay jumps out of the car slamming the door behind him. He pushes Harold back away from the car.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Whoa, man... it's me... it's me, D.Jay... It's Harold!

D.JAY

It's a damn good thing what I usually got under my belt is under my mother-fuckin' seat. Sneak up on me like that again, you gonna be grinnin' out the back 'a yo' head.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD

Hey, D... um...

D.JAY

D.Jay.

HAROLD

D.Jay...

D.JAY

Yeah, we ain't friendly. Call me by my name. D.Jay.

HAROLD

Well, listen, you got some crank, any of that rock shit?

D.JAY

You know I'm strictly gateway. I don't deal with that.

HAROLD

Yeah? Well... what could I get for this?

Harold removes a small electronic KEYBOARD from a sack.

D.JAY

Do I look like a pawn shop?

HAROLD

Like an ounce? What?

D.JAY

Shit. I wouldn't give you a toke. Where you get this at?

HAROLD

You know... just...

D.JAY

If you tell me this belonged to one of yo' kids I'm just gonna bust.

HAROLD

No, no... no way, man. I used to play on it. You know, all the time.

D.JAY

So it work?

HAROLD

Yeah, man. Like a pro.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY  
(regarding the keyboard)  
Yeah. I had one of these back in the day.  
Not as big though.

HAROLD  
Bigger is better, D. D.Jay. D.Jay.

D.JAY  
Shut up.  
(thinks)  
I'll give you a quarter.

HAROLD  
A quarter? You mean a half... and then  
some. Pawnshop'll get me more than that.

D.JAY  
Why don't you give 'em your thumb print.  
See how much you get.

HAROLD  
(relents)  
Okay.

D.Jay reaches into his coat pocket and slaps a bag into  
Harold's hand.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
(handing over the  
keyboard)  
I don't think that's really a fair trade  
but I... I understand you've got to keep  
an eye on your interests and all.

D.JAY  
You pushin' me. Do you know you pushin'?

And Harold is off into the night. D.Jay regards the keyboard.  
His fingers touch the keys as a subtle 808 beat pounds in his  
ears: BOOM... BOOM... BOOM.

LEXUS  
Hey! Stevie Wonder!  
(the beat stops)  
We hungry.

CUT TO:

1A EXT. MEMPHIS STREET - NIGHT

10A \*

Establishing shots. D.Jay's Chevy rolls through Memphis.

\*

1 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

11

D.Jay and his girls live in one of many shotgun houses along a crowded street. Kids run past them as they step out of the car. D.Jay calls out to an old woman on her porch.

D.JAY

Miss Cole! That runt bitch of yours got in my trash again. I know it won't your fault but get one yo kids to clean it up.

SHUG

(v.o.)

Y'all got tacos?

D.JAY

(v.o.)

Naw, we got cheeseburgers.

CUT TO:

12 INT. D.JAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

12

SHUG (short for SUGAR) is a pretty, twenty year old, black girl who is about four weeks short of giving birth - swollen beyond belief for her tiny frame. She is soft spoken, sweet.

Shug bites into a burger as they all watch the TV - a local rap video program.

SHUG

I called the power comp'ny 'bout gettin' an extension on the light bill. They say I gotta come down and stand in line to get an application.

(takes a bite)

But I can't be standin' all day how they do down there. Not if I got Roger with me. You know, D.? You know?

A video concludes - another begins. It is a SKINNY BLACK CD.

D.JAY

(shouting)

Oh! There go Skinny! Eh, Lex! LEX!

SHUG

So what do you wanna do, D?

LEXUS

(approaching, pissed)

Huh!

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

(pointing to the set)  
Me and Skinny Black gonna be kickin' up  
at Arnel's on the fourth of July, Baby.  
Ain't that some shit?

LEXUS

Who? You?

The video is standard in aesthetics, gleaming BMWs, booty girls shaking into the lens. Skinny Black is wearing a pristine black and white camouflage suit.

D.JAY

Me and Skinny... do some catch up. You know, he used to live up on Looney and Third. Where they spray down the trolleys at.

LEXUS

Am I supposed to piss myself?

D.JAY

(speaking to Lex as she walks away)  
Yeah, okay... okay... you tell me. Who is it you know that's somebody, huh? Who?

LEXUS

Nobody in this crib.  
(speaking in a whiny baby voice)  
Where's my baby? Roger?

SHUG

Lex. Don't. I just got him to sleep.

Lexus goes into the back room to retrieve her baby. D.Jay continues to watch the video as Shug complains to the back of his head.

SHUG (CONT'D)

D, I know it's my part in it all to baby-sit while she at work. But she always gotta wake him up just when I get him down. I gotta have some chill time too.

D.JAY

You know, Skinny used to DJ over at Booker T. Just like I did at Westwood. Ain't like he the only nigga spit some flow in this town. I's doin' the same thing just at my school. Ask anyone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
(he has to prove himself)  
I'm serious. Go ask Carlos up on the  
corner. He's in my grade. Ask him.

\*

SHUG  
(with a mouth full of  
burger)  
Gotta get that extension.

13 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT

13

D.Jay is still holding the small keyboard as he bites into his burger. He opens the door to his private workroom. He turns on a single bulb from above by yanking on a chain. There is a simple scale on the table, a few boxes of sandwich bags.

D.JAY  
(to himself)  
... shit... talk to me about platinum  
better than gold. In the day, I's like...  
triple platinum. Ask anyone...

Lexus enters holding her baby boy, ROGER, in her arms.

LEXUS  
I gotta shower.

D.JAY  
Uh-huh.

LEXUS  
You gotta watch Rog.

D.JAY  
Go give him to Shug.

LEXUS  
She say it's her chill time.

D.JAY  
(taking the baby)  
When's my chill time at?

Lexus is gone. D.Jay slams the door.

CUT TO:

14 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

14

D.Jay pushes the POWER BUTTON on the keyboard and then pushes the POWER BUTTON on the mini fan on his table.

(CONTINUED)

With Roger tucked under one arm, D.Jay begins pressing the different keys, listening to the various sounds, changing between the different menus.

Roger is drooling, mesmerized with sounds just like D.Jay - two little boys with a new toy.

D.JAY  
(laughing)  
Yeah, that buck ain't it.

We CUT IN AND OUT of moments as D.Jay acclimates himself with his new keyboard.

He takes Roger's hands and taps them on the keys - each key makes a different beat. They actually manage to peck out a simple beat. D.Jay laughs.

The beat is interrupted by Lexus storming into the room wearing a towel around her hips and head.

LEXUS  
The fuck are you doin' wit my son?

D.JAY  
Just playin'.

LEXUS  
(pulls Roger away)  
Give me my baby.

D.JAY  
Every time he get settled you gotta come and fuck with him. Gonna give that boy a twitch.

The door slams. D.Jay lights a blunt and closes his eyes. \*

The 808 beat can be heard softly - the pounding in his head. He opens his eyes and pulls the keyboard closer. Pressing the loop button, he matches the keyboard beat to the beat in his head. It fits perfectly: *Pip. Tack, tack, pip, tack.* \*

D.Jay looks on the back of the keyboard. A single headphone jack is on the back. \*

An idea hits as the loop continues. \*

JUMP CUTS as he opens a drawer next to his massive stereo and removes a long cable. He pushes it into the inputs behind his huge stereo. \*



He picks up the remote. The treble goes to 0. Bass goes to 10. Bass boost activated. The volume dial spins to the loudest possible volume. \*

D.Jay takes the other end of the cable and plugs it into the headphone jack on the keyboard. \*

***BOOM! TACK, TACK, BOOM, TACK! BOOM! TACK, TACK, BOOM, TACK!*** \*

The room is vibrating with his beat, as the loop sounds from his towering speakers. D.Jay stands silent, allowing the beats to pound through his body. \*

14 CONTINUED: (3)

14

3 INT. D.JAY'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

19

\*

Shug awakes on the couch and stares oddly at the door to D.Jay's work room. The TV distorts with the beat.

20 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT

20

D.Jay circles his table, punching at the air with each beat.

The pot scales vibrate. D.Jay bounces his upper body up and down furiously - a man alone with his own invention.

He turns off the keyboard with the push of a button. He is panting - suddenly aware of his own heart pounding.

Silence.

CUT TO:

21 INT. D.JAY'S CAR - PARKED ON THE STREET - DAY

21

Nola snorts up some crank off a small swatch of shiny paper.

D.Jay and Nola are parked by an old auto shop - hisses and pops sound from inside as D.Jay eyes a car driving up slowly.

D.JAY

Go easy, gal. Can't be no open candy store. We tight this whole week.

(D.Jay nudges Nola)

Put yo shine on. Here this one come.

Nola wipes away sweat as the driver approaches, she attempts to put on a sexy scowl for the passing trick.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Come on, Cuz. We ain't gonna bite.

The driver tries to get a good look at Nola but then speeds past. D.Jay shakes his head in frustration.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Goddamn! You go to IHOP to eat pancakes not stare at 'em. Half the lunch crowd just be window-shoppin'.

NOLA

Why can't we work the motels no more?  
Least they got air.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

Least they take a cut, is what they do. Thirty dollars a room for one hour on top of what we already chargin'. And that's what... for a five minute nut. I mean, that just don't make no sense. That's money outta my pocket, to keep your country cool.

NOLA

All I do is ask about gettin' cool and you gotta be ugly.

D.JAY

(D.Jay notices the car approaching)

Hold up. He comin' back. You need to put on a show for this trick. Do that thing with your tongue like you do.

NOLA

Lex get to work inside all day at the club. I don't see why I can't.

D.JAY

Cuz we been over this, Nola. Ain't I told you? You got what they call a bad equilibrium. My uncle Hector had it. You knock into shit. We put you in them heels up on that stage... tricks gonna be screamin' "timber." Here he come.

NOLA

I'm in heels out here, D! You don't see me fallin' down. \*

D.JAY

Cuz you sittin', Nola. Ain't that much of a fall to the floor. Just... look it... let me do the thinkin' for ya. Ah-right? Just stick to what you do. And let me do what I do.

NOLA

One day you're gonna have to tell me about that.

The trick's car stops alongside of their car.

D.JAY

About what?

NOLA

What the fuck it is you do.

The car stops. D.Jay has turned his cold attention to Nola.

Knowing she has wounded D.Jay, Nola gains a modicum of confidence. She leans across D.Jay as if he was not even there.

NOLA (CONT'D)

(to the trick)

Hey, Honey. You wanna see me walk in these heels all the way over to your lap?

The trick nods nervously. Nola smiles and crawls back inside.

NOLA (CONT'D)

(bitter)

Look like he got air in his car. Must work as hard as you.

Nola slams the door behind her.

She parades her high-heeled saunter in front of D.Jay, and hops in the trick's car. D.Jay fumes as the car drives off.

CUT TO:

2 INT. CORNER GROCERY STORE - DAY

22

D.Jay's shirt is wet from sweat as he enters the CORNER GROCERY STORE - a small, unassuming establishment. Nola trails behind and immediately goes for the ice cream freezers.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

ELROY, mid thirties, sits behind the counter. D.Jay reaches past Elroy to a pack of cigarettes in a display. Elroy glares as D.Jay cracks open the pack and lights up.

ELROY

You wanna do my job? I got a mop for ya.

D.JAY

Elroy. I'm havin' a day that just won't quit. So... shine a little light on me, huh?

ELROY

You got something for me?

D.Jay reaches into his pocket and pulls out a leather tobacco bag and a small NOTEPAD. D.Jay wipes a handful of sweat away from his brow and places the bag before Elroy.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

(referencing his notepad)  
Gotta grocery list, too. Gonna need a  
brick of that Big Easy bud for this VIP  
comin' in...

Elroy looks inside the bag and notices his hand is wet from  
D.Jay's sweat.

ELROY

(showing D.Jay his hand)  
Shit, D. I don't want yer stank on me.  
Look at this shit. I don't even like my  
own sweat on me. Sure as hell don't want  
yers...

A surge of anger hits D.Jay. He snatches the wad of cash from  
Elroy's hand and shoves it deep down the front of his pants  
into his crotch.

D.JAY

Tell you what. Let's get some of my sweet  
juice on it. See how you like that.  
(pulls out the cash and  
slams it on the counter)  
Go on. Tell me you ain't gonna pick that  
up.

Elroy glares at D.Jay but chooses not to antagonize him  
today. He picks up the wad of cash.

ELROY

Let's get you on your way, D.

Elroy disappears into the back of the store. D.Jay looks over  
at Nola, eating an ice cream sandwich.

D.JAY

(spiteful)  
You cool now?

Positioned directly in front of his gaze is a spinning  
cassette display case - a face-out cassette of SKINNY BLACK'S  
latest release stares back at D.Jay.

KEY

You still into that shit?

D.Jay turns to see KEY. Key is a simple looking, chubby black  
male in his mid-thirties. He is wearing glasses and a blue  
button-down shirt with tan Dockers. He is cradling a dozen  
packs of 9 volt batteries.

D.JAY

Huh?

KEY

I remember coach Rosallis lettin' you spit some flow over the intercom in gym class. Back when we was all beat-boxing like the Fat Boys.

D.Jay studies his face unable to come up with his name.

KEY (CONT'D)

(offering his hand)

Key Dunn. We went to East Middle.

D.JAY

(remembering)

You did the after school dances. Had you spinnin' records. Huh?

KEY

Nothing fancy. Not like I was scratchin'. Just making sure Purple Rain got played for the ladies.

D.Jay laughs - some welcomed nostalgia. Elroy returns with a healthy pound wrapped in a brown paper bag. He stops, eyeing Key suspiciously. \*

D.JAY

Naw, he cool, Elroy. Give over. \*

(back to Key) \*

East Middle. Them was some days, huh? \*

Key looks over at Nola sucking her ice cream covered fingers. He grins. \*

KEY

I see you still doin' the same. \*

Elroy starts ringing up Key for the batteries. \*

D.JAY

We like the Post Office. You know, through rain or sleet or snow. \*

(Key smiles) \*

So, what? You got a dildo or somethin'? \*

KEY

Do what? \*

D.JAY

What'chu buyin' all these batteries for? \*

KEY

Well, it ain't for a dildo. \*

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY \*  
(grinning) \*  
I'm just playin'. Shit. \*

KEY \*  
They're for my microphones. \*

D.JAY \*  
Microphones? \*

KEY \*  
Mm-hm. \*

D.Jay studies Key's face, cautious and curious. \*

D.JAY \*  
Microphones. \*  
(nods) \*  
So. What is it you do? \*

CUT TO: \*



1 INT. BELLEVUE BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

24 \*

A modest-sized gospel choir takes a deep breath and breaks into the Spiritual "Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning."

We follow a gray cord from a hanging microphone to a collection of cables. Key is recording the choir from the pews of the church.

D.Jay is seated in the center of the church - Nola sits in the back eating an ice cream sandwich.

The choir crescendos with chilling intensity. D.Jay is unable to move as the song continues. He slowly grips the pew in front of him, his chest rising with deep breaths through his flaring nostrils.

The music is working on him.

The choir concludes abruptly, building into an accented climax. Key holds one hand up in the air, indicating for everyone to remain silent.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

D.Jay exhales. Key presses STOP.

CUT TO:

25 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT

25

D.Jay is smoking a blunt, holding in the smoke and gently blowing it back out. His keyboard holds a steady beat.

D.Jay sighs and closes his eyes.

Suddenly a wave of fear and paranoia hits. Something or someone just charged at him. He scrambles to his feet, looking around the room. *What was that?*

He holds his chest and tries to control his rapid panting.

He is alone in the room. He looks at the blunt and then quickly taps it out into the bowl.

He turns the keyboard OFF.

CUT TO:

6 INT. D.JAY'S LIVINGROOM - LATER - NIGHT

26

It is unusually quiet in the room. Nola sleeps on one couch as Shug sleeps on the adjacent one.

D.Jay is gently shaking Shug awake.

D.JAY

Hey, Shug... you up?

Shug opens her eyes and sits up, cradling her stomach with one hand.

SHUG

(waking up)

I gotta watch the baby?

D.JAY

Naw. Everyone asleep.

(looks at her stomach)

So. He kickin' tonight?

SHUG

Usually after I eat. He really active durin' the day, though. Must be like his daddy, cuz he don't get that from me.

D.JAY

Yeah. Whoever that is.

(CONTINUED)

Shug is slightly wounded by the comment.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(with difficulty)

Shug. We got history. You know, you been trickin' for me goin' on a few now. So... there's that.

(Shug nods)

Me not pimpin' you 'cause of, you know...

(referring to her stomach)

It kind'a... puts us in a different place.

SHUG

You wantin' me to leave?

D.JAY

Naw. That ain't... Naw.

D.Jay moves closer. He looks over at Nola again. His chest feels tight. Anxiety pushes in on him.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(rubs his hands together)

I think I may be gettin' one of them mid-life crisis.

(Shug listens)

You know my Daddy's heart gave out when I's just twelve years old. He was a young man. I mean... I mean he's my age.

(thinks on that)

That's been fuckin' with my head. Like this is it for me. It's fuckin' with my Mode on the track, can't concentrate, can't smoke weed without feelin' like I'm gettin' a heart attack and... and I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

SHUG

I get bad dreams. Dreams like me givin' birth to dead dogs, sometimes I'm breast feedin' a big ole ugly catfish.

D.JAY

For real?

SHUG

But that's just my mind touchin' in on somethin' that I ain't said out loud.

D.JAY  
What's that?

SHUG  
I'm scared.  
(rubs her stomach)  
I get so scared, D.

D.Jay doesn't like how that sounded to him - too truthful. He stands and crosses to his work room. He looks back at Shug.

D.JAY  
(lying)  
I ain't scared.

Shuts the door.

26aA INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT

26aA

D.Jay sits at his table. He touches his chest - fearful of another attack. His Mode begins to sound in his ears. Anger grips him.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

D.Jay pulls his pad out of his pocket. He flips to a clear page. He begins to write flow.

CUT TO BLACK:

26A EXT. MEMPHIS - DAY

26A

Various morning establishing shots.

27 INT. CLASS ROOM - DAY

27

A little boy is playing the violin. He is earnest in his efforts but terrible in his execution.

We PAN to a microphone on a stand. We follow the cord to Key's recording station.

Key is turned to the side, holding one end of a headphone to his ear. He winces with each awful note.

The song concludes. Key presses stop and puts on a supportive, phony smile to the BOY'S MOTHER.

KEY  
That was beautiful.

CUT TO:

9 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

29 \*

Key has fallen asleep with his mouth open, laying on the couch. The TV is on - a weather man talking about the heat index.

YEVETTE

Clyde? Clyde, dinner is on.

A meatloaf is placed on the small dining room table, by YEVETTE, Key's wife. Yvette is roughly the same shape and size of Key. She works at a clothing retail store. She is confident, strong and no nonsense.

She walks over and gently taps his cheek.

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

Baby? Baby?

(a firm voice and a firmer  
slap)

Clyde.

Key snorts awake. He looks around as if he doesn't know where he is.

CUT TO:

) INT. KEY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

30

Both Yevette and Key have their heads bowed and their eyes closed.

KEY

(mumbling the prayer)

Most-gracious-and-heavenly-father-we-ask-  
you-bless-this-food-and-this-house-in-the-  
name-of-Jesus-we-pray-Amen.

YEVETTE

Amen.

Yevette jumps into a tale from work as Key prepares to eat.

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

So, Beth Ann tells me the reason I didn't  
get moved up into Sales Supervisor is  
because I have issues enforcing company  
policy with my co-workers. Who she  
referred to as my *friends*, not co-workers  
but *friends*. I said, just because I am  
pleasant and supportive does not mean I  
cannot...

(a new mouthful)

Crack a whip. Cuz I can crack a whip. I  
mean, you've seen me crack a whip.

KEY

(chewing his meatloaf)

Mm-hm.

YEVETTE

I mean what are we talking about here?  
We're talking about folding sweaters and  
making sure the fitting rooms are kept  
clean. Sales Supervisors don't even  
handle the safe.

KEY

I know. I know.

YEVETTE

So I go in and I talk to Leonard. He  
always say, come in and air your  
grievances, so I did.

Key is struggling to stay interested as he devotes his  
attention to pouring gravy on his mashed potatoes.

(CONTINUED)

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

And you know what he said? He said that I would be incapable of writing someone up. Cuz I'm so friendly. I said, give me a pen, Leonard. I know everything that everybody is doing wrong. Beth Ann take way too long on her lunch break. Allen, that little shit back in receiving came to work high. Not to mention yesterday Sally was wearing a skirt from our discontinued line. And I know she didn't pay for it. Now, do you think I'm gonna turn a blind eye to these violations if I was Sales Supervisor, just cuz I'm nice?

Key isn't aware that Yevette is waiting for an answer. He eats his dinner with his head bowed over his plate.

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

Clyde?

Key looks up at Yevette. The doorbell rings. The two look at the front door and then back at each other.

CUT TO:

1 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

31

Key opens the door to see D.Jay standing there holding a big paper sack in his hands. Nola and Lexus stand behind him.

KEY

D.Jay. What are you...

D.JAY

I know you prob'ly sick of me, but... if I could just...

YEVETTE

(from behind Key)

Clyde? Who is it?

KEY

Just a...

D.JAY

(finishing Key's sentence)

Just an old school buddy. Ain't that right... Clyde?

Key looks at the sweaty, scantily dressed Nola and Lexus. Nola smiles as Lexus glares behind her braids.

(CONTINUED)

KEY

Yeah, come on in.

Yevette stands cautiously in the entrance way to the living room, her hands clasped together.

D.Jay enters followed by Nola in her short jeans mini skirt, and Lexus in tight spandex and over accentuated eye-liner.

Key feels pressure to explain.

KEY (CONT'D)

Uh, Yevette, this uh... this D.Jay. We went to East Middle together.

D.JAY

How you doin'?

YEVETTE

(polite but skeptical)

We were just having dinner.

Yevette's eyes move to Nola and Lexus. Key stumbles his words to introduce them.

KEY

And this here is Nola and...  
(not knowing Lexus)  
And... uh...

LEXUS

(mumbled)  
Lex.

KEY

Legs?

LEXUS

Lex. Like Lexus. Like you get in and drive a fuckin' LEX-US.

KEY

(with a big phony smile)  
And... LEXUS.

D.JAY

I'd a left 'em in the car but Nola saw y'all got a window cooler. She sniffs out window units like a bloodhound bitch, I'm tellin' you.

(turns to Yevette)

I meant that as a complement.

(CONTINUED)



YEVETTE

Would you all... like to sit down. Can I... get you all anything?

NOLA

No, ma'am.

D.JAY

I'm ah-ight. Thank you.

(to Key)

Somewhere we can talk, you and me?

KEY

Come on back in the kitchen.

Yevette is now left alone with two hookers sitting on her couch. She sits, leaning forward, trying to be polite.

YEVETTE

So. Where do you all work?

Lexus releases a gruff chuckle.

CUT TO:

32 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

32

D.Jay is brimming with enthusiasm. Key keeps his voice soft. \*

KEY \*

Opportunity? \*

D.JAY \*

Yeah. \*

KEY \*

For who? \*

D.JAY \*

For us. You and me. You got the gear. I got the styles. \*

KEY \*

One thing don't lead to another just cuz you want it. You may got some bacon, lettuce and tomato. But that don't mean I'm givin' you my toast. \*

D.JAY \*

The fuck you talkin' about? \*

(CONTINUED)

KEY

Look, D. I know you learned a whole mess of shit, hustlin' on the streets, like you say... but let me tell you what I learned workin' my job.

(cracks a beer open for D.Jay and himself)

There's two kinds a people. There's those who talk the talk and there's those who walk the walk. People who walk the walk, they sometimes talk the talk but most of the times they don't need to talk cuz they walkin'.

(D.Jay tries to follow)

Now folks who talk the talk, when it come time to walk, you know what they do? They talk somebody like me into doin' the walkin' for 'em.

D.Jay removes his pad and flips to a page of flow.

D.JAY

Okay... But just look it what I got here, mane.

KEY

D... were you listenin' to what...

D.JAY

(through clenched teeth)

I ain't a man to beg. But I will, nigga. Is that what you want? You think this easy... come over all hat-in-hand and shit?

(he has Key's attention)

Listen to what I got. You think this shit's whack.

(snaps)

I'm out'cha ya life. And that's my word.

Key takes a breath. He nods, ready to listen. D.Jay takes his time preparing.

KEY

I'm listening.

D.JAY

I'm goin'. Just...

(takes a breath)

Waitin' on my Mode to kick in.

KEY

Y'what?

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

Nothin'. Okay.

D.Jay presses the loop button on the small Casio keyboard. A  
simplistic beat sounds.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

It's called Pop It. It go...  
(reading)

These bitches pop it for some paper. Pop  
that ass for some cash flow...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

3 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

33 \*

Yvette is wringing her hands together. She nervously smiles at Lexus and Nola, trying to come up with something to say.

Nola beats her to it.

NOLA

I like your hair. Kind'a got that chocolate color in it.

YEVETTE

Well, thank you. I have a great guy who does it over in Germantown. The coloring, I mean.

NOLA

I try to do somethin' different with my hair every couple of months. Keep the tricks guessin', you know.

YEVETTE

Keep the what?

Another gruff chuckle from Lex.

NOLA

(pulling on her braids)

These gotta be re-done a lot, if I wanna keep 'em lookin' real. Cuz these ain't my real braids. They just extensions.

LEXUS

Nola, shut the fuck up.

NOLA

No one's talkin' to you, bitch. You shut the fuck up.

There is a loud pounding from the kitchen.

LEXUS

She don't want to know nothin' 'bout yo kitchen do.

YEVETTE

(trying)

Well, I think... they look very nice.

LEXUS

(to Yvette)

You don't gotta be nice to her just cuz she sitting on your couch.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEXUS (CONT'D)

If you think her head look like a dust mop, just say so.

YEVETTE

But I didn't. I mean, I don't...

Yevette can hear the pounding now, she turns to the kitchen, confused.

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

What in... God's...?

NOLA

I don't know why you gotta be so ugly. People say my hair looks sexy.

LEXUS

Yeah. And then they nut.

Yevette stands and moves toward the kitchen door.

YEVETTE

Clyde?

LEXUS

Ugly as a swamp duck ho, is what you look like...

CUT TO:

Yevette opens the door to the kitchen. What she sees confuses her.

D.Jay is caught up in his flow. It is biting, profane and bursting with energy. Key is slamming his beer bottle on the kitchen table to the beat, his eyes are closed, his head bobs to the flow.

D.JAY

(rapping)

Pop it for some, pop it for some paper.  
Pop it for some paper. Pop it.

KEY

(in a chant)

Now put your hands on your knees.  
Shake it, shake it, real fast. Shake it,  
shake it, real fast. Shake it, shake it,  
real fast.

(Key giggles)

That's the shit right there.

(MORE)

34 CONTINUED:

34

KEY (CONT'D)

Just needed some shake, naw what I mean?  
Needed some ass shakin'...

\*

\*

D.Jay turns around and stops, noticing Yevette and Nola. Key  
opens his eyes, a fat grin on his face.

\*

(CONTINUED)

KEY (CONT'D)

You run out a spit, nigga?

YEVETTE

Clyde?

The smile on Key's face disappears. He sits upright.

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

Clyde, what are you doin'?

Key takes a deep breath and looks at a smiling D.Jay. With confidence and a touch of abandon, Key responds:

KEY

Walkin'.

\*

CUT TO:

- 35 CLOSE UP OF D.JAY'S TURNTABLE - DAY 35 \*
- D.Jay puts on a record and speeds up the rhythm. Music continues. \*
- 36 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY 36
- EXTREME CLOSE UPS of outputs plugged into inputs, shelving added to the table, drilling screws into the wall.
- Key saws off the light from a desk lamp with an extendable arm. He then fastens the mic to the end of it with duct tape.
- 37 INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY 37
- The beat continues as Key and D.Jay shop for keyboards and samplers at various pawn shops.
- 38 INT. KING OF CLUBS - NIGHT 38
- Lexus dances, hangs from a pole, unfolds a wad around her middle finger and hands it over to D.Jay.
- Mickey unplugs a smaller mixer from his console in the DJ booth and hands it over to D.Jay.
- D.Jay hustles nickel bags to a few dancers in the back.
- 39 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY 39
- D.Jay sucks the last out of a roach and tosses the rest into a bowl. Key sets up his four track recorder - plugging in the ear phones. D.Jay hooks up Dr. Rhythm and puts beat to song. \*

(CONTINUED)

A large keyboard is plugged in. A label is taped to it: ELBOW. The melody is heard in the beat as D.Jay fingers the keys. Key nods, clear signal. Thumbs up.

KEY

Elbow on two.

D.JAY

(holds up the small  
keyboard)

Quarter O?

KEY

(switching channels)

Quarter O on One.

The music cross fades to the simple beat.

40 EXT. D.JAY'S STREET - DAY

40

D.Jay's Mode is heard - an 808 beat: BOOM... BOOM... BOOM.

Key is huffing as he carries the window air unit as D.Jay talks at him.

D.JAY

All my days I been listenin' to this beat  
in my head. Like a pounding. Sometime it  
sounds raw like an 8Ball joint. Sometime  
it go smooth like Otis Redding, ya naw  
what I'm sayin'. That beat. That song.  
That feeling in my gut. It's what I been  
callin' my Mode.

(Key struggles and huffs)

If my Mode is crackin', I can't be  
stopped. Like it's showtime and I'm like  
Mike. Cuz out here on the track... I  
gotta keep my game. It's hard out here  
for a pimp. Now, hold up... that sounded  
tight.

(D.Jay scribbles in his  
notebook)

It's hard out here for a pimp...

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

Key puts the air unit down to catch his breath.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

What? You tired?



1 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY 41 \*

Music returns to the simple beat as Key hammers plywood over the windows. D.Jay plugs in Christmas lights that he has hung around the walls.

Another lamp is plugged into the cluttered power pack. D.Jay squeezes in another plug for the turntable. He spins a record and lets it roll, blending with the beat.

42 EXT. D.JAY'S CHEVY - THE TRACK - DAY 42

Nola has mastered a pair of white platform boots. She prances alongside the Chevy, along the track, as D.Jay scribbles in his notepad seated in the driver's seat.

A trick's car drives up. Nola leans inside.

43 EXT. BY THE TRAIN TRACK - DAY 43

The trick's car pulls behind a brick wall, a train passes.

44 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT 44

Key and D.Jay push the small air unit into the window space. Key plugs it in and pinches the power dial.

KEY

We cool now.

Key twists the power switch and yelps as sparks fly.

45 INT. D.JAY'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT 45

Shug's TV along with all the lights blink out.

The beat is cut short as we:

CUT TO:

46 INT. D.JAY'S CHEVY/ TRICK'S CAR - DAY 46

CROSS CUTS of: D.Jay switching stations on his push button radio - Nola taking two wrinkled 20's from the trick.

Another commercial on another station - Nola rips open a condom and tosses it in her mouth.

The radio dial jumps back and forth - Nola turns her face away as sweat showers her off the trick's chubby face.

D.JAY

Goddamn...

(CONTINUED)

D.Jay turns off the noise and flips open his notepad.

7 INT. D.JAY'S CHEVY - SAME DAY

47

Nola climbs in the car covered in another man's sweat. She holds out two wrinkled 20's, but D.Jay is too busy writing flow in his note pad to notice.

Defeated and ignored, Nola places the two 20's on the seat. In silence, she carefully peeks over at his notes. D.Jay takes notice.

D.JAY

I'm tellin' you... this is hard work. To take what's in your mind... and put it into words that fit together like a puzzle...

D.Jay returns to writing. Nola curiously watches.

NOLA

I wish there was somethin'. You know, somethin' I could...

D.JAY

Shit, baby, you're my operation. You what they call my *primary investor*. Making all this shit happen one trick at a time.

Nola looks out the window, discouraged. D.Jay notices. He turns her face toward him. He gently touches her face.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Think about how I found you at the truck stop. You the smallest lot lizard I ever seen, trickin' them truckers for change.  
(serious)

I love you, Nola. Not like a man loves a woman. But like a brother. Like you my own blood. Cuz I know, girl. I know what it is to be lost. Wantin' to be a part of somethin'. And I'm tellin' you. You a part of this.

D.Jay takes her tiny hands and places them on the steering wheel. He wraps his hands around hers.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

You know what this means?

(she shakes her head)

Means we got our hands on the wheel. We in charge, you and me. None of these tricks out here. We in charge.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

D.JAY (CONT'D)

I wanna hear you say it, so I can believe  
in you like you do me. Go'on.

Nola feels D.Jay's warmth spread through her chest. His words  
are working on her.

NOLA

We're in charge.

CUT TO:

48 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - DINNING ROOM - NIGHT

48

Yvette made fried chicken tonight with mashed potatoes and  
purple peas. She sits stoned faced on her end of the table as  
Key fixes his paper plate to go.

KEY

You said you was okay with this.

YEVETTE

Yeah, that's what I said.

KEY

But that ain't what you meant?

YEVETTE

It's what you wanna hear. So let's just  
drop it. \*

KEY

I wanna hear what you really think.

YEVETTE

No you don't.

KEY

Yes, I do.

YEVETTE

You say that... but I know you just wanna  
hear what you want. So that's what I say.

KEY

I'm gettin' so sick of people tellin' me  
what I'm thinkin'. Like I don't know my  
own Goddamn mind.

(CONTINUED)

YEVETTE  
 Don't you dare take that tone  
 with me! I have supported you  
 in every...

KEY  
 We already talked about this,  
 so we wouldn't go round and  
 round when time came...

YEVETTE  
 (interrupting)  
 I'm thrilled, Clyde! What woman wouldn't  
 want their husband spending all their  
 time in a house full of hos?

Silence.

KEY  
 Yevette. This may turn out to be a big  
 nothing. But if I sink my ass into that  
 couch one more night... I swear to  
 Jesus...  
 (looks at his watch)  
 I'm late.

Key walks over to Yevette and kisses her on the cheek.  
 Yevette is motionless, even after Key walks out the door.

CUT TO:

19 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT 49

Key is stapling card-board drink holders to the walls. D.Jay  
 is eating a leg of chicken from Key's plate.

D.JAY  
 What is that shit?

KEY  
 Drink holders. Poor man's sound proofing.

D.JAY  
 Yeah, you ain't so dumb, huh?

A knock. Shug pops her head in.

SHUG  
 D, they's someone at the door for you.

D.JAY  
 You know my rates, baby.

SHUG  
 I don't think this guy wants no weed.

D.JAY  
 Go wake up Nola, then.

(CONTINUED)

SHUG

I don't think he want that either.

D.JAY

Shit. We gotta start making some rules  
round this crib.

50 INT. D.JAY'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

50

D.Jay admonishes Shug as he makes his way to the front door.

D.JAY

Gotta get one 'a them red  
light bulbs, put on the wall.  
Light it up when we workin'.  
You know, "recording in  
session" and shit...

SHUG

You tell me not to answer the  
door that'd be just fine with  
me. Gotta get up off the  
couch every time....

D.Jay opens the door with a jerk.

Standing on the porch is SHELBY, an optimistic looking white  
boy - age 25. He is wearing a white button-down shirt and a  
black tie.

SHELBY

Hey.

D.JAY

Shit, you Mormons are some brave mother-  
fuckers.

SHELBY

No. I'm Shelby.

D.Jay notices he is holding a large duffle bag.

D.JAY

Okay, you Shelby.

KEY

(from the work room)  
Come on back, Shel.

Shelby smiles at D.Jay as he passes. D.Jay is confused and  
unable to protest. He looks at Shug. She shrugs.

D.Jay creeps through his own livingroom listening to Shelby  
and Key talk with casual familiarity.

KEY (CONT'D)

Turntable's up. The mixer D. got has four  
inputs, so we should be good with both  
your boards.

SHELBY

Got a power strip?

(CONTINUED)

KEY

We tight. How many outlets you need?

SHELBY

Three. I brought my MPC.

Shelby's MPC 3000 is slammed down on the table.

D.Jay and Shug watch as Shelby removes two electronic keyboards and a drum machine from his duffle bag.

D.JAY

Hey, Key. Let me uh... let me holla at cha for a few.

Key leaves the work room behind. D.Jay leads him by the arm out of earshot of Shelby.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Who's that?

KEY

That's Shelby. He plays piano at my church. Thought he'd come in and help us develop our sound.

\*  
\*  
\*

D.Jay looks over at Shelby rolling up his shirt sleeves.

D.JAY

You know he white, don't you?

KEY

He's just light skinned.

CUT TO:

51 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

51

Nola, shy and curious, places a glass of Kool-aid in front of Shelby. He smiles.

SHELBY

Thank you.

NOLA

I just woke up. I ain't put any make-up on or nothin'.

D.JAY

(cold)  
Get on, Nola.

\*

Nola takes the hint and disappears.

(CONTINUED)

D.Jay studies Shelby from across the table. Shelby is aware of D.Jay's intense stare.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

You just come back from a funeral?

SHELBY

(taking off his tie)

Oh. I had to renew my driver's license today. I just decided, fuck it. I'm dressing up for this one. Shouldn't have gone with the white shirt, though. It bleeds in with the background. My head looks like it's floating in a tub of milk.

(shows D.Jay his license)

See?

D.JAY

(not even looking at it)

Look it. I don't know who you are but I fly the fuckin' plane around here. This is my shit. My music.

KEY

D.JAY

D...

You understand me?

SHELBY

Sure.

D.JAY

My crib. My way.

SHELBY

Word.

D.JAY

And if I decide...

(catching on)

WORD? Motherfucker, did you just say "word?"

KEY

That's just the way he... he... it just sound funny comin' from a white boy... but...

D.JAY

Sounded like a dig to me.

(CONTINUED)



SHELBY

A dig?

D.JAY

Like I'm being made to look like a chump  
in my own house.

SHELBY

I was told you wanted to make music. And  
it just so happens that I'm a musician.  
So that's why I'm here. I can be like...

Shelby burst into Flight of the Bumble Bee on his keyboard.  
He is quite impressive, D.Jay is silenced.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Or I can be like...

Shelby shifts into a funky soul riff, switching the piano to  
an organ with a push of a button.

Key smiles as Shelby tears up the keys. D.Jay sits down,  
humbled and curious. Nola and Shug peek around the corner.

Shelby lays down a wicked melody as the keyboard pounds out  
the percussion.

And then Shelby stops. He stares at D.Jay.

SHELBY (CONT'D)

This could go on and on.

(Shelby folds his arms)

But... you fly the plane, Mr. D.Jay.

D.Jay looks over at Key and back at Shelby. Suddenly he is  
very intimidated. \*

KEY

You seen what he can do. Now show him  
what you got. \*

D.Jay nervously flips through the pages of his note pad. \*

Shelby sips his Kool-aid waiting for D.Jay to say something. \*

D.JAY

(concealing his fear)

I keep this pad on me. Jot down some...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
 (nervous, changes subject)  
 Y'all wanna burn one first?

SHELBY  
 Naw, we can toke up later. Let's hear  
 what you got.

D.JAY  
 (flips through note pad) \*  
 I just got, like a... a few things \*  
 like... \*  
 (reading without passion) \*  
 I bet you won't beat that bitch. \*  
 Whoop that bitch. \*  
 Got us actin buck in this. \*  
 Hoes tellin me to calm down but I'm like \*  
 fuck that shit. \*  
 I'm already on that hypnotic and that \*  
 Grey Goose. \*  
 A couple of shots of Hen that just gave \*  
 me another boost. \*  
 I'm feelin'... \*

D.Jay looks up at Key who has a concerned, sour face. \*

D.JAY (CONT'D) \*  
 What? \*

KEY \*  
 Well, D... I mean that sounds good but... \*  
 thing is... we want some radio play, \*  
 right? And if you got a song called... \*  
 Beat that bitch... some might say it's... \*  
 degrading. \*

SHELBY \*  
 (in D.Jay's defense) \*  
 That's if *bitch* is a woman. This sounds \*  
 like a tear-da-club-up song. \*

D.JAY \*  
 No. I ain't callin' no ho a bitch. \*

SHELBY \*  
 I'm tellin' you, Key. All the bitches I \*  
 know are guys. \*

KEY \*  
 Y'all are preachin' to the choir. My \*  
 brother in law... borrows money off me \*  
 all the time... biggest bitch this side \*  
 of the Mississippi... But... \*

SHELBY

Alright... D.Jay. If you had to say  
somethin' different... other than beat  
that bitch... what would you say?

D.JAY

(thinks)  
Whoop that trick.

Silence. Heads nod. Everybody likes it.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

I think I like that better than beat that  
bitch. Like a chant. You know like...  
(a soft chant)

Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.

Key joins in. The chant get louder.

SHELBY

Head sets, y'all...

D.JAY & KEY

Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.

Everyone puts on their headsets. Shelby fires up the Key  
board and lays down a wicked theme.

SHELBY

Got some dark flow there. You  
just need the right... ghetto  
bottom to it. Some of that  
Dirty South, 808 bottom.  
Like...

D.JAY & KEY

Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.

Shelby adds a beat from the MPC 3000. Boom, Boom-Boom, Boom.  
The beat rumbles through the house. Nola and Shug can't stay  
away. They move into the doorway from the hall.

SHELBY

(to Key)  
Bring up his mic if you're rolling.

D.JAY & KEY

Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.

(CONTINUED)

D.Jay flips to a different page in his pad and puts his mouth to the mic. He is getting more heated, angrier. Directing his flow to Shelby. Proving himself.

D.JAY

(rapping)

I'm gonna make you suckers recognize I  
ain't playin' ho.  
If you violatin' off the top, trick, you  
gotta go.  
I done held in a lot of shit and I'm bout  
to flip.  
Now I think it's time to show you bitches  
who you fuckin' wit.  
D.Jay, that's the name.  
And I came to bring the pain.  
Ana in my chest got me bustin' at you  
lemon lanes.  
Y'ain't know, you fuckin' with a street  
nigga.  
From the gutter, pimp-type, slash, drug  
dealer.

Shelby notices Shug and Nola grinning from ear to ear. He waves them in. They cautiously flank D.Jay To hear.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(rapping)

Born and raised in the M, Memphis  
Tennessee.  
Before it's said and done you bitches  
gonna remember me.  
This only the beginning.  
I gotta a lot to say.  
It's been a long time and you got hell to  
pay.  
Ain't no love ho.  
Just bring it to the door.  
I bar none let my nuts hang to the floor.  
So if you want some, this is your death  
wish.  
Better come corrected cuz I'm gonna break  
you off trick.

It sounds so good! Everyone gets into it. Shelby, Shug, Nola, and Key chant with D.Jay.

EVERYONE

Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.  
Whoop that trick... Get 'em.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVERYONE (CONT'D)

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

The whole crew is tossing their arms up and down to the chant. \*

EVERYONE (CONT'D) \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... Get 'em. \*

Shelby hits his keys, making a dark explosion that ends the song. \*

Silence. Everyone is panting. Overwhelmed. Inspired. \*

51 CONTINUED: (7)

51

D.Jay, Key and Shelby all exchange looks. \*

SHELBY \*

Well, let's smoke some weed. \*

CUT TO: \*

54 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

54

Shug is washing dishes with Roger is on her hip chewing on a pacifier. She is singing a song with the beat as she works.

Nola enters and fills Shelby's glass with more Kool-aid.

NOLA

It's nice havin' company.

SHUG

Mn-hm.

55 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

55

The three men are sitting on the top step of D.Jay's front porch. They are passing a joint. Shelby is high and babbling.

SHELBY

(finishing up a healthy  
toke)

Thing is... and I believe this.  
(exhales)

Rap is comin' back home to the south.

Key moans in agreement as Nola hands Shelby his Kool-aid and sits next to him

SHELBY (CONT'D)

Cuz here is where it all started. Heavy  
percussion. Repetitive hook. Sexually  
suggestive lyrics. It's all blues. Back  
Door Man to Back That Ass Up. It's all  
about pain, and pussy and...

(quickly to Nola)

Oh. Sorry, honey.

(CONTINUED)

NOLA  
(laughing awkwardly)  
That's okay.

SHELBY  
(back to it)  
And... and... making music  
with simple tools. By any  
means necessary.

D.JAY  
By any and all means necessary.

SHELBY  
Whether it's Son House slappin' his  
guitar or Public Enemy samplin' Isaac  
Hayes. You get what you gotta say out.  
Cuz you got to. Every man, you know, has  
the right... the Goddamn right... to...  
(everyone waits, while  
Shelby tries to remember)  
... contribute a verse.

QUICK CUTS of another round of toking. We jump to later.

D.JAY  
You know... I may pimp. I may hustle. I  
may got to roll in circles that folks  
might find... you know, objectionable.  
But let me tell you... I roll with God.

KEY  
You got to. You got to!

D.JAY  
Cuz for me... God is peace of mind.  
(Key hums his approval)  
God is a *standard* that man should set for  
his'self. God... to me... is like... a  
distribution deal.

Another set of tokes. Jumping to later.

KEY  
With a whole album, ten or twelve is  
okay. But you make a demo that just gives  
a little bit of a taste, like what kind'a  
style we got. What makes us... us.

D.JAY  
Then we just gotta get it in the right  
hands. You know. Get us some tour  
dates...

KEY  
Tour dates? We get five tracks, I'll be  
grinning.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

(refers to his notepad)

Naw. I got this shit all mapped out. This my agenda, see? Look it. Three years from now we gotta win a Grammy.

KEY

(laughing, holding in  
smoke)

The fuck? We ain't gonna win no Grammy!

SHELBY

Well, you know, it's an honor just to be nominated.

KEY

See this is what I'm talking about, D. You get to thinkin' too big, you lose sight of the task at hand.

D.JAY

Then our first "task at hand" is get our shit together by the Fourth of July. Cuz I got somebody I gotta slip this shit to.

SHELBY

Who?

D.JAY

Ya'll know Skinny Black?

Silence. Key and Shelby exchange looks.

KEY

You mean, Skinny Black, Skinny Black?

D.JAY

Only one I know of.

SHELBY

I got all his early underground stuff. Back when he was good.

D.JAY

Nigga's paid... I say that's pretty good.

KEY

So... you really know him? You ain't just sayin' you know of him.

D.JAY

We went to different schools and all, but... Yeah. I know Skinny.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



55 CONTINUED: (3)

55

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
(to Shelby)  
Nigga just went platinum.

SHELBY  
Never won a Grammy.

D.JAY  
(points to his pad)  
Well, he don't got an agenda like we do.

CUT TO:

56 EXT. MEMPHIS STREET - NIGHT

56

A new beat blares over D.Jay's radio as his Chevy Capri rolls through downtown.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

\*

8 EXT. CRYSTAL PALACE SKATING RING - NIGHT

58

This is the South Memphis scene. Blacks, Mexicans and bold white rednecks roam the parkinglot in packs, scanning the fresh parade of young ladies. Music, fights, flirting.

D.Jay and Key sit in the front seat of the parked car. Shelby and Nola are outside, leaning against the back of the Chevy.

D.Jay has two Styrofoam cups. He produces a bottle of Crown Royal and begins making their drinks.

D.JAY

Way you been takin' care of me and mine... you get as fucked up as you want. I got your back tonight.

KEY

Ain't been lit like this in long time... I don't know if I should be... is that Crown? Oooo. Breakin' out the good shit. Pass that on over.

Outside, Nola and Shelby watch the cars roll by slowly - the nightly mating ritual.

NOLA

Do you got a regular job, like during the day?

SHELBY

You mean that which pays my bills but does not feed my soul?

NOLA

I guess.

(CONTINUED)

SHELBY

I restock vending machines. You know, soda. Candy. Microwave popcorn. All that shit. I gotta get up at the crack and hit all these truck stops off the interstate before I head over to the high schools. I'm alone all day and I smell like Skittles and sticky buns.

NOLA

I thought my job sucked.

SHELBY

Well, what I lack in benefits... I make up for in Moon Pies.

Inside the car, Key kills the last of his drink. D.Jay gives him another refill.

KEY

So this shit about Skinny... That's real? Cuz even if he listens to what we got, we don't know what he's gonna do with it. It's a one in million shot, D. One in a million...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

D.JAY

If I can pimp 20 dollar tricks out the back of a Chevy... I can pimp Skinny.

\*  
\*  
\*

KEY

I know it's the only plan we got but... Still sounds like winnin' the lottery.

\*  
\*  
\*

D.JAY

(lights a cigarette)  
Just get me there, Key, and I'll do what I got to do.

(points to himself)

This dog, you know, he got some tricks.

\*

KEY

You mean "old" dog?

D.JAY

Didn't say that.

Key thinks. Takes a drink.

\*

KEY

My wife... She a good woman. Feeds me. Loves me. Gets freaky on my birthday.  
(they both laugh)

\*  
\*  
\*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KEY (CONT'D)

But I... I can't help but feel... \*

(sadness hits) \*

You know I talked a big game to her when  
 I was young. My own studio. My own label.  
 Now I'm just payin' the rent. She don't  
 mind but for me... Just whole lot of the  
 same. \*

(tears hit Key by  
 surprise) \*

I ain't talked to nobody about this. \*

D.JAY \*

Go'on, Key. \*

KEY \*

(overcome) \*

I just been feelin' myself shut down.  
 Like I missed an exit, you know, on a  
 freeway, and I just can't... turn this  
 mother-fucker around. \*

(takes another drink) \*

I wanna give you my all, D.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (3)

58

KEY (CONT'D)

Cuz it ain't over for me. Naw what I mean? It ain't over.

(wipes away tears)

Damn weed and Crown got me cryin'.

\*  
\*

CUT TO:

59 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

59

D.Jay shuts the passenger side door of Shelby's car where Key has passed out. Shelby sits in the driver's seat.

SHELBY

Well, I better roll my ass back to Cordova. Been a night to remember.

Shelby's car takes off. D.Jay and Nola stand side by side at the curb. Both feel exhilarated and inspired.

NOLA

I's thinkin' about callin' my parents.

D.JAY

What fer?

NOLA

What we're doin' now. It just feels... important.

D.JAY

It is important. It's got to be. If it don't get important... I'm gonna shoot myself in the head.

Nola giggles and smiles.

NOLA

Thank you for letting me come tonight.

D.JAY

Hey. No problem.

60 INT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

60

Upon opening his front door, D.Jay and Nola have walked right into the middle of a serious argument.

Shug and Lexus are in each other's face. Lexus is holding Roger as he screams and cries.

LEXUS

You don't tell me what to do with my son, bitch! I'll do whatever the hell fuck I wanna do...

(CONTINUED)

SHUG  
You can't be screamin' like  
that, Lex!

LEXUS  
I pay for all this shit. This  
fuckin' house should be mine.  
(upon seeing D.Jay)  
Well, check this. Look who  
showed up. \*

Nola dashes past Lexus and clutches the door frame to the  
kitchen. She is fearful and a little paranoid.

LEXUS (CONT'D) \*

You supposed to pick me up three hours  
ago, D. I been standin' outside all night  
all by myself. Had to take a taxi all the  
way back, ate up all my little monies. So  
you ain't gettin' shit from me tonight.

D.Jay tries to ignore Lexus. He walks past her towards his  
workroom.

LEXUS (CONT'D) \*

You ain't gonna never be more than what  
you is, D. A fuckin' chauffeur. Yeah,  
that's right. Come to think of it, I  
wanna go make some money, I wanna go  
shake some ass, go suck some dick...  
(snapping her fingers)  
D.Jay go get the car, boy. I'm ready to  
make me some money. Go on, now. Run  
along, bitch.

D.Jay crosses to Lexus, fists clinched at his side. Shug,  
fearful for Roger's safety, intercepts - holding D.Jay back.

SHUG  
She holdin' Roger, D. She got the baby!

LEXUS  
Yeah, here it come. Come on pimp, keep this bitch in line. Go on, do your shit, nigga.

D.JAY  
(with restrained fury)  
You and me. We done, gal.

D.Jay turns, passing Nola, and disappears into the back of the house while Lexus continues to scream after him.

LEXUS  
Yeah, we done. Go on, play with your toys. Ya sorry-assed punk.

SHUG  
Lex, I'm tellin' you, you gotta back off...

D.Jay comes out of the back of the house with two dresser drawers filled with assorted clothes hanging out of them.

LEXUS  
What now...

Lexus calls after D.Jay as he opens the front door and tosses the dresser drawers out onto the cement steps.

LEXUS (CONT'D)  
The hell are you doing?!

Roger is screaming now. D.Jay abruptly turns into Lexus' face.

D.JAY  
You think your shit don't stink? You think that ass gonna be your meal ticket for the rest of your life, then you get on? See how you do without this mother-fuckin' chauffeur.

LEXUS  
I ain't pickin' any of that shit up, D. You want me to leave, I'll pick up. But you can't expect me... you can't do this... not right now!

D.Jay rushes back to the back room.

He pulls the baby crib out of the back room, ripping it against the wall as Lexus shouts.

LEXUS (CONT'D)

Don't you fuckin' touch my shit. I'll get  
it. I'll get it! Just GET OUTTA MY SHIT,  
D!

Shug tries to reason with D.Jay as he tosses the baby crib  
out the door.



SHUG

D, don't. She got the baby with her...

In the back room, Lexus starts stuffing her possessions in a bag, fearing she won't be able to take them with her. She is trying to juggle packing and holding on to Roger at the same time.

LEXUS

(cursing to herself)

Think I can't do on my own... like I need you...

(screaming out loud)

I can't do this now, D!

D.Jay bursts into the room, scaring Lexus, as he grabs her by the arm.

D.JAY

Out!

LEXUS

Don't touch me! Get'cha hands off me, D!

D.Jay pulls Lexus forcefully out of the room. Roger screams as Lexus pleads with D.Jay.

LEXUS (CONT'D)

Where you expect me to go? HUH?

D.Jay pushes her out the front door.

D.JAY

You can go to hell, all I give a fuck.

D.Jay slams the door in her face. Hearing Roger scream outside, he turns to find both Shug and Nola starring at him.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

GET'CHA GODDAMN EYES OFF ME!

Shug keeps her distance as D.Jay passes. He slams the door to his workroom behind him. A muffled beat can be heard. Nola rushes to the bathroom and slams the door behind her.

61 INT. THE BATHROOM - NIGHT

61

Nola removes the small bag of blow from her pocket. She snorts it up using her pinky fingernail. She then crawls into the bathtub and looks above her at the bare bulb.

The blow takes effect as the muffled sounds grow louder and closer. A moth flutters around the bulb, burning its wings.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

The beat stops.

CUT TO BLACK:

62 EXT. UNDER THE OLD BRIDGE - DAY

62

\*

D.Jay leans against his car and smokes a cigarette. The cars roll by on the bridge above as D.Jay stares at the Mississippi and ponders his troubles.

He pulls out his pad and stares at a blank page. Closing his eyes, D.Jay begins waving his hand up and down to a beat in his head.

We begin to hear the beat as we:

CUT TO:

63 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY

63

The beat continues as we MOVE to later that day. Shelby and D.Jay are huddled over the drum machine tapping out a new beat with their fingers.

SHELBY

Okay... wait... check this?

Shelby tries a new beat. Key adjusts the input level on his mixer, one side of his headset to his ear.

KEY

That's workin'. Kick that 8, man.

Key's beeper goes off - a frown comes to his face followed by a stressful breath.

D.JAY

Y'all keep talkin' on this 8.

SHELBY

Short for 800 megahertz. It's one of the lowest audible bass beats you can make. I'm talkin' serious, hoopty shakin' shit. It's that...

He demonstrates, tapping a square that creates a low "Boom" that shakes the walls.

D.JAY

Shit. Crack a tooth on that.

Key steps out of the room as Shelby starts laying down a tune to the beat on the keyboard - a wicked anthem.

(CONTINUED)

The two suddenly realize that Key is having an argument on the phone. They stop and listen.

KEY

(into the phone)

Like I said... when I finish up...

(listens)

I'm not gonna put a time on it. I'll get it done when I get it done. If I start telling you a certain...

(listens)

If I tell you a certain time, then you gonna hold me to it and I'll probably be late and I...

(listens, gets angry)

We're not gonna do this now... I said we're not...

Key notices D.Jay is watching him from the next room.

KEY (CONT'D)

We'll talk about this later, Yvette.

(listens)

Later, Yvette! Like I said...

Key looks at the phone. Yvette hung up on him. Key is about to slam the phone down on the receiver but manages to keep his cool. He hangs up the phone and walks back towards D.Jay.

D.JAY

We gonna get to work?

Key ignores D.Jay as he passes.

CUT TO:

64 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY

64

D.Jay is reciting rap from his pad as Shelby provides the beat loop.

D.JAY

(rapping)

Man it seems like I'm ducking, dodging  
bullets everyday.

Niggas hatin' on me cause I got hoes on  
the track.

But I gotta stay paid, I gotta stay above  
water.

Couldn't keep up with my hoes.

That's when shit got harder.

North Memphis is where I'm from. I'm  
seventh street bound.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Where niggas all the time end up lost and  
never found.  
Man these girls they do group things  
leave a big headache.  
I'm hopin every night they don't end up  
being dead..

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

And then everything stops. Key has turned off the sound of  
the drum machine and the keyboards. He is visibly frustrated.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

\*

KEY

I think we got to make a choice whether or not we want to make some free-style, free-for-all or if we gonna actually make a track. You know, one that might get some radio play.

D.JAY

I thought that's what we was doin'.

KEY

No. We doin' a whole lot of flow, is what we doin'. It just goes on and on and on.

SHELBY

There's no hook.

D.JAY

So let's get some hook. I mean, you the producer. Fuck. Just say what's gotta be done.

KEY

We gotta lay something down. Anything. Even if it's shit. Like I been saying, the way to completion is in layers.

D.JAY

I don't want to lay shit on top of shit.

KEY

(pissed, folding his arms,  
leaning back)

Well that's the wonder of audio tape, D. You can just tape right over the shit.

There is a silence that hurts. D.Jay stands up.

D.JAY

Do you need some ass? Cuz I got some right outside this door.

KEY

Man, fuck you, D.

D.JAY

Fuck me? Naw! Fuck Yvette! She the one got you wound like a clock...

SHELBY

Hey, guys. Let's keep it light.

KEY

(standing, furious)

You listen to me, ya dirt-rascal pimp.  
You keep my wife's name out-cha mouth.

D.JAY

Sound like she the one need to put  
somethin' in her mouth! Naw what I mean?

Key lunges at D.Jay. Shelby grabs them both as their faces  
get so close they could kiss.

SHELBY

Whoa! Could we not do this? Could we  
just... smoke a joint for Christ sake!

A knock is at the door. Everyone freezes.

D.JAY

Who is it?

SHUG

It's me, Shug.

D.JAY

We workin' now, Gal. What'chu want?

SHUG

I got somethin' for you.

The three men exchange looks and then carefully release each  
other. They all slowly return to their stations.

D.JAY

Yeah, come on, Shug.

Shug enters holding a box.

SHUG

I'm sorry, y'all. Didn't mean to disturb  
yo recording.

She removes a green lava lamp. Everyone looks at it with  
confusion and curiosity as she sets it up on the table.

SHUG (CONT'D)

They had this interview with Skinny Black  
on TV. Look like he got one of these in  
the studio he use. So I thought I'd go  
down to the Mall and get you one.

\*

(CONTINUED)

She turns it on. green colors ooze in a hypnotic motion. The men are captivated. Shug smiles at her contribution and leaves.

Silence.

D.JAY

(with awe and respect)

Now, that's bottom bitch right there.

KEY

Good woman. Good good woman.

SHELBY

Wow! It's like she was a little angel, just flew in and flew out.

D.Jay leans in and looks at the lava lamp.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

All of this. It's bigger just sittin' in this tiny room. We got everything we need and I ain't got shit in my head.

KEY

It takes time.

D.JAY

(holds his head)

I'm tryin' to squeeze a dollar out of a dime. I ain't gotta cent.

Silence. Shelby stares at the lava lamp.

SHELBY

Do you all believe in omens?

CUT TO:

65 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - LATER - DAY

65 \*

Shelby is laying down a simple melody on the keys, no percussion. Shug is listening intently.

SHELBY

Okay, I'm going to play with you until you've got the melody down. But don't rush it. We've got time to get it right.

Nola sits down in the corner of the workroom. She hugs her knees, nervous for Shug. D.Jay looks helpless in the corner = as he watches Shelby coax a performance out of Shug.

(CONTINUED)

KEY

Shug, I'm gonna need you to move closer  
to the mic.

(she complies)

Can you hear yourself. Say something.

SHUG

Hello?

Thumbs up from Key.

SHELBY

What we need right now is what we call  
"hook." It's like the chorus of a song.

(he hands a sheet of  
lyrics to Shug)

These are the lyrics. Real simple. But we  
need some soul behind it.

KEY

Kill the fans.

D.Jay snaps at Nola. She turns off the fans.

SHELBY

Okay, I suck. But I'm gonna sing it with  
you until you got it down. Cover your  
ears. \*

SHELBY (CONT'D)

(singing and snapping)

You know it's hard out here for a pimp. \*

When ya tryin' to get the money for the \*

rent. \*

With the Cadillac and gas money spent. \*

Cause a whole lotta bitches jumpin' ship. \*

(speaking quickly to Shug)

Sing with me. And...

Shug leans into the mic. She is timid and soft, occasionally  
looking at D.Jay for encouragement. \*

SHUG &amp; SHELBY

(singing with Shelby)

You know it's hard out here for a pimp. \*

When ya tryin' to get the money for the \*

rent. \*

With the Cadillac and gas money spent. \*

Cause a whole lotta bitches jumpin' ship. \*

SHELBY

Come on, Shug. Get behind it.

(CONTINUED)



She tackles the verse again, this time much more aggressively. Nola rocks back and forth, she snaps her fingers with Shug. \*

SHUG \*

(singing) \*

You know it's hard out here for a pimp. \*  
When ya tryin' to get the money for the \*  
rent. \*

D.Jay moves closer to Shug, drawn to her sudden talent. They look at each other as she sings: aggressive, passionate. \*

SHUG (CONT'D) \*

(singing) \*

With the Cadillac and gas money spent. \*  
Cause a whole lotta bitches jumpin' ship. \*

D.JAY

(firm, commanding)

Bitch, you better let it out.

D.Jay smacks her on the ass. It pushes Shug into a state of control. She sings right at D.Jay who glares and grins with awe and approval. \*

SHUG \*

(perfect) \*

You know it's hard out here for a pimp. \*  
When ya tryin' to get the money for the \*  
rent. \*  
With the Cadillac and gas money spent. \*  
Cause a whole lotta bitches jumpin' ship. \*  
(again, better) \*  
You know it's hard out here for a pimp. \*  
When ya tryin' to get the money for the \*  
rent. \*  
With the Cadillac and gas money spent. \*  
Cause a whole lotta bitches jumpin' ship. \*

Shelby barks at Key as D.Jay and Shug remain locked into each others eyes. This is his girl. \*

SHELBY

That's the money take, right there.

KEY

(rewinding, listening)

Hold on...

NOLA

Hey, I wanna do one.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

Nola, hush up!

\*

Nola shrinks back into the corner. Shelby barks at Key again.

SHELBY

You got that down or don't you?

KEY

Alright everybody out! We gotta work on this alone. You too, D. Let us work.

D.Jay is surprised at being kicked out of his own room - but he is quick to obey. They all exit, shutting the door behind him.

66 INT. D.JAY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

66

\*

D.Jay remains standing, staring at the closed door as Shug sits down on the couch, Nola beside her. It is as if the three are waiting for a baby to be born.

66 CONTINUED:

66

A muffled beat lifts D.Jay and the girl's attention to the door. D.Jay takes a breath, nervous.

\*  
\*

Through the door they listen to Shelby and Key shout. Then there is silence.

\*

Shelby opens the door.

SHELBY

(to D.Jay)

You're on, dog.

CUT TO:

67 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY

67

\*

QUICK CUTS: Red dots rise as the FOUR TRACK rewinds. Plug in. Push. Adjust levels. Scans through the menu of the MPC 3000. Key listens and then:

(CONTINUED)

KEY

D. We layin' you down now. That means it's a fixed length. Don't do more than what you got down on your pad.

D.Jay is scared and excited. He rubs the sweat off his palms and removes his notepad from his back pocket.

CUTS of rewinding tape - Shug's voice is playing in reverse.

KEY (CONT'D)

Alright, kill the fans.

The fans are turned off again.

KEY (CONT'D)

(hearing something in his headphones)

Is the TV on in the... Shhhhh.

All is quiet in the room. But outside the neighborhood is still alive. A pounding muffled bass beat can be heard.

D.JAY

Goddamn it!

D.Jay opens the bottom drawer behind him and removes two quarter ounce bags of bud.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(as he leaves)

This day is fuckin' with my Mode.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. R.L.'S HOUSE - DAY

68 \*

D.Jay knocks on the door of the shotgun house next to his.

R.L. opens the door - the man is muscular and fierce looking. Behind him are two of his friends - equally as fierce looking - playing on a Playstation. The rap music is deafening.

D.Jay puts on a smile as all eyes are on him.

D.JAY

R.L.... I know we've had some words in the past. Some of 'em wasn't too friendly. But I respect you and your boys right to do whatever it is you want to do in your own house and do it as much as you want to do it. But the thing is...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
 is I got something going on in my crib  
 that requires some... silence....

One of R.L.'s boys stands in the back - all eyes on D.Jay.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
 And though I would never demand... I can  
 only suggest with a gesture of  
 neighborly, you know... friendship...  
 (holding out the two bags  
 of bud)  
 ... to please... consider the MUTE button  
 for a spell.

R.L. takes the bags of bud, opens one, sniffs it. He then  
 points the remote in his hand toward the stereo. All goes  
 quiet.

R.L. shuts the door.

69 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - DAY

69 \*

D.Jay leaps his fence. A few children are running up his  
 sidewalk with squirt guns - screaming and shouting.

D.JAY  
 Uh-uh. Naw. Y'all take that shit up to  
 your own yards. Go play somewhere's else.

A brave boy squirts D.Jay in the side of the head and bursts  
 into laughter. D.Jay grips the dying tree in his front yard  
 and rips a switch off.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
 Oh, you think that's funny?  
 (running after the boy)  
 I know your daddy! I know your daddy!

The kids scramble in all directions.

CUT TO:

70 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - DAY

70 \*

D.Jay sits in his seat - he is almost out of breath.

D.JAY  
 We gonna need to get some more drink  
 holders.

KEY  
 Stand by everyone.

(CONTINUED)

SHELBY

Standing by.

D.JAY

Yeah, me too. I'm here.

Key hits it. He spins his finger in the air and mouths the words: Rolling.

Shug's voice explodes over the headphones. She sounds incredible. She has to cover her mouth she's so excited.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(rapping)

With my eyes I done seen some crazy  
things in these streets.  
Gotta couple hos working on the changes  
for me.  
But I gotta keep my game tight like Kobe  
on game night.  
Like takin from a ho don't know no  
better, I know that ain't right.  
The same people killed the same people  
deal.  
The same people live in poverty with no  
meals.  
It's fucked up where I live but this is  
how it is.  
It might be new to you but it's been like  
this for years.  
It's blood sweat and tears when it comes  
down to this shit.  
I'm trying to get rich before I leave up  
out this bitch.  
I'm trying to have things but it's hard  
for a pimp,  
but I'm praying and I'm hoping to God I  
don't slip

Shug's hook returns. Her and Nola are dancing to it. Key looks concerned. He keeps adjusting levels - something is wrong.

D.Jay is about to start on the second verse. Suddenly, the tape stops.

KEY

Cutting.

SHELBY

WHAT!

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY  
Nigga, I gotta another verse!

\*  
\*

KEY  
D, I gotta talk to you.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - LATE DAY

71 \*

D.Jay and Key are in a heated debate on the porch.

KEY  
You gotta understand... I only bring this  
up cuz things goin' so good. I mean this  
is goin' a whole lot better than I  
thought. I just want it to be perfect.

D.JAY  
It sounded perfect to me.

KEY  
It don't matter what sounded good to you,  
D. It matters what I hear through the  
current. And I'm tellin' you that  
microphone ain't shit.

D.JAY  
What's wrong with it?

KEY

(holding it up)

The mics we're using got a wider pattern,  
D. They're too flat. You start screamin'  
they distort and pop out.

\*

D.JAY

Just when I get up you gotta fuck with my  
Mode. I ain't gonna be that live again. I  
don't care what mic I'm on. Shit was  
live.

KEY

It was live, D. It was also distorted.

D.Jay storms off.

CUT TO:

72 INT. MUSIC SHOP - DAY

72

The SHOP OWNER is resisting D.Jay's hustle. He is a portly,  
red-breaded, sweaty guy, with black-rimmed glasses.

D.JAY

I just don't see why I gotta pay so much  
more money for that microphone and the  
one right next to it, look just like it,  
cost half. If I buy two can I get 'em  
both for ninety dollars.

Nola is bored and browsing through the CD collection.

SHOP OWNER

These are studio quality. They cost two  
hundred and fifty dollars. Why would I  
give you two at ninety apiece.

D.JAY

Cuz the customer always right. Ain't  
nobody told you that?

SHOP OWNER

Not in this case, sir, no. If you want  
quality, you have to pay for it.

The shop owner briefly looks over at Nola browsing the  
portable stereos.

D.JAY

What was that?

(CONTINUED)



SHOP OWNER

What?

D.JAY

What'chu lookin' at?

SHOP OWNER

Nothin'.

D.JAY

Now, hold up, Sparky. I ain't gonna pop. See the thing is... I got it good with that one over there. She my girl and all but she ain't really my girl.

The shop owner looks confused. D.Jay peeks over at Nola.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Now, she gonna wanna lock that door and see what kind'a specials you got goin' on in back. And me? I'm the kind'a man that can walk right outside and leave somethin' like her behind - cuz, truth is, she don't belong to me. Not like that.

(D.Jay pauses for effect)

And maybe, when she ready to go, she can take somethin' that don't belong to her neither.

The shop owner looks down at the microphone.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(shrugging)

Like you say... If you want quality... you gonna have to pay.

D.Jay pats him on the shoulder as he walks away.

He whispers into Nola's ear. She listens and then looks over at the nervous shop owner. She rolls her eyes and furiously whispers into D.Jay's ear. He whispers back - a little louder this time, grabbing her arm forcefully.

She pulls away with a jerk. D.Jay exits with a broad smile.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Y'all be good.

Nola inhales and exhales deliberately, turning the lock on the door. She turns to the Shop Owner.

(CONTINUED)

NOLA  
(unable to fake a smile)  
Hey.

CUT TO:

73 INT. D.JAY'S CHEVY - OUTSIDE THE PAWN SHOP - LATER - DAY 73 \*

Nola opens her door and slams it shut behind her as she plops down beside D.Jay. D.Jay looks at her, expectantly, but she reveals nothing.

D.JAY  
You got somethin' for me?

Nola explodes at D.Jay, hitting him in the shoulder. It startles him at first.

NOLA  
Don't you ever do that to me again!

D.JAY  
Now, hold up...

NOLA  
I ain't some fuckin' cash machine, where you can get shit for free! I gotta have a say in what I do. I gotta have a say! I ain't gonna suck dick every time you come up short! Fuck you, D! Fuck you!

D.JAY  
(pulling out a twenty)  
Now I was gonna pay you what you make... weren't in there for more than half a minute. Ain't like you sweatin' bullets in the back of some niggaz car... Hey you got somethin' for me? DO YOU GOT SOMETHIN' FOR ME?!

Nola reaches into her bag and throws the microphone at D.Jay.

NOLA  
Here! Take it! You fuckin' earned it.

D.JAY  
Shit, Nola! You can't be throwin' this! This here a dynamic mic, studio quality. Couple hundred dollars right here!

D.Jay realizes that Nola is sobbing. He tries to touch her but she pulls away.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
Now don't get like this. Hey. You heard me?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(it's rare that Nola  
cries, so D.Jay gets a  
little nervous)

We... We take care of our shit, Nola. By  
any means. We do what we gotta do. Ain't  
that right? Huh?

(No answer)

Look it. You think I want this? You think  
I wanna spend the rest of my life pimpin'  
yo pimped country ass... well, I don't,  
baby. NOT ME!

D.Jay grips the wheel attempting to quell his angry.

NOLA

(through her tears)

Don't you know, D? Don't you know what I  
do in them cars.

(sorrow over takes her)

E'erybody got somethin' to do! And I just  
want...

D.JAY

What? Say it!

NOLA

Somethin' I can...

D.JAY

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?!

NOLA

NOT THIS!

Nola tries to swallow her tears, looking out the window.

D.JAY

The way I saw it... you was on the other  
side of the table, you know, with me.  
More like a... a executive producer.

NOLA

Ain't that just another way to say I  
gotta eat dick.

The statement silences D.Jay. Nola wipes the tears from her  
face and the snot from her nose. D.Jay leans close.

D.JAY

I think I got you dressed all wrong.  
Bitch like you need to be in a suit. Get  
you a mobile with an earphone jack. I'm  
tellin' you...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)

once I get you into some different shoes,  
you gonna feel better... You gonna look  
like you in charge.

NOLA

(looks him dead in the  
eye)

D. I know when you mess with my head to  
get what you want. And I let you do it.  
Cuz sometimes I need my head to be messed  
with. But right now... just don't do it,  
okay?

D.Jay nods respectfully and starts up the car. They drive  
away.

CUT TO:

74 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 74 \*

The oven timer dings.

Yevette removes a baked ham from her oven.

5 INT. KEY'S HOUSE - DINNING ROOM/ INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - 75  
NIGHT \*

Yevette prepares a plate for herself at the empty dinning  
room table. \*

Key shouts at Shelby over the beat. \*

KEY \*

High hat! Put some high hat shit on top!  
Right there with the kick. It should go  
like, boom, boom, tack... ba-TEEK! \*

With a deep sigh Yevette looks at Key's empty chair. She then  
shakes the sorrow away, laces her fingers and bows her head. \*

Shug is laying down in the bathtub covered in blankets. Key  
is adjusting a mic positioned over her. \*

KEY (CONT'D) \*

Try it now, baby. \*

SHUG \*

(singing) \*

Keep Hustlin'... Keep flowin' . \*

KEY \*

(calling out) \*

How was that? \*

(CONTINUED)

SHELBY

(o.c.)

Tell her to put some dick in it!

KEY

(gently to Shug)

He say you need to put more dick in it,  
baby.

SHUG

(sweet as can be)

Okay.

We see Yevette pray.

YEVETTE

(praying)

Most gracious and heavenly father... We  
ask that you bless this food and bless...  
our home...

(CONTINUED)

Yevette cannot continue. Tears come to her eyes as she covers her mouth.

Looking at the empty chair, Yevette calms herself. There is a refreshing sense of clarity in her eyes - the woman has made up her mind.

CUT TO:

76 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

76 \*

Yevette is dressed in a conservative brown blouse, holding a covered serving plate. She knocks. Shug opens the door.

YEVETTE

Hi.

SHUG

Hey.

YEVETTE

I'm... my name is Yevette, I'm Clyde's...  
Excuse me... Key's wife.

SHUG

He in back with the rest of the fellas.  
They fixin' to cut.

YEVETTE

Cut?

SHUG

Yeah. They recordin' somethin'. It's what  
they call it. Cut.

YEVETTE

Well... I just wanted to drop this off.  
It's nothing, really. Just, sandwiches  
and... there's dill sauce in the middle  
to dip if...

Yevette hears a loud rhythm from the other room. She tries to fan away the tears welling in her eyes.

YEVETTE (CONT'D)

I don't want to disturb him or... or  
cause any fuss... I just...

(distracted by Shug's  
stomach)

Boy are you pregnant.

Shug takes the dish from Yevette and takes her by the hand.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

SHUG  
Come on in. It's okay.

CUT TO:

77 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT

77 \*

Shug opens the door to the back room where all the boys are crammed and working. \*

Nola is sitting on the floor by the fan carefully writing D.Jay on the tape labels; Key has his headphones on, testing levels; D.Jay mumbles through some flow scribbled in his notebook; Shelby is huddled by the MPC 3000 going over beats. \*

Shelby is creating really loud beats on the drum machine. He stops temporarily to speak with D.Jay. \*

SHELBY  
I think you should throw your best ball.  
To me that's the second bit.

SHUG  
Hey fellas?

D.JAY  
We gonna gab or we gonna roll?

Key slaps his hands together and turns around toward the table.

KEY  
(taking command)  
Alright, alright. Let's beat this bitch! \*

Upon seeing Yvette next to Shug, terror seizes Key as he snatches the headphones off his head and stands.

KEY (CONT'D)  
Oh... shit...

Everyone else in the room turns to see Yvette.

SHUG  
Shelby, Mickey... this here is Yvette.  
This is Key's wife.

(CONTINUED)

Shelby and Mickey stand. Yevette is thankful that Shug is doing all the talking. Key is paralyzed.

SHUG (CONT'D)  
 (handing the serving tray  
 to D.Jay)  
 And look, y'all. She brought everybody  
 sandwiches.

YEVETTE  
 There's dill sauce. For you to dip, if...  
 (her eyes meet Key's)  
 you all want...

D.Jay stands, facing Yevette.

D.JAY  
 You know, Key worked real hard on this  
 last one. You should stay and listen.

YEVETTE  
 I didn't want to interrupt. I thought...  
 it being dinner time...

D.JAY  
 We'd like it if you could stay.  
 (to Key)  
 Huh, Key?

Key remains staring at Yevette who stares back expectant,  
 nervous.

78 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - NIGHT

78

D.Jay is petting the new studio mic fastened to the desk lamp  
 arm.

D.JAY  
 This track here... It's a piece of my  
 heart. So, before I put my mouth to this  
 mic and do this, I'd like to bless it  
 with a kiss from our primary investor.

\*  
 \*  
 \*

D.Jay slowly spins the new mic to Nola. She is embarrassed  
 but Shelby encourages her.

SHELBY  
 Go on, girl.

Nola kisses the mic with her eyes closed. The mic spins back  
 toward D.Jay.

(CONTINUED)



## KEY

Well, just like our primary investor,  
this mic is real hot. So fans off.

The fans are turned off. A beat is heard as we push in on the  
blades slowly turning to a stop.

CUT TO:

79 INT. D.JAY'S WORK ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

79

\*

D.Jay is concentrating hard. His flow is tight and confident.  
Tape is rolling.

\*

\*

D.JAY

\*

(rapping)

\*

This is my life and it's a battle  
within'. I gotta survive even if I'm  
sinnin' to win.  
And if I show no remorse I reap the  
devil's reward.  
He said he'll give me riches but I'm  
searchin' for more.  
When I was young witness my dad standin'  
for right.  
Black pride in him even though he passin'  
for white.  
Took years from my life now I'm missin'  
it, mane.  
Mom on some other shit now I'm missin'  
the plan.  
So I'm stuck in that fuck the world mold.  
Adolescence to a teen the world been so  
cold.  
Then my pimpin' ass uncle put me up on  
the game.  
It really ain't no love it's bout that  
paper mane.  
Put me in the position got me out on a  
mission.  
Collectin' from the hos turned me about  
pimpin'.  
A nigga from Memphis dealin' with life in  
the struggle.  
Missin the gift I was givin so I just  
stay bout my hustle.

\*

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\*

Shug is heard in the hook. We cut back to her in the bathtub,  
recording the hook, singing soulfully into the mic hanging  
over her.

\*

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)

SHUG  
 (singing)  
 Keep hustlin'...

D.JAY  
 (rapping)  
 It ain't over for me, no it ain't over  
 for me.

SHUG  
 (singing)  
 Keep flowin'...

D.JAY  
 (rapping)  
 I'm'a step my game up and get what's  
 comin to me.

Hook repeats.

Shug sits in a chair in the corner of the room. She rubs her  
 stomach as her head moves to the beat, mouthing the words.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
 Now I'm just getting by and it's fuckin  
 with me.  
 See others doin' big things they was  
 nothing to me.  
 I'm seeing what I use to be and it's  
 lookin legit.  
 Got my hands on some music started fuckin  
 with it.  
 Put it down hard then I start bumpin to  
 this.  
 Let me check my connection cause we go  
 back in the day.  
 They was cookin for dro heard I was  
 hustling hay.  
 Got me connin' my nigga spittin game to  
 my hos.  
 This is my opportunity feel like anything  
 goes.  
 I was never s'pose to see the new  
 millennium mane.  
 And I refuse to let my daddy "Die in  
 vain".  
 So I give it my all you feel my struggle  
 and pain.  
 If you ain't feelin what I'm spittin  
 trick you lame to the game.  
 But the closest one to me know I'm holdin  
 it down.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)

You gonna feel me one day I'm gonna be hurtin the town.

\*  
\*

SHUG

(singing)

Keep hustlin'...

\*  
\*  
\*

D.JAY

(rapping)

It ain't over for me no it ain't over for me.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

SHUG

(singing)

Keep flowin'...

\*  
\*  
\*

D.JAY

(rapping)

I'm'a step my game up and get what's comin to me.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Hook repeats.

\*

As the track concludes we spin around the room, stopping briefly at each of our crew.

WE SPIN TO: Shelby on keyboard. SPIN TO: Nola listening. SPIN TO: Mickey grinning. SPIN TO: Shug closing her eyes and grooving. SPIN TO: Yvette looking at her man in awe. SPIN TO: Key winking at Yvette and pressing stop on the four-track.

\*

There is silence.

CUT TO:

80 EXT. ARNEL'S CLUB - NIGHT

80

D.JAY

(from inside the club)

You a business man, Arnel. Let me ask you somethin'. You ever get... depressed?

81 INT. ARNEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

81

Sitting on two crates, both D.Jay and Arnel share a blunt in the storage room.

They are playing dominoes.

ARNEL

You mean sad?

D.JAY

(thinks)

Way I see it. A man who make his own payroll. You know, hustlin' his own agenda?

(Arnel nods)

That's a whole lotta pressure to lay on a man. Not like his troubles stop at the end of the day. The shit stay with you.

(sighs)

I get down, that's all.

ARNEL

That's gonna happen when a man try to take charge of his own destiny. Hard thing to claim - destiny.

D.JAY

I got that taken care of.

ARNEL

You think so, huh?

D.JAY

Ain't like it's somethin' a man can't get control of. He just gotta do it.

ARNEL

Okay, D. Lay it on me. What's your destiny.

D.JAY

I aim to be a media empire.

ARNEL

And how you figure to be that?

D.Jay removes a zip-lock bag of light brown marijuana. Arnel eyes the bag.

D.JAY

Yellow and blue make green.

ARNEL

Is that...?

D.JAY

Uh-huh.

(CONTINUED)

ARNEL

(referring to his joint)  
Why the fuck we smokin' this?

D.JAY

This for Skinny.  
(D.Jay pauses for effect)  
When he come in tomorrow, on the Fourth,  
I'm gonna make a gesture. You know, my  
own little firecracker finale.

ARNEL

You just bein' friendly or you wantin' an  
autograph?

D.JAY

Autograph? Shit, I want a contract. I  
want distribution. Back-end publishing  
points. Fuckin' standees with my pimpin'  
mug on da front.

ARNEL

What'chu talkin' about... Standees?

D.JAY

(removes his pad)  
In two years, way I figure, Skinny gonna  
be wantin' my autograph. Cuz that's when  
I go platinum. Me. D.Jay...

D.Jay looks at a Skinny Black CD Release poster on Arnel's  
wall.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(glares with confidence)  
That's the name.  
And I came to bring the pain.

We PUSH IN on Skinny's face in the poster.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Ani in my chest got me bustin' at you  
lemon lames.

His Mode starts pounding as we PUSH IN CLOSER: D.JAY'S eyes  
and SKINNY'S FACE.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

CUT TO BLACK:

1A EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - SUNSET

81A \*

Establishing shot.

\*

1 INT. D.JAY'S BATHROOM - DAY

84 \*

D.Jay loops his black belt through and buckles it. Shug is sitting on the toilet watching him prepare for the evening.

He looks impressive, dressed in black with his long leather coat.

SHUG

Ain't you gonna be hot in your coat?

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

Good leather breathe a bit. Keep you at the... you know.... the temperature you wanna be at. \*

Shug smiles. D.Jay picks up a rolled up sock. A simple silver watch rolls out of the sock and into D.Jay's palm.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

This was my Daddy's. Ain't much shine on it but... you know, in the day, this was the shit. He worked for the school district... he fixed up all them school buses.

SHUG

Yeah?

D.JAY

Yeah. I see them buses today and I be all, "my daddy worked on them."

(a brief smile)

But, uh... he been doin' it for like, goin' on 10 years. So the school district gave him this. Thought about burying him with it... but I thought, you know, maybe I should have, like, a heirloom, you know?

He snaps it on and positions it just right.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Wear it for luck. Help me get my Mode on.

Shug stands up, nervous at first, but a deep breath calms her.

SHUG

I got you somethin'.

(Shug offers a small box)

I been watchin' the videos and all, and it be like all the rappers got some chain.

D.Jay opens it and groans in appreciation and awe.

D.JAY

Oh, shit!

He removes a gold medallion. It is in the shape of his name: D.JAY. \*

(CONTINUED)



SHUG

Always talkin' about your name bein' real, you know... thought people could see how you like it spelled out. With the J-A-Y.

D.JAY

See this is what I'm talkin' about. I gotta have my people think this shit up. Cuz I didn't even think of somethin' like THIS. You know?

(admiring it)

This shit is perfect.

Shug takes it from his hands and attaches it around his neck. Their faces are very close.

SHUG

D...?

D.Jay waits for Shug to continue but soon realizes she is crying.

SHUG (CONT'D)

I get like this... cuz I'm pregnant.

(trying to collect herself.)

Lettin' me sing. On the demo, like you let me do. I felt...

(she wipes her face and tries to breath)

Special. And I know, you gonna be movin' on and movin' up. And y'all gonna get really good people backin' you up.

(D.Jay wipes away her tears)

But for me... you need to know, it meant the world to me. It meant the world. And I wanted to thank you.

D.Jay kisses her on her wet cheek. He lifts the D.JAY medallion and looks at it.

CUT TO:

\*

6 EXT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

86 \*

D.Jay and Shug cross to the door. They peeks outside to see Shelby, Key, and Nola waiting by the Chevy. \*

KEY

(from the street)

Don't you gotta be there at nine?

D.JAY

(calls out to Key)

He gonna be there all night, Key.

(to Nola)

Go calm that nigga down.

Nola joins the others. D.Jay checks his pockets. Shug sees he is nervous.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

I ain't scared, you know?

SHUG

I know.

Shug gently touches his arm. D.Jay nods and closes the door. He crosses to his crew by the car but he is preoccupied with the sensation of Shug's touch.

SHELBY

(looking at the medallion)

Oh wow. Check it out! How cool is that?

KEY

I got extra demos in the car in case he got some label folks around. They cassettes now. He want a CD, he gonna have to hit us back.

SHELBY

(still enamoured with the medallion)

I want one of these, man. Do I get one?

KEY

(noticing D.Jay is preoccupied)

What's wrong with ya, D?

SHELBY

You got your Mode on?

A thought hits D.Jay.

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

86

D.JAY

Hold up.

D.Jay bounds up his steps.

87 INT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - DAY

87 \*

He throws open the front door, startling Shug who has been spying out the front window.

D.Jay grabs Shug with controlled force bringing his lips to hers.

The girl collapses under his uncharacteristic passion. She moans, clutching his face, as he holds her almost upside down in his embrace.

The kiss finally concludes. D.Jay stands Shug upright and burns into her eyes with his. Shug holds the bottom of her stomach and breaths evenly trying not to give birth right then and there.

D.Jay nods proudly, certain of one thing in his life if nothing else.

He shuts the door behind him.

D.JAY

Yeah, I got my Mode.

\*

CUT TO:

10 EXT. ARNEL'S CLUB/ D.JAY'S CAR - LATE DAY

90 \*

D.Jay pulls up in his Chevy into the parking lot. The music stops as he turns off the car. He slides a demo tape from a stack positioned on his dash.

D.JAY  
(looking into the mirror)  
Show time, D.

He steps out of his car. His confident swagger ebbs as he sees the tricked out Cadillac Escalades parked out front..

He swings the front door open and slams into YELLOW JACKET, a large looking man dressed in (surprise) a yellow jacket.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
What's up, Cuz. Happy Fourth.

\*  
\*

YELLOW JACKET  
Sorry man, we're closed for tonight.

D.JAY  
Arnel know I'm supposed to be here.

YELLOW JACKET  
It's a private party and I know everyone who supposed to be here. So...

Arnel calls from the back.

ARNEL  
Hey! He good. He good, man. I already told Skinny.

YELLOW JACKET  
(chews on a tooth pick)  
Ah-ight. Show me some love, bra.

D.JAY  
I don't tip the doorman, "Bra."

YELLOW JACKET  
Put your arms up.

D.Jay sighs and complies. Yellow Jacket pats him down.

YELLOW JACKET (CONT'D)

Welcome to the party.

CUT TO:

91 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - LATE DAY

91 \*

D.Jay enters through the front door of Arnel's. He cautiously scans the place for Skinny Black.

Music blares. Twenty or so have collected in front of the large table. Skinny remains hidden.

Arnel breaks D.Jay's concentration.

ARNEL

They aim to party tonight.

D.JAY

Where's he at?

ARNEL

Up yonder at the big table.

D.Jay looks to the mass of bodies, all with their backs turned toward him. Girls in booty shorts giggle and worm their way through the onlookers.

D.JAY

I don't see him.

ARNEL

I'll take ya on over. You ready?

D.JAY

Shit, I ain't in no rush. Can I get a drink first?

Arnel and D.Jay move to the bar. Arnel pours a drink while D.Jay's eyes scan the face of the entourage.

ARNEL

It's always strange to see him, you know. Up close. Bein' that I known the man all his life, I still got it in my head that he a hundred feet tall from that music video where he walking through that city like King Kong.

D.Jay turns to Arnel and drinks.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

They do that shit with computers. He ain't that big.

ARNEL

(can't hear)

Huh?

D.JAY

I say, he ain't that big!

A loud, annoying voice sounds over the party.

SKINNY BLACK

WHO THE FUCK IS THAT?

D.Jay and Arnel freeze as the group separates and stares back at them.

Sitting at the table wearing black, bottle-rimmed sunglasses, camouflage designer threads, and a mouth full of platinum, is none other than SKINNY BLACK.

D.Jay was right - he's not that big.

SKINNY BLACK (CONT'D)

I can't believe what my own Goddamn eyes is seein'! I'm gonna have to get me a seeing-eye-nigga just tell me what I'm lookin' at fo'sho!

D.Jay can barely breathe. He believes Skinny is talking about him.

SKINNY BLACK (CONT'D)

Is it? Can it be? My one, my only?

D.Jay is about to answer, but is cut short by a deep, booming voice from behind him.

SLOBS

SKINNY, DAT YOU?

Arnel and D.Jay turn to the door and see SLOBS, an enormously round man dressed in a blue velour jump suit.

SKINNY BLACK

SLOBS!!!

They dog each other as they approach.

SLOBS

Is that my bone assed, buck-toothed, Ethiopian poster-boy, too big for his own pampered britches, mother-fucker?

SKINNY BLACK

You corn-fed, belly bustin', ass crack as long as the fuckin' M-I-crooked-letter-crooked-letter--I-P-P on ya own feet cuz you can't see ya own dick when ya take a piss, bitch!

They are both in each others face. All is quiet. All eyes on them.

SLOBS

(big ass smile)

Yeah, that's me, baby.

They embrace and mumble incoherent love to each other.

SKINNY BLACK

Back in the day, nigga... back in the day... back... IN... THE... DAY!

(leads Slobs to his table)

Need to get a drink in ya hand and a pussy in ya fat lap! Com'on! Hey Tigga! Tigga, Slobs from the hood up in this!

Slobs bumps past D.Jay on his way over. D.Jay keeps his composure, still shell-shocked from earlier.

ARNEL

You ready to go over?

D.JAY

Hold up.

92 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB ~ BATHROOM - NIGHT

92 \*

D.Jay opens the door to the cramped bathroom. A drunk kid in baggy jeans is drying his hands under a air-dryer. D.Jay waits as the dryer stops. The drunk guy pushes the button again to start it up.

D.JAY

(tossing him out)

They dry, punk!

The door slams. He faces himself in the mirror.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Get'cha Mode on, D.

He is now ready.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

ARNEL

(v.o.)

Skinny. I think you already know my boy  
D.Jay.

CUT TO:



3 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - NIGHT

93

Skinny Black looks at D.Jay with an absent expression. He is surrounded by guys on cell phones and tight dressed honeys.

Skinny squints behind his glasses.

SKINNY BLACK

Hey... I don't know who this nigga is.

D.Jay jumps, in extending his hand.

D.JAY

Good to see you again, Skinny. Been a while since you been back home, ain't it?

SKINNY BLACK

Got my people tellin' me I been away too long. Like I'ms comin' back. Like they's a back to get back to. I said, FUCK! Best place to keep Memphis is in my rear-view, ya-naw-I'm-sayin'? Ya-naw-what-I'm-sayin'? Who-ever-the-fuck-you-is, ya-naw-what-I'm-sayin'?

ARNEL

Skinny, this is the man I was telling you about.

SKINNY BLACK

(remembering, to Arnel)

Oh! Oh! Oh this here the man?

D.JAY

That's me. I'm the man.

ARNEL

This here, D.Jay.

D.JAY

We went to different schools but...

Skinny Black flashes a gold grin.

SKINNY BLACK

D.J.? D.J. what? Like D.J., like short fo'somethin' D.J.? Or you sayin' like you a

(motions like he's scratching)

Vip, vip, verp kind'a D.J.?

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

(awkward)

Just...

(fumbles with medallion)

...just D.Jay.

SKINNY BLACK

Nigga, you got somethin' for me?

D.Jay is thrown by Skinny's directness. He holds a demo tape in his hands.

D.JAY

Well, yeah. But before I give over, I just gotta say...

SKINNY BLACK

Every time I come to Memphis, my boys hook me up wit some dirt weed, taste like they grown it out the ass a' some redneck. But my boy Arnel say you slangin' the prime.

Realizing now, what he is referring to, D.Jay reaches in his pocket and pulls out the prime pot. He hands it over to Skinny Black, but the man in the Yellow Jacket grabs it first.

SKINNY BLACK (CONT'D)

What do I owe you?

D.JAY

It's cool. You know, we old friends, Skinny.

SKINNY BLACK

Have a seat my blood brother.

(smells the pot)

Mmmmm. You ain't fuckin' around with this bag. I just might be in love.

D.JAY

Remember when you was at the drive-in?

SKINNY BLACK

(unable to hear over the music)

What?

D.JAY

The drive-in. You was sellin' your underground tapes...

(CONTINUED)

Tigga pulls a HOT GIRL dressed up in a sexy UNCLE SAM outfit, onto his lap for Skinny to see. Skinny explodes with horny delight. \*

SKINNY BLACK  
(checking her out) \*  
GOD... BLESS... AMERICA! GAL THAT I \*  
LOOOOOOVE! \*

Tigga and Skinny's crew begin singing and cutting up. \*

SKINNY & CREW \*  
(loud and obnoxious) \*  
STAND BESIDE HER! AND GUIDE HER... \*

D.Jay looks down at his demo tape in his hands. He is losing control of the sit. He started off wrong. He rubs the back of his neck and then adjusts the chain and medallion around his neck.

The sound in the room fades away. D.Jay inhales and glares at Skinny Black. \*

His MODE comes to his aid: BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! \*

He grins, takes a breath and interrupts Skinny Black and his crew. \*

D.JAY  
Hey, Skinny? Man, I wanna ask you  
somethin'.  
(Skinny passively looks  
his way)  
What the fuck happened to you?

Skinny Black and Yellow Jacket look at D.Jay, stunned into silence.

SKINNY BLACK \*  
Huh? \*

YELLOW JACKET  
The fuck did you just say?

D.JAY  
(cool as ice)  
I remember when you started cuttin' that  
underground shit... it just flew through  
Memphis. Like a typhoon. I couldn't walk  
my ass down half a block without the  
pavement crumblin' under my feet from  
some Cadi boomin' with yo tracks out the  
back.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(D.Jay looks a little sad,  
turns away)

I just miss ya Skinny, that's all.

Skinny doesn't know what to say - he struggles with anger and anticipation. He pushes the UNCLE SAM GIRL away. \*

SKINNY BLACK

Miss me? Nigga I don't even...  
(pissed)

(MORE)

SKINNY BLACK (CONT'D)

So. What? You sayin' I can't cut it no mo? Like I ain't the shit?

D.JAY

You know one day this all gonna be gone. This club, this city, the whole fuckin' US of A. It all gonna turn to dust, you heard me? But then a whole new civilization of people gonna dig. They gonna find, like, the pyramids in Egypt, they gonna find the fuckin' Empire State. But if they wanna know about *my* people, my hos, my boys... all they gotta do is find your first underground tape...

Skinny Black joins in. Nodding.

D.JAY & SKINNY BLACK

North Third Thugs.

Skinny is now completely into D.Jay, leaning in over the small table.

SKINNY BLACK

You know, I cut that motherfucker myself. In my mommas laundry room, man. It raw as hell but I put everything I had in that. Made my own covers with magic marker. Talkin' real ghetto, D.

D.JAY

But that's the sign of genius, Skinny. It's not enough to fuckin' climb Mt. Everest... you gotta do with the least amount of tools.

SKINNY BLACK

It's about the man. One man.

D.JAY

One man and his skills.

SKINNY BLACK

Like the samurai say. You know, a sword only as powerful as its master.

D.JAY

Ain't the size of the dog in the fight but the...

D.JAY & SKINNY BLACK

... fight in the dog.

SKINNY BLACK

(slaps hands with D.Jay)

My nigga.

D.JAY

Now I know a man gotta do what a man gotta do.

(glance at Yellow Jacket)

Gotta surround himself with people think they gotta say in who Skinny Black is. Them big labels ain't nothin' but a pimp of a different color...

SKINNY BLACK

Oh they pimpin' me. Ain't no lie. I'm a ho on the corner. No doubt. Got me tourin' the chittlin' circuit all through the summer... gotta split my paper with them greedy number-crunchin' motherfuckers. Ain't like it was back in the day.

D.JAY

Skinny... you ain't gotta explain shit. You do what Skinny Black wants to do and Memphis'll be there for you. Like you was here for us back in the day.

D.Jay removes an old cassette tape and slides it across the table to Skinny Black.

Skinny looks down to see his old underground tape. He colored his own name like a graffiti tag. It is over a decade old. Skinny carefully picks it up and, to the wonder of all around, removes his shades.

SKINNY BLACK

My underground. Look, Tigga. Slobs, look at what this nigga got.

(genuine)

I... can't believe you got one of these, man. I don't got none of these left.

D.JAY

(leans in for effect)

Skinny, you got thousands of these in you. Just come back home.

Everyone is silent. They all look to Skinny Black.

SKINNY BLACK  
 (to D.Jay, holding up his  
 bag of prime weed)  
 You stand behind yo' product?

D.JAY  
 Is a pig's pussy pork?

CUT TO:

94 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - BACK ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

94

Rap music, fuzzy and heavy on bass through Arnel's twenty year old amplifiers.

D.Jay's fingers break open a cigar, gutting the tobacco and replacing it with his New Orleans herb.

With a roll and a lick, the two are ready to share a smoke - the blunt is passed back and forth between D.Jay's lips and Skinny Black's platinum grin.

They laugh together from a separate room of the club. Skinny's friends continue their party from a distant table.

Skinny is now half way through a story that he can barely get out - a mild case of the giggles.

SKINNY BLACK  
 Had me this Mustang. Fuckin' tight ride.  
 hood snout, maple dash... two-toned  
 metallic monster motherfucker. I go to  
 m'lady's crib over in the Courts.

D.JAY  
 (laughing)  
 I had a lady in the Courts, too. Had a  
 few.

SKINNY BLACK  
 I go inside. Get my ugly on. Come out and  
 my ride is gone. And I nut pretty damn  
 fast... these fools must'a snagged my  
 ride  
 (snapping his fingers)  
 like *that*.

D.JAY  
 Gone in sixty seconds.

(CONTINUED)

SKINNY BLACK

So I call up my crew. I say, "pick me up." Cuz I knew they only one place these fools go cruisin' in my hot ride.

D.JAY & SKINNY BLACK

Millbranch.

D.JAY

Nobody cruise Millbranch no more. It all down' on Riverside now.

SKINNY BLACK

So we roll down to Millbranch and we wait. And sho'nuff. Here come my car.

(laughs)

We roll up in front. Box them motherfuckers in. Twenty niggaz come rushin' at 'em. Pullin' these fools out my ride. And I'm screamin' like a woman, "Don't touch my car! Don't touch my car! Ain't you seen my two-tone metallic?"

Their laughter dies down. They both take another hit off the blunt. D.Jay eases in for the kill.

D.JAY

Skinny. I ain't a scrap of cheese off yo' table... but...

(holds up the demo tape)

My heart beats in this motherfucker. I put my blood in it.

SKINNY BLACK

Is that for me? Can I take that?

D.JAY

I ain't tryin' to play you. You the only one I want to give this to. Cuz I respect you. Cuz we old friends.

SKINNY BLACK

That's the truth man, and I *miss* you, Jay.

D.JAY

(lifting his medallion)

It's D.Jay. Ain't no tag. Just D.Jay.

SKINNY BLACK

D.Jay. Okay. My bad, D.Jay.

(CONTINUED)



D.JAY

If you could just give me a shot. Help get my voice heard... that.... that would... I don't have words, Skinny. I don't have words.

SKINNY BLACK

Hey man... I got somethin' to tell you.

D.JAY

Okay.

SKINNY BLACK

It's important. You listenin'?

D.Jay Nods. Skinny Black is having a hard time focusing. He wobbles on his feet and grabs on to D.Jay.

SKINNY BLACK (CONT'D)

Everybody gotta have a dream.

(again)

Everybody... gotta have a dream.

D.Jay nods, not knowing what to make of this statement. But he rolls with it.

D.JAY

I hear you.

Skinny blinks, steadies himself.

SKINNY BLACK

Where da bathroom at?

CUT TO:

95 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - AT THE BAR - LATER - NIGHT

95

D.Jay pulls himself up to the bar. He tries to conceal his glee from Arnel, but a grin escapes.

ARNEL

How'd it go?

D.JAY

I fuckin' played it like a pro.

ARNEL

(slides D.Jay a drink)

Tell it, D.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

My Mode is poundin'. Got it deep in my gut. All he gotta do is play it. Gonna be... undeniable. Just you wait.

(takes a swig)

You gonna need to get yo weed from some other hustler.

ARNEL

I'm happy for you, D. You earned it.

D.JAY

My ladies. My precious... Shug... and Nola. How they came through for me. Let me tell you, Arnel... I just wanna give back to 'em. Ain't gonna feel like a man 'till I give back.

ARNEL

(takes a hold of his arm)

You on your way.

D.Jay takes one last swig of beer and slaps a twenty on the bar as well as a demo tape.

D.JAY

That's for you, Arnel. Gonna take a piss and roll.

ARNEL

See you, D.

CUT TO:

96 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - BATHROOM - NIGHT

96

D.Jay bursts into the bathroom, catching his reflection in the mirror over the two sinks. He focuses his eyes, chasing his buzz away.

And then an echoed mumble from somewhere in the bathroom. It sounded like an attempt at language but came out as a garble of slurs and vowels.

D.Jay is cautious more than curious as he opens the only stall in the bathroom. He slowly pushes it open.

Skinny Black is passed out on the floor in front of the toilet with his pants around his knees. He is mumbling incoherently, occasionally flinching like a dog having a nightmare.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY

Ain't this some shit.

D.Jay kneels down next to him, almost at eye level with Skinny Black.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Hey? Skinny? You need to piss, let's try it standing up.

SKINNY BLACK

(barely audible)

Talk to me... about... shit...

D.JAY

That's right. I'm talkin' to you. You need some help, dog?

No clear answer comes from Skinny Black. D.Jay stands Skinny Black up, holding him in place with one hand.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Tell you what? Ain't many in this world put a man's dick away for a brother who can't. Best show me some love for this.

D.Jay pulls Skinny Black's pants up and buckles his belt. Skinny Black is still mumbling.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

You know... we go on the road one day, I ain't gonna do this. A man could do all kinds of trouble to you right now, you wouldn't even...

Something catches D.Jay's eye. He lets go of Skinny Black, letting him fall to the floor - smack.

D.Jay is stunned. He cannot swallow, he cannot blink, he cannot look away.

He kneels before the toilet looking inside. He slowly reaches into the toilet to retrieve his demo tape.

Dripping with piss and God knows what else, D.Jay lifts the tape out of the toilet. The tape from inside the cassette has been pulled out, hanging like a long tangled braid.

A rage builds in D.Jay as he lifts Skinny Black up against the wall. The rage turns to unbearable hurt.

(CONTINUED)

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
(Holding the tape up)  
Tell me this fell out'cha pocket. TELL ME  
THIS FELL OUTTA YOUR POCKET!

Skinny wakes up briefly, slurring, trying to talk.

SKINNY BLACK  
Hey...

D.JAY  
Hey, what... go on, Skinny, speak up.

SKINNY BLACK  
You... you could...

D.JAY  
What? What can I do?

SKINNY BLACK  
You can suck my dick, bitch.

D.Jay nods. His rage is oddly calm.

D.JAY  
You suck on this.

D.Jay crams the demo from the toilet into Skinny Black's mouth. He pushes it in hard.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
SUCK ON THIS!

D.Jay's fury overtakes him. He throws Skinny Black to the floor and pounds his face repeatedly.

After five hits to his face, Skinny reaches into his coat and removes a silver .45 pistol. With another punch from D.Jay, he drops the gun to the floor.

D.Jay grabs it and pushes the muzzle up against Skinny Black's face.

D.JAY (CONT'D)  
Oh, you want this? YOU WANT THIS! Look at  
me, Skinny. LOOK AT ME MOTHERFUCKER!

There is sudden silence save the music pounding from the club outside. D.Jay realizes where his anger has taken him. Reason returns. Fear pervades.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(softly)  
Skinny?

D.Jay kneels down next to Skinny Black, lightly slapping his bloody cheeks attempting to bring him back to consciousness.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

You need to wake up, now. Come on... wake up, Skinny.

Skinny lets out a groan. D.Jay stands quickly, suddenly spooked.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Shit. Oh, shit. D. What did you do...

The noise from outside increases suddenly as the man in the YELLOW JACKET enters the bathroom.

YELLOW JACKET

Yo, Skinny! Where...?

He sees Skinny on the floor and D.Jay standing above him holding the gun.

YELLOW JACKET (CONT'D)

What the fuck!

It all happens at once. Yellow Jacket quickly reaches inside his coat pocket. D.Jay simply lifts his hand and fires, hitting Yellow Jacket in the shoulder.

Blood splatters against the back wall. Yellow Jacket screams and slips falling to the dirty floor tiles - his fresh wound hitting first. Another howl.

D.Jay steps back in fear. He points the gun at Skinny and then back at Yellow Jacket struggling on the floor and then to the door, open wide to the now silent club.

D.JAY

(to Yellow Jacket)  
Don't you move! You hear me!

D.Jay notices Yellow Jacket looking out the bathroom door to his friends.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

(calling out)  
Hey! I'm comin' out! I see a gleam of steel, I'm'a shoot. Anybody don't wanna get shot best step back! I'm coming out!

\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: (4)

96

D.Jay keeps the gun pointed at Yellow Jacket as he creeps to the front door.

97 INT. ARNEL'S CLUB - NIGHT

97

D.Jay appears in the doorway of the bathroom before a silent and captive audience. Yellow Jacket squirms on the floor, clutching his shoulder. He clinches his teeth attempting to contain his pain.

Tigga moves forward. D.Jay points the gun right at Tigga.

D.JAY  
Not tonight, Tigga.  
(Tigga stops)  
You wanna test me? Back up!  
(they aren't fast enough)  
NIGGA BACK UP!

D.Jay's shout scares himself just as much as it scares the crowd.

As he backs toward the door, D.Jay notices Arnel behind the bar, looking at D.Jay with confusion and fear. D.Jay attempts to apologize with his eyes but it is already taking too long to get out of the club.

With a burst of speed, D.Jay takes off out the door.

98 EXT. ARNEL'S CLUB - NIGHT

98

D.Jay runs to his car, trying to keep Skinny's gun pointed at the front door just in case. He scrambles for his keys.

The Chevy roars as D.Jay cranks it to life.

Four members of Skinny Black's crew leap out of the club. One aims a pistol at D.Jay's car as he flies out of the parking lot. He fires twice. The back window of the Chevy shatters.

CUT TO:

99 INT. KING OF CLUBS - NIGHT

99

D.Jay enters the club crossing to the DJ booth immediately. Mickey is changing discs.

D.JAY  
Mickey.  
  
MICKEY  
Hey, man. How'd it go?

(CONTINUED)

D.Jay moves Mickey away from the booth with urgency.

D.JAY

Mickey, I need some cash and I need it right now. How much can I use from you?

MICKEY

I just came on, D. Girls tips me when they pay out and that ain't gonna be for hours.

LEXUS

HEY!

D.Jay turns to see Lexus dressed in a string bikini. She unleashes her furry from the stage.

LEXUS (CONT'D)

You see me?

(grabs one of her tits)

You see this? It's all real, baby. Head to toe. I ain't no front-faggot-bitch! You hear me?

D.Jay is caught in her tirade. He can't even look away.

LEXUS (CONT'D)

I'll be right here. On my stage. Doin' my thing. Now who the fuck is you? Huh? I wanna hear ya, baby. Come on! Who the fuck is you?

100 EXT. KING OF CLUBS - NIGHT

100

D.Jay throws the door to the club open gripping the side of the building to steady himself.

He takes deep breaths to stave off nausea. Reaching under his leather coat, D.Jay retrieves Skinny's gun.

With his free hand, he grips the silver watch on his opposite wrist - the hand holding the gun.

A decision has been made.

CUT TO:

100A INT. D.JAY'S CHEVY - NIGHT

100A

\*

As D.Jay drives up his street, his view through the windshield glows with blue and red pulsating lights.

\*

\*

01 EXT. D.JAY HOUSE - NIGHT

101

\*

(CONTINUED)

The police are there in full force. Arnel is with them, reluctantly, along with the remaining Skinny Black crew, including Tigga. \*

D.Jay pulls to the side of the road and hops out.

TIGGA \*

There he is! There that mutha-fucka go, right there! Shoot his ass! \*

D.Jay immediately raises his hands into the air. The police spin around and pull their side arms into position. \*

POLICE

Put down your weapon and step away from the car.

D.JAY

(stepping away from the car)

I ain't got nothin' on me, it's in the glove.

SHUG

(running toward D.Jay)

D.Jay! D.Jay!

Nola runs after her trying to stop her. Three police officers hold her back. Key and Shelby rush to the end of the street.

D.JAY

Ease up, Shug, it's ah-ight.

NOLA

(screaming at the police)

Get off her! Get off her!

TIGGA

Hey! Shoot him! Shoot the motherfucker!

The police wrestle Shug to the ground as she screams.

BOOM! A firework sounds above. \*

SHUG

(crying)

I just wanna go with him! I wanna go!

D.JAY

(yelling at the cops)

Goddammit, get off her! She's pregnant! Get off! Key get them niggaz off my girl! \*

(CONTINUED)



Key looks shell shocked. Shelby rushes to help Nola with Shug.

POLICE  
(calling out to D.Jay)  
Put your hands on the hood of your car!

D.JAY  
Get 'em off her!

SHUG  
D.Jay... D.Jay, please...!

The police help Shug up to her feet. Nola and Shelby comes to her side and helps her stand.

POLICE  
Come to the front of the car! Do it! Now!

D.Jay slowly moves to the front of the car, hands raised. Shug is on her knees, sobbing into Nola's stomach.

D.Jay turns to the front of the car slowly putting his palms down on the hood of his own Chevy.

He is slammed from behind by three officers. Shug screams out. Nola has tears running down her face as she holds tightly onto Shug, quivering in her arms.

KEY  
(yelling at the officers)  
He turned himself in! He turned himself in! Don't dog pile him like that!

Nola can see D.Jay with his face on the hood of the Chevy - he is grunting in pain and humiliation.

Tigga has made it closer to D.Jay. He taunts him.

TIGGA  
That's my brother you fuckin' with!  
That's my brother! I'm gonna get you  
stuck! In the joint, Bitch!

\*  
\*  
\*

The police empty his pockets. Three demo tapes are sprawled out on the hood of the car followed by his notepad.

A sudden panic comes over Nola. She rushes past the police to the side of the Chevy.

NOLA  
D.Jay? D.Jay?

D.Jay opens his eyes as another officer tries to move Nola back. She resists.

NOLA (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Tell me what to do. Please tell me what to do.

Her plea is exactly what D.Jay needs to hear - his confidence restored.

D.JAY

Pick up my pad.

(Nola picks up the pad)

Disc Jockeys, baby. Get ya ass off the track and get our shit some play. Put it in their hands, baby. Make 'em play it!

The cops lift D.Jay up and pull him away.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

I got a stack of demos in the car. Tell Key and Shelby to get that shit on disc. In two weeks I wanna hear my music in the yard at 201. You in charge Nola. Say it.

POLICE

You have the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law...

NOLA

(crying)

D...

D.JAY

Say it, Nola!

Nola follows him as they pull him away. Tigga brakes free and punches D.Jay to the ground. \*

SHELBY

HEY!

KEY

Get the FUCK OFF HIM!

Nola covers her mouth as police push Tigga back. A fight has now erupted between the members of Skinny's crew and D.Jay's neighbor, R.L.. \*

Shelby and Key are filled with rage, they race at Tigga. Shelby is the first to clock him as the two join the fight. \*

D.Jay is lifted to his feet again, blood leaking from his nose. He is smiling - alive with confidence for Nola's benefit.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

Come on, baby! Who's in charge?

NOLA

(sobbing)

I'm in charge.

D.JAY

There you go. Say it again, partner.

NOLA

I'M IN CHARGE!

D.Jay is shoved in the back seat of a squad car. It has now turned to mayhem: photographers, neighborhood thugs pounding the car.

The squad car disappears around the corner, leaving Shug weeping and Nola standing alone in the street, quivering in the pulsating lights.

Fireworks crackle in the night sky. \*

FADE TO BLACK.

02 INT. D.JAY'S JAIL CELL - DAY

102

The cell door opens. With a grinding rhythm the bars move past D.Jay's unmoving eyes.

D.Jay walks through the corridor, his head lowered, his hands in his pockets. A Prison Guard walks behind him.

103 INT. PRISON VISITATION ROOM - DAY

103

D.Jay enters the room divided by protective glass - prisoners on one side, visitors on the other.

Sitting with his arms crossed, looking appropriately pensive, is Key.

D.Jay picks up the phone. Key waits a moment before picking up his side, choosing to stare at D.Jay instead.

D.JAY

I tried callin' the house but... the phones...

KEY

Yeah. They got turned off. But it's okay. Me and Yvette, we pitching in.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

Key removes a picture of a baby girl and places it up against the plexi.

(CONTINUED)

KEY (CONT'D)

Baby girl, in case you was wonderin'.

D.JAY

(sadness and joy)

Awe... she's precious. Look at that. What she callin' it?

KEY

Named her Kiesha.

D.JAY

Kiesha? No shit. That's a good handle. I like that. Kiesha.

D.Jay suddenly tears up. It surprise him, embarrasses him. Key puts the picture away abruptly.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

With what I got to do... with the people I got in my life... it feels like an eternity in here. I can't get my Mode back. I don't hear a thing.

KEY

Whenever you say somethin' serious to me, you always say, "look me in the eye." You know?

(D.Jay nods)

Now I want you to look me in the eye.

(leans in)

Did you know Skinny Black... before that night?

D.Jay sits in silence for a moment.

D.JAY

This little girl, Keisha... she gonna dream large like kids do, you know. One day she gonna ask me if she can grow up and be President.

(silence)

Now I know this girl got a ho for a momma and some trick for a daddy, ain't nobody know where he at. But I tell you, Key, I'm gonna look that girl right in the eyes... and I'm gonna lie. Cuz sometimes you got to.

Key understands. He takes a breath.

D.JAY (CONT'D)

So what' chu been doin'?

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED: (3)

103

KEY

Back to a whole lot more of the same.

CUT TO:

104 EXT. STREET - DAY

104

Key is sweating as he loads his gear into the back of his van.

KEY

(v.o.)

I'm back to recording depositions and school recitals.

We CUT AHEAD to him waiting at a stop light. Next to him, a car load of young men roll up in a convertible blaring rap music. Key looks sad and defeated.

KEY (CONT'D)

(v.o.)

You talk about eternity. Yeah, that's been on my mind, too.

05 INT. TRUCK STOP VENDING MACHINES - DAY

105

Shelby is pushing a crate of soda cans through the front door of a truck stop. He waves to the woman behind the counter.

KEY

(v.o.)

It's been on all our minds.

Shelby begins stocking the machine with product.

106 INT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - DAY

106

Shug holds her baby in her arms and looks out the window as if she is waiting for D.Jay to come home.

KEY

(v.o.)

We was just dead. Locked up just like you. But ain't no sorrow gonna take away Shug's song, let me tell you. She got love for you, D. When you talk on eternity. You think about your woman.

She softly hums a song.

CUT TO:

07 INT. PRISON VISITATION ROOM - DAY 107

D.Jay nods. He ponders Shug's sadness and takes a breath.

D.JAY  
What about Nola?

KEY  
Nola. Well... let me say this. That girl  
got a Mode of her own.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. RADIO STATION - DAY 108

High hat beats as we see D.Jay's Chevy roll up and stop.

Nola steps out dressed in a tight, mini-skirt suit. In her ear is a mobile phone headset. The cord dangles free because there is no phone. She tucks the slack in her small purse.

KEY  
(v.o.)  
That girl hit the bricks runnin'. Somehow  
she got it in her head that she was in  
charge.

09 INT. RADIO STATION - DAY 109

We pan across the mix board.

KEY  
(v.o.)  
She hit every shake joint and station  
Memphis got and then some. Now I don't  
know how she did it... but let me say  
that girl got some skills.

We see Nola suggestively sitting on a DJ's lap. She passes him a joint and puts on the charm.

NOLA  
We can't lay around lickin' our ass all  
day like a dog. I mean, we man. I know  
I'm a girl and all but...

110 EXT. RADIO STATION - DAY 110

Nola hops in the Chevy and cranks the engine. She starts pushing the buttons on the old radio.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

NOLA

(v.o.)

We mankind.

The dial hops to different sides and stops on a familiar beat. It is the Whoop That Trick song. \*

The camera spins and stops on our crew hearing the track for the first time. \*

HOOK \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

SPIN TO:

111 EXT. TRUCK STOP VENDING MACHINES - DAY

111

Shelby drops a case of sodas as he runs over to the front counter. He reaches past the woman and grabs her radio. He cranks up the volume and grins wildly.

HOOK \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

Whoop that trick... get 'em. \*

SPIN TO:

112 EXT. STREET - DAY

112

The boys in the convertible are bouncing to the track. They flinch as Key starts screaming out his van window.

KEY

That's D.Jay... That's D.Jay! THAT'S MY  
BOY D.JAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY!

SPIN TO:

113 INT. KING OF CLUBS - DAY

113

Mickey bobs his head to the track in the booth. We SPIN TO the stage and see Lexus look over her shoulder with a glare.

SPIN TO:



14. INT. D.JAY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 114 \*

Shug is crying with joy. Her tiny baby is on her lap. She is rapping along with D.Jay bouncing her baby.

SPIN TO:

115 EXT. RADIO STATION - D.JAY'S CHEVY - DAY 115

Nola is on top of the world. Sitting in the driver's seat, she pops a cigarette in her mouth. She pushes in on the cigarette lighter.

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

It pops out. The music stops as we:

CUT TO:

116 INT. PRISON VISITATION ROOM

116

D.Jay can't hide his awe. Key reaches into his pocket and pulls out D.Jay's notepad and flips through the pages.

KEY

So, if you don't mind... Nola and I got a few points we would like to go over in regards to your agenda.

(a big smile from D.Jay)

If you got a minute to spare.

D.JAY

(returning the grin)

I got more than a minute. I got eleven months.

CUT TO:

17 INT. D.JAY'S JAIL CELL - DAY

117

The Prison Guard escorts D.Jay back to his cell. The Prison Block Manager rushes up and stops them.

BLOCK MANAGER

Albert, hold up.

The Prison Guard stops D.Jay.

BLOCK MANAGER (CONT'D)

(addressing D.Jay)

You the man on the radio. That Whoop that trick song.

\*  
\*

PRISON GUARD

What'chu talkin' about?

BLOCK MANAGER

This that guy who stomped on Skinny. You know that song, Whoop that trick... get 'em...

\*  
\*

PRISON GUARD & BLOCK MANAGER

(singing)

Whoop that trick.... Get 'em. Whoop that trick... Get'em.

\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

PRISON GUARD

(to D.Jay)

Oh yeah. Shit. That's you?

(CONTINUED)

D.Jay grins and shrugs. His confidence returning.

BLOCK MANAGER  
(looks over his shoulder)  
You know... we in the rap game, too.

D.Jay turns to the Block Manager who grins proudly.

D.JAY  
Naw shit?

PRISON GUARD  
See, we got it goin' on both sides, being  
from the streets and now, you know, being  
officers of the law. Gonna be my tag.  
Goin' as 5-0. You know, like my stage  
name. Big 5-0.

D.Jay can not believe what he is hearing. The Block Manager  
secretly hands him a demo tape: BIG 5-0 and BLOCK C.

BLOCK MANAGER  
When you get a chance, in the rec room.  
Let us know what you think.

D.Jay takes the tape and smiles.

D.JAY  
Well... you know what they say.

BLOCK MANAGER  
What's that?

D.JAY  
Everybody gotta have a dream.

D.Jay turns away and walks back to his cell with the guard  
keeping a respectful distance.

The 808 pounding returns to his ears and swagger: BOOM...  
BOOM... BOOM... BOOM.

D.Jay's smile fades as his Mode returns. He looks right at us  
- hungry, determined. The 808 can't get any louder.

BOOM... BOOM... BOOM... BOOM... BOOM... BOOM... BOOM... BOOM!

CUT TO BLACK

THE END