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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

School Teacher

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Daret Keith Dickens

June 2015

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Committee Co-Chairperson

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University of California, Riverside

FADE IN

EXT. PRISON CAMP, NORTH CAROLINA - MORNING

A late model suburban drives along the tranquil countryside and finally stops at the entrance of the Butner Federal Prison Camp.

INT. PRISON CAMP, CELL - MORNING

Looking older than he really is, a scruffy, bearded African-American male, DEAN JACKSON, 40, gathers some personal items and places the items in a prison issued duffel bag.

Quite subdued, Dean stops and slowly glances across the cell. His cell mate, a grey-haired OLD MAN with the weight of the world on his face, stoically reads a newspaper.

The SOUND of steel is heard as the cell door opens, and a PRISON GUARD enters. Dean grabs the duffel bag and is about to leave for good. He eyes his cell mate.

DEAN  
Take care, Bernie.

As old man puts the newspaper in his lap, the name tag on his embossed jump suit is revealed: MADOFF. He nods at Dean. Dean walks out of the cell and the guard slams shut the door.

EXT. PRISON CAMP - MORNING

As soon as Dean exits the prison gates, REPORTERS flock him, but a well dressed BODY GUARD shields Dean from the reporters and escorts him into the suburban. The vehicle quickly leaves.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN

EXT. OCEAN DRIVE, SOUTH BEACH - AFTERNOON

At a sidewalk cafe, ROY EISNER, an impeccably dressed lawyer with the demeanor of absolute corporate power, sits across from Dean.

Dean is well groomed, far from the mess he was while in the prison camp.

With a bottle of sparkling water and glasses on the table, Roy looks intently at Dean.

DEAN  
Changed medications. Can't pronounce it, but milder than that poison I got from the prison doctor.

ROY  
Anxiety?

DEAN  
Yeah.

ROY  
Well you look great, Brother.

Dean takes his glass and drinks. He puts the glass back on the table.

DEAN  
Thanks for everything.

ROY  
No sweat. Two peas in a pod, you and I. Passed you the ball for that game winning shot against Yale, not to mention the best man at my first, second, third and soon to be fourth wedding.

DEAN  
Fourth wedding.

Dean shakes his head.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
And I am the one seeing a shrink?

They both LAUGH. Roy takes his glass and drinks. He places the glass back on the table.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
I'm going back to Wall Street.

The pleasant moment quickly vanishes as Roy is stunned.

ROY  
Going back?

DEAN  
Gotta get back to the top of the food chain.

ROY

Lehman is dead and no firm is going to touch you. The name Dean Jackson is too toxic.

(pause)

The divorce . . . Fighting off shareholder lawsuits . . . The strings it took to keep your licences -

DEAN

(interrupting)

You didn't do it for free.

ROY

(irritated)

Maybe you should change doctors.

DEAN

Don't give me that shit.

ROY

Get it in your thick skull, no firm is going to touch you.

DEAN

I'll start my own firm.

Roy shakes his head, SIGHS.

DEAN (CONT'D)

What you want me to do? Write a book? Den of Thieves part two?

ROY

Could be therapeutic.

DEAN

Fuck off, Roy.

ROY

Why can't you understand? You need time to regroup. Trust me. My life was in shambles when Katie left.

(pause)

Can't blame her for wanting a divorce. Had just made partner. House on the intracoastal, fast cars and banging every hot associate in the firm. All the while my wife had her own lover, some young stud stroking my wife and drinking up my Grey Goose. Hell, he was even eating up my Frosted Flakes.

Dean LAUGHS.

ROY (CONT'D)

It's funny but it hurt back then.

(pause)

(MORE)

ROY (CONT'D)

When it sinks in and no matter how much you think you're like Tom Wolfe's Master of the Universe, your world comes crumbling down.

Roy picks up the bottled water, pours water in his glass as well as Dean's glass, and puts the bottle down.

DEAN

You gotta understand.

Roy looks away, then back at Dean.

ROY

Spent decades doing the dirty work for rich fat cats, cleaning up the mess they made without any remorse.

(pause)

Lawyers . . . We're nothing but high priced whores. But I found a little peace, a little solace.

(pause)

It's not just the divorce or the crash.

(pause)

Dean . . . You haven't done anything worthwhile, nothing. And that's a hard thing to accept.

Dean becomes angry.

DEAN

I'm a rainmaker, the best!

ROY

It sent you to prison.

Dean looks away for a moment. Roy takes his glass, drinks, and puts the glass back on the table.

ROY (CONT'D)

I take several months off and work with Doctors Without Borders, performing human rights initiatives in developing, mostly war torn countries - Sudan, Somalia. All for free. If I don't make it back alive, DWB simply pays for my body to be shipped back to the states.

(pause)

It's the only reason I don't have my own shrink.

Dean looks a little flush, hands start to tremble.

ROY (CONT'D)

You okay?

Dean reaches into his pocket, takes out a small pill box, withdraws a pill, pops it in his mouth, grabs his glass and drinks.

ROY (CONT'D)  
Dean?

Dean places the glass on the table.

ROY (CONT'D)  
You okay?

Dean, now visibly angry, looks directly at Roy.

DEAN  
Yeah. I'm alright, you self-righteous bastard. Go fly off to Africa or wherever and make yourself feel good, but we still need that rush, that rush from being on top of the food chain even though we're nothing but high priced whores.

Dean stands up, takes out his wallet and removes a folded check. He unfolds the check and smacks it down on the table.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Paid in full.

Dean puts his wallet back in his pocket and is about to walk out.

ROY  
You can't leave.

Dean stops and turns.

ROY (CONT'D)  
There are conditions to your release.

DEAN  
What? What the fuck are you talking about?

ROY  
Community service, the only way I could swing the deal.

Dean is stunned.

DEAN  
Community service? How you? Without -

ROY  
(interrupting)  
It was the only way, Dean.



Dean stares in disbelief.

ROY (CONT'D)

One year at an inner-city high school, that's all.

Dean is irate.

DEAN

Are you crazy? I went to Harvard to get out of the hood . . . Now you want me to work with those pants sagging little gangsters.

(pause)

Send me back to prison.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

A large trophy case full of championship football trophies, game balls and pictures of former players, cover an entire wall of the expansive office.

Dean sits across from the principal's desk. A bold name plate, DEXTER REED, PRINCIPAL, sits prominently on top of the desk.

Principal Reed, a big, intimidating African-American man, wears a polo style shirt with the Liberty City Bulldogs logo.

He examines Dean's resume'.

PRINCIPAL REED

Impressive credentials, Mr. Jackson.

DEAN

Thank you, sir, but please, call me Dean.

PRINCIPAL REED

Alright, Dean.

(pause)

I don't sugar coat nothin'. You're obviously well connected.

Dean is taken aback as Principal Reed puts the resume' on the desk.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

B.A. in finance . . . Harvard. M.B.A. from Cornell.

Principal Reed LAUGHS.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

Got my masters in education from City College.

A man like you doesn't end up at Liberty City High.

Principal Reed glances back down at the resume'.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

How did I miss that. All-American Ivy League athlete.

(pause; looks up)

Got you on this one, Dean. I'm an All American linebacker from State!

Principal Reed extends his hand and shows off a big gold ring.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

National Champs.

Dean looks nervous.

DEAN

Played, you know . . . Ivy league basketball; that's all.

Principal Reed sits back in his chair, doesn't respond.

Dean quickly reaches into his pocket, pulls out the small pill box, takes out a pill and pops it in his mouth.

Principal Reed sits up.

PRINCIPAL REED

You good?

DEAN

Yes, sir. I'm fine.

Dean gathers himself.

PRINCIPAL REED

(pause)

You've been cleared by the certification board. Have everything you need.

Principal Reed nods as he looks genuinely enthusiastic to have Dean on board.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

Maybe your Ivy League education is just what we need to help our kids pass the FCAT. Athletics we're an "A," but academics, solid "F."

Principal Reed SMACKS his fist on the desk.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test is a our biggest impediment. School funding is based on the scores; hurts urban schools the most. I think you can help us, Dean.

DEAN

I'll do my best, sir.

PRINCIPAL REED

(pause)

But do you understand the pool of kids we have? Ever see that reality crime show, the First 48?

Dean shakes his head.

DEAN

Don't recall.

PRINCIPAL REED

It's all about murders, real murders, and they film in Liberty City, right in the Pork-n-Beans housing projects.

No doubt you're well connected; that's how you got a position here, right over my head, but I'm glad it happened. So let me be the first one to welcome you.

Principal Reed extends his hand from across the desk and Dean shakes the Principal's hand.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

You'll take over for Mrs. Banks' eleventh grade FCAT Prep class.

(pause)

The students passed the math section but failed on the reading. Someone with your skill set can get our students over the hump. I've tried everything, all kinds of specialist. New approach, that's what we need.

DEAN

I'm up for the challenge.

PRINCIPAL REED

Good. It's a small class. Did my best to help the last teacher; cut the class down from twenty-five to just thirteen. That didn't help much, though.

Principal Reed looks ominously at Dean.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

You're gonna need whatever you got in those pills . . . Ed Robinson is in your class.

INT. MIAMI'S SCOTT PROJECTS, ED'S UNIT, BEDROOMS - MORNING

It's total darkness as the CRIES of children are heard from a distance.

A lamp lights up the room and a well built, teenaged African-American male, ED ROBINSON, has his hand on the lamp.

A poster of 2PAC hangs over the bed. The bedroom furnishings are simple, frugal.

Ed has short dread locks, a fierce scowl on his face, and a tattoo on his right shoulder that reads "THUG LIFE."

Wearing only his boxer shorts, Ed jumps out of bed.

ED'S P.O.V. - FROM BEDROOM TO HALLWAY

Ed walks out of his bedroom and into the hall, stopping at his mom's room. He walks in front of the opened door.

Inside the doorway, Ed simply stares at MISS ROBINSON as she is sound asleep on a mattress void of a box spring.

Miss Robinson, even in the midst of sleep, caresses an empty bottle of cheap gin.

Ed enters. He takes one hand and grabs his mom's throat as if he is going to strangle her.

The sounds of crying children intensifies and Ed removes his hand from his mom's throat. He turns and heads down the hall.

Ed stops in front of a door that is nearly open; he pushes the door.

Six SIBLINGS, ages three to nine, are all stretched across a single bed.

The children continue crying.

RETURN TO SCENE

Ed shakes his head.

ED

Damn, fools! Umma feed yahh. Give me a minute.

Ed turns away and walks down the hall.

EXT. MIAMI'S LIBERTY CITY HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

High school STUDENTS walk through the courtyard, headed to and from the cafeteria.

TRINA BROWN, a tall, African-American girl, walks alongside COCO MARTINEZ, a precocious Cuban-American girl.

Unlike the conservatively dressed Trina with her baggy school uniforms, Coco wears everything extra tight and loves to show off her seductive tatoos.

Coco LAUGHS.

TRINA  
Girl, what's funny?

COCO  
Boys ain't 'bout nothin'. Just want some, but they ain't gettin' this. What they think, I'm a shone?  
(pause)  
That eleventh grader, Tim Freeman, told me he heard my stuff is sweet as sugar.

TRINA  
What? Girl get outta here.

Trina taps Coco on the shoulder.

COCO  
Told that fool, yeah, it's sweet as sugar, but if you don't got cash -

Coco smacks her own butt.

COCO (CONT'D)  
You ain't touching this ass.

Trina LAUGHS.

COCO (CONT'D)  
Like my mama says,  
(in Spanish)  
Dollar bills, baby boy, dollar bills.

TRINA  
Girl, you somethin' else. And you know Miss Martinez don't play.

Suddenly, BRITTANY WASHINGTON approaches. Brittany is the only Anglo-American, non-Hispanic student at Liberty City High.

Completely urbanized, Brittany is dressed like a lesbian. Her baggy boys jeans reveal her boxer briefs, and a mouth full of silver grills cover her bottom teeth.

She walks right up to Trina.

BRITTANY

Miss Thing, keep my name outta yo mouth. Gonna make you look silly when basketball starts, but if you can't keep my name outta yo mouth, I'm gonna slap you silly right now.

TRINA

Don't know what you talkin' 'bout.

BRITTANY

Shone! You know what I'm talkin' 'bout.

Coco pushes Trina aside and steps in front of Brittany.

COCO

(to Brittany)

Who you calling a bitch? Better take your girl grinding ass back home. My partner ain't said nothin' 'bout you.

Brittany smiles at Coco.

BRITTANY

(to Coco)

Sexy, you cool,

(to Trina)

But she better keep my name outta her mouth.

COCO

Whatever.

Brittany turns, walks away, and Coco gives Trina a stern look.

COCO (CONT'D)

Next time that butch mess with you . . . If you don't hit her, me and you gonna fight. I'm dead serious.

Trina, visibly shaken, nods.

INT. MIAMI'S SCOTT PROJECTS, ED'S UNIT/BEDROOM - MORNING

A Cuban-American teen, REEFER RED and an overweight African-American teen, FAT MIKE, all hover around Ed's bed.

The bed is covered with money. Bent over, Ed is counting the mound of cash.

REEFER RED

(to Ed)

Count them stacks, Rich Mouth 'cause I'm going to the club tonight.

Ed shakes his head.

ED

(to Reefer Red)

Fool, better pay your child support before they lock you up.

REEFER RED

Keep telling you, them ain't my kids.

Ed shakes his head and continues counting money.

FAT MIKE

(to all)

We serving the best trees in the city. Got that banging Arizona, that stout Sensimila, and the fiens on that Kryptonite like Crazy Glue.

REEFER RED

(to Fat Mike)

Feel you, movin' mad ecstasy too.

FAT MIKE

(to Ed)

Dog, Big Castro gotta break us off with mo' cash; I got the Subs on lock and Reefer holding down Wynwood. For real though, Big Castro gotta break us off mo' or we ought to clear it, go push for the Haitians. Zopound Killers will pay us better.

Ed calmly stands upright, .22 caliber GUN sticking out of his pants.

ED

(to Fat Mike)

Zoes will cut your throat.

(pause)

Drop you in the Miami River.

Ed hands Fat Mike a stack of money. Fat Mike takes the money.

ED (CONT'D)

Fool, you ain't never made stacks like this, but if you don't like the way we flowin' . . .

(pause)

Do what you gotta do.

Ed hands another stack to Reefer Red. Reefer Red takes the money.

REEFER RED  
(to Ed)  
Bet it up, Rich Mouth.

Ed takes his gun out and drops it on the bed.

ED  
(to Fat Mike)  
You cool?

Visibly disgruntled, Fat Mike nods, turns and walks out of the room.

REEFER RED  
He'll be alright.

Reefer Red embraces Ed, then walks out of the room.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH - DAY

Pants sagging, Ed walks next to Trina. Trina, gym bag in hand, wears a "Lady Bulldogs Basketball" T-shirt.

Ed and Trina head towards the gym as Ed peers a few feet away at a male student, NINO.

ED  
(shouting)  
Nino, where my money, fool?

NINO  
Got you, Rich Mouth, got you.

Ed nods then looks at Trina.

TRINA  
Stop worrying about money and start coming to school on time.

ED  
My paper come first, and you just  
Trying to distract me. How long I gotta sweat you, girl? You  
know I wanna get with you.

Trina shakes her head.

TRINA  
Ed Robinson, you too much.



She hands her gym bag to Ed.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
Here, be a gentleman.

Ed takes the gym bag and straps it across his shoulder. They both continue walking.

ED  
For real though. Why you playing hard to get?

TRINA  
Think I'm green? I know you hollering at my girl, Coco.

ED  
Fool, what you talkin' 'bout. I ain't hollerin' at Coco. We friends. Ain't never hollered at her. She might like me. A lotta hoes like me.

TRINA  
(irritated)  
See, that kind of talk not gonna get you with me.  
(pause)  
Might be young but I'm still a lady, and you gotta treat me like one. So don't be using words like that around me.

ED  
Damn, don't get all sensitive.  
I'll watch my mouth around you, but I'm not gonna stop coming at you. I'm shooting for you just like you shoot them jumpers. You good for twenty a game, right?

Ed motions, moving his hands as if he is shooting a jump shot.

ED (CONT'D)  
Swish! Sexy Red for two.

Trina smiles.

TRINA  
Don't know about this year. Coach moved me up to varsity. Girls already hating on me.

ED  
Damn them butch hoes!

TRINA  
(annoyed)  
Ed, told you not to use that word around me.

ED

My bad, but I don't like them butch girls. They be after all the fine hoes. Oh, I'm sorry.

Trina shakes her head. They stop in front of the gym.

ED (CONT'D)

Serious, my bad. I respect you, and I'm trying to get with you; all the fellas trying to holler at you. But give me a shot. I'll be careful what I say.

Ed takes his finger and gently touches Trina under the chin. Trina smiles. He hands the gym bag to Trina. She takes the gym bag.

ED (CONT'D)

Go on show 'em who the baddest baller ever come out of the Pork-n-Beans.

She smiles.

TRINA

Later.

Trina turns and heads into the gym.

INT. CONDO, MEDIA ROOM - EVENING

The elevator opens directly into the unit. Barnes & Noble bag in hand, Dean enters the stylish penthouse.

He walks into the media room and sits in a cozy chair in front of the television screen. Dean takes a book out of the bag.

BOOK

It is a copy of Harry Wong's *The First Days of School*.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean opens the book.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM/LOCKER ROOM - DAY

In her bra and panties, Trina is standing in front of an opened locker. She places her clothes inside the locker.

Suddenly, BIG NEELY SAMPSON, the center on the girl's team, enters. Big Neely is fully dressed in her practice gear.

Tall and big, Big Neely is an intimidating yet goofy girl, an obvious lesbian with fake platinum grills on her bottom teeth and a prominent tatoo on her shoulder: BIG BUTCH.

BIG NEELY

(excited)

Oh shit! Hoe, you even sexier in them red panties. See why everybody sweating you; got that fat bush.

Trina completely ignores Big Neely and quickly puts on her practice shorts and jersey. She sits on the bench and starts putting on her basketball shoes.

BIG NEELY (CONT'D)

Damn, hoe. I'm given you a compliment. You ain't gotta be all sady.

Brittany Washington enters.

BIG NEELY (CONT'D)

(to Brittany)

Bri-Bri, she rude, won't speak, and I gave her a compliment.

Trina stands.

BRITTANY

Yeah, shone; yo girl Coco ain't here to help your ass; talk shit now, shone.

Brittany approaches Trina. With lightning speed, Trina reaches inside of her right shoe and pulls out a small, pocket knife. She flips open the pocket knife.

TRINA

First bitch try me getting sliced like a no good butch-bitch ought to.

Suddenly, a gigantic black man, COACH WILLIAMS, enters.

COACH WILLIAMS

What the hell going on? First day of practice and ya'll already fighting.

BRITTANY

(to Coach Williams)

That shone thinks she's all that.

Trina lunges at Brittany with the knife, but Coach Williams quickly grabs Brittany's arm and pushes her out of the way, barely avoiding the knife.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)  
Hoe tried to cut me.

BIG NEELY  
She show did.

COACH WILLIAMS  
(to Brittany; Neely)  
Shut up and get back.

Coach Williams turns and looks directly at Trina.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Trina, give it to me.

TRINA  
(shouting)  
No, 'cause if these dikes try me, I'll slice 'em so bad, make 'em find a real man and stop humpin' rubber dicks.

Both Brittany and Big Neely lunge after Trina. But the massive Coach Williams push them both back.

COACH WILLIAMS  
Get back.

Brittany and Big Neely reluctantly cease their attempts at Trina. Coach Williams turns toward Trina.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Give me the knife.

Trina lowers the knife and slowly hands it to Coach Williams. Coach Williams closes the knife and puts it in his pocket.

COACH WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
(to all)  
Now get on the court and start running suicides 'till I say stop.

Brittany gives Trina a mean look, turns and exits the locker room. Like a stooge, Big Neely follows.

Trina then walks out of the locker room. Coach Williams follows.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - EVENING

Dean relaxes on a psychiatrist's chair as DOCTOR GRANT sits in a chair next to him.

DR. GRANT

Certainly unethical for him to slip community service into your plea; nevertheless, public service work can bring you in touch with engaging experiences from a variety of perspectives.

Dr. Grants nods.

DR. GRANT (CONT'D)

A stint teaching may very well do some good before you return to New York.

DEAN

(pause)  
Think so?

DR. GRANT

Absolutely. You had one turbulent year at Lehman's. How can teaching high school possible be as difficult as the '07 crash? Should be a piece of cake.

Dean nods.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH - MORNING

School buses enter the main entrance. School SECURITY GUARDS are ready to usher students off the buses and into the main building for another day at Liberty City High.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, CLASSROOM - MORNING

Dressed in a conservative suit, Dean looks confident.

He stands in front of the dry-erase board where he has neatly written his instructional focus for the week, "context clues."

An elderly African-American JANITOR, enters. Dean turns his way.

JANITOR

Good luck, Mr. Jackson.

DEAN

Thanks. Guess I look nervous.

The janitor changes the trash can.

JANITOR

Don't know if you a good teacher or a bad one; don't matter anyway.

What matters is they need to know you care. Once they know that, you'll be fine.

The janitor puts the can back in place and leaves.

The bell RINGS.

Dean walks toward the entrance of the classroom. He takes a deep breathe and gathers himself as he waits for the students to arrive.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

It is very NOISY as droves of students walk through the hall. Although the students all wear school uniforms with the Liberty City Bulldog logo, all of them wear the uniforms with an urban flair.

None of the boys wear belts, and their pants sag, revealing their underwear. The boys all have on expensive footwear: the latest Jordan brand sneakers and Timberland boots.

The girls make the conservative uniforms fashionable, wearing smaller shirt sizes to show off their sprouting chests and sexy tatoos.

The school khaki pants the girls wear are tight so as to show off their shapes. And the hair weaves are bodacious: blonde weave, brown weave, plumb weave, even hot cherry weave.

Some of the students have on flea market gold - bracelets, rings and rope chains.

The second bell RINGS

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

As Dean stands in front of his class, the students vigorously TALK as they settle into seats.

The students pay little attention to their new teacher. It is as if Dean isn't even in the room. The late bell RINGS.

Despite the late bell, the noise level in the room intensifies, and the students continue to talk and completely ignore their new teacher.

Dean takes a big dictionary from off his desk and drops it on the floor, causing a loud THUMP. The students immediately stop talking.

DEAN

I am Mr. Jackson, your FCAT teacher. I'm not a sub.

(pause)

This is my classroom now.

The students remain quiet, but a CONVERSATION is heard from the rear of the classroom.

STUDENT

Standing with his back facing Dean and the rest of the class, the student is busy talking on his cell phone, completely oblivious to Dean and the rest of the class.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean looks across the classroom, spots the student on the phone.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Young man, turn around and turn off the phone.

The student simply ignores his new teacher, continues to talk on the cell phone.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I said turn off the phone.

The student doesn't respond.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Young man, what's your name?

Annoyed, the student flips his phone off, turns, and snatches off his shirt.

Now in a tank top T-shirt, the powerfully built boy has a prominent tattoo on his right shoulder: "THUG LIFE."

Ed Robinson's facial expression is utterly menacing as he walks right up to his new teacher, nearly bumping noses.

ED

Fool, you don't know me? Everybody knows me.

(pause)

Mr. Oreo cookie, don't ever interrupt when I'm on the phone.

The students roar with LAUGHTER.

ED (CONT'D)

Case you really don't know, my name is Ed. But you can call me Rich Mouth 'cause I got these here -

Ed opens his mouth wide, grimaces as he shows off a mouth full of platinum grills.

ED (CONT'D)

Platinum, fool, with diamond sprinkles, cost more money than that fake Rolex you got on.

The students roar with LAUGHTER as Ed continues tormenting Dean.

ED (CONT'D)

Fool, I'm from the projects, the Beans. Where you from with that Salvation Army suit on?

The students roar with LAUGHTER. The class is completely out of control. Dean shakes his head, but he doesn't back down; instead he tries his best to look tough. He shouts.

DEAN

Fool, I'm straight out of the Park Avenue projects, New York City; so sit your old behind down.

The room becomes completely silent. The students are all shocked because no one talks to Ed like Dean just did.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, got your history; you're a grade behind so sit down and learn from a real "G".

The room appears to be on the verge of an explosion as the students all wait in silence, waiting for Ed to strike.

Ed steps back and quickly reaches into his pocket as if to take out a gun. The students appear concerned.

Dean has that look of an impending melt down. He grimaces and tries to suppress it.



ED  
Park Avenue projects?  
(pause)  
Fool, you alright.

Ed pulls out a big marijuana joint and extends it to Dean.

ED (CONT'D)  
Fire it up, Teach. Welcome to the hood.

Dean doesn't know what to do or say as the entire class erupts into LAUGHTER.

INT. CONDO, MEDIA ROOM - NIGHT

Dean sits in front of the television. He flicks the remote, stopping the channel on the local news.

TV SCREEN

The SPORTS ANCHOR is interviewing Liberty City High football star RONNIE BLAKE inside of the school's locker room.

SPORTS ANCHOR  
(to camera)  
I'm here with Ronnie Blake, Liberty City High's all world  
linebacker.  
(to Ronnie)  
Ronnie, as you guys head into district playoffs still  
undefeated, does any team have a chance to beat the Bulldogs?

The Sports Anchor places a microphone in front of Ronnie Blake.

RONNIE BLAKE  
With me running the defense? No touch downs. Not even a field  
goal.

SPORTS ANCHOR  
I have to agree with you. Thanks, Ronnie and good luck in the  
playoffs.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean flicks off the remote, picks up a book from off the floor  
and puts it in his lap.

BOOK

The cover reads: Understanding Poetry.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean opens the book.

EXT. MIAMI BEACH MANSION - DAY

A grand estate stands on the banks of the Atlantic Ocean.

INT. MIAMI BEACH MANSION - DAY

The place is immaculately South Beach posh. Principal Reed sits on a sofa next to Ronnie Blake.

Wearing a sharp suit, JAY SHAPIRO, 30, enters the room. Principal Reed and Ronnie stand.

PRINCIPAL REED

Ronnie, I'd like you to meet a good friend, Jay Shapiro.

Ronnie, in awe of the surroundings, shakes hands with Jay Shapiro.

They all sit, Jay sitting across from Principal Reed and Ronnie Blake.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

Ronnie, Jay is a sports agent; represents a hundred pro football players.

(pause)

Now I got Jay here 'cause you gonna need some support in college. But Jay ain't no stranger. Remember when your mom's stove went out and your brother had to be bailed out of jail?

Ronnie nods.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

I handled that for you, but I got the money from Mr. Shapiro. So I want you to start showing him some love. Through me, he gonna take care of you in college right on up to the draft. My man Jay got you covered. All you gotta do is play ball and keep it all on the low. I send all the top Bulldogs to Jay.

Principal Reed pats Ronnie on the shoulder.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)  
Now relax and have fun.

Wearing only swim shorts, COACH EARL BOOKER enters from the patio door. A young, African-American man in swim shorts is with him, PRO FOOTBALL PLAYER.

COACH BOOKER  
Ronnie, here he his, All Pro from Chicago.

Ronnie is flush with excitement.

RONNIE BLAKE  
Nahh . . . don't believe it.

They shake hands.

PRINCIPAL REED  
Give him the orientation.

Coach Booker smiles. The pro football player and Coach Booker guide Ronnie toward the patio door.

EXT. MIAMI BEACH MANSION - DAY

A FEMALE DJ spins hip-hop MUSIC from the patio. In and around the pool are ethnically diverse bikini clad young women.

Several tattoo adorned professional athletes socialize with the young women, frolicking in the pool, at the bar and around the expansive patio.

Coach Booker stands next to pro football player and Ronnie. Ronnie is completely in awe. Pro football player pats Ronnie on the back.

PRO FOOTBALL PLAYER  
Lil' Bro, can you handle it?

RONNIE BLAKE  
Will see in a few minutes.

They all LAUGH.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

The students - CLIFF, DEVON, CYNTHIA, TERRY, MELISSA, ASHLEY, CEDRIC, PHIL, ROD, Willie, Coco, Trina and Ed - are paired into small, cooperative learning groups.

They are busy TALKING as Dean's back faces the students.

Dean, standing before the dry-erase board, takes a colorful marker and writes his DO NOW response.

#### DRY-ERASE BOARD

During the Harlem Renaissance, jazz was the art form of choice, and Harlem was the artistic center of the jazz world.

Assuming that hip-hop is now king as an artistic medium, discern what American city is the center of the hip-hop world?

#### RETURN TO SCENE

Dean turns and faces the classroom. He claps his hands. The students settle down, all except Phil and Willie. They continue talking.

Ed lifts his head up from his desk and sends a menacing look at Phil and Willie.

ED  
Y'all heard, Teach.

Phil and Willie immediately cease talking.

DEAN  
Alright . . . Thanks for being seated in your groups.  
(pause)  
As I explained yesterday, each day will start with the Do Now response. Working in your group, think about the question.  
(pointing to board)  
But I also want you to draw on sensory details when it's time for your group to respond.

Dean turns, takes a box from off his desk, pours out the contents from the box, numerous magazines with similar themes, music. There are issues of the *Source*, *Rolling Stone*, etc.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Come up; check out the magazines while I turn on some music videos.

The students waste little time coming up to the desk and selecting magazines.

Dean reaches up and pops a DVD in the wall mounted television. He takes the remote and turns on the unit.

DEAN (CONT'D)

This is well before your time, but check it out; take in the sensory details, sights and sounds that tell the history of hip-hop.

The students return to their seats with the magazines and attentively watch the television screen.

TELEVISION SCREEN

Old school hip-hop videos, artists such as Grandmaster Flash, the Sugar Hill Gang, the Jungle Brothers, Curtis Blow, Run DMC, the Beasty Boys, and Whoodini, play on the television screen.

RETURN TO SCENE

The students are mesmerized by the old hip-hop videos. They poke fun at the clothing the old school artists have on.

As the students enjoy the videos, Dean walks behind his desk, pulls out a milk crate and drops it on the desk.

He takes out a stack of old album covers: Luke Records, Def Jam, Run DMC, and the Fat Boys. The students consume it all.

LATER

The students are at their desks, in their respective groups and the television monitor is off, magazines and old albums are all put away.

Dean stands at the front of the class.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Alright, group 1, Coco, Cliff, Devon, Cynthia, explain, discern, what American city is the hip-hop capital of the world? One of you present for the class.

Coco waves her hand.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Go ahead, Coco.

COCO

We said -

PHIL  
(interrupting; to Coco)  
Girl, you sexier than a McDonald's biscuit.

Some of the students LAUGH.

DEAN  
(to Phil)  
Respect, she has the floor.

PHIL  
(to Dean)  
My bad, Teach.

DEAN  
Go ahead, Coco.

COCO  
As I was saying before ESE boy interrupted me -

All of the students LAUGH.

DEAN  
Calm down.

The students settle down.

COCO  
Our group said that New York is the hip-hop capital 'cause the original rappers came from New York.  
(pause)  
Oh, and 'cause my mama, she did a party for Jay-Z and he was telling her all about the -

TRINA  
(interrupting; to Coco)  
Girl, that's too much information.

PHIL  
(to Dean)  
Teach, you seen Coco's mom? She thick, fine as a mother -

COCO  
(interrupting; to Phil)  
Hush, slow boy.

The students LAUGH uncontrollably.

PHIL  
(to Dean)  
Teach, you gonna let her crack on me like that?

DEAN  
Enough, settle down.

The students calm down.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Group 2, ahh . . .

Dean picks up a piece of paper from the desk, looks at it and puts it back down.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Terry, Ashley, Willie, Cedric and Melissa, what's your response?

No one from the group responds.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Ashley, can you present for your group.

Ashley immediately covers her face and lowers her head.

TERRY  
(to Dean)  
Ashley too shy. I'll do it.

Terry, sleek and athletic, wears a Liberty City High Football T-shirt.

DEAN  
Terry, right?

Terry nods.

PHIL  
(to Dean)  
Touch down Terry, that's his name, Teach.

DEAN  
(to Phil)  
Calm down.  
(to Terry)  
Go ahead.

TERRY  
We said Miami is the hip-hop capital.  
(to Willie)  
Spit them rhymes, Willie.

WILLIE  
(rapping)  
I'm so hood, got that gold in my mouth and you know what I'm  
talking 'bout, so hood -

PHIL  
(interrupting)  
Whack! Whack!

The students LAUGH.

COCO  
Phil, I heard Rick Ross is your daddy.

More LAUGHTER.

PHIL  
Sexy trying to crack, Teach.

Dean claps his hands. The students settle down.

DEAN  
Alright, group 3, Trina, Phil, Ed, and Rod let's go.  
(pause)  
My bad, Rod's absent. Let's go group 3.

Phil stands up.

WILLIE  
Phil presenting?

COCO  
Ohh shit.

The class roars with LAUGHTER. Dean claps his hands. The  
students calm down.

DEAN  
(to Coco; firm)  
Respect Phil, respect me, respect the classroom.

COCO  
Sorry, Teach.

Suddenly, the door opens and Rod, a demonstrably gay boy  
enters, strutting like a super model.

Rod's hair is dyed hot flaming red and tied in a pony tail. He  
has on some light make up and some lip gloss. A fake Louis  
Vutton bag is in his hand.



ROD  
Hey y'all.

PHIL  
Late ass, gay ass, Rod.

The class roars with LAUGHTER. Even Dean, although he tries not to, LAUGHS.

Dean claps his hands. Rod takes a seat next to Trina. The students calm down.

DEAN  
Go ahead, Phil.

PHIL  
Even though Teach dissed us making our group go last -

DEAN  
(interrupting)  
Hold up, Phil.  
You wouldn't go on a job interview and say you were dissed.  
(pause)  
Instead of dissed, what word would you use?

PHIL  
Ahhh? Disrespect?

DEAN  
Much better. Go ahead, present.

PHIL  
Like Big Phil was saying, the capital of the hip-hop world is . . .

Phil scratches his head.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
Damn, Teach, you interrupted me and I done forgot.

The clause is hysterical with LAUGHTER. Dean shakes his head and LAUGHS as well.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
(to Trina)  
Sexy Red, help your boy out.

DEAN  
Alright, calm down.

The students settle down, and Trina raises her hand.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Yes, Trina.

TRINA  
We said the hip-hop capital is Atlanta.

Rod jumps up and strolls around the class like a super model.

ROD  
Yes, yes, yes. Don't know 'bout the hip-hop capital, but Hotlanta is the Ebony gay capital of the world, baby!

The class roars with LAUGHTER.

DEAN  
(to Rod)  
Roddricka, sit your sweet behind down.

The laughter gets louder as some students roll on to the floor.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Alright, calm down.

Dean gathers himself. The students finally calm down.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
(pause)  
Trina, why did your group pick Atlanta?

TRINA  
Well, Ed can explain it better.

Ed, who is observing albeit with his head on the desk, doesn't respond.

PHIL  
(to Ed)  
Come on, Ed; they trying us man.

DEAN  
Ed, discern why Atlanta is the hip-hop capital, but first tell us what the word discern, given the context in which I used it, what does it mean?

Ed sits up, wipes his face with his hands.

ED  
Discern? That means to get it; figure somthin' out; you know like perceive.

DEAN  
Great job, Ed.

ED  
Yeah and we picked Atlanta 'cause they got it all, hip-hop, R&B, from Usher, Jeezy, T.I., Outcast and on and on, Hot-lanta is it for hip-hop music period. No disrespect to Trick Daddy and Rick Ross, but Miami not even in the same category.

(pause)  
Atl is what New York was back in the day, during the Harlem Renaissance. Paul Robeson, Aaron Douglass. Harlem was gangsta back then but Hot-lanta and the dirty south is gangsta right now.

Ed lowers his head back on the desk but keeps his sleepy eyes open.

PHIL  
(to the class)  
That's right busters, and don't y'all forget the knowledge we just dropped on yah by the pound.

COCO  
Hush, slow boy.

The students LAUGH.

DEAN  
(to Coco)  
Stop.

Coco looks the other way.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Ed read his homework assignment, remember, the Langston Hughes essay, *When Harlem was in Vogue?*

(pause)  
Ed compared the Renaissance era with the modern day artists of Atlanta and argues that the City of Atlanta is now the new hip-hop capital. Group 3 is correct. They supported their position with facts and details.

(pause)  
That's how you have to tackle the FCAT, facts, deductive logic and context clues.

WILLIE  
Was having fun, Teach 'till you mentioned the FCAT.

CEDRIC  
I ain't taking it.

CLIFF  
Me either.

COCO  
I'll be sick with the flu.

TRINA  
Me too, girl.

Dean claps his hands.

DEAN  
Hold up. Do you realize you just took a sample FCAT, and Ed's group knocked it out? Today's Do Now response came out of the Wall Street Journal, an article on music marketing.

The students MUMBLE as they are quite puzzled.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Listen.

(pause)  
The test has an informational passage taken out of newspapers and magazines just like the ones I give you. The test also has a literary selection, and it's always a poem. That's the breakdown.

(pause)  
We're going to dismantle articles and poems each day. That's how we're going to pass the FCAT. Read poems, write poems, read articles, write articles. Understand?

Reluctantly, the students nod.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Lets go.

Dean walks around with a small stack of papers. He passes the papers to the students.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Here's a really good Langston Hughes poem.

Ed takes the sheet of paper and balls it up.

ED  
Teach, come on; you cool and all, but we from the hood. We don't read poems.

The students LAUGH. Dean gives them a stern look.

DEAN

(dramatically)

"If in my quest to achieve my goals  
I stumble or crumble and lose my Soul. Those that knew me  
would easily co-sign. There was never a life as hard as mine.  
No father - No money - No chance and No guide. I only follow  
my voice inside. If it guides me wrong and I do not win. I'll  
learn from my mistakes and try 2 achieve again."

ED

Teach, that's deep.

DEAN

*If I Fall* by Tupac Shakur.

The students are stunned.

INT. CONDO, STUDY - NIGHT

The study is comfortable and historical in appearance with an  
English leather chair, oak desk, and an oak bookshelf full of  
leather bound classics.

BOOKSHELF

The books include Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Milton  
Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, and *Lords of Finance* by  
Liaquat Ahamed.

RETURN TO SCENE

As Dean sits at his desk, he reaches to the floor where a stack  
of journals rest. He takes one from the top and puts it on the  
desk.

JOURNAL

The words Ed and THUG LIFE are written creatively on the cover.  
Dean opens the journal.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean reads silently.

ED (V.O.)

In Liberty City, "What happens to a dream deferred?" It can dry up like a raisin in the sun. It can fester like a sore and damn near run. It can stink like rotten meat. It can even crust and sugar over like a syrupy sweet.

(pause)

If that dream was a real dream, Liberty City High wouldn't be in the hood, but in the bosom of good soil, where grapes don't rot but grow into raisins and even fine wine. Dreams wouldn't fester like a sick ass sore, but see in reality I'm kidding with myself, 'cause in Liberty City our dreams from birth have a time clock ticking, they sag like heavy loads. And you know damn well they gonna explode!

Dean closes Ed's journal and ponders.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH - EVENING

At the entrance to the school, a banner reads: Welcome Parents to Student Status Night.

INT. CLASSROOM - EVENING

With the door opened, Dean is busy rearranging extra desks to accommodate the parents.

He walks over to his own desk and takes out a big box of donuts from out of a grocery bag.

He places the box of donuts on the desk as well as napkins and small bottles of water.

LATER

Visibly disappointed, Dean sits at his desk. The donuts and bottled water are still as he previously arranged the items. Dean looks up at the clock.

CLOCK

It is 8 p.m.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean wipes his forehead. His face becomes a bit flush. His hands shake. He quickly reaches into his pocket, takes out the small pill box.

Dean takes out a pill, pops it in his mouth, grabs a bottle of water, opens it and drinks. He puts the bottle down.

A teacher walks in, CARL BRANCH. Carl has a brown paper bag in his hand.

DEAN  
Hey, Carl.

CARL  
Any parents?

DEAN  
No, not one.

CARL  
Ahh, you'll get used to it. The entire community fills the stands for the football games, but when a meeting is called about their kids education, the school is empty. We have a well validated saying at Liberty City High, food stamps and football. That's all that matters.

Carl pulls a Bud Light out of the brown paper bag.

CARL (CONT'D)  
That's why you have to be prepared for student status night, FCAT night or any other academic event for parents 'cause their asses aren't coming.

Carl opens the cap on the beer and drinks.

CARL (CONT'D)  
You'll get used to it. Time to go home.

He pats Dean on the shoulder, puts the beer back in the bag and walks out of the room.

Dean sits back in the chair, lowers his head. Suddenly, a KNOCK is heard on the door.

A shockingly sexy woman, JOSEPHINA "DIAMOND" MARTINEZ, enters.

DEAN'S P. O. V. - FROM DOOR TO DESK

Dean's mouth drops on sight of Miss Martinez. She is tall with bright, seductive eyes, and the cleavage from her tight blouse is absolutely criminal. Her long, sleek legs are perfectly encased in a short, tight skirt.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean is dumbfounded. He tries to gather himself. He stands.

DIAMOND

(sexy, Latin voice)

Mr. Jackson, I'm Diamond. Coco's mom. Just came over to show my appreciation. Since you've been her teacher, she reads every night.

DEAN

(stumbling)

Oh, don't, don't thank me. She works hard -

Miss Martinez pushes the door shut and with the utmost sex appeal, walks toward Dean.

DIAMOND

(interrupting)

No. I have to . . . Give you a free lap dance.

Dean's mouth drops again.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH - NIGHT

Looking a bit disheveled, Dean walks into the school parking lot. He wipes his eyes as if he is seeing a mirage.

A few feet away, the mighty Bulldogs football team, like Spartan soldiers, run around the school in perfect order.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Dean stands in front of the class. The students are all seated and attentive.

DEAN

Let's take a look at free verse poetry. Poetry that is, like hip-hop, free flowing. However, unlike hip-hop, free verse poetry doesn't have to rhyme.



WILLIE  
Like free style?

DEAN  
Exactly -

PHIL  
(interrupting; to Coco)  
Girl if you don't wanna give me a shot, put me down with your  
momma.

Coco ignores Phil.

DEAN  
Phil, you're disturbing our creative flow. Respect.

PHIL  
Sorry, Teach.

CEDRIC  
(to Dean)  
She is fine, Teach. You ain't seen Coco's mom?

DEAN  
Ahh, no. Let's focus on -

COCO  
(interrupting; to Dean)  
Teach, you saw my mom at Student Status Night. She the only  
parent showed up.

WILLIE  
Oh, shit. Teach hit it.

The students ROAR with LAUGHTER as Dean shakes his head and  
claps in a vain effort to calm his class.

INT. CONDO, STUDY - NIGHT

Dean sits at his desk. He reaches over and takes a journal  
from the top of the stack. He places it on the desk.

JOURNAL

In bright pink, the cover reads: Ashley.

RETURN TO SCENE

Deans opens the journal and silently reads.

ASHLEY (V.O.)

The Down Low

On the down low, I got me a good man. He loves me so.  
So much he calls me his little shone. My man knows I'm quiet,  
but he knows I treat him right.  
So we keep it all on the down low. So low, only me, my man and  
now Teach, know that Ashley got it going on, on the down low.

Dean closes Ashley's journal, reaches down and grabs another journal.

INT. SOUTH BEACH, CHINA GRILL - NIGHT

A HOSTESS ushers Dean and Diamond into seats at a table for two. The hostess waives across the room to a WAITER, and the hostess leaves.

Dean, casually dressed, looks directly at his date, Diamond Martinez. Diamond is dressed in a short, seductive dress with a matching purse.

Diamond is dazzlingly sexy and fits right in the upscale restaurant full of beautiful, young urbanites.

DIAMOND

Oh, this so nice. Never been to a place like this. The last guy took me out, that jerk took me to KFC.

Dean LAUGHS. Diamond smiles.

The waiter approaches and pours a glass of wine for Diamond and one for Dean. The waiter nods and walks away.

Diamond takes more than a sip.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

Woah. This better than Colt Forty-Five.

Dean smiles as he takes a sip.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Ronnie Blake opens the door and Ashley enters. Ashley sits on a bench as Ronnie stands over her.

RONNIE BLAKE  
You my Lil' shone, right?

Face full of unwise, youthful glee, Ashley nods.

RONNIE BLAKE (CONT'D)  
Then I gotta teach you how to be a good Lil' shone.

He grabs Ashley by the back of her head and pushes her face right at his crouch.

RONNIE BLAKE (CONT'D)  
Do your thing, Lil' shone.

Scared, Ashley unzips Ronnie's pants.

INT. SOUTH BEACH, CHINA GRILL - NIGHT

Dean and Diamond have completed their meals as the waiter removes the plates from the table and walks away.

DIAMOND  
Thanks for bringing me. Great food, hip vibe.

DEAN  
My pleasure.

Diamond looks inquisitively at Dean as she takes a sip and puts her glass back on the table. She looks serious.

DIAMOND  
How come you haven't asked me my real name? You know it's not Diamond.

Dean is caught off guard.

DEAN  
I . . . I just figured you'd tell me when you wanted to.

DIAMOND  
You know Diamond is my stage name.  
(pause)  
So am I just a stage to you? 'Cause if I am, I don't do nothin' for free, not even having dinner. Rich men pay me thousands just to show up at parties. So what I'm saying, school teacher, if I'm a trophy, it's all cash. If it's a dance, it's all cash. If it's sex, this señorita doesn't get down like that.  
(pause)  
So what do you want, Dean?

Dean drains the rest of his wine. He reaches into his wallet and pulls out a credit card and places it on the table.

He looks at Diamond intently with a measure of firm confidence.

DEAN

We can fly to Paris tonight and visit the Eifel Tower; hit Italy in the morning and shop in Milan; cruise the Queen Mary to Cape town, South Africa and watch the whales. Whatever you want. If you want to jump on this table and dance that's fine too, but what I really want is the continued pleasure of your company.

(pause)

That in itself is better than any orgasm I'd derive even if you were to sex me. But like I said, all I want is the pleasure of your company, that's all and God only knows, so far it's been heaven for me.

She is visibly touched by Dean.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Oh, and by the way, your name is Josephina.

Diamond takes out her purse, opens it, and withdraws a stripper's roll of hundred dollar bills.

DIAMOND

I got the bill, Teach

(pause)

All I can say is I must like your company too 'cause I ain't never spent money on any man.

Dean smiles and so does Diamond.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Ashley sits on the bench as Ronnie Blake zips up his pants.

RONNIE BLAKE

Lil' shone, you learning. But if you really wanna be down with me, you gotta be down with my boys.

Ronnie Blake turns and heads to the door. Ashley looks confounded. The door opens and TWO TEEN BOYS enter.

RONNIE BLAKE (CONT'D)

Lil' shone, these my boys from the block; we like brothers. Go on and show 'em what you learned from me.

The two teen boys unzip their pants. Ashley stares in disbelief.

INT. CLASSROOM - NOON

The bell RINGS and the students begin leaving the classroom. Dean waves to Devon as he is just about to walk out.

DEAN

Devon, what's going on with Willie? Hasn't been coming to class.

DEVON

Don't know, Teach.

DEAN

Come on, gotta know something; that's your buddy.

Devon waits until all of the students are gone.

DEVON

Don't tell him I told you.

DEAN

I won't.

DEVON

Willie is dropping out. I mean he's still around school, just not going to class. He's hustling.

DEAN

Hustling?

DEVON

Go to the east wing, boys' bathroom. You'll see what I'm talkin' 'bout. Gotta run, Teach.

DEAN

Thanks, Devon.

Devon leaves the room.

I/E. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, BOYS' BATHROOM - NOON

Dean opens the door to the bathroom. He is visibly shocked as he observes Willie and several boys on their knees while shooting craps.

On sight of Dean, the boys are startled, but Willie calms their fears.

WILLIE  
(to boys)  
Don't run; that's my teacher; he cool.  
(to Dean)  
Gotta make dis money, Teach.

Dean simply stares in disbelief as Willie shakes the dice and slings the dice on the floor.

WILLIE (CONT'D)  
Yeah, give me my money, busters.

Looking defeated, the other boys toss their money over to Willie.

INT. DEAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Dean drives his late model Mercedes while Willie sits in the front passenger's seat.

DEAN  
You can't drop out. You'll end up in jail or dead.

WILLIE  
Teach, you cool, coolest teacher ever, but my home life is crazy; too much pressure.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dressed in a robe, Coco is seated in a chair in front of a lighted vanity. A stylist is busy preparing her hair.

Another stylist is busy preparing Coco's make-up. During the entire process Coco is all smiles.

INT. DEAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Dean drives while Willie enjoys the ride.

WILLIE  
Teach pushing a big body Benz; you got that paper, but I'm broke with two babies on the way.

DEAN  
You're having twins?

WILLIE

Nahh, Teach. Got two girls pregnant, and both of 'em live on the same street. Don't wanna be a dead beat dad. Wanna raise my lil' G's. That's why I gotta drop out, make some paper, some money.

DEAN

Wow . . . Willie you dug a big hole for yourself. But dropping out of school isn't the answer.

Like it's nothing, Willie pulls out a marijuana joint and a lighter. Dean is shocked.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Willie, you can't smoke that; it's illegal.

WILLIE

Gotta get the pressure off, Teach; don't you got pressure?

Willie lights the joint.

DEAN

Sure I have pressure, but I don't go around puffing joints.

WILLIE

It's all confidential, Teach. You my new road dog.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Both stylist are just about finished dolling up Coco and she is all smiles.

INT. DEAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Dean, with one hand on the steering wheel and the other holding the marijuana joint, smokes. Willie, sitting in the passenger's seat, looks at Dean.

Dean COUGHS.

WILLIE

Good shit, right, Teach?

Dean is buzzed out of his mind.

DEAN

Damn good.

He pulls on the joint again. He COUGHS. Willie LAUGHS.

WILLIE  
Might as well pull over at Mickey D's 'cause we gonna get the munchies.

EXT. LOT - NIGHT

Car parking at Mc Donalds, Dean has his seat laid back, low-rider style. Willie's seat is laid back as well.

The entire car is filled with smoke like a Cheech and Chong movie. Both Dean and Willie are visibly high.

DEAN  
Fire up some more chronic.

Willie LAUGHS as he reaches in his pockets and takes out another joint. He lights the joint.

WILLIE  
Teach, you right. Gotta stay in school.

Willie pulls on the joint.

DEAN  
Stay in school. Get a part-time job and raise your lil' G's.  
(pause)  
Now pass the chronic, fool.

Willie hands Dean the joint. Dean pulls on it. He COUGHS.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Need some advice.  
(pause)  
I like this lady, really like her.

Dean COUGHS.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
But we different. I'm trying, but I might be too square . . .  
Get what I'm saying, Willie?

WILLIE  
Yeah, Teach, I feel you. Gotta loosen up. You too preppy.  
Give her some thug love.

Dean hands the joint to Willie. Willie pulls on the joint.

DEAN  
Thug love?



WILLIE  
Yeah, Teach. Gotta get your Mack on. Tell her she's sexy,  
then lick the side of her face like it's grandmas potato salad.

DEAN  
Naaah?

WILLIE  
That thug love works; that's how I got two kids. Try it.

Willie hands Dean the joint. Dean takes it, pulls on it and  
COUGHS.

INT. DIAMOND'S CAR - NIGHT

Driving her late model BMW, Diamond looks distraught. With one  
hand on the wheel and the other holding a cell phone, Diamond  
manages to make a call.

INT. CONDO, MEDIA ROOM - NIGHT

Television on, Dean is asleep in the chair. A phone land line  
RINGS.

INT. DIAMOND'S CAR - NIGHT

Driving and still looking upset, Diamond holds her cell phone  
to her ear.

DIAMOND  
(into phone)  
Wake up, Dean. Wake up.

INT. CONDO, MEDIA ROOM - NIGHT

The phone continues to RING. Dean finally wakes up. He  
manages to pick up the phone.

DEAN  
(into phone)  
Fuck off Roy . . . Oh, sorry; thought it was my lawyer.  
(pause)  
You okay?  
Around the corner; I'll buzz you in.

INT. DEAN'S CONDO, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The elevator opens and Diamond, with a duffel bag in her hand, enters. Dean escorts her into the living room.

DEAN  
Please, sit.

Diamond sits as she places the duffel bag on the floor. Dean sits next to her.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

Diamond sniffles.

DIAMOND  
Smells like chronic.

Dean is caught off guard.

DEAN  
Chronic . . . What's that?

DIAMOND  
Forget it.  
(pause)  
My -

DEAN  
(interrupting)  
Come here.

Dean licks the side of the Diamond's face. Diamond immediately pops him on the head.

DIAMOND  
Wrong with you? You acting strange. Get it together. I Need help.

DEAN  
Sorry . . . I'm a bit cloudy -

DIAMOND  
(interrupting)  
Coco is dancing.

DEAN  
Dancing?

DIAMOND  
Stripping.

DEAN  
What? Who told you that?

DIAMOND  
My girl friend works at  
Shake One, strip club full of criminals and dope boys.  
(pause)  
Don't know why she's doing it. I been saving money for her to  
go to college. Buy her nice clothes.  
(sobbing)  
Everything I do is for my daughter.

Dean pats her on the shoulder. Diamond gathers herself.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)  
Afraid to call the cops 'cause they might arrest her.

DEAN  
I'll get her.

DIAMOND  
You can't go in there. Too dangerous. That place is hard  
core; you'll get a cap bust in you.

Dean stands up.

DEAN  
I'm straight hood now.

Diamond manages a smile, a LAUGH.

DIAMOND  
Child please, you ain't hood. Living in a penthouse on Biscayne  
Bay.

DEAN  
(mimicking Ed)  
Fool, what you talk'n 'bout. I'm gangster.

Diamond LAUGHS.

DIAMOND  
Came over here to get help, but you the one need help.  
(pause)  
What am I gonna do with my daughter and her foolish teacher?

Dean LAUGHS as he sits back on the sofa.

DEAN  
Go home. You can't work tonight. I'll bring Coco home; I can do it.

DIAMOND  
Here, take this.

Diamond hands Dean the duffel bag.

DEAN  
Work clothes?

DIAMOND  
No, Teach. It's a hundred grand. Been saving for Coco to go to college.

Dean takes the duffel bag, opens it, withdraws a neat stack of hundred dollar bills. He puts the money back in the duffel bag and puts the bag on the floor.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)  
Thought since you know about investments and stuff, may be you can put it in some kind of account for her.  
(pause)  
Got another fifty thousand in some shoe boxes back home, wanna use that for school, you know, don't laugh, but I wanna be a paralegal; that's somethin' I been thinking about for a long time.

Dean takes Diamond's hand.

DEAN  
You're a superwoman and a supermom.

She wraps her arms around Dean.

DIAMOND  
This is how you do it.

Diamond gives Dean a gentle, passionate kiss.

INT. DEAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Dean drives while talking through the car's phone system.

DEAN  
I know it's late, Roy.

ROY (V.O.)  
You must really need a new doctor calling me at this hour.  
(pause)  
Can have you put back in prison, you know.

DEAN  
Love you too, Roy.

ROY (V.O.)  
What is it?

DEAN  
Still represent the police union?

ROY (V.O.)  
Yes, why?

DEAN  
Need a big favor.

EXT. SHAKE ONE, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dean gets out of his car and walks over to the front door, stopping in front of a menacing looking BOUNCER. The bouncer frisks Dean.

BOUNCER  
Twenty cover.

Dean takes out his wallet, withdraws a large bill and hands it to the bouncer.

DEAN  
Keep the change.

BOUNCER  
Thanks, Boss. I'll keep an eye on the ride.

DEAN  
Good man.

The bouncer opens the door for Dean.

INT. SHAKE ONE - NIGHT

As Dean walks into the club, he is hit by loud hip-hop MUSIC. The club isn't for the faint at heart.

The place is full of middle-aged African-American and Hispanic men, all of whom look like hard-core criminals.

Most of the men hover around a small stage where STRIPPER #1 dances on a pole. Other men stand around the small bar area.

Even the strippers look like they spent time in jail.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Ed and Trina walk into a cheap motel.

INT. SHAKE ONE - NIGHT

As men stand around the stage watching Stripper #1 sensuously slide up and down the pole, a soft hand touches the back of Dean's shoulder.

Dean turns. STRIPPER #2, dressed in a bikini and heels, smiles.

STRIPPER #2  
Baby Boy, can I have a dance?

Dean doesn't know what to say.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

In the no frills motel room, Ed hugs Trina and kisses her. Trina holds Ed tightly, gripping his strong arms.

Trina take off Ed's shirt and Ed takes off Trina's blouse.

INT. SHAKE ONE - NIGHT

Arms wrapped around Dean's neck, Stripper #2 whispers in his ear. The DJ stops the music.

DJ (V.O.)  
Big money ballers, make it rain. Gotta a rookie first round draft pick coming to the stage.

(pause)  
Coco Butter, bring that body up here.

The MUSIC starts again.

Dean looks at the stage. He sees Coco dressed in a two piece bikini and heels. She looks like a 20-year-old woman. Dean pulls a bill out of his wallet.

DEAN  
Gotta go.

Stripper #2 takes the bill and Dean makes his way near the stage.

On stage, Coco starts dancing. With her young body and cute face, she is without a doubt the best looking dancer in the club.

Once Coco grabs the pole, twirls around, stops and shakes her bottom, all of the men flock to the stage and start throwing money at her even though she has yet to take off her bikini.

DJ (V.O.)  
Told ya'll she's a first round pick. Make it rain, ballers, make it rain.

The men continue to shower Coco with dollar bills as she erotically dances on stage.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Trina is in bed, wearing her bra and jeans while Ed is on top of her, wearing only his underwear.

As Ed licks Trina under her neck, Trina tightly grabs his back.

Ed begins to go lower, licking Trina from the neck down to her stomach, seductively circling her navel. Trina's face is flush as she MOANS.

Ed goes back up, licks Trina around the neck. He puts his hands in Trina's crouch, then abruptly stops. Ed looks at Trina intently.

ED  
(surprised)  
Baby Girl, you ah virgin.

Trina SIGHS. She shakes her head as if she is dazed.

TRINA  
Won't let a boy do me unless he loves me.

ED  
(pause)  
How you know I love you?

TRINA  
Ed Robinson, if you didn't love me, you wouldn't have stopped.

ED  
(pause)  
Ain't never met a girl like you. You're the words I put on paper. I write those words, and it calms me, calms me better than any joint. Yeah, Baby Girl, you the only high I need.

Ed kisses Trina on the forehead.

ED (CONT'D)  
Let's go home.

INT. SHAKE ONE - NIGHT

Coco grabs the pole, bends and shakes her body fast and the men in the club are in awe of her. They continue to shower her with dollar bills. Dean moves to get closer to the stage.

Mere inches from the stage, Dean courageously leaps up on the stage and grabs Coco. A menacing looking THUG jumps on the stage.

Coco SCREAMS as the thug grabs Dean by the collar and punches him right in the face, knocking Dean off of the stage.

Better late than never, City of Miami Police Officers with their guns drawn burst into the club. The DJ's voice hovers through the speakers.

DJ (V.O.)  
Chill, ballers, five-0 in the house.

The thug is immediately placed in hand cuffs.

INT. DEAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Face a bit bruised, Dean drives as Coco sits in the front passenger's seat. She looks away from her teacher.

DEAN  
I know you're upset, but you don't have to dance, not that kind of dancing.



COCO  
My momma does it.

DEAN  
Circumstances caused your mom to do what she does.

Coco turns and looks at Dean.

COCO  
Go to hell. You my teacher not my daddy.

DEAN  
Oh, so I have to get ghetto to get some sense into your hard, disrespectful head.  
(pause)  
Well, the hell with you. If you want to strip, go right ahead. Drop out of school. Let those old thugs run through you like water.

COCO  
Told you, you ain't my daddy.

DEAN  
What are you talking about? You never see your sorry daddy. Stubborn brat. Don't even realize what your mom does for you. She does what she has to do so you won't have to live like her. Can't you understand that?

Coco starts CRYING.

COCO  
Teach, you don't understand. I wanna be like my mom; she's a star.

DEAN  
Stripping? That's no star. Told you she does it 'cause she has to. No good Jose abandoned you'll. Your mom, a teenager with a baby, she had to do something to support you. You don't even realize how hard your mom works to save money for you to go to college. She wants you to accomplish what she couldn't. So if you want to strip and drop out, go ahead, but your mom is going back to school.

Quite abruptly Coco stops crying. She wipes her tears and she even smiles.

COCO  
Teach, you are, you really are.

Dean is a bit confused.

DEAN  
Are what? What you talking about?

COCO  
You fuckin' my momma.

Dean is visibly floored, caught completely off guard.

DEAN  
Oh, nahh, nahh. You don't understand the situation.

COCO  
What's the situation, Teach? You know my real daddy's name, Jose. My momma hates his ass, never talks about him, not even to me. She told you about him. Yeah Teach, you fuckin' my momma.

DEAN  
You don't understand -

COCO  
(interrupting)  
You gonna marry her and be my daddy or are you just a hit and run?

Dean pulls the car over into the parking lot of a Church's Chicken. He parks the car but keeps the engine on.

DEAN  
If I do, it's not going to change anything. You're not doing dumb stuff like you did tonight.  
(pause)  
Your mom and I are making progress toward something special. The key is, the main idea is, it's positive progress. What you did tonight, that's negative motion; pushes you back instead of forward. Understand?

COCO  
Yeah, Teach. I'm sorry. I was stupid. Take me home. Gotta tell my mom I'm sorry, tell her I love her.  
(pause)  
And you really need to learn how to fight.

Dean LAUGHS as he puts the car in drive and pulls out of the parking lot.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Mrs. Holmes escorts Dean into Principal Reed's office. She leaves.

Principal Reed is at his desk with the phone at his ear. He waves his hand for Dean to have a seat. Dean sits in one of the chairs directly in front of the principal.

PRINCIPAL REED

(into phone)

Thanks for the parade, mayor. The football team deserves it. Back to back state championships.

(pause)

Alright, talk with you later.

Principal Reed hangs up the phone.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

Dean Jackson, my favorite teacher.

Although surprised, Dean smiles.

DEAN

Good morning, Principal Reed.

PRINCIPAL REED

Gotta give it to you; doing a great job for a first year teacher; classroom management is fantastic.

DEAN

Thanks.

Principal Reed starts signing a stack of papers, looking at Dean then at the papers.

PRINCIPAL REED

But I need a huge favor.

Want you to coach the girls' basketball team.

Dean is surprised.

DEAN

They have a coach.

PRINCIPAL REED

Fired him this morning. We should have won districts last year; got knocked off by Norland. We have talent, but the team is a mess. He had to go.

DEAN

I've never coached before.

PRINCIPAL REED

But you played big time college basketball. That's great experience. You're perfect for the job.

(MORE)

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

(pause)

Besides, Coach Williams didn't strike me as a real Bulldog. You, Dean, you're a real Bulldog now.

(pause)

Don't worry, you can handle it. I've got your back.

DEAN

Thank you, sir, appreciate your confidence in me, but I -

PRINCIPAL REED

(interrupting)

Don't let me down. We're family now, and I need your help.

Dean reluctantly nods.

DEAN

I'll coach the girls.

PRINCIPAL REED

Good man. Now let me know if you need more books, new computers, whatever, 'cause I got your back.

DEAN

Yes, sir.

PRINCIPAL REED

Oh, got somethin' for you.

Principal Reed reaches underneath his desk, takes out a bag. He takes a shirt out of the bag and holds it up.

The shirt has the school colors with Lady Bulldogs and Coach Jackson embroidered in the upper left.

PRINCIPAL REED (CONT'D)

Might as well put it on now 'cause you got a game against Norland tonight.

Dean looks at the shirt and reluctantly smiles.

EXT. MIAMI NORLAND GYM - NIGHT

The gym is packed with students and fans. They CHEER as the NORLAND VIKINGS strut on to the court with sheer confidence.

All-star point guard CASSANDRA JONES is cornered by local MEDIA flashing photos and seeking interviews.

Then the Lady Bulldogs of Liberty City High hit the court, they are greeted by loud BOOS. Dean walks over and shakes hands with NORLAND's COACH.

LATER

Big Neely wins the tip and passes the ball to Brittany. Brittany brings the ball up the court with Cassandra guarding.

Immediately, Cassandra steals the ball, dribbles down the other basket and goes up for a layup. Brittany tries to block the shot but misses.

CASSANDRA

(to Brittany)

White trash, you can't guard me.

The ball goes in and the REFEREE blows the WHISTLE for a foul. Cassandra gets on the line and hits the three point play.

Over on the bench, Dean claps with encouragement. He looks up at the score board: Norland 3, Liberty City 0.

Brittany gets the ball up the court and Big Neely sets a devastating pick for Trina. Trina gets free for an easy layup, but Brittany pulls up for a jump shot that misses badly.

A Norland player grabs the rebound, passes it to Cassandra and Cassandra dribbles to the other end of the court. She does a wicked cross over to fake out Brittany and make another easy layup.

LATER

Dean is sitting on the bench looking dismayed. He looks up at the score board: Norland 60, Liberty City 20.

INT. DEAN'S CONDO, STUDY - NIGHT

Seated at his desk, Dean reaches to the floor where a stack of journals rest. He takes one from the top and puts it on the desk.

JOURNAL

The words Trina are colorfully written on the cover. Dean opens the journal.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean reads silently.

TRINA (V.O.)

When I was a little girl, I heard birds singing 'cause I lived in a house with a yard with trees and a rose bush. I saw bees on blooms and little green lizards crawling up the mango tree. Blue jays and mockingbirds and the scent of sweet gardenias. Glad I spent that time as a foster child. Even though I didn't stay long, I will never forget that house, those images of hope, the birds, the flowers, and the little green lizards crawling up a tree. Those things are more radiant than gun shots and pee.

Dean closes Trina's journal and smiles.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dressed in practice uniforms, the girls are standing in the middle of the court.

Dean, dressed in coaches shorts, a Lady Bulldogs T-shirt, basketball sneakers and a whistles strapped around his neck, holds a basketball as he stands before his new team.

DEAN

Let's see what you can do. First team against second team.

Dean tosses the ball on the court. The starters, which include Brittany, Big Neely, and Trina, take the ball up the court against the five backups.

Initially the scrimmage seems normal; however, when the starters have the ball, the point guard, Brittany, simply will not pass the ball to the shooting guard, Trina.

On a glaring example, during a fast break Trina is open on the wing, yet Brittany pulls up and hits a ten foot jump shot. Dean blows his WHISTLE to halt play.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(to Brittany)

Trina was wide open, easy layup. Why didn't you pass the ball?

BRITTANY

What difference does it make. I hit it.

DEAN  
(to Brittany)  
So you're the best shooter?

BRITTANY  
Damn right.

DEAN  
Let's find out.  
(to Big Neely)  
Get down low.  
Every body off to the side except Brittany.

Brittany jogs over to the free throw line. Dean brings over the rolling basketball cart.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
(to Brittany)  
Take five shots, wherever your range, just knock 'em down.  
(to Big Neely)  
Rebound.

Dean blows his WHISTLE.

Dean grabs a ball from the cart and rockets a chest pass to Brittany as she stands at the free throw line. She catches the ball and immediately pulls up for a jump shot. The ball rambles in.

Big Neely gets the ball and rolls it off the court. Brittany back peddles to the top of the key. Dean grabs a ball and slings a sharp bounce pass.

Brittany catches the ball in stride, pulls up for a jump shot and fires. The ball hits the rim. Big Neely grabs the rebound and rolls it off the court.

Brittany runs over to the wing, about fifteen feet out. Dean grabs a ball and pops her with a sharp chest pass.

Brittany catches the ball with ease and pulls up, shoots. The ball, once again hits the front of the rim.

Big Neely grabs the rebound and rolls the ball off the court.

Brittany moves closer, about twelve feet from the wing, and Dean pops her with a sharp bounce pass. Brittany catches the ball, dribbles the ball between her legs, pulls up and shoots.

The ball rambles into the basket. Big Neely grabs the ball out of the net and rolls it off the court.

Brittany, back paddles back to the top of the key, and Dean hits her with a sharp chest pass. Brittany catches the ball, pulls up and fires a jump shot.

The ball hits the rim. Big Neely grabs the missed shot as Dean blows the WHISTLE. Big Neely replenishes the cart.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Trina.

Trina jogs on to the court. Brittany rolls her eyes at Trina while walking off the court.

Dean blows the WHISTLE. Trina runs to the top of the key. Dean grabs a ball from the cart and slings a sharp chest pass.

Trina stumbles catching the pass, but she secures the ball, pulls up and fires. Her trajectory on the ball is so perfect, the ball soars in without touching the rim, nothing but the bottom of the net.

Big Neely grabs the ball out of the rim and rolls it off the court. Trina runs to the left corner, to the three point line, Dean hits her with a sharp bounce pass.

Trina catches the ball, pulls up with perfect form, launches the shot and it hits nothing but the bottom of the net. Big Neely grabs the ball and rolls it off the court.

Trina runs over to the left corner, behind the three point line, and Dean fires a sharp chest pass. Trina catches the ball in stride, pulls up and shoots.

The ball, once again, hits nothing but the bottom of the net. Big Neely gets the ball and rolls it off the court.

Trina back peddles over to the top of the key, but further out, a few feet from the three point line. Dean hits her with a bounce pass.

Trina catches the ball, pulls up, fires. The ball sails into the basket. Big Neely gets the ball and rolls it off the court.

Trina runs over to the corner, just outside the three point line. Dean sends a hard bounce pass, and Trina catches the ball in stride, pulls up and shoots.

The ball hits nothing but the bottom of the net. Big Neely grabs the ball and rolls it off the court as Dean blows his WHISTLE.



Looking stern, Dean walks over to Brittany.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Pass her the ball.

Brittany is irate.

BRITTANY  
Fuck this. Where they get this buster from, rather have Coach Williams.

Big Neely goes over to Brittany and tries to calm her down.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY - NIGHT

As Ed's best friend, Reefer Red, swiftly walks along 79th Street, he is ambushed by TWO BLACK MEN armed with automatic hand GUNS.

They pistol whip Reefer Red to the ground. A third FIGURE wearing a ski mask observes.

The two black men kick and stomp Reefer Red until he curls up in a fetal position. The figure removes his ski mask. It's Fat Mike looking down at Reefer Red. Fat Mike takes a gun from one of the two black men.

FAT MIKE  
(to Reefer Red )  
Never liked you any way. Yo boy, Ed, he next.  
(pause)  
Rolling with Zoepound Killers now. What Ed gone do, pull out that little cap gun.

Fat Mike FIRES a round in Reefer Red. Reefer Red's body jolts.

A van pulls up to the curve. The door opens, and the Zoe Pound Killers and Fat Mike jump in. The door closes shut and the van quickly leaves the area.

LATER

Now roped off by crime scene tape, onlookers watch as paramedics slide the body bag carrying Reefer Red into the back of an ambulance.

Detectives search for evidence and try to talk to potential witnesses, but the onlookers are reluctant to speak with law enforcement.

In the midst of the crowd of onlookers, a quite stoic Ed looks on.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dean, dressed for practice, stands in front of the locker room where Trina sits on a bench. Brittany sits on a separate bench.

DEAN

Can you two sit together?

Brittany doesn't budge. Trina gets up and sits on the same bench as Brittany but at a distance.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Can't force you to get along, but there is no way we can win without you two working together.

Both Trina and Brittany look down to the floor.

DEAN (CONT'D)

We play Norland again in our gym. Lots of college scouts coming.

Brittany looks up at Dean.

BRITTANY

For real?.

Dean nods.

DEAN

They're coming to see Cassandra.

(pause)

Now if you'll want to stay poor, keep on hating each other. Play together, and basketball can get you out. Why not let those scouts notice you all?

(pause)

I got a scholarship, and I've made more money than most people will ever see. Basketball was my ticket.

(to Brittany)

Poor white trash? Welcome to the party; called Oreo for years.

Dean turns and walks out of the room. Brittany looks at Trina. Trina looks over at Brittany.

INT. DEAN'S CONDO, STUDY - NIGHT

Dean sits at his desk. He reaches to the floor where a stack of journals rest. He takes one from the top and puts it on the desk.

JOURNAL

Ed's journal is on the desk. Dean opens the journal.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean reads silently.

ED (V.O.)

Phantom.

Umm ah Phantom. You don't see me.

A once mortal who tried to B. Now I just loom in the dark shadows amongst the dead. Umm ah Phantom.

U don't C me. A few miles away, darkness turns into bright light. Pretty people laugh, happy and content. The sun hovers over them like darkness covers me. Reminds me of my death and that dark night Lucifer ushered me in for the ill deeds of my stay.

But when he checked the list,

He released me from my cell.

"Go away from me boy . . . U already live in hell." Umm ah Phantom.

U can't see me.

A once mortal who even Lucifer set free.

Dean looks pensive as he closes Ed's journal.

INT. MIAMI'S SCOTT PROJECTS, ED'S UNIT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ed, dressed in all black, kneels next to his bed. He slides his hand under the bed and pulls out an AK-47. Ed stands, holds the weapon.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM - NIGHT

Brittany is shooting jumpers as Trina observers. Trina gets the rebound from a missed shot. She comes over to Brittany.

TRINA

Back is crooked. Gotta keep good posture. Like posing for a picture. Watch.

Trina dribbled to the top of the key, pulls up with perfect form and fires. The ball soars into the basket.

Brittany gets the ball and jogs over to Trina. Trina gets in back of Brittany and grabs her, making her stand straight as she gets ready to shoot.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
Now, shoot.

Brittany pulls up and shoots. The ball soars into the basket.

TRINA (CONT'D)  
All you gotta do.

INT. MIAMI'S SCOTT PROJECTS, ED'S UNIT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Looking quite stoic, Ed sits on his bed. Using a cloth, he meticulously polishes the AK-47.

ED  
(dramatically; to himself)  
"True!-Nervous-very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am!  
(pause)  
But why will you say that I am mad?"

Ed spits on the gun and continuous to polish it.

ED (CONT'D)  
(dramatically)  
"The disease had sharpened my senses-not destroyed-not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute."

Ed stands up, aims the gun.

ED (CONT'D)  
"I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell."

INT. LIBERTY CITY, DIAMOND'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dean enters the moderately decorated home. Diamond hugs Dean and they kiss. Dean sits at the small, oval dinning table with Coco and Trina. Diamond sits next to Dean.

DEAN  
(to them all)  
What's going on?

DIAMOND

(to Dean)

The girls are worried, think Ed is in trouble.

Coco looks at Trina.

COCO

(to Trina)

Tell 'em.

Trina takes her cell phone out of her pocket and places it on the table.

TRINA

(to Dean)

When I came from the gym, Ed sent me a text. Tried to call him back, but he wouldn't answer.

DEAN

(to Trina)

What did it say?

Trina hands Dean her cell phone. Dean looks at the phone.

TRINA

The Tell-Tale Heart. Is that a poem, Teach? You know he's really into poetry now.

DEAN

No, its an Edgar Allan Poe short story.

Dean hands the phone back to Trina. Trina places the phone on the table.

COCO

(to Trina)

Tell him, girl.

TRINA

(to Dean)

Ed sells marijuana and estacy.

DEAN

(to them all)

What's does that have to do with Edgar Allan Poe?

DIAMOND

There was a murder a few days ago. Reefer Red, one of Ed's friends, was killed. Ed sells for a man they call Big Castro.

DEAN  
(confounded)  
Hold up, Big Castro, Reefer Red. What's going on?

TRINA  
(to Dean)  
The Tell-Tale Heart, what's it about?

DEAN  
(to Trina and Coco)  
We read some Poe. The Raven. Remember Poe's style?

TRINA  
Gothic.

DEAN  
Right. Gothic is based in madness, death and darkness. The Tell-Tale Heart is about a murder, and given the context here, I think Ed is going to kill somebody.

Coco smacks her hand on the table.

COCO  
Fat Mike. Word on the street is Fat Mike and some Zoe's took out Reefer Red.

TRINA  
(to Dean)  
Ed told me Big Castro is ruthless. If that story is about a murder like you say, then Ed is out to kill Fat Mike 'cause that's the only way Big Castro will let Ed live.

Dean shakes his head.

DEAN  
(pause; to all)  
This is not how I envisioned teachable moments.  
(pause)  
Where can I find Big Castro?

EXT. CORAL GABLES, BIG CASTRO'S HOME - NIGHT

Dean's car drives up to the drive way of a grand Gables styled estate.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY - NIGHT

Ed's car, a classic Impala with a candy-apple red paint job and twenty-two inch chrome rims, swiftly moves through the streets of Liberty City.

INT. BIG CASTRO'S HOME, HALL, DEN - NIGHT

A massive Afro-Cuban man, MACEO, ushers Dean inside. Maceo immediately frisks Dean and leads him down the hall and into a stylish den.

Seated at a round table, Big Castro is a Cuban-American man. Quite dapper, he is dressed in a guaybera shirt and a straw hat. Big Castro stands and shakes hands with Dean. Maceo leaves.

BIG CASTRO  
Mr. Jackson, please sit.

Acting as poised as he can, Dean sits in a chair across from Big Castro. Big Castro sits in front of a tank teeming with predatory fish.

Maceo enters, carrying an ornate case. He opens the case and it is full of Cuban cigars.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
Do join me. Havana's finest.

Big Castro takes a cigar and so does Dean. Maceo closes the case, takes a lighter and lights the cigars. He places ashtrays before each man.

Both men pull on the cigars and both look pleased with the aroma.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
Let's get down to business, shall we?

Dean nods. Big Castro looks at his cigar.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Delightful.  
(to Dean)  
You're here for mercy, obviously. I seek assistance as well. Zoepound wants my territory. Confiscating the drop was nothing but a misguided statement of nerve. Such things have to be addressed and will.

Folder in hand, Maceo enters. He hands the folder to Big Castro. Big Castro opens the folder, looks over the document inside.

Maceo hands Big Castro a pen. Big Castro takes the pen, signs the paper and closes the folder. Maceo takes the folder, the pen and leaves the room.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
No harm will come to Ed as long as you help me.

Dean looks puzzled.

DEAN  
How can I possibly help you?

Big Castro places his cigar on the ashtray.

BIG CASTRO  
I'm looking to retire soon. If you help me clean up my capital, I can indeed fade away, and I promise neither I nor any one else will touch your student.

DEAN  
But I'm just a school teacher.

Big Castro gives a sinister smile.

BIG CASTRO  
You're an intelligent man, Mr. Jackson. Do you really think I'd let you come to my home if I didn't have your history?

He reaches to the side of the table and picks up a file, drops it in front of Dean.

Dean puts his cigar on the ashtray. He takes the file, opens it, sifts through the many pages.

There are photos of Dean at Lehman Brothers, an article of Dean in the Wall Street Journal, a picture of his ex-wife, a picture of Dean as a college basketball player, and a photo of him being arrested by the FBI.

Big Castro looks intently at Dean.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
Understand, I'm just one small piece of a global cartel that runs a multi-billion dollar conglomerate distributing various pleasure induced narcotics worldwide.

Quite stunned, Dean finally closes the file.



BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)

Mr. Investment Banker, I get information faster than the FBI and make people vanish cleaner than the CIA.

(pause)

Perhaps you should take your pills? Zoloff, I believe?

Dean nods with amazement and fear.

DEAN

I'm okay.

Dean places the file on the table. He picks up his cigar, pulls on it, exhales, then puts it back on the ashtray.

DEAN (CONT'D)

I'll do it as long as Ed isn't harmed and you capitalize the Liberty City Education Fund. Got to get my kids into college.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Liberty City Education Fund? Never heard of it.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Doesn't exist, not yet.

Big Castro LAUGHS.

BIG CASTRO

Fine, we have an agreement.

Big Castro extends his hand. Dean shakes his hand.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)

Big game tonight. You'd better get back. Maceo will take care of Ed.

DEAN

The game, I forgot.

Dean gets up.

INT. TWENTY-FOUR HOUR CORNER STORE, LIBERTY CITY - NIGHT

Fat Mike strolls over to the cooler, takes out a forty ounce of malt liquor beer, walks over to the counter and hands a male, middle-eastern STORE CLERK a large bill.

FAT MIKE

(derogatorily)

Keep the change A-rab.

The Store Clerk looks away from Fat Mike as Fat Mike walks towards the exit.

EXT. TWENTY-FOUR HOUR CORNER STORE - NIGHT

As soon as Fat Mike walks out of the store, he sees Ed's car. Face fraught with fear, Fat Mike drops the beer, and the bottle burst as it hits the ground.

Fat Mike reaches into his pants and pulls out a 9mm gun. He fires erratically. Just across the street, Ed's car stops along the curb.

As if immortal, Ed walks right out, stands stall, and despite bullets coming his way, Ed aims the AK-47 and fires relentlessly.

Despite being an overweight teen, Fat Mike turns while running as fast as he can, and he tries to shoot as he runs. But the 9mm is no match for the AK-47.

In mere seconds, Fat Mike's back is riddled with bullets. He falls to his knees, then flat on his face, lifeless.

Ed stops firing, calmly walks over to the body; he turns and heads to his car.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM - NIGHT

The gymnasium is packed with Bulldog FANS, not a single available seat. The Norland starting five is on the court.

Once the referee throws the ball up, Big Neely Sampson out jumps the Norland center, gathers the ball and quickly passes it to Brittany.

Norland gets into a two-three zone defense, forcing Liberty City to shoot jump shots. Trina follows a Big Neely pick, and stands on the wing, three point range.

Brittany soars a sharp pass to Trina. Trina catches the pass, pulls up and fires a jump shot. As the ball soars through the bottom of the net, in unison, the Bulldog fans shout their own play by play.

FANS  
Swoosh!

The Lady Bulldogs get back on defense as Cassandra brings the ball up, but like a bolt of lightning, Brittany steals the ball. Cassandra tries to defend, but Brittany makes a slick, crossover dribble, fakes out Cassandra and makes an easy layup.

FANS (CONT'D)  
Ohhhh!

Over on the sideline, Dean stands and claps.

Back on the other end, Cassandra brings the ball up the court as Brittany defends. Cassandra dumps the ball down low to the Norland center.

She turns to shoot, but Big Neely jumps and blocks the shot, slapping the ball away.

FANS (CONT'D)  
Get that shit outta here!

Brittany grabs the ball, runs down the court, spots a wide open Trina in the corner. Brittany rockets the ball to Trina. Trina catches the ball, pulls up and fires a jumper. The ball soars through the bottom of the net.

FANS (CONT'D)  
Swoosh!

The Bulldog fans stomp on the bleachers.

Cassandra gets the ball in bounds and pushes it all the way up the court. She stops, pulls up and shoots the ball off the glass and into the basket.

FANS (CONT'D)  
Booooo!

Brittany takes the in bound pass and pushes the ball up the court. She looks directly at a teammate on the right and Trina running on the left.

Brittany flips the ball toward the teammate on the right, and as the defense reacts, in seconds Brittany passes the ball behind her back and hits Trina on the left.

Trina pulls up, shoots and the ball soars in, hitting nothing but the bottom of the net.

FANS (CONT'D)  
Swoosh!

EXT. MIAMI BEACH, MCARTHUR CAUSEWAY - NIGHT

As Ed's car crosses over the causeway to Miami Beach, a fast CLUNKER of a car, bumps Ed's car in the rear.

INT. ED'S CAR - NIGHT

Ed looks in his rear view mirror where he spots the old, clunker right behind him. TWO GOONS, street killers, are visible in the front seats.

Ed drives and looks at his passenger's seat where his cell phone and the AK-47 sits.

EXT. MIAMI BEACH, MCARTHUR CAUSEWAY - NIGHT

As Ed's tries to evade the clunker, a Range Rover pulls to the side and then in front of Ed's car.

INT. ED'S CAR - NIGHT

Ed's cell RINGS. Ed is about to grab the AK-47, but instead grabs the phone. He places the phone to his ear.

MACEO (V.O.)

Rich Mouth, Big Castro cool. My word is good; gotta take over; get rid of the gun, the car.

Ed looks out at his rear view mirror.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM - NIGHT

In the packed gym, the score board reads: Liberty City, 60, Norland, 60. The time reads: 15 seconds remaining in the ball game.

Over on the bench during his last time out, Dean huddles with his team.

DEAN

They're not playing for overtime. Cassandra is going to run the clock down and take the last shot.

Dean looks at Brittany.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Get in her ass.

Brittany nods. The buzzer SOUNDS. The Lady Bulldogs jog back on to the court and Norland does the same. The Referee blows his WHISTLE and Norland in bounds the ball.

Cassandra takes the ball and starts to dribble it up the court. Brittany guards her.

She bends her knees, stoops low and grimaces as she opens her mouth wide, displaying her grills with a fierce scowl. Brittany looks Cassandra square in the eyes.

FANS

Defense! Defense! Defense!

With sheer confidence, the sleek Cassandra intentionally lets the clock run down. Only 10 seconds remain.

As Cassandra makes her move to take the last shot to win the game, like a bolt of lightning, Brittany steals the ball.

The fans stand up as Brittany dribbles down the other end of the court. Brittany desperately looks to pass the ball to Trina, but Cassandra, instead of guarding Brittany, Cassandra double teams Trina.

Thus with seconds remaining in the game, Cassandra dares Brittany to take the last shot.

FANS (CONT'D)

Shoot!

Seeing Trina blanketed by two defenders, and the clock down to just seconds, Brittany stops at the top of the key, steadies her body, pulls up, and just like Trina taught her, shoots a jump shot with perfect form.

The ball soars in the air and into the basket, hitting nothing but the bottom of the net.

The gym is pure PANDEMONIUM as the BUZZER sounds and Liberty City wins the game. The fans storm the court and lift Brittany high in the air.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, GYM, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Players on the Lady Bulldogs basket ball team walk out of the locker room. Trina is about to walk home.

A few feet in back of Trina, Brittany walks in Trina's direction.

BRITTANY

(shouting)

Hey, I'll drop you home. Gotta a bucket, but it runs.

Trina turns and smiles.

TRINA

Don't care 'bout that.

She walks toward Brittany.

BRITTANY

Wanna hit Mickey D's first?

TRINA

Cool.

They head toward the school parking lot.

INT. DEAN'S CONDO, STUDY - NIGHT

Dean, still in his game clothes, sits at his desk. Ed walks around and admires the great books on the shelves.

He touches the leather bound classics then walks away, turns facing Dean.

ED

Growing up in my hood fills you with some darkness, some horror.

DEAN

Ed, you don't have to grow up in the projects to have hell in you.

ED

Then why . . . Like Poe, why does madness follow me?

Dean takes a pencil and twists it.

DEAN

Horror, madness, insanity are as much a part of the human condition as walking along a beautiful beach in a perfectly sane state of mind. Poor people may have more hell to deal with, but internally -

Dean breaks the pencil in two.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Heaven and hell is inside us all.

(pause)

What you did tonight was to let all the good, all the creative fall into darkness.

Dean drops the broken pieces in a trash can.

DEAN (CONT'D)

You killed, took a life; you put a dent in the creative part of yourself.

(pause)

In the Tell-Tale Heart, the narrator received incredible senses, a new power of acuteness, but instead of using it for good, he used it to kill.

(pause)

That hell that is in you, Ed, it can be used as power for something creative, something good.

Ed snaps back.

ED

How you gonna analyze me? You crashed the stock market.

Dean looks stunned.

ED (CONT'D)

Yeah Teach, Googled you for three days. People went broke 'cause of your crooked ass. So don't analyze me 'cause you just as bad as me.

Dean shakes his head, SIGHS

DEAN

You're right. I'm a bad man.

Dean suddenly looks very angry.

DEAN (CONT'D)

The hell with you. I never took a life. You took a child away from a mom, a son away from a father, and I don't care if Fat Mike was a piece of shit. What makes you any better than him?

Ed looks away. He then turns back, facing Dean.

ED

(dramatically)

My city.

It loves me so.

The same city that put me in the hood -

DEAN  
(interrupting)  
Fuck a poem. You took a -

Dean starts shaking uncontrollably as a severe anxiety attack overtakes him. Face flush, he falls on the floor.

ED  
Teach?

Ed rushes to his side. Dean is panting.

DEAN  
Bathroom.

ED  
What?

DEAN  
Pills on the counter.

Ed stands up and rushes out of the room. Dean gasps as if he is having problems breathing.

Ed returns with a bottle of prescription drugs and a glass of water. He kneels, places the glass on the floor and takes the top off of the pill bottle.

Ed takes his free hand and lifts Dean's head. He hands the pill bottle to Dean. Dean sluggishly takes out a pill and pops it in his mouth.

He puts the bottle on the floor and takes the glass of water and hands it to Dean. Dean takes the glass and drinks.

LATER

In bed, Dean is resting peacefully. Ed sits in a chair at the foot of the bed. He looks up at the ceiling, lowers his head and prays silently.

INT. BRITTANY'S CAR - NIGHT

With the car parked, both girls LAUGH uncontrollably. They finally stop and settle down.

BRITTANY  
Ohh, God, best night of my life.



The car becomes awkwardly silent. Brittany looks intently at Trina, and Trina looks directly at Brittany.

Brittany kisses Trina. Trina doesn't resist, but she finally pulls away.

TRINA  
Better go.

Trina opens the door.

INT. SHAPIRO SPORTS AGENCY - DAY

In a high-rise office suite with an incredible view of the city, Principal Reed nervously paces about. Jay gets up from his desk, walks over to a bar and prepares a drink.

PRINCIPAL REED  
Can't keep it under wraps. The girl's mom is asking questions.  
(pause)  
Not going down for Ronnie.

Jay calmly walks over to Principle Reed. Hands him a drink.

JAY  
Johnnie Walker Blue.

Principal Reed takes a sip, nods.

JAY (CONT'D)  
Six college boosters willing to pay a king's ransom to sign Ronnie. Highest bidder so far is \$250,000.

PRINCIPAL REED  
Serious?

JAY  
The kid is a stud.  
(pause)  
Do whatever you have to, just keep the heat off of Ronnie.

PRINCIPAL REED  
Split the booster money, and I get another percent once Ronnie hits the league?

JAY  
You got it.

Principal Reed is al smiles.

INT. WILLIAM'S ISLAND, COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

In the steam room, Dean and Roy, with towels around their waists, sit on benches, eyes closed.

DEAN

Have a load of dirty laundry; big fee, really big fee.

Roy wipes his forehead.

ROY

That's what I like to hear. Where you want to park it? Swiss not what it used to be.

DEAN

No. Use the cozy little bank in the Virgin Islands. You know, where we set up the IBCs for the Coleridge family.

Dean rubs the back of his neck.

ROY

Got it.

DEAN

Take my cut and set-up a charitable trust, the Liberty City Education Fund. Going to send some kids to college.

ROY

Sweet. That's all?

DEAN

I wish. My best student is getting a murder charge.

Roy's eyes open. Dean's eyes open. They look directly at each other.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Ed made a mistake, but I can't let him rot in prison.

ROY

I'll put Smith on it; pro bono should keep it under the radar.

DEAN

Thanks.

Both men close their eyes and enjoy the steam.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, COURTYARD - DAY

The cafeteria doors storm open. TWO POLICE OFFICERS escort a handcuffed Ed Robinson out into the courtyard.

School security as well as some teachers try to stop students in the cafeteria from coming out, but the scene quickly becomes a ROWDY show of support for Ed.

Ed, while being placed into the patrol car, turns, opens his mouth wide, scowls and flashes his grills.

The students ROAR in unison. The scene looks like a celebrity hip-hop star being supported by loyal fans. The police car drives away.

INT MIAMI POLICE STATION, INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

In a small, bland interrogation room, Ed sits in a chair at a small table. His attorney, MISS REGINA SMITH, 30, a sharply dressed African-American woman, sits in a chair next to Ed.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO, 50, a fierce looking Cuban-American male, enters. He shuts the door and sits directly across from Ed.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO

(to Ed)

Mr. Robinson, I hear you're a pretty good student. What happened?

Ed doesn't respond.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO (CONT'D)

Did Mike owe money?

Ed still doesn't respond. Detective Castillo is getting irritated.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO (CONT'D)

Let me ask you this. Why the hell were you standing over his dead body?

Unyielding, Ed says nothing. Detective Castillo sits back in the chair, hands behind his neck.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO (CONT'D)

Talk, 'cause we have a credible witness.

Ed still says nothing.

MISS SMITH  
(to Castillo)  
My client was home asleep.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO  
(to Miss Smith)  
You told me that. He hasn't told me a damn thing.

Miss Smith taps Ed on the shoulder.

MISS SMITH  
It's late. Tell the detective where you were at the time his imagination had you standing over the deceased's body.

Detective Castillo glares sharply at Miss Smith then at Ed.

ED  
The projects. Teach gave me a stack of work; ate some KFC, you know what they say about black folks and fried chicken, did my home work, and went to bed.

Incensed, Detective Castillo jumps up and slams his hand on the table.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO  
Mr. Robinson, there's no more juvenile detention, no more house arrest; your ass is going down; prison, where they turn boys into girls. You'd better come clean with me. I know you shot the shit out of Mike Mason. I'm the one who can give you a break, not this wanna be Johnny Cochrane in a dress. Now tell me who you work for?

Miss Smith pats Ed on the shoulder.

MISS SMITH  
Go ahead, tell the detective about William.

DETECTIVE CASTILLO  
Now we're making progress.

MISS SMITH  
Go ahead. Tell him.

ED  
(dramatically)  
"Five years have passed; five summers, with the length of five long winters! And again I hear these waters, rolling from their mountain-springs -"

Feeling duped, Detective Castillo storms out of the room.

MISS SMITH  
Guess the detective doesn't like poetry. Too bad, Wordsworth  
is the best.  
(pause)  
You'll be out in an hour.

INT. BRITTANY'S CAR - DAY

Headed to school, Brittany drives and Trina sits in the front  
passenger's seat. Brittany parks the car on the side of the  
road.

TRINA  
What you doing?

BRITTANY  
Gotta talk.

Brittany shuts the engine off.

TRINA  
Why you turned the car off; you know how hard it is to start  
this bucket.

BRITTANY  
We can catch the bus if it doesn't start back up.

Brittany looks directly at Trina.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)  
One minute you cool with me; the next minute you don't want to  
be seen with me. What's up?

TRINA  
Not now. Can't handle this now.

BRITTANY.  
Ed?

Trina looks away. Brittany gently places her hand under  
Trina's chin, turns her face toward her.

BRITTANY  
You ain't gay.

Brittany removes her hand. They stare at each other.

TRINA  
Then what am I?

BRITTANY

Trying it out, but you not really 'bout that life.

(pause)

I was born like dis . . . Straight up butch. Ain't nothin' wrong with it. Turned many girls out, but see, nobody turned me out, nobody made me like this. God made me like this, gay and proud.

(pause)

But you, Trina, you just experimenting.

TRINA

So what do we do?

BRITTANY

Does Ed know?

TRINA

No.

BRITTANY

I bet he does.

TRINA

I -

BRITTANY

(interrupting)

Don't say nothin'. Go to him; I can feel you love him. Just promise me one thing.

TRINA

What's that?

BRITTANY

You'll still be my friend, you know, my road dog.

TRINA

We down like that.

They both smile and shake hands tightly.

BRITTANY

One more thing; next year we gonna win state.

TRINA

State champs and one day, first round picks in the WNBA.

The handshake turns into a tight, tearful hug.

INT. MC DONALD'S - NIGHT

Soft drinks in hand, Ed and Trina sit at a booth, looking directly at each other.

TRINA  
What's it like in jail?

ED  
No place for me. Teach got me thinking. I'm on a mission now; gonna get out of the hood the right way.

TRINA  
Taking me with you?

ED  
Depends 'cause may be you don't know what you want.  
(pause)  
Are the rumors true?

TRINA  
What you talkin' 'bout?

ED  
Come on, Baby Girl. Nothin' stays a secret in the Beans. You and Brittany, that's what.

Ed takes a sip and puts the cup back on the table.

TRINA  
Ain't gonna lie. We kissed, but that was it.

ED  
Had to test the waters?

TRINA  
Yeah, I guess I did.

Trina takes a sip. She puts her cup back on the table.

ED  
That's what I love about you; you still innocent, going through normal experiences. I never had normal experiences. Been on the streets hustling since I was twelve.

TRINA  
You not disappointed?

ED  
No. You came clean; we all good.

Ed touches her on the cheek.

ED (CONT'D)

(dramatically)

Once I lived in solitude like a Gothic creature living in darkness. Once I ran away from light, life, and I didn't have to avoid love 'cause there was no such thing. Once I ran the streets with reckless abandon. Once I stole bad thoughts and inflated hellish dreams. But then U hit the scene . . . Made a thug dream, picked up his self-esteem. U showed me I could do big things in the presence of a Queen.

U girl, took an ex-thug and put him in a slick suit, gave him a book, even made a thug cook. U girl, made an ex-thug learn what it means to respect and adore a Queen. Now I have culture, run away from ghetto vultures and thrive in the positive. And it was all because a Queen came on the scene and showed an ex-thug what it means to respect a beautiful thing.

Trina's eyes become watery.

ED (CONT'D)

Thought it was good.

TRINA

Beautiful. It's just you always text me your poems. This the first time you recited for me. God, Ed Robinson, you're crazy talented. You my boo forever.

Trina reaches over and plants a big kiss on Ed.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The students sit at their desk relatively quiet and attentive as Dean stands before class taking attendance.

DEAN

Anybody seen Ashley?

A few students shake their heads.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Okay, let's get started.

Dean walks over to the dry erase board. In colorful markers, he writes.

DRY ERASE BOARD

When I consider How My Light Is Spent by John Milton.



"When I consider how my light is spent. Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide. And that one talent which is death to hide. Lodge with me useless, though my soul more bent. To serve therewith my maker, and present. My true account, lest he returning chide; 'Doth God exact day-labor light denied?' I fondly ask: but patience to prevent. That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need either man's work or his own gifts; who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed. And post o'er land and ocean without rest: They also serve who only stand and wait."

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean takes a different color marker and writes.

DRY ERASE BOARD

Students will decipher the main idea of a literary text by utilizing context clues and logical inferences.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean turns toward the students.

DEAN (CONT'D)

The FCAT reading comprehension section always uses poetry.

Dean walks around the class room.

DEAN (CONT'D)

If you all can interpret a difficult poem by using context clues and making logical inferences to grab the main idea, you can comprehend anything on this test. I don't care what it is, poem or article right out of The Miami Herald, and if you can interpret Milton, you can interpret anything the FCAT throws your way.

(pause)

The test is in a few weeks. This is it, the reason we focused on poetry.

(pause)

We are all poets; we have a higher level of creative thinking. Now break into a literary circle. Same positions.

Dean turns and writes on the side of the board.

DRY ERASE BOARD

Dramatic Readers; Word Busters; Literary Police; Reading Coordinator.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean turns toward the students.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Let's do it.

The students get up and arrange the desks into a circle. In seconds, they sit at their respective desks. Dean places a single chair at the center of the circle.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
Trina, remind the class of the Dramatic Readers role.

TRINA  
Ahh, read the poem with some drama.

DEAN  
Absolutely. Coco, what's the role of the Word Busters?

COCO  
Word Busters break down any confusing words, you know any unclear meanings and stuff like that.

DEAN  
(to Phil)  
Is she correct, Phil.

PHIL  
Yeah, Teach, Sexy got it.

DEAN  
Excellent. Willie, define the role of the Literary Police?

WILLIE  
Teach, they gotta use all of the info collected from the other groups, and come up with explicit or implied meaning, breakdown all that figur-a-tive language down.

DEAN  
Good job Willie. Terry, the Reading Coordinator. What's up with that?

TERRY

Keep everyone on task, bring every body together for a final session, and come up with the meaning, significance, and main idea of the poem.

DEAN

Correct.

Dean claps.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(to class)

Milton, break it down.

Dean sits down in the chair situated in the middle of the circle. Coco stands.

COCO

Willie, Rod, Dramatic Readers, go ahead.

Willie and Rod stand up. Coco sits.

WILLIE/ROD

(dramatically)

"When I consider how my light is spent. Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide. And that one talent which is death to hide. Lodge with me useless, though my soul more bent. To serve therewith my maker, and present. My true account, lest he returning chide; 'Doth God exact day-labor light denied?' I fondly ask: but patience to prevent. That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need either man's work or his own gifts; who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed. And post o'er land and ocean without rest: They also serve who only stand and wait."

Rod and Willie sit back down. All of the students are gathering in small groups, some standing, some in their desks.

CHATTER hovers around the class. Trina and Terry stand at the dry erase board. Trina circles the words "ere," "light," "lodge" and "day-labor." Dean simply crosses his legs and observes.

Coco comes over to Dean.

COCO

Teach, can the Word Busters use a dictionary this time?

Dean gives Coco a mean look.

COCO (CONT'D)  
No, right?

DEAN  
The brain is better than a dictionary.

Coco turns and heads back to the students. The students are still CHATTING and writing. Some go up to the dry erase board and simply stare.

During the entire process, Ed doesn't move. He remains seated, calm and collected.

LATER

The students are all seated. They look tired, defeated and frustrated. Coco stands and drudgingly walks over to Dean.

COCO  
Teach, we got stuck on the word talent. We all agree he has a talent, a gift, but we don't know what it is. He has this talent lodged, stuck, parked, but we can't figure out what his talent is. I'm sorry.

Coco turns and walks away.

Dean lowers his head. He too looks defeated. His hand starts to shake. He tries to stop, at least not let the students see it.

He stands, turns away from the students and furtively takes out his pill box.

But Ed stands up.

ED  
Teach.

Dean slowly turns, one hand holding the other.

ED (CONT'D)  
Teach, Milton is going blind. The light represents his vision, his eyes. But see, Milton comes to understand he is tough, a real soldier. See his talent represents his gift, his poetry. He realizes that even if he is going blind and his talent, his gift of writing poems is taken away by a loss of light, his eyes, he still can serve God. He can go blind, but his real vision is his relationship with God, that's his true account, not his poems. Who best bears his mild yoke, they serves him best.

Ed sits back down. The class is dead silent. Dean walks over to his desk. He drops the pill box in the waste basket.

Dean walks in front of the class, stops. He looks at Ed.

DEAN  
That's absolutely right.

The students ROAR in triumph. After a few minutes of jubilation, Dean waves his hand and beckons for the students to calm down.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
You had the right pieces, just needed Ed's glue to stick it together.

The front door opens, and the Security Guard enters.

SECURITY GUARD  
Mr. Jackson, need you in the main office. I'll watch your class.

DEAN  
(to students)  
Hold it down until I get back.

Dean walks out of the class, and the Security Guard stands at the front of the class.

EXT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH - DAY

As Dean walks down the stairway, TWO CITY OF MIAMI POLICE OFFICERS immediately arrest him. Principal Reed looks on with a sinister smile.

DEAN  
Hey, what's going on?

The officers handle Dean quite harshly.

POLICE OFFICER #1  
Failure to report the sexual battery of Ashley Woods. Mr. Jackson, you have the right to remain -

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

In a dense room, Dean sits at a small table. Roy Eisner sits across from Dean.

ROY

Don't worry, I'll hire the best criminal defense lawyers in the state.

Dean, quite calm given the circumstances, pats Roy on the hand.

DEAN

I have no doubt you'll put together a dream team, but that won't be necessary.

ROY

Dean, these are serious charges.

Dean smiles with a measure of confidence.

DEAN

I want a union lawyer, school teachers union.

ROY

Are you sure?

DEAN

I'm a school teacher.

(pause)

Want the teacher's union to represent me.

ROY

I'll get to it.

DEAN

But before you do that, Roy, need you to handle something else.

ROY

What's more important than getting you out of jail?

Dean smiles.

EXT. DIAMOND'S HOUSE - DAY

A Bentley pulls up to the home of Diamond Martinez. Roy gets out of the car.

Roy walks up to the front door. He knocks on the door several times. The door finally opens. Dressed in a simple tank top and cut-off blue jeans, Diamond looks directly at Roy.

ROY

Sorry for interrupting your evening, Miss Martinez. I'm Roy Eisner, dear friend of Dean Jackson.

DIAMOND  
Something wrong? Is he okay?

ROY  
Dean is okay, but he's in jail.

DIAMOND  
Jail . . . For what?

ROY  
I'm on my way to bond him out. He'll explain everything.

DIAMOND  
You come up here in that fancy car to tell me my man is locked up and won't tell me why. Mister you ahh brave somethin'.

ROY  
I know it's strange, but I promise, you'll see him in a few hours.

DIAMOND  
Shit, instead of wasting time talkin' to me, go and get him out of jail. What you even come here for?

ROY  
Certainly, Miss Martinez. The second purpose for my visit is to, well, Dean wanted me to deliver this.

Roy reaches into the inside of his coat pocket and takes out a tiny box. He hands it to Diamond. Diamond takes the box. She carefully opens it.

Her eyes light up as she gazes at a marvelous diamond ring.

ROY (CONT'D)  
I guess he wants to marry you.

Joyful tears stream down Diamond's face as Roy turns, walks to his car, gets in and drives away.

INT. TEACHER'S UNION - DAY

Seated at a desk inside a cozy office decorated with a University of Miami law degree and pictures of the Cuban countryside, is SHELDA GARCIA, a mid 40's Cuban American.

Dean sits across from Mrs. Garcia.

MRS. GARCIA

Mr. Jackson, I've been representing teachers for many years. From teachers slapping students to sleeping with students - the entire gamut. But this case is different.

DEAN

I realize it's serious.

MRS. GARCIA

I've seen far more serious allegations. A few years ago, I represented a teacher charged with having sex with a student.

Mrs. Garcia takes a shot of Cuban coffee and downs it with one gulp. She puts the paper cup in the waste basket.

MRS. GARCIA (CONT'D)

After meeting with the teacher, I really believed he was incapable of doing such a thing.

She shakes her head.

DEAN

What happened?

Mrs. Garcia leans forward.

MRS. GARCIA

The detectives showed me the videos. My client recorded the sexual encounters with his student.

(pause)

So I convinced the detective to allow me to speak with him before the arrest. I went to his apartment; he let me in and said nothing, just pulled out a gun and blew his head off, right in front of me. I can still feel the warm blood splatter on my face. That was a difficult case; your case is just political, highly political.

DEAN

Political?

MRS. GARCIA

You teach at Liberty City, a school with an out of control alumni board that cares more about football titles than SAT scores, a school where nobody snitches. It's a wall of silence.

DEAN

So what do we do?

Mrs. Garcia leans back in the chair.



MRS. GARCIA

Florida law requires employees working with children to report incidents of abuse. Mr. Jackson, you had a duty to report the incident to Principal Reed.

DEAN

How can I report what I don't know?

MRS. GARCIA

Principal Reed confiscated your class journals. In Ashley's journal, she wrote about loving a man.

Mrs. Garcia lifts up a piece of paper and reads.

MRS. GARCIA (CONT'D)

The Down Low

On the down low, I got me a good man. He loves me so. So much he calls me his little shone. My man knows I'm quiet, but he knows I treat him right. So we keep it all on the down low. So low, only me, my man and now Teach, know that Ashley got it going on, on the down low.

DEAN

It's a poem, figurative language.

MRS. GARCIA

That's a question for a jury. What is fact . . . Ashley was seriously sexually assaulted. She is still in the hospital.

Dean lowers his head, SIGHS.

MRS. GARCIA (CONT'D)

Mr. Jackson, Ashley's mom has nothing but praise for you. But it's clear that her daughter was sexually assaulted on multiple occasions by multiple perpetrators.

(pause)

We do know that one of the students is a football player, but Ashley wouldn't say his name. She refuses to talk.

Dean looks up.

DEAN

That bastard. Principal Reed is setting me up.

MRS. GARCIA

Perhaps, but why? Why is it so important to win at that school? There has to be a bigger picture, bigger than pleasing the alumni board. When we find out what's really at stake, the case against you is over.

(pause)

I'll tail Principal Reed.

Dean quickly takes out his cell phone.

DEAN  
And I'll get Big Castro.

Mrs. Garcia is taken aback by Dean's last statement.

EXT. NORTH MIAMI, APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Bag of groceries in her hand, Miss. Holmes makes her way to the front door of her first floor apartment.

A few feet in back of Miss Holmes, Mrs. Garcia stands.

MRS. GARCIA  
Miss Holmes.

Miss Holmes stops and turns.

MRS. GARCIA (CONT'D)  
Shelda Garcia. I have some good information about your son.

MISS HOLMES  
You know my son?

MRS. GARCIA  
Can we talk in private?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

In a frugal apartment, Miss Holmes is seated on the sofa and Mrs. Garcia stands.

MRS. GARCIA  
Kevin is up for parole in six months.

She points to a picture of Kevin.

MISS HOLMES  
Yeah, been counting every day, praying for God to let my son out.

MRS. GARCIA  
I have a contact on the parole board.

MISS HOLMES  
Don't need your help. I'm praying.

Despite her words, Miss Holmes appears uneasy and uncertain.

MRS. GARCIA  
Your son is a habitual criminal, record is as long as a mile.

Miss Holmes stands and points at Mrs. Garcia.

MISS HOLMES  
Get out.

Mrs. Garcia comes closer.

MRS. GARCIA  
Maybe your prayers were answered and that's why I'm here.

Miss Holmes puts her hand down. Sits back down.

MISS HOLMES  
What you want from me?

MRS. GARCIA  
Principal Reed.

Miss Holmes lowers her head.

MISS HOLMES  
He had me go through Mr. Dean's papers, the students' work.  
(pause)  
I wanted to say somethin' but Principal Reed promised he would  
get Kevin a job when he got out.

MRS. GARCIA  
This apartment building -

MISS HOLMES  
(interrupting)  
Principal Reed owns the building.

MRS. GARCIA  
He owns a lot of apartments, too many for a principal's salary.  
Is your rent free?

MISS HOLMES  
Hell no. I pay my rent and better not be late or Booker  
harasses me.

MRS. GARCIA  
Earl Booker, the football coach?

Miss Holmes nods.

MISS HOLMES

Low down Coach Booker, harasses me if I'm one day late or a dime short, but go three doors down the hall, bet she ain't paying any rent.

Mrs. Garcia looks puzzled.

I/E. APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Mrs. Garcia knocks on an apartment just a few doors down from Miss Holmes. In a few seconds, the door opens.

An African-American, FEMALE TEEN dressed in a simple T-shirt and faded gym shorts with Liberty City High stitched in, looks on with a mean expression.

A LITTLE BOY, 3, tries to get in front of the female teen.

LITTLE BOY  
Mama, dat daddy?

Looking shocked, Mrs. Garcia glances down at the kid then back at the mother.

MRS. GARCIA  
Oh my God.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

One of the goons drives the clunker, and the other is in the back seat with a GUN to the head of Liberty City High football coach, Earl Booker.

Scared, Coach Booker is sweating like a pig.

EXT. HIALEAH, CHOP HOUSE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

In a cozy mom and pop, only Big Castro and Coach Booker are in the restaurant, seated at a table for two.

Dressed dapper as usual, Big Castro neatly unfolds a napkin and places it in and over his shirt.

He looks at his steak diner, takes his fork, knife and slowly slices the steak. He takes a bite and appears quite satisfied.

BIG CASTRO  
(to himself)  
Argentinian beef, magnificent.

He finally looks at Coach Booker. A steak diner is in front of Coach Booker as well, but he hasn't touched it, too petrified.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
My family founded the Cuban Mob; cut deals with that idiot Batista.  
Heard stories of how good my great grand father and my papa was at making ancillary business.

He takes another bite of the steak.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
I'm continuing the tradition. Of course it's not our life blood, but these ancillary enterprises increased revenues exponentially.

A CHEF enters with a glass of wine. The chef places the wine next to Big Castro's food. The chef leaves.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
Example, I fell in love with this place, the great food, but got an idea. It's a chop house, right? So I convinced the owners to dispose of my enemies here, you know, chop 'em up and dispose of parts. Shred arms, ears, everything, bag it up and dump it in the city landfill, but that was wasteful. Since flesh and guts are a good source of protein I decided to turn it into dog food.  
(pause)  
Coach, you haven't touched your steak. You don't appreciate my hospitality?

Coach Booker melts, starts to SOB.

COACH BOOKER  
Please, please, I'll tell you everything.

Big Castro takes his glass of wine, drinks, and puts the glass back on the table.

BIG CASTRO  
Of course you will. Start with the apartments. How did Principal Reed obtain so much real estate?

COACH BOOKER  
Jay, Jay Shapiro. Reed sends the football players to Jay and Jay pays cash money.

Big Castro nods. He takes his glass of wine, drinks, puts the glass back on the table.

BIG CASTRO  
You get a cut?

COACH BOOKER  
Yes, sir.

Big Castro nods.

BIG CASTRO  
The girl . . . Who abused the girl?

COACH BOOKER  
Ronnie Blake. Some more older boys from off the street . . .  
But I don't know 'em.

Big Castro gets upset. Takes his glass and hurls the rest of the wine in Coach Booker's face.

BIG CASTRO  
Scum. Lucky my partner wants the law to handle this. But listen and listen good. I want the names of the other boys. Got one day or my deal is off, and I'm turning you into dog food.

Big Castro claps his hands. The chef comes with a service tray. The chef places the tray in front of Big Castro. Big Castro takes a plain can off of the tray. It reads: Dog Food.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
This is what dogs in Cuba eat.  
(pause)  
No get out.

Coach Booker stands, turns and hurries out of the restaurant.

Big Castro takes a bite of the steak.

BIG CASTRO (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Magnificent.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JUSTICE IS DONE

A) The police arrest Coach Booker in the school hallway.

B) In the weight room, the police arrest Ronnie Blake.

C) At the corner store, police arrest the two teen boys.

D) As he exits a private jet, the police arrests Jay Shapiro.

INT. CONDO, MEDIA ROOM - NIGHT

Dean sits in the recliner as he watches the local news.

TV SCREEN

The news broadcasts the arrest.

NEWS ANCHOR

The perpetrators have been apprehended except Principal Marcus Reed. He is still at large.

RETURN TO SCENE

Dean shakes his head.

DEAN

(to himself)

No he isn't.

Dean reaches into a brown paper bag on the floor. He pulls out a can: Dog Food.

DEAN (CONT'D)

(to himself)

No he isn't.

EXT. STAPLES CENTER, LOS ANGELES - AFTERNOON

SUPER: "Six years later."

The Staples Center is full to capacity as the WNBA's LA Galaxy prepare to play the New York Liberty.

Now with a last name of Robinson on the back of her jersey, Trina is dressed in a LA Galaxy uniform. She jogs over to meet Brittany Washington.

Brittany wears a New York Liberty uniform. The two embrace. They then go back to their respective ends of the court.

In the stands, Diamond Jackson sits next to her husband, Dean, and seated in the middle of the couple are their TWIN GIRLS, 4.

One wears a LA Galaxy jersey and the other wears a New York Liberty jersey.

INT. LIBERTY CITY HIGH, CLASSROOM - DAY

The class of tenth grade students is quite RAUCOUS. A lone MALE STUDENT, with his pants sagging, stands in the rear of the class, cell phone to his ear.

FEET WALKING - ISOLATING THE SHOES

A pair of fine leather shoes, Johnson & Murphy, enters the class room. The students immediately become quiet with the exception of the male student in the rear. His back is away from the class as he continues holding the phone to his ear.

RETURN TO SCENE

MALE STUDENT

(into phone)

Heard we gotta new teacher; won't make no difference. I'm still running this class.

The male student realizes the class has become quiet. So he looks around, and out of sheer fear drops his phone on the ground.

ED'S FACE

Ed Robinson delivers the most menacing look as he opens his mouth wide and flashes his grills.

FADE OUT:

THE END