

MILL BROOK HOUSES, THE BRONX, NYC 1986

Camera pans down from bustling traffic on the Cross Bronx Expressway/I-87 interchange to find a block party in full swing in the courtyard of a housing project below. The crowd is lively. Women are in summer clothes. Some men are dressed to impress in Kangol hats and 501 jeans, some have their shirts off in the heat, holding tall cans of beer and bottles of wine. Others stand in formations militantly wearing leather vests with gang insignia such as Constant Casanovas, Glory Stompers, or Savage Skulls. B-boys and b-girls dance within impromptu circles as breakbeats blast through huge living room speakers carted outdoors. A young boy is next to a speaker pressing record on his own boom box. People are selling hats, t-shirts, and jewelry- money is being exchanged. A young couple lean against a wall kissing, embracing, feeling the excitement of young love.

We see the DJ (Smooth B) throw on two copies of the record Super Disco Brakes and begins looping a Drum portion of the song Scorpio by Dennis Coffey. A tattoo of a black spade is on his bicep.

Dec (7 years old) stands on the side of the DJ platform, watching his uncle play records and the crowd react, soaking it all in. Busy Bee Starski picks up a microphone and begins asking the crowd to make noise for their favorite clothing brands as he goes down a list.

BUSY BEE

C'mon now y'all. Show some love for
the selector, Grandwizard Smooth B,
baby! Give the DJ some!

The crowd cheers. Dec smiles and pulls on his inhaler as Busy Bee begins performing his song Busy Bee's Groove over the breakbeat Smooth B is playing. He looks up at his uncle and sees that he is focused on the crowd. Curious of his surroundings, Dec takes the opportunity of his uncle's obvious distraction to wander away towards a battle between two B-boys on the side of the houses near the road. The battle is full of energy and seems to be becoming confrontational. It continues heating up until one of the B-boys makes such an incredible move that the group surrounding the pair decides that he's won and shows it by breaking the formation of the circle to congratulate him. The two B-boys approach each other and share a huge smile as they hug and shake hands. Dec smiles as well, enjoying the moment briefly before being distracted by a loud car stereo.

The stereo is coming from a long white Cadillac pulling up to

the party. The song coming from the car, White Lines by Grandmaster Melle Mel, seems to overpower all other music playing and draws all of Dec's attention to the car and it's owner. The driver is an early 20's big guy wearing a fedora hat and a spotless white suit with a thick gold chain over his maroon shirt with an eye patch over one eye. He is scanning the scene from behind the wheel with a face that looks like he already knows everything he might see. His head turns towards Dec who becomes self-conscious after realizing he's been caught staring at the man. The man narrows his eyes until it appears he recognizes Dec. He gestures for Dec to come over to his car. Dec hesitates, unsure if it's him that the man is talking to but the man gestures again. Dec walks over to the open passenger window of the car. The man turns down the stereo.

DRU

What's happening big man? (Waits, but Dec makes no reply) You Smooth B's nephew right? What's your name boy? Derrick?

DEC

(hesitantly)
Dexter.

DRU

Dexter? What the fuck kinda name is that for a nigga? You gone need to work that out, big man. Haha..
(pauses, watching Dec intensely) Look here man, come and hop on in the car with me. I wanna show you something.

Dec pauses, unsure how to respond.

DRU

Hop in nigga! I ain't gone kidnap you. I got enough kids. I wanna talk to you.

Dec can see a certain insistence in the man's eyes that makes him feel that he can't refuse. As he walks slowly to the car, Dru's eyes meet the eyes of some of the gang members standing against a nearby wall. The way they look at each other does not reveal either one's intentions but after they trade looks, a couple of the gang members leave the wall. Dec pauses, pulls out an inhaler and takes a hit, then nervously gets in the car.

Inside the car, he notices for the first time that there are

two girls in mini-skirts and fishnet stockings in the backseat of the car. They look high and tired. He also sees a pearl handled .38 Special pistol and a straight-edge razor blade, also pearl handled, on the seat next to Dru.

Dru looks at Dec intensely for an uncomfortable amount of time. One of the girls in the back is nodding off to sleep. Dru notices.

DRU
What the..??

He reaches out and pulls her hair towards the side she's leaning as she dozes, causing her head to slip off her palm and bang into the window. The girl jerks awake. Dru clamps his hand on the nape of her neck.

DRU
Nap time's over bitch. Seems like everybody in this car got things to do except you. Look out the window. (Dru taps the window with a gold and black onyx intaglio ring with the shape of a smiling skull cut into it.)

Outside of the window, two regular looking middle aged men walk by.

DRU
That's business. It was. Hard to keep up with when you got your eyes closed right? (no reply) Well ain't it?!
(turns to the other girl) Tina you need a nap too?

Tina shakes her head quickly.

DRU
Hmm. Best to get your cousin up off her sleepy high ass and get to work then huh?

Tina pushes her cousin who is looking drowsy again. The drowsy cousin makes a defiant look with her face but says nothing.

DRU
What?? You got a problem? With work?

DROWSY GIRL
No..

DRU

Nah. I think you do. I care about you too much to let you go on in this world harboring illusions. (he pauses, looking at her intensely) Gimme your hand.

DROWSY GIRL

Dru..

DRU

Gimme your hand! (His look is so intense, the girl knows there is no stopping what is coming.) I don't know why you make me do this... but I'ma teach you, baby. Yes I am.

The girl slowly extends her hand. She is shaking as she opens her palm. Dru stares at her intensely for another moment then in a flash, he has opened his straight edge razor and slashes a cut across her palm. Blood immediately begins flowing from the cut. The girl cringes but does not cry. Tina pulls a cloth from her jacket pocket and wraps it around her cousin's hand. They both hurry to get out of the car.

DRU

Wait! (they pause) Show him your other hand.

The girls pause and look at Dru. His look lets them know he is serious. The girl with the cut extends her other hand and Dec looks at it. The palm is covered in scars.

DRU

That's somebody that has trouble with the ways of the world. She'll learn though. Ain't that right? (the girl looks at him not sure how to respond) I'll be sure I can do that for you baby. (pauses) Well go on then! (she looks at her bandaged hand) Work with your good hand, they won't notice!

The girls hurry out of the car and hit the streets. Dru turns back to Dec. He takes the maroon handkerchief out of his breast pocket and begins to clean his razor.

DRU

That's the way of the world, young blood. Let me tell you something. You're gonna hear folks tell you it's

who you know and that's how you make it out here. Nah blood, it's who knows you. And you want people to remember exactly who you are, need to leave a mark. Or you're nothing. Question I'm asking you is who are you?

Dec remains silent, watching Dru continue to clean his blade.

DRU

Don't know huh? (he waits) Lemme see your hand. That one... (gesturing with the razor towards Dec's right hand)

Dec's eyes widen. He remains motionless. Dru reaches down methodically and takes a hold of Dec's wrist.

DRU

Open it.

Dec's hand is now shaking slightly. Dru raises his eyebrow.

DRU

Open it.

Slowly, Dec's fingers open revealing his soft young palm. Dru turns the hand over, running the blade over Dec's knuckles as he inspects it.

DRU

Fresh young hands huh? That's good.

Dru looks Dec in the face intensely. Dec looks at his hand, not wanting to make eye contact.

DRU

Your uncle's been looking out for you. He looks out for a lotta niggas out here. You got a real lucky beginning, young blood. The scars come with time. (he pantomimes a cut across Dec's hand with the blade) I can tell you that's true.

Dru opens his own hand. The palm is laced with long scars. Dec raises his eyes to look at it. Dru watches him observe it and smiles a little. Satisfied, he closes the razor and puts it back in his pocket.

DRU

I called you in here to pull your coat, boy. There's gonna come a time when you realize you want more than what you got. Happened to me. Happens to everyone out here. (gestures out of the window towards the dilapidated houses outside) One difference between me and most of these other niggas is that I figured out what it takes to get it. A bigger difference is I got the nuts to take it. It's a hunt out here. Problem is most of these fools don't realize they're ducks until they hear the bang. It's the ones that got teeth that make it boy. The ones know what it is and go on and take it. You know what you want?

Dec is still motionless, but with the blade away and Dru talking more softly, he has loosened a bit. Something shines in his eyes.

DRU

Haha... I see it. I knew you did. That's why it was you I chose. I got something in the glove box right there I want you to have. A little first step to making that thing turn real. (looks at Dec closely for another moment) Open it.

Dec looks Dru in the eyes for the first time. Dru smiles.

DRU

Go on. Open it. (the two look at each other for another long moment. Dru puts his hand on Dec's shoulder) It's all right. It's for you. Go on get it...

Dru's smile has begun to disarm Dec. He looks at the glove box, which is glowing from its contents then back to Dru. The smile remains constant. Very slowly, Dec extends his hand and reaches into the glove box....

Before anyone realizes what's happening, the car door has opened and another hand grabs Dec's arm, yanking him out of the car. It's his uncle, Smooth B. He is furious.

SMOOTH B
(to Dec)
I told you to stay by the tables!

DRU
Hey, it's all good, Smooth. We...

SMOOTH B
(cutting Dru off)
No! (to Dec) Get over there!

Dec is stuffing his hand into his pocket as if hiding something. Smooth B passes Dec off to one of the gang members who had walked away while watching him get in the car earlier. The gang member holds Dec by the shoulders and walks him back to the wall they've been leaning against. From his vantage point, Dec watches Smooth B yell at Dru while Dru listens calmly, still smiling. The argument between the two men remains one-sided with Smooth B yelling, furious and Dru listening and responding calmly not breaking a sweat. At some point, it seems Smooth B has said something that breaks Dru's cool. The smile leaves his face and a coldness comes over him. He makes one final comment towards Smooth B while pointing his finger at him then pulls off. Smooth B remains on the curb watching him go, breathing heavily. After catching his breath, he stomps back towards Dec, grabs him by the shoulder and pulls him away from the others to a quieter part of the street and crouches down looking him in the eye.

SMOOTH B
This is why I keep telling you to stay close to me!

Dec is obviously shaken, confused. Smooth B looks deep into his eyes. He sighs before going on.

SMOOTH B
People like that use your feelings against you, Dec. They mix them all up with the things you want and use them to turn you into what they want you to be. You understand me? (No answer) You understand me?!

Dec is starting to well up with tears, not understanding what's going on.

SMOOTH B

Look Dec, you're gonna want things in your life. We all do. That's all right What you gotta understand is, sometimes it seems like what you're doing is taking you where you wanna go but it's really leading you astray.

Smooth realizes he's not wording his speech in a way Dec can understand. In the background the gang members are shifting positions. Something is going on. Smooth B notices and looks up at them. The gang member who held Dec is looking back at him. He nods with a funny look in his eye. Smooth B grimaces and puts his arm around Dec to guide him towards the street. The two begin walking away from the buildings and the party. Smooth B is obviously hurrying.

SMOOTH B

C'mon. (as they walk) Man, this world is full of traps. I seen so many of our people fall into... Sometimes the danger got nothing to do with you and you just gotta know how to deal with it when it comes. Sometime, you make the danger yourself. I know this is hard to understand but it'll make sense one day. That fool Dru, he thinks the way he does things is the only way there is. That's why I show you the things you see around me. Dru's way ain't the only way. There's something realer, better than that Dec. Something that lasts. Something that...

Someone screams and the sound of garbage cans crashing into someone ring out from the direction that Smooth B and Dec just came from. Yelling and commotion can be heard. In the background we can see someone getting jumped and beat with chains and hammers. The person getting beat up is screaming. Dec naturally looks back to see what he can see, wide eyed. Smooth B puts his hand on Dec's chin and guides his eyes back to meet his own.

SMOOTH B

There's more than that. C'mon.

Smooth B takes his headphones from around his neck and puts them on Dec's head. With his hand on Dec's shoulder, Smooth B presses play on his walkman and guides Dec down the street away from the commotion. La Di Da Di by Slick Rick and Doug

E. Fresh begins to play.

PRESENT DAY ATLANTA

CAMERA PANS AROUND THE ROOM

A MODERN COVER VERSION OF "LA DI DA DI" IS PLAYING ON HALF VOLUME.

The time has definitely changed. Ear buds lay on the desk near a 32 inch computer screen. Old school party fliers of Afrika Bambaattaa and Kool G Rap cover one side of the room but are inside glass frames. Photos of Smooth B and 6 yr old Dexter arm and arm can be seen. There are also pictures of Smooth B DJing a party, Dexter rapping to a crowd on a microphone wearing a flat-top fade haircut, Smooth and Dexter in LA at the Capital Records building, and Smooth B and Dexter in NY standing in front of the rec-center credited with birthing Hip Hop- someone has written Sedgwick and Cedar on the picture with a marker. Dec's gold plaque for singles sold hangs on a wall. Books are also strewn about the room with titles like: 2000 Seasons, A People's History of the United States, Subway Art, The Art of Getting Over, Bomb the Suburbs. Kung Fu movies lean haphazardly against the Blu-Ray player.

There's a rustle from the bed. The clock reads 9:59AM as we pan to reveal Dexter. His hands are interlocked behind his head as he glances over to the clock that now blares an alarm tone and reads 10:00AM.

Dexter hits the clock to stop the sound then gives his body a huge yawn.

He swings out of the bed and walks into the bathroom, hitting a button on his phone on the way.

MUSIC OVERDUB OF "LA DI DA DI" TURNS UP TO FULL VOLUME.

CLOSE UP:

Dexter looks into the bathroom mirror with soap covering his face as his hand reaches for a cup to the side and he rinses his face.

He crosses his arms and goes into a full B-Boy stance in front of the mirror. He freezes as the lyrics of the music

playing recite: "Who is the freshest of them all?"

Dexter laughs then...

DEXTER

..I know i know I know.

He brushes his teeth and jumps into the shower.

Drys from the shower.

CUT-IN:

Dexter pulls his jeans on and slips into a brand new pair of white, black, and red classic Jordan's. Before leaving, he picks up his last accessory, a bracelet made of red, black, and green beads engraved with West African motifs, puts it on, then heads out the door.

And just as it should be, he comes back into the house looks around frantically then there it is: his Atlanta Braves baseball cap. He places it on his head and looks into a full length mirror by the door. He opens his hands wide as if asking himself a question. The music playing ends with the answer: "Fresh!"

CUT TO:

EXT. DEXTER LOFT

Dexter takes a puff of his inhaler and swings the door open to exit for his day. To his surprise, Angela, 24 in heels and jeans, stunning, is standing there with a warm sexy smile on her face.

DEXTER

Hey! Wh.. what are you doing here?

ANGELA

You not happy to see me?

DEXTER

Umm..... no no no that's not it. I'm just on my way out and I wasn't expecting you.

ANGELA

Well that's what a surprise is, silly.

He takes a deep breath then..

DEXTER

Yeah...but I thought that we had talked about the pop up thing, you know.

ANGELA

Yeeeeeaaahh, but this is not a "pop up" it's a "Surprise"!!!

DEXTER

Oookaaaay. Well thanks for the surprise but seriously I've got a couple of meetings today so I was just heading out.

ANGELA

Well would you like for me to stay here and wait for you to get back. Maybe cook something? (with a smile)

DEXTER

Ummm why don't I just text you later?

ANGELA

...ummm (jokingly mocking) okay. You sure you don't want to go inside and...."talk" for a minute before your meeting. You definitely want to go in there fully relaxed and focused.

DEC

Nah nah I can't.

ANGELA

(mood shifting for the worse)
What? You going to see your baby Mama? (sneers) How long you gonna chase that.. (Dec's eyes relay that Angela better stop before she goes too far) Hmmm... you know she ain't right for you, baby. That's that old thing. How many times she gonna turn you down before you see what you got right here? C'mon, why don't you let me remind what that new new is all about before you go?

DEXTER

Wow...that sounds like....something.. but I really gotta go. You know, business don't wait. Let me walk you

out.

He grabs her by the arm and walks her down the hall and out of the building.

CUT TO:

INT. DEXTER CAR

DEXTER (VO)

It's insane how someone can draw up a whole story about your life from the smallest details they observe. Who they see you around, what you wear, where you stay... They know these little things and then they fill in the rest with whoever they want you to be.

Cut to future Dec in an interview chair across from a pretty young entertainment reporter. Dec appears to be older and is dressed in clothes and with jewelry that imply a greater level of success.

Young Dec rides through the city, looking out of his window. We see images of downtown Atlanta as he makes turns through familiar streets. The buildings, people at cafes, murals, homeless people, Caprice Classics lifted on 30 inch wheels, music shops, iconic businesses...

CUT TO

INTERVIEWER

That's interesting. Well, I'll let you tell it instead then. How bout we start with the where you stay part? Your music does seem to have influences from all over but at the same time, you're so Atlanta. Do you draw inspiration from where you live?

DEXTER (PARTIAL VO)

Of course! This is my city and I love it! The buildings, the smells, the food, the people, the heart...I love this place and couldn't imagine living anywhere else in the world. The culture is so rich from Mojo to MC Shy D to Edward J to Kilo to JD to Outkast, Tip, Jeezy, Savage. This city

is where it's at. It's been good to me.

INTERVIEWER

True. True. You seem to have taken so much from the beauty of the world you live in. Every time I see you, it's a positive vibe. Not to put too much on the dark side, but how do you keep this vibe? If you don't mind me asking, do you have any regrets? Any tragedies in your life while you were coming up?

DEXTER

(becomes instantly lost in thought)
Hmmm... I got a few.

CUT TO

Dexter pulls up in front of a small ranch style home with a clean coat of paint and a freshly cut lawn. A woman is digging up the ground in a small makeshift garden. Shawna, 30's, natural hair, in overalls and barefoot, wipes sweat from her forehead as she looks back and notices Dexter's car.

Shawna walks towards the car as Dexter gets out to meet her.

SHAWNA

Hey!

DEXTER

Hey! Whacha up to?

SHAWNA

Oh just a lil gardening tryin' to get these tomatoes to act right.

DEXTER

You know I always loved your tomatoes.
(with a wink)

SHAWNA

(laughs and makes a goofy face)
Shut up. I'm out here working hard.

DEXTER

Nah that's dope. You always said you wanted a garden.

SHAWNA

It's been a minute. They're finally showing some promise though...

There's an awkward moment of silence. Dexter collects his words.

DEXTER

Hey. I just wanted to come over and talk to you instead of sending a text.

SHAWNA

What's up? Is everything okay?

DEXTER

Yeah everything is fine but....I'm busted right now (no money). Can you hold it together til next week?

Finding it a little humorous, she smiles and chuckles.

SHAWNA

Don't worry. I got us.

Seeing Dexter's relief, she keeps him on his toes.

SHAWNA

But the next time I call you to pick me up from Sevananda, I don't want to hear it. All I want to hear is 'yes Miss Shawna'. 'When do you need me there, Miss Shawna'.

They share a laugh

DEXTER

Yes ma'am.

SHAWNA

Miss Shawna. Alright... You know the boys haven't made it back yet from my moms.

DEXTER

I know I just wanted to talk to you before they got back.

Both of their eyes glaze over a bit. Dexter blinks out of his daydream.

DEXTER

You know I shoulda been out here with you digging up this dirt, planting seeds.

SHAWNA

Mmm hmm. You know when's the best time to plant a fruit tree?

DEXTER

(a little puzzled at the question but playing along)
When?

SHAWNA

30 years ago? You know when the second best time is?

DEXTER

(frozen for a moment thinking)
Uh...

A horn blares to snap them both out of the moment as a car turns into the driveway.

Shawna makes a "I guess you don't know" face and turns towards the car. They both wave as it pulls to a stop. As Shawna walks toward the vehicle, Dexter watches her.

Two boys jump out of the back of the car (Malik 7 and Tyrel 6). They both are excited to see them. The boys jump into their arms, one for Dexter and one for Shawna.

MALIK

We missed you!

SHAWNA

I missed you too, baby.

TYREL

Look, big mama got us Chick Filet!

SHAWNA

Mama! I told you we don't want them eating that stuff!

JINNY

Oh dear, I must have forgot. (winks at boys) Mercy me. Hey, at least it wasn't McDonalds.

SHAWNA
(grumbles)

DEXTER
(changing the subject)
Thank you for keeping them this weekend, Jinny. I really appreciate it. If I didn't finish that work by today...

JINNY
Oh don't worry about it Dexter. I love hanging out with my grand babies. But you can still come over anytime this week to cut the grass.

DEXTER
All this work being in this family!
(laughs) I got you, I'll be there.

JINNY
Ok, sounds good. I'll see you all later. Big Mama got a date to get my nails done. Call me later Shawna.

The boys run into the house as Jinny pulls off. Dexter and Shawna are left alone together again.

SHAWNA
Okay, I guess I'd better get inside.

DEXTER
Oh yeah. I have a meeting to get to too. So I guess I'll talk to you soon.

SHAWNA
Okay. Have a good day. Boys! C'mon out and say good bye to your father.

The boys run back out and hug Dexter. Shawna turns and walks towards the house. Dexter has to pull himself from watching her walk away.

DEXTER
Hey Shawna.

SHAWNA
(turns around)
Yeah?

DEXTER
(hesitates until he loses his
nerve)
Nah, nothing. Never mind.

SHAWNA
(diffuses the awkward tension with
a smile)
Weirdo.

Shawna turns and walks away and Dec jumps in his car, takes a long look at the house, then drives off.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

Receptionist answers the phone as Dexter approaches the front desk of the studio. He signs in.

DEXTER
I'm here to see Dru.

RECEPTIONIST
Hi, Dec. He's in 4.

DEXTER
Thanks.

Dexter moves through the halls and walks into studio 4. He looks around. An artist is in the booth, a couple of guys are at the boards, and Dru, now older and with an eye patch over his right eye, sits in the back typing on his cell. Blunts are being rolled and bottles of Hennessy and 1738 Remy Martin cognac line the counters. Just as Dexter sees Dru, a huge guy in the back gives Dexter the up and down "Fuck you nigga" look. Dec responds with a "Why do you behave this way?" face. Dru looks up from the phone, spots Dexter and calls him over.

DRU
Ay, Dec!

Waves Dexter over to the back.

DEXTER
Dru, what up man? What's good?

DRU
What's up man? That shit was fi (fire)
you sent over. That's what's up.

DEXTER
Good, good. So it worked. The team was

feeling it?

DRU

Most definitely. I'm gone need to get with you again...you remember that nigga BFT?

DEXTER

Ummm...

DRU

My nephew from Baton Rouge.

DEXTER

(laughs)

Oh yeah. Blunt Force Trauma. How could I forget?

DRU

We creating a lil' movement for him but I want you to come vibe with us for a lil' bit so you can really feel what he's about.

DEXTER

Yeah vibe with him huh? Haha.. I know how yall get down. Damn BFT. Alright man. When you ready just let me know.

DRU

Give me a few days... Now if I can just get this nigga right here (gestures to the rapper in the booth) to rap on beat, we'll be in business.

DEXTER

Yeah good luck with that. Hit me if you need something.

Dexter leaves the session and heads outside to his car. Just as he gets to his car, Trav, 20 something, runs out of the building.

TRAV

Dec!

Dexter looks over to see who it is.

DEXTER

Yeah what's up?

Trav hands Dexter an envelope.

TRAV

Yo, Dru wanted me to give this to you.

Dexter takes a look inside. It's a stack of \$100 bills. He's a little confused.

DEXTER

Huh? This is way more than what we discussed.

TRAV

Hey, Dru said a job well done is a job well done brah. He appreciates ya. I can take some of that off your hands if it's too much though.

DEXTER

Wow, that's hilarious, Trav.
(sighs)...tell him I said thanks.

They both turn to leave when Dexter turns back to Trav.

DEXTER

Hey! Where's the paperwork?

TRAV

I'll email it to you.

A little frustrated with how this went down, Dexter slides behind the wheel, pops the envelope into the glove box, then starts the car.

INT. CHRIS LAMBERT'S OFFICE

Dexter is escorted into the office of Chris Lambert, early 50's music executive, by Chris's attractive assistant, Shea. Dec can't help but watch her shake as she walks.

CHRIS

Thanks Shea. Can I get you anything Dec?

DEXTER

No, I'm good.

Shea exits and closes the door as she leaves.

CHRIS

How you been?

DEXTER

I'm good, I'm good. Just need to work.

CHRIS

Well good timing, my brother. I got something on the books for you.

DEXTER

Ok. What you got?

CHRIS

I've got a session with two kids that been making some good noise. They are trying to make the move from mix tapes to label work.

DEXTER

(chuckles)

What does that even mean now? You mean from Soundcloud to mix tapes?

CHRIS

(chuckles back) Whatever you wanna call it. Look I'm still here ain't I?

DEXTER

(teasing)

For now. How much longer these Youtube rappers gonna need an old ass dude telling them what to wear, setting up in-stores, booking tour dates?

CHRIS

Haha.. yeah we'll see how everybody does on their own when I'm gone. Somebody gotta hold the money. And shit, with all this talk about the savvy generation, most of these kids know less than me about working these algorithms, spidering these search results. Man, I'm the past and the future.

DEXTER

(laughing now)

All right, all right calm down.

CHRIS

Nah, bro. I'm the Alpha and Omega. I AM... IMMMMOOOOORTAAAALLLLL!

DEXTER

Ok, you sold me. You're still the shit. I'm sorry I asked. So what's up with these kids.

CHRIS

Mmm hmm. Don't forget it. I sign the checks, cutty. Anyway, I don't know if you been doing your homework. If so, you probably heard of em both by now.

DEXTER

C'mon with the suspense man. Who? Where are they from?

CHRIS

One is from DC, Sage the Traveler. (Dec makes a face indicating he thinks the name is weird) The other kid, Stray \$hots is from Opa Locka.

DEXTER

Haha.. Stray \$hots and Sage the Traveler? Where do you find these guys? Sounds like you're coming from both sides of the universe with these two. You called Wale already?

CHRIS

We want to keep it deep south... I just sent you an email with a couple joints from both of them. Check em out. If it's all good, I'll send you the beats.

DEXTER

Which one are we doing DC or Opa Locka?

CHRIS

...Both.

DEXTER

What?! (laughs) You killing me, man.

CHRIS

Haha... you said you wanna work.

DEXTER

Nah, all right bro. I'm joking. I got nothing but time. Just go ahead and

send me the beats. Let's get moving.

CHRIS

There you go. Too easy. Looking like it could be some stretch money too.

DEXTER

Oh yeah?

CHRIS

Trust me.

DEXTER

(sighs)...I always do.

CHRIS

Oh... one more thing is the kid Stray \$hots got a few concepts and ideas he wants in the process. Hungry little dude man.

DEXTER

Ahhh... one of these.

CHRIS

Truuuust me. Have I steered you wrong yet?

DEXTER

Mmmm hmmm...

CHRIS

Hahaha... too easy!

DEXTER

All right man, I'm gone. I gotta go see Tre at this new spot he's been working. A little youth center or something. I'll get at you with something soon though.

The two shake hands and hug casually before Dec turns to leave.

DEXTER

And hey, tell fine ass Tanya in the front office to stop working it so damn hard. I'm trying to be a

gentleman but how many women can I watch from behind today without saying something?

CHRIS
(pouring himself a drink)
Well here's to self-discipline.

FADE OUT:

EXT. SKATE PARK

Dexter gets out of the car. Some hard looking young men glare at him suspiciously from the apartments next to the youth center and skate park. Dexter ignores them. He looks around just as Tre, Dec's age, tall and skinny, steps up behind Dexter.

TRE
What up though, boi?

DEXTER
Got your text. Did they already start?

TRE
Naw, not yet. You're right on time.
For once.

DEXTER
Funny. All right. So anyway now that you're back from MIA. What's going on? I can't get a call unless it's about some other people's kids?

TRE
Haha... I know. I know. Work, bro. When you got a purpose, ya heard? Wait till you see this joint. But let's hit "The Cigar Bar" tomorrow tho. We ain't been there in months.

DEXTER
I'm working on something new myself actually. I'll let you know tomorrow. I'm glad to see you're safe though. For real, it's been weeks. I was about to call Ms. Linda.

TRE

(sucks his teeth)

Bruh, you gotta stop calling my moms.
That shit ain't appropriate.

DEXTER

I was calling to check on you!

TRE

I know man, but why y'all be askin'
about each other. You askin' me how
she doing. She askin' me how you
doin'. I'm just saying, chill!

DEXTER

Hey hey hey, just because I have
feelings for her and she has feelings
for me... You know I'd make a
wonderful step father to you. Why not
bring the family closer?

TRE

That's it man, fuck it. I'm gone.

Dexter laughs as Tre starts to walk away.

DEXTER

All right, all right, all right, come
on back man. I'm just kidding with
you....You gotta stop being so
sensitive, man.

TRE

That shit just ain't funny, bruh.
That's my mama.

DEXTER

I get it man.... if my mama was as
fine and as sexy as Ms. Linda...
ooooweeeeee!

Tre starts to walk off again but Dexter grabs his arm and
draws him into a headlock. Tre wrestles out and throws some
shadow jabs at Dec. They dance around for a moment, ducking
and dodging each other's play punches like expert boxers.

DEXTER

...come on man that was a compliment.
Let's go on up in here and see whats
going on. So what are we doing here?

TRE

You remember when we were little and we would go down to Sharon's Showcase?

DEXTER

Of course! That was the first time I ever performed. I wasn't even rapping then. Haha...

TRE

Yeah, that booty ass little dance routine you used to do. You sucked. Haha... These kids started the same concept but it's on steroids from the Ms. Sharon thing. It's ridiculous. They got dance routines to go with the rappers and singers. They got a music lab, video stuff. Shoot, robotics, fashion, you name it. Peep this tho. They even got mimes and magicians... everything. We set the stage and they come with whatever they wanna do. The mentors follow behind, help em clear out the obstacles. Figure it out.

DEXTER

What?! Haha... mimes? In the hood? They gonna be out here trapping on some two for five shit with no words huh? Like.. (pantomimes a drug deal in mime fashion)

TRE

Man where you think pop locking came from? You're supposed to be knowing this stuff. Anyway, that's the whole thing though. We were out there doing dirt, kicking up dust cause we ain't have shit else to do. They're too busy bringing these ideas to life, practicing, whatever. Some of them are in here making money off their art. They don't even need to trap. That's the point.

DEXTER

Shit, ok. If you say so. Makes sense. So who runs this thing?

TRE

That's whats so crazy. The executive

director finds the money. Mentors like you come and sit with them and help when you're needed... get the fuck out the way when you're not. They got the ideas. We're mostly running behind them. And I facilitate the show, keep it safe, get the supplies, push em along a little bit, whoopty woo. Come on in and see.

They walk inside the big room..

TRE

The concept is: if they love what they're doing, they will keep growing with it. To be real, they mostly police themselves. They even check other kids trying to come in with drink and smoke and shit. They protect the space. All the adults you see here are volunteers. The mentors. And Hip Hop is at the heart of it all. It's beautiful. You know better than anybody where we're at right now. You know this block. Check it though, there hasn't been a fight in here, nothing, for like a year. It's like they worked it all out inside these doors. It's a better world between these walls.

DEXTER

Take a step outside though...

TRE

Hey, I'm dealing with what's inside for now. If we can do it in here... you know? One step at a time, bruh.

DEXTER

Shoot, say that.

Inside the room, there are make shift recording booths with boards for the producers. One kid is showing another kid how to play a violin. Kids are spray painting a mural in the corridor. Some kids are air brushing shoes and pressing t-shirts. Some are beading jewelry. Others are on computers coding. Groups of B-Boys and B-Girls are showing off their newest moves. Kids are filming a talk show on a green screen.

DEXTER

Yo for real bro. Where was this when we were shawties? This is hot man, real hot. What you need from me though?

TRE

Your time bro. You can come in like once a week and work with the rappers and poets, you know help them create their little voice, man.

Dexter looks around and takes in the magic.

DEXTER

This place is great bro... for real. But I don't think I can do it right now. I'm on my grind man. I been short for a minute and work is just about to pick up quick.

TRE

Hey, just think about it. These kids need to hear you bro. Not to get too sensitive on you, but you know I've learned so much from you over the years. You're a natural teacher bro and you got the heart and soul and values these kids need to be inspired by. These are the next voices of our culture. Each one teach one, right?

DEXTER

(sucks his teeth) Damn, the hard sell huh? (pauses) Haha.. you sound like Smooth. Sometimes I think y'all have too much faith in me, if I'm being honest. I don't know bro. Lemme think about it. I'll let you know.

Dexter turns and notices a boy about 12 years old in the makeshift booth with headphones on rapping into the mic. It reminds him of himself.

CUT TO FLASHBACK

EXT.IN PUBLIC PLAZA- NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

A group of mostly young men and women along with some teens

of both sexes are standing in a circle while several of the young men make beats with their mouths and one person at a time improvises raps: the freestyle cipher.

On the outskirts of the circle, business men and women walk by on their way back from lunch. Shoppers carry bags to and from stores. One of the teenage boys from the circle makes a slick hand to hand exchange of a small bag of weed for 10 dollars to another teenage boy.

TEENAGE BOY 1
(Purchasing weed) Good lookin.

TEENAGE BOY 2
(Selling weed) No doubt, young. Be
easy.

Teenage Boy 2 immediately turns around and offers a passing shopper a CD for sale.

TEENAGE BOY 2
Excuse me miss. Do you support local
culture? Original music...

The shopper walks away quickly muttering a nervous dismissal of the proposition.

Back in the cipher, a young woman is rapping while the rest of the group nods and laughs, offering affirmations when she does well. A young, pre-teen Dec is watching from below most of the other rappers shoulders, trying not to be squeezed out of the circle. He looks back at Smooth B standing just behind the circle with his arms folded. Smooth B nods to him. Dec takes a deep breath, squeezes closer to the action and begins posturing his body to enter the cipher while he watches the woman rapping, waiting for her to finish. As she closes her verse, Dec hesitates before beginning his rap. A young light skinned black man with a perm and a purple jacket takes the opportunity and begins rapping (about sex and bitches). Dec looks disappointed but remains poised. Smooth B watches intently from behind.

Partway through Permed Rapper's verse, the group begins to disapprove of his performance. First one person begins the chant, then another joins in and another until the whole group is chanting:

GROUP IN CIPHER
Paaaaass the motherfuckin mic!
Paaaaass the motherfuckin mic!

The beat box stops and Pearl moves towards the center of the circle.

PEARL
Ahhhhh... cut that shit, cut that
shit. Fuck outta here with that shit.
Ugly ass nigga.

PERMED RAPPER
Fuck you nigga!

PEARL
Fuck YOU nigga!

Permed Rapper makes a move towards Pearl but other people in the circle hold him back and push him off to the side.

PEARL
Let this nigga out the circle. Don't
take it personal nig. Real spits out
here. Come back when you got some and
see me on the mic.. or stick to
pimping nigga. You'll be all right.

The group laughs. Permed Rapper sneers.

PERMED RAPPER
I'ma see you then nigga.

PEARL
Do that.

BILLY BLAZE
Kick that shit, Raj.

The beat box begins again. Dec looks back at Smooth B who nods to him again. Pearl prepares to rap.

PEARL
Yo... yo..

DEC
(Steps forward and interrupts
PEARL to begin rapping)
Yo...

I got words I splurge do not conserve
I drop verbs to get the props that I

deserve

Feels like you should welcome me back
but it's my first time

In fact I been busting these raps
since I was 9

And I'm black like uh.. Wesley nestle
and essence put together

I came to rain no need to check the
weather

I'm dope like ounces of coke inside
your veins

And I'm dope.. um.. yes too dope you
dope if know my name

It's Dex.. d, to the e, to the x, to
the t, to the e, to the r

The kids is fresh yes but it ain't
just to be a star

That I do it.. I'm repping for the
culture and movement

My uncle pulled my coat yo he showed
me how to do it

Now I'm hot like uhh.. some grits
admit that I'm the shit

Y'all can not get wit the spits that I
emit

So I'll break and let yall rest, peace
to smooth

Yo I'm out without no doubt I showed
and proved!

The group is quiet for a moment. They look to Pearl who is looking straight at Dec, emotionless. Pearl smiles. The rest of the group erupts into smiles, handshakes and congratulations to Dec. Pearl offers Dec a strong clap of a handshake. A man's handshake.

PEARL

You killin it little brotha. What's your name shorty?

DEC

(Pauses) Dec.

PEARL

Huh, that's a first. Dec One. Welcome to Westlake little man. Drop that shit Raj! This little cat interrupting me and shit..

Pearl starts rapping again. Dec turns around to where Smooth B is standing smiling. Smooth B gives Dec the same man handshake as Pearl did.

SMOOTH B

(Grinning) Welcome to Westlake little brotha. The hardest part to this comes from right here. (gestures to his heart) It's fear. You conquered something today that's gonna stop most of your competition before they even start.

Smooth B bends down taking a bracelet of red, black, and green beads with West African etchings on the beads from his wrist (the same bracelet Dec put on in opening sequence), and placing it on Dec's wrist.

SMOOTH B

I had Miss Tangie make this bracelet out of my first Zulu beads and medallion. Someday I'll tell you who gave this to me and what I had to do for it. But for now, know there's power in these beads. People fought and died and made peace again over these. During the truces we made these the colors of unity. Black for the skin of the kings and queens of your ancestors. Green for the earth we share with all people. And red for the blood that was shed to pave the way for you to be born free in this world. Wear these and feel that freedom. Never forget it didn't come for free. Don't waist it, son. You're on your way. Don't forget what you did today, Dec. You might not know it yet but

you're a warrior.

DEC smiles humbled.

SMOOTH B

Now go do it again.

Dec pauses for a moment, hits his inhaler, then turns around and returns to the fray. Pearl looks back at Smooth B and nods in respect. Smooth B nods back without smiling. Meanwhile, the circle has opened for Dec to reenter, he's been welcomed back in with hands on his back, and he is nodding and throwing his hands up. The cipher is in full swing.

CUT BACK TO SKATE PARK/REC CTR

Kid in recording booth is rapping with gusto. Dec can see the determination in his eyes. The kid notices Dec watching and recognizes him. Without breaking from his verse, the kid nods at Dec in respect. Dec nods back.

INT. DEXTER CAR

As Dexter sits behind the wheel of his car he knows what he has to do. His phone text alert buzzes.

It's Angela.

ANGELA

(Text) Did you forget me, Bae?

DEXTER

(Text) Had a busy day.

ANGELA

(Text) What time you want to get together?

Dexter leans his head on the headrest of the car and takes a deep breath.

DEXTER

(Text) Can't tonight I got a project.
Gotta finish by tomorrow.

ANGELA

(Text) Okay. Maybe tomorrow? Drinks at the new place on 14th?

DEXTER

(Text) That's wassup. Give you call after I'm done tomorrow.

ANGELA

(Text) Good night, Bae. Don't work too hard. See you tomorrow.

Dexter shakes his head a little before he puts the cellphone down and starts the car.

INTERVIEW CUT OFF

We return to a clip from the earlier interview with future Dec and the entertainment reporter.

INTERVIEWER

You've gotten a lot of credit for making music with a positive message but like you said, things can be dark too. You also have the other side of some of the work you've done. The work that speaks to anger, frustration, violence.

DEXTER

I mean, look... life isn't always sweet. Sometimes you have expectations that things are gonna go one way. You try to do good by people, follow some values and you think that's gonna pull you through but yeah, the city, life, whatever... it's got plans of its own.

CUT BACK

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

After leaving the youth center, Dexter stops at a convenience store around the corner, hops out of his car, and walks into the store. He enters right behind a put-together girl in a sexy leather mini-skirt, high heels, and long flowing hair. He makes a face to himself, remembering that he told Chris he was going to say something the next time he saw a fine woman from behind. He watches the woman with a sly grin as he stops

to hold the door for an elderly man stumbling in. Dexter and the older man nod to each other as the older man heads to the beer and wine cooler. Dexter heads to the cooler in the back, grabs a Red Rock Ginger Ale and continues up the isle grabbing a bag of cashews before he continues to the counter. The sexy woman is waiting in line right in front of him. Dec decides to make a move, pulls out a brush and smooths out his goatee.

DEXTER

Excuse me, love. I don't mean to be rude but I think we all thought the same thing we saw you walk in. I'ma just be honest about it. Can I get a minute of your time?

The woman listens to Dec, then turns around fully to reveal a strong jawline and prominent Adam's apple. She smiles mischievously as she replies.

SEXY WOMAN

(in a deep- obviously male voice)
Shoot your shot, nigga.

DEXTER

(flustered)
Oh, shit. I mean, uh... excuse me. I don't mean no disrespect... sister? I'm not really sure how to... I mean more power to you, I just... uh...

SEXY WOMAN

(playfully)
Don't worry, baby. It ain't for everyone, but in case you ever do see the light, you can call me first.

She hands Dexter her card, a sparkly, pink and purple square. Before leaving, she cups his face in her large hand and winks at him. When she leaves, Dexter stands still, stunned. All of a sudden the older guy, now holding a bottle of Wild Irish Rose wine starts cracking up laughing.

WILD IRISH ROSE GUY

Hahahaha... (imitating Dexter) Buh.. buh.. buh.. buh... more power to you but... hahahaha.... that boy looked like a opossum caught in the kitchen! Hahaha.... hey lemme get that card, that hairy ass won't be bother me none! I like em bow-legged! Hahaha...

DEXTER
(to cashier)
Hey, ain't nothing wrong with all that. I just, you know I like... It's cool, I just... it's new. I don't know.

CASHIER
(laughing)
Hey man, I just work here.

The cashier rings up Dexter's items. The items ring up to be \$7.38. Dec is shocked.

DEXTER
Seven dollars?! This more than one genders thing I can wrap my head around but \$7 for a soda and some nuts? That don't make no sense.

He reaches in his pockets and reveals the contents, a \$1 dollar bill and some change. The old man behind him holding his bottle of Wild Irish Rose sighs as Dexter thinks of what to do.

DEXTER
..go ahead. I'll be right back.

He dashes out of the store and out to his car. As he settles into the drivers seat, a white work van pulls up behind him. Two men jump out of a sliding door and hurriedly enter the store. He opens the glove box to retrieve the envelope Trav gave to him. The glovebox light puts off a faint glow as he reaches into it. He grabs the envelope, jumps out of his car and heads back to the store.

All of a sudden, a commotion breaks out in the store. Dec pauses mid-step to see what is happening. The two men have pulled neoprene masks with prints of a skeleton and monster over the lower halves of their faces, brandished guns, and are running around the store. Through the window Dec sees one guy jump over the counter, point the gun at the cashier, and pull the trigger. The ring of the gunshot cuts out all other sound as Dec watches, frozen. The other guy is pulling cash out of the till. One of the men notices Dec watching and taps the other.

DEXTER
"OH FUCK!"

Dec starts to turn to head back to the car. "CLICK" One in

the chamber. There's a third robber!

GUNMAN #3
....I'll take dat.

Out of instinct, Dexter resists giving up the envelope. Him and the third robber start to tussle. Cash in hand, the two other robbers run out of the store towards Dec.

GUNMAN #1
Let's go! Let's go!

In their rush, one of them grabs Dec by the collar smashes him in the back of the head with the butt of his gun and tosses him into the van as the other two robbers file in.

Half conscious from the blow, Dec glances up from the floor of the van to see one of the robbers counting the money from the envelope and smiling from behind his mask.

GUNMAN #1
Look what we got here.

Dexter is seeing multiples of everything. Black is rushing towards him as he loses consciousness.

FADE TO BLACK

Dec regains consciousness briefly to find himself still in the back of the gutted van. The three men are holding his envelope counting the money, greedily, sinister smiles on their faces.

FADE TO BLACK

Conscious again, the men are now standing directly over him. Dec is slightly delirious, seeing horns and fangs on the faces of the men. Their voices sound as if they're playing in slow motion.

GUNMAN #1
We got a live one shawty. What you wanna do with him?

GUNMAN #2
(resembling a psychedelic monster)
You know what they say, right? You gotta die to be reborn. Haha!

GUNMAN #1
You gotta die to be reborn.... (fading

out, echoey, spacey)

GUNMAN #2

(to Dec)

Strip, nigga! (Dec in his delirium
lays prostrate) Strip!

Dec, in a daze, begins clumsily taking his clothes off.

GUNMAN #2

Strip nigga! Faster!

Dec kicks off all of his clothes, leaving only his socks and his bracelet.

GUNMAN #1

(noticing the bracelet)

What's this? You holding out? (kicks
Dec in the ribs) I like this. (rips
the bracelet from Dec's wrist)
Hotepping ass nigga. Gimme that. A
little memento.

Dec regains some consciousness and fight starts to flow through him at the thought of losing his bracelet. He rushes the man, who sidesteps him easily. Dec continues to fight. The second man knocks him down again while the first opens up the rear doors of the van. Stepping back to gain his footing, Gunman #2 steps on Dec's inhaler with a crunch.

GUNMAN #2

We got what we need. Get him out!

The van slows enough for the gunmen to kick Dec into a roll out of the back of the van. He tumbles onto the freeway, cars honking, and rolls off the road and onto the shoulder. Dec lays on the ground, gasping for breath, having an asthma attack. He gulps for air, holding his chest, until he finally starts to come to and breath through the experience. Having made it through the attack, he lays for a moment, recovering until he finally pulls himself up to his feet. In a daze, he walks along the highway, through empty lots, through neighborhoods, in and out of a dark tunnel. Coming out of the tunnel, a police cruiser appears behind him and flashes its lights.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT CONVENIENT STORE

We watch the scene play out from a wide angle with no sound, only the thematic music playing in the background.

Dexter sits on the curb, wrapped in a blanket over a set of scrubs he's been given to wear, head in hand. A police officer approaches him. He rubs his face as he looks at the officer. Lights flash. The area is being taped off. The police are asking Dec questions. A stretcher is wheeled out of the corner store. The elderly man that had been purchasing the bottle of Wild Irish Rose is being questioned. Young kids from the neighborhood are awake and watching. From a tree next to the corner store we see a large owl looking down on the scene.

Dec, now sitting on the bed of an ambulance, glances up and notices the owl perched on a branch. An EMT shines a flashlight in Dec's eyes obstructing his view. His vital signs are checked. The whole time, Dec's face shows little emotion. (environmental sound returns) All of a sudden, there is an obnoxiously loud and long crunching, scraping sound. Everyone on the scene looks over to see an EMT vehicle backing into the side of Dec's car, crumpling the frame around the driver's door. People's faces turn into grimaces as the EMT driver tries to navigate away from Dec's car but accidentally makes the scraping worse in the process. The neighborhood kids watching cover their mouths and point.

NEIGHBORHOOD KID

Daaaaaaaaaaaaamn!

Dec drops his head into his hands. (environmental sound drops out) His car is towed. He is loaded into a squad car. From the police car, he watches the lights of the city pass by the window as he is driven home. We see a shot of the owl lifting off from the tree and flying into the night.

INT. DEXTER LOFT

(The thematic music of the previous sequence continues but environmental sound returns.) Water rushes over Dec as he shower's. He leans with both hands against the wall, letting the hot water run over him. Lifting his head to the sky, he breathes deeply but doesn't cry.

THEMATIC MUSIC FADES

CUT TO

Dexter is sitting in his studio/office, rocking in his chair,

tapping his fingers. He picks random trinkets up from his desk only to put them back down. He gets up and looks in the fridge. He leaves the kitchen with a sandwich and sits at the table just looking at the food. He pushes it away. He sits on his couch and looks at the remote but doesn't touch it. He leans in a big chair in his living room, rotating around, looking at the ceiling. He lays in bed on his back looking at the ceiling not able to sleep. His head rolls to the side and focuses in on the kitchen. He rolls his head the other way focusing in on his studio desk and the jar of marijuana next to a pack of cigars. He stares intently in that direction until all of a sudden, he pops up.

DEXTER

Fuck it.

CUT TO

INT. DECS LOFT (STUDIO)

Dexter is online researching Stray \$hots and Sage the Traveler. As he watches, he leans forward to the screen while picking up a lit blunt. He scrolls through Sage the Traveler's Instagram, noticing the Afrocentric clothing he wears, the incense he burns, a book that he posts about: A Man of the People by Chinua Achebe. Dec logs into Amazon and orders the same book. Web searches detailing news and cultural events from Opa Locka come across his screen. He brings the blunt to his lips and burns. Huge clouds of smoke flood from his mouth as he exhales. He starts to bob his head to one of the tracks, taking another toke from the blunt. He watches clips of people from the hoods of Opa Locka talking to the camera, flashing money, throwing up signs. He fixes his face to imitate their facial expressions. He stands up and begins recreating their body movements. He watches a clip of an interview with Stray \$hots.

STRAY \$HOTS (FROM INTERVIEW CLIP)

Yeah I'm bout that life though, woop.

DEXTER

(imitating Stray \$hots)

Yeah I'm bout that life though, woop.

(repeats, trying to perfectly recreate the voice) Bout that life though, woop. Bout that.. bout that life.

Dexter walks into a glass booth inside of the dimly lit loft-one side is blue, the other side is red. He begins to mimic the physicality of the Opa Locka rapper as he mumbles to himself. He writes in his pad as he vibes with the beat.

Inside the booth, he steps to the mic and begins to improvise. Each verse is relevant and poignant to the place and the time of the rapper he is mimicking. An accent begins to form as he continues improvising. Somehow he is able to see into who the rapper wants to be, not who he is, and Dexter gives them the best version of that. We watch as Dec transforms into another person before our eyes.

He is a master lyricist. For the first time we see Dec, in all his glory as we watch his methods.

Dexter steps out from behind the mic, goes over to his computer and stops the recording. He plays it over and over and goes back to his pad to scratch words out and jot down more lyrics. He gets back behind the mic again to repeat the process.

Dexter goes back and forth from the mic, to the computer, to the page, to the blunt. His process is brilliant and every time he hits the mic, the verses get better and better.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. DEXTER LOFT

Alarm blares. Dexter wakes, checks cell. He has two text messages. One from Angela..

ANGELA

(Text) Good morning Sexy. I can't wait to see you tonight. I bought something special.

The other from Shawna....

SHAWNA

(Text) Sorry for the early text. Wanted to catch you before you got your day started. I need to pick up some plants from the nursery in Grant Park today. Can you give me a hand???

DEXTER

(Text) What time?

SHAWNA

(Text) How's 4?

DEXTER

(Text) That works. Text you when I'm on the way

SHAWNA

(Text) Thanks...BTW what's up with all of the questions? The deal was you were suppose to just say yes Ms. Shawna

DEXTER

(Text)Yes Ms. Shawna;)

SHAWNA

(Text) lmao. C U @ 4

Another text comes in...

ANGELA

(Text) You up yet, Bae?

Dexter looks at the text and shakes his head in disbelief. On a whim, he makes a decision, goes to his contacts, pulls up Angela's, hits the block button and then delete, then starts his daily ritual with a huge stretch and yawn.

EXT. CAR RENTAL OFFICE

Dexter is outside of the car rental office with paperwork in hand, waiting on his rental car to pull up to the curb for him. He pulls out his phone and dials Dru's phone number. No answer. Next, he dials Chris Lambert's number.

CHRIS

Hello?

DEXTER

Yo man.

CHRIS
How you doin' bro? You all right? I
heard what happened.

DEXTER
What?! You heard? Damn Atlanta small!

CHRIS
Smaller than you think. It is what it
is. So how much you get got for?

DEXTER
(Instantly)
Five stacks. I'm wiped clean.
Literally spending my last to rent a
car right now, 'til this insurance
bullshit comes through.

CHRIS
Shit. Wait, what? Why you renting a
car?

DEXTER
Ambulance at the scene last night
ripped right through the whip. This
shit insane, bruh. I might have to get
an advance or something.

CHRIS
Unfortunately, I can say the company
has never covered a corner store
robbery. I'll do what I can though.
Just in case I'm asked, why did you
have that much cash on you.

DEXTER

I don't even want to talk about it right now. Can you just
check to see if they can cover me?

CHRIS
Can't promise you anything but I'll
see.

DEXTER
(Defeated)
Fuck. Hit me back.

Dexter hangs up as the rental car employee pulls up with his
rental, a giant Lincoln Navigator.

RENTAL CAR GUY
(getting out of car)
Here you go sir.

DEXTER
I asked for a full sized. What's this?

RENTAL CAR GUY
Sorry, we're hella busy today. This is all we had on the lot. No upcharge though.

DEXTER
Whatever, gimme the keys man.

RENTAL CAR GUY
One other thing is since it just came back in, the gas is under a quarter tank. You'll have to fill it up but you can bring it back empty.

DEXTER
Fuck!

The car rental guy jumps back at Dexter's exclamation and gets out of his way. Dexter get's behind the wheel, slams the door, and pulls out of the rental lot.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

Dexter walks fast through the lobby, past the counter and into Dru's studio. He looks around and notices Dru in the back. Dru waves for him to come over. As Dexter walks up, he is furious.

DEXTER
Don't ever fuckin' give me cash money like that in a envelope. You just cost me \$5000. I aint no fuckin drug dealer. I'm trying to run a real business out here!

Dru's defenses form behind him. The tough guys in the room start to converge in a show of force. Dru doesn't take his eyes off of Dec but holds up a hand, pausing his goons.

DRU
Watch your tone with me, young man. Now, I don't know what the fuck happened but you got paid. Plus some, nigga. So whatever problem you got

ain't wit me. Check that shit lil nigga and take a look at where you at. (gestures to the room full of hard looking men) In case you ain't notice, you ain't the only one running a business in this town.

DEXTER

Fuck you Dru. Fuck all this greaseball hood shit. You put on a suit and tie but this ain't no business. This ain't even some mafia shit. This ain't nothing but some project kitchen, young money. You look like a stock broker in a trap house. I ain't here for this. I did work and came here for some sign the check money. You had me walking out with brown paper bag money and I got ran up on. It's always some fuck shit like this fucking with you. Fuck all this. I been here too long for this!

DRU

Youngblood, it sounds like this is all some shit you should have took up with the niggas that caught you slipping. I ain't got shit to do wit yo money after you leave here wit it. I'm gonna say it one more time. I paid you. Money is green nigga and you been making a living off my money for too many years now.

Dru stands up and walks closer to Dexter.

DRU

Open your eyes lil' nigga. Now we got history, but you been thinkin' you're the golden boy of the A for too long. Now it's time to wake the fuck up. Without me you don't eat. If I say the word you don't walk... Nigga all I gotta do is give a look and those 2 lil' niggletts and dat fine ass bitch of yours will never see yo body in one piece again.

DEXTER

A bitch nigga will threaten you all

day but a real G got...

DRU

(continuing Dec's sentence)

...a real G got nothing to say. You still quoting your uncle when you're up against a wall. Nigga, who you think told Smooth that shit? Shit, sometimes I think I'm the ghostwriter. Hmm.. imagine if I didn't need you...

Dru chuckles then gives Dexter a mischievous look. The look raises a flag in Dec's mind but he can't quite tell why. Dru leans in close to Dec.

DRU

Now listen real close to me, nephew. I'ma drop one more jewel on you for the road. You think this good boy shit makes you deserve something for your efforts don't you? That's dog shit, nigga. What you deserve don't got a got damn thing to do with what you get unless you use it to justify taking what you want. I tried to tell you that shit long ago. Some motherfuckers never learn, huh?

They stare each other down for a long moment then Dru motions to his security guy that has been standing by.

DRU

...get him the fuck outta here.

The security guy grabs Dexter by the arm and shoves him out to the studio then out of the building.

INT. CHRIS OFFICE BUILDING

Chris hangs up the phone and takes a deep breath as Dexter paces the office.

CHRIS

I know you're aware as anyone of Dru's reputation so we don't even have to cover that but for real though, you know this wasn't on him, right? Why did you have that much money on you going into a convenience store anyway... on Godby Road of all places?

DEXTER

Man, I made sure to keep it in the car but I was in the store, I didn't have enough money on me. \$7 for a ginger ale and some cashews! I just ran out and grabbed it without thinking... Damn. You right..I was slippin'.

CHRIS

Look, I don't know exactly what you said over there but it ain't good. I pulled a little weight to slow things down but making this right is ultimately gonna have to fall back on you, brother. This ain't good for you or for business.

DEXTER

Nah, you're right. I got on this Iyanla Vanzant kind of thing, feeling like I need to clear all this out of my life. Like I... yo, I just might have took it too far. I'll take care of it.

CHRIS

(gives him a look of genuine concern)
You sure?

DEXTER

Yeah.

CHRIS

You good?

DEXTER

Yeah.

CHRIS

We good?

DEXTER

I got this. I'll take care of it.

Chris grabs a check book from his desk.

CHRIS

You got a few people that believe in you, man. (pause) There are not very many people they do this for but the

company authorized me to cover 3000.
I'm sure that's not what was taken but
at least you're getting something
back.

DEXTER

Damn.. thanks. That's gonna save me
right now.

CHRIS

Who loves you man? Now I suggest you
go repair that situation with Dru,
post haste my brother. Don't let it
sit.

DEXTER

(laughing)

Post haste? What kind of stuff they
teach you up there at Howard?

CHRIS

How to be more articulate than
brothers at Morehouse.

DEXTER

Haha... whoa watch it now!

CHRIS

Go on get outta here. Go read a book.

Rises and shakes Chris' hand sincerely.

DEXTER

Thanks Chris.

CHRIS

You already know.

EXT. SHAWNA HOUSE

The sun is going down as Shawna and Dexter move plants from
the SUV to the side of the house. Dexter grabs the last plant
and drops it off. Shawna goes inside to check on dinner.

DEXTER

Somebody was looking out for you when
they gave me this big ass truck.

SHAWNA

Won't he do it? (Hands to the sky with

her most exaggerated church voice)I am so sorry this took so long. I thought I knew exactly what I wanted but when I saw that puakenikeni tree it changed my whole vision. Bout to smell like Hawaii over here if I can keep it alive. Haha...

DEXTER

It's all good. I'm glad you got what you wanted. I think it's going to look incredible when you're done.

SHAWNA

Well thank you, Dexter... that means a lot.

DEXTER

(teasing)

Look at you, all formal. Haha.. hey, I don't think anyone in Hip Hop knows more than I do about the botany... so I learned something from you. Again.

There is the moment of silence that these two seem to always share.

SHAWNA

Hey dinner is almost done. Why don't you let me thank you with a good meal?

DEXTER

Look I, I... are you sure?

SHAWNA

If I wasn't sure, I wouldn't have asked.

DEXTER

True.

SHAWNA

You can help the boys wash up.

CUT AWAY:

As they walk into the house Dexter's cellphone on the front seat of the car vibrates and lights up.

CUT TO:

INT. SHAWNA HOUSE

Dexter and the boys are in the bathroom laughing and splashing water while Shawna puts some plates on the table.

SHAWNA
It's ready guys.

DEXTER
We are on the way.

They all grab plates and dig in.

CUT IN:

The family laugh as they eat dinner talking to one another.

We catch Shawna taking in this time with her whole family together. She is happy.

Having made it from the table, now on the couch, the boys are playing video games. Dexter is looking at items on a table in the back of the living room.

DEXTER
Yo all this, is this you still working on that idea you had about the second hand wedding supplies business?

SHAWNA
Yeah, you thought I gave up on it?

DEXTER
Nah, nah. It's a great idea. I love it. I guess we just hadn't talked about it for a while.

SHAWNA
I guess there's a few things we haven't talked about for a while. Yeah, I'm just collecting stuff here and there and selling it on Instagram. I gotta say, it's doing pretty well. Most of that stuff on the table is already sold. I just gotta pack it up or deliver it.

DEXTER
Look at you, hustler. That's great to see you making that happen. It's cool all that stuff that got so much love

for a day then got thrown in a closet
is gonna come back out to live another
life.

SHAWNA

Not to mention all the waste it'll
prevent from people not buying into
that process of manufacturing new
stuff over and over again.

DEXTER

Yo, like I said, it's a brilliant
idea. Imagine it in a storefront
somewhere downtown.

SHAWNA

Yeah and imagine me parking my Bentley
in the garage of my penthouse
apartment above the store.

DEXTER

I sense some sarcasm coming my way.

SHAWNA

(laughs) Well you keep dreaming for
me. I'll keep on my Instagram hustle.
All right boys, time for bed.

The boys shut down the PS4 and come over to say good night.

MALIK

Good night Daddy. Good night Mama.

DEXTER

Good night you guys. Love y'all. Come
here.

The boys come over and give Dec a manly clap of the hand and
hug.

SHAWNA

You tough guys.

DEXTER

(joking)

We're some sensitive thugs, Mama. This
is how we show emotion.

SHAWNA

You better stop with all that. These

boys are gentlemen. Isn't that right boys?

BOYS

Yes mama.

SHAWNA

Mmm hmm.

DEXTER

(laughs)

All right, all right. My bad. Good night gentlemen.

BOYS

Good night, daddy.

They walk toward their room as Shawna gets up to follow them.

DEXTER

I'm gonna chill right here for a minute if you don't mind. I don't even think I can move right now I'm so full.

SHAWNA

See, I told you you can get full off of vegetarian food.

DEXTER

I guess you weren't lying.

SHAWNA

Just chill. I'll tuck them in. Sometimes I have to read Tyrel a few extra stories but take your time.

DEXTER

Hey boys. (they stop and turn around)
I'm proud of you. Gentlemen.

The boys smile and turn towards their rooms with Shawna leading. As she walks to the back, Dexter lays his head on the couch and slowly doses off.

CUT TO

A younger Dexter, dressed in styles from the 1990's, sits on the same couch in an empty room looking out of the front window of the house. Shawna walks up from behind him and

begins to rub his neck. Dexter leans his head back to look her in the eyes.

DEXTER

Hey baby. What you think?

SHAWNA

I love it. The house is beautiful.
It's almost like a dream. The way the
light comes into this room...

DEXTER

I meant what you think of the couch
here, but I like that answer better.

Shawna walks around and sits on the couch next to Dexter.

SHAWNA

Haha... I like it. It's perfect. The
couch is perfect. The house is
perfect.

DEXTER

(gently kisses Shawna on the lips)
You're perfect.

SHAWNA

(kisses Dexter back with her hand
on his cheek but moves away
slightly from his last comment)
Watch out now. Couches and houses can
be perfect. People ain't perfect. We
work and do our best and good ones
like you and me shine bright on each
other. Love me when you feel like this
and love me when it passes and we'll
be good. This beauty lives in the
moment, baby.

DEXTER

(pauses) Damn. You never cease to
amaze me. This wise queen. Ok, queen.
How bout we just stay living in this
beauty for right now and call this
moment perfect.

SHAWNA

(gets up and walks around Dexter,
trailing her fingertips over his
shoulder and neck as she goes)
If you gotta call it something.

Shawna keeps walking out of the room, turning her head back to look at Dec seductively before heading into the bathroom.

SHAWNA

C'mon, man of the house. Let me draw us a bath and we can keep living in the moment...

CUT BACK

Back in the present, Shawna is standing behind the couch, lightly touching his shoulder. He wakes up.

DEXTER

Ahhhh, how long have I been sleep?

SHAWNA

I don't know. I fell asleep too. I think Tyrel was excited about you being here. It took him a little longer to go down.

Dexter stands up to head for the door.

DEXTER

Sorry about that. Let me get outta here.

SHAWNA

Okay, thanks again for the help today. And for staying for dinner. It was nice.

Shawna reaches up to give Dexter a hug. As she pulls back slowly, they both look at each other. They begin to kiss, slowly, gently....then more passionately. Dec holds Shawna's waist close to him as he kisses her neck. Shawna slightly throws her head back and gives in fully to the moment. Her eyes slightly open. She begins to unbutton Dec's shirt. In full embrace they reach at one another's clothes as they make their way to the bedroom. They move inside as Shawna's head wrap drops to the floor. The door closes.

INT. SHAWNA BEDROOM

A clock on the stand reads 7:59AM and Dexter begins to stir in the bed. Shawna's arms and legs wrap around him. His eyes pops wide open.

DEXTER

Shawna you gotta wake up. I gotta get

outta here. Are the boys up?

SHAWNA

Yeah they are but I don't normally get them started until about 8:15.

DEXTER

I mean should I leave or, or....

SHAWNA

Dexter, you're their father.

DEXTER

I know that. I just don't want to confuse them you know?

She turns Dexter to face her.

SHAWNA

Dexter, you are their father and the only man they have every seen me with. They will be overjoyed to see you. Trust. Now, we have 15 minutes. Hold me.

Dexter relaxes...

DEXTER

Yes, Ms. Shawna.

They both laugh and breath deep into this moment.

DEXTER

...Shawna I, I... I want this. This feels right, right now. I'm ready to come home...

SHAWNA

Stop. I know what you want from me. And I don't think I'm too mysterious for you not to know I've always wanted you too. We had times together that were so precious, felt just right. And then there's those other times. They've ebbed and flowed, so forgive me if I just don't dive right into thinking they're one way or another. And I love seeing YOU, you every time I see you. That's good. But if you're really saying you're ready to put me

and these boys where we belong, I want to take this slow. I need to know we're not gonna turn back into accessories on your outfit while you work day and night and forget we exist.

DEXTER

Shawna I...

SHAWNA

Dexter, don't make me no promises. Last night was nice. (touches his neck) I missed you. This Dexter is nice. I like what I'm seeing in you. But you understand where I'm coming from.

DEXTER

I do. I do.

They pause, both lost in thought for a moment.

DEXTER

What if we start with dinner tonight? Just Papa and Mama. We can put on something nice and go out to one of those spots in Buckhead where you spend your whole paycheck and they give a little mint leaf and a spoonful of rabbit tartar.

SHAWNA

(laughing)

You're stupid. But you're still cute. It's a date. You pick the spot, but don't bring me to no rabbit tartar. You just find something cool and tell me what to wear.

DEXTER

Yes Miss Shawna.

They both laugh.

INT. SHAWNA KITCHEN

Shawna makes pancakes with fruit slices as the boys play with Dexter in the living room. He walks into the kitchen. They both smile.

DEXTER
Hey, have you seen my phone?

SHAWNA
I haven't.

Dexter walks out to his car and looks in. He sees the cell is on the front seat. He grabs it takes a look. He presses a button to retrieve his voice mails.

First voice mail from Angela (calling from someone else's phone), we hear her yelling through the phone at Dexter as he pulls the it away from his ear and moves to the next message.

CALLER
Hello Mr. Moore. I am calling from Grady Hospital. We are contacting you at the request of a Mr. Tre Barnes. He was the victim of a shooting last night. He is in stable condition. You've been added to his visitor list. The hours for visitation are between...

Dec hangs up the phone and starts his car.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Two figures begin to emerge as Tre slowly wakes. As everything gets clearer it's painfully obvious who the two people are.... Dexter and Linda (Tre's mom). Dexter has his arm around Linda's shoulder.

TRE
COME ON, MAN!

Linda's head pops up from Dexter's chest as they hear his voice.

LINDA
Heeey, baby. How you doin'? I was so worried.

TRE
I'm okay, mom. Hurts. (holding his shoulder)

DEXTER
Well the doctor said it went in and

came out so you'll heal quick. Damn though, you had us trippin' waiting to find out!

TRE

Good thing you wasn't there man.

DEXTER

Shoot I wish I was. I'm supposed to be looking out for you. So what happened?

TRE

(something about his look seems like he's hiding something)
Idiots got wild after the club. I was just trying to get outta there. Wrong place at the wrong time man.

DEXTER

That's why I don't go out anymore if it's not for work. The only place you'll catch me at is Bars.

LINDA

What's Bars?

DEXTER

Oh, it's a very relaxed tapas kind of place that serves Kombucha, kava kava, Kefir, vegan sandwiches... there's performance art and then there's a dispensary. You should come with me sometime. You'd love it.

LINDA

Wow Dexter, that sounds nice. Let's make a date.

Tre shakes his head in frustration.

TRE

..like WHY!? Mom you got your own friends and Dec don't you have a girlfriend?

DEXTER

I don't. I'm single.

LINDA

Me too!

Tre shakes his head again, not knowing if they are serious or just kidding with him.

TRE
(under his breath) You gotta be
kiddin' me.

Linda responds in Dexter's direction.

LINDA
Nope, not kiddin' at all.

DEXTER
So how about next week?

LINDA
Sounds good, Dexter. I'm already
looking forward to it.

They both look back at Tre who is fully disgusted on top of furious that neither of them are going to stop this. Dexter and Linda then look back at each other and break into laughter.

DEXTER
Hey, I'm going to head out, I gotta go
pick up my car and drop this rental
but I'll be back in the morning.

TRE
Rental? What's up with your car?

DEXTER
Long story. Another time, yo. You just
worry about healing up that arm man.
Them kids are gonna need that backhand
in shape to keep em line.

TRE
You're stupid man.

DEXTER
For real though. I'm glad you're ok,
brother. Love you man.

TRE
Shoot, we from the A man. We don't go
out that easy. Love you too bruh.

They shake hands and hug.

DEXTER

Linda, it's always a pleasure seeing you.

LINDA

You too, Dexter.

DEXTER

...and I'll check back with you about that date. (winks at Tre)

Tre grimaces. Dexter turns to head for the door then turns back to Tre.

DEXTER

Oh, and I thought about it. I think it'll be cool to get with the kids but I also want to bring the boys down with me. I think they'll benefit from seeing that kind of environment.

TRE

Well that's the least you could do, punk. After all, you stood me up last night, now you're up in here hitting on my mom.

They all laugh as Dexter leaves the room. Tre cringes from the laugh and holds his shoulder.

On the way down the hospital hallway, Dec's phone beeps. He checks the screen- it's Shawna. Dec checks the text while he walks through the hospital to his car.

SHAWNA

(text) How's Tre??

DEXTER

(text) He's all right. Talking mess, laughing. Ain't nothing but a little flesh wound

SHAWNA

(text) Little flesh wound. You make it sound like you two get shot at everyday

DEXTER

(text) We do. Love struck fans. They can't stand not having me

SHAWNA

(text) So cavalier. Give him my love and don't forget when its time to take something seriously

DEXTER

(text) Always wise

SHAWNA

(text) You pick a spot?

DEXTER

(text) Yep. Wear your usual sexy funky tea room vibe gear. Reservation at 7:30

SHAWNA

(text) LOL. I'll pick a head wrap. Tell me more about Tre tonight

DEXTER

(text) Will do

DEXTER

(text) Hey, I was thinking. You never finished your point the other day. The best time to plant a tree is 30 years ago. When's the 2nd best time?

SHAWNA

(text) Now

Dec, in his car by now, smiles, starts the car.

DEXTER

(text) See you at 7

Dexter drives away.

INT. DECS LOFT

Dec is buttoning his shirt, rubbing Egyptian Musk essential oil on his neck and wrists. He checks the clock (6:43pm) and bends over to slip his shoes on when his text message notification goes off.

CHRIS
(text) Where you at right now?

DEXTER
(text) Home

DEXTER
(text) What's up?

CHRIS
(text) Big things. I'm sitting in my office right now across from the top selling artist in the world. He came down here to meet you.

DEXTER
(text) Dante Thomas??

CHRIS
(text) Yep. Drivers on his way. Be downstairs in 5

Dec looks at his phone in disbelief. He leans back on his bed and looks at the ceiling taking it all in, remembering all the years of struggling for a break. Phone buzzes.

CHRIS
(text) U ready for life to change?

DEXTER
(text) On my way down.

Dec pulls his second shoe on and heads for the door.

EXT. CHRIS LAMBERTS OFFICE

An arm is reaching out of the window of the backseat of a burgundy Mercedes Metris Minivan shaking hands with Chris then with Dec.

CHRIS
All right now. We'll be in touch with that paperwork. Big things!

As the minivan pulls off, Chris turns to Dec and slaps him on the chest excitedly.

CHRIS
HAHA!! I woke up with a feeling about

today! Ha! He was in town for a movie meeting. I sent him links months ago to the videos for those joints you did for that kid Deacon from the Bay that got shelved by Sony. Thought it was a wash. Turns out he was already knowing about the stuff you wrote for Otis in New York. His people couldn't believe the same dude wrote stuff that different for artists coast to coast. They hit me up today and I sent them the roughs for the Opa Locka joints. After that it was a wrap. Didn't expect to see this cat walk into my office himself though! Haha! My man Dec!

DEC

Man, I don't even know what to say. I'm still taking it all in. Did that really just happen?

CHRIS

What? Did you just shake hands on writing a whole album for the hottest musician in the world, the third top selling recording artist of all time? Yes, son. It happened.

DEC

You think they're really gonna sign the papers?

CHRIS

Believe me, I won't give em time to change their mind. I'm going upstairs to draft the contract right now. Hey I got that bottle of Delamain I been saving for a moment like this if you wanna come up and celebrate for a minute tho...

DEC

(Thinks for a minute) Don't tempt me man. Haha.. Nah, I just got this feeling like I ain't ate for a month. I'm bout to walk down to Bars and do some thinking on the way. Some things are bout to change, C.

CHRIS

You ain't lying brotha. Respect. Just make sure you're thinking bout them lyrics! We got some work to do, family.

DEC

No doubt.

The two men shake hands and hug before Dec walks away down the street. Chris calls out behind him as Dec walks into the darkness of the streets.

CHRIS

Big things, my brother! Big things!

EXT ATLANTA DOWNTOWN

Dexter walks down Peachtree Street on his way to Bars the lights from the cars shine onto the glass buildings. People drink on a sidewalk balcony. He smiles reflecting on what's to come.

INTERVIEWER

So from what I gather, you're able to take all these experiences and somehow turn them all into something with meaning. And you love your home.

DEXTER (VO)

You said it. From minute to minute, this city will give you goosebumps from the warmth of it's embrace or the frigid chill of it's rejection. But that's why I love it... At any moment your lowest low can transform into your highest high. It somehow morphs and changes... you just have to stay on the ride. This is my city. And if it's not, nothing's gonna stop me from making it mine.

INT BARS

Greg Street, the owner of "Bars" greets Dexter at the door as he always does. A band sets up on stage as Greg gives him a pound.

DEXTER

Who's up tonight?

GREG STREET

You'll see. We got some soul food for you.

DEXTER

Ahhhh... as always. Is that a hint though?

GREG STREET

Haha... you'll see. I heard about that Dru situation. You good?

DEXTER

(a quick look at his shoes) Man the streets got ears huh? I appreciate ya man. Ain't nothing I can't handle, family.

GREG STREET

Good good. Speaking of family, how's Smooth?

DEXTER

As good as to be expected.

GREG STREET

True. We're heading up north next week. I'll probably stop by the prison and check him out. You should roll with us.

DEXTER

Let's do it.

GREG STREET

Oh, I think they ready.

Greg Street calls to the 20 something woman behind the wooden counter top.

GREG STREET

Baby, get my man some booch and a Mama Africa burger. (to Dexter) Millet and homemade BBQ sauce... it's new. Real soul food, bruh. I'll check you in a minute.

Greg Street walks off and heads to the mic that has been placed on the stage as Dexter moves to a small table in the lounge.

GREG STREET

Sometimes you are in the right place at the right time. Ain't that the truth? Tonight we got one of the architects of southern Hip Hop. He just happened to stop by. This brother helped redefine what Hip Hop sounds like. Shoot, like he needs an introduction. For all those outside of these walls that know this brother from the Voice, you don't know the half. "Me and my associates named the south dirty"! Ladies and gentlemen, give a warm welcome to... Cee Lo Green! Let's see if he can still rap!

Cee Lo comes out of the side of the room and places a chair on the stage as the band starts in with a slow methodical instrumental. Cee Lo lays the words to his verse of "Live At the O.M.N.I." The crowd sits back and vibes.

Dec is oblivious as his cell phone chirps with the text message alert from the table while the waitress brings his drink and sandwich.

The message is from Shawna.

CUT TO

Shawna is sitting at her dinner table looking at her phone, head wrap and nice clothes on.

CUT TO

Tre is in his hospital bed talking to his mother laughing.

CUT TO

Dexter is eating his Mama Africa burger vibing to the music.

CUT TO

EXT. BARS

The owl is sitting on the roof of Bars. It spreads its wings and flies over the parking lot. As we follow it, the camera pans down to a white Cadillac in the parking lot. Dru is in the driver's seat, smoking and looking at the venue. On his wrist is Dec's red, black, and green beaded bracelet.

FADE TO BLACK

As credits roll, Goodie M.o.b.'s "Live At the O.M.N.I." is over taken by LL Cool J's "Loungin (Who Do You Love?)".