

BROWNSVILLE

Screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. SUBWAY, ROCKAWAY STATION - DAY

The C TRAIN RUMBLES to a stop at the ROCKAWAY AVENUE subway station in south central Brooklyn.

PASSENGERS file in and out of the subway cars. Going about their day.

EXT. BROWNSVILLE - DAY

The concrete jungle that is the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York comes to view. Asphalt as far as the eye can see. Not a blade of grass.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

The main street of Brownsville. No multi-million dollar high rise corporation headquarters here. No fancy boutiques. Just apartment buildings, corner stores, and HOUSING PROJECTS.

BROWNSVILLE RESIDENTS mill about the streets. Not a white person for blocks.

A VOICE speaks to us off screen. An assertive voice that must belong to a person that has been though and seen a lot that most have never experienced.

We will come to know that the voice belongs to JOHN HARRISON.

JOHN (V.O.)
Brownsville. My home. My hood.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Two BLACK TEENS meet together. They swap two items between them in a blink of an eye. Typical drug deal.

They part ways just as quickly as they met.

JOHN (V.O.)
When you live in the place that gave the world the baddest motherfucker alive, Mike Tyson, a nigga got no choice but to be hard.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Children no older than 12 play a makeshift pick up game on one side of the asphalt court.

JOHN (V.O.)

I see more shit in one day than most people see in a lifetime.

On the sideline of the court, a 13 YEAR OLD BOY watches the game with TWO FRIENDS standing next to him. They joke around with each other, completely immersed in the game in front of them.

From behind, an 11 YEAR OLD BOY stalks up to the 11 Year Old's back, trying to remain nonchalant.

No one really notices the 11 Year Old Boy creeping up behind the 13 Year Old.

And the select few ones that do see the little boy could care less.

With one swift motion, and absolutely no regard, the 11 Year Old Boy PUNCHES the 13 Year Old in the side of the head, knocking him to the ground.

Like a routine, the 13 Year Old's Two Friends SPRING on the 11 Year Old Boy. PUMMELING him to the ground.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But that's just how it be. From day one we all learn that you need to earn respect. That shit is never given. And the minute you forget that...

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - NIGHT

A FLASH BULB WHITENS the screen. As it dissipates, we find the lifeless gaze of a DEAD BLACK TEEN staring back up at us.

A CORONER puts down his camera. Pulls a WHITE SHEET over the dead body.

Several POLICE OFFICERS seal off the area with YELLOW POLICE TAPE.

JOHN (V.O.)

...that's the last minute you live.

The DEAD TEEN'S MOTHER HOWLS with heartbreak behind the police tape that separates her from the corpse of her boy.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now, I don't expect you to
understand that right now. But you
will. And you'll see...

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

JOHN (V.O.)
...that in Brownsville, that's just
the way of life.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A small bedroom comes to view. Only the bare essentials are
contained within it.

A bed. A dresser. A nightstand. That's it.

A CLOCK on the nightstand displays the time of 9:31 AM.

Lying in the bed is JOHN HARRISON. 19 years of age. African-
American. Braided hair. Tattoos on both ripped arms.

He is still in the middle of a deep sleep. Settled next to
him is a small SKETCH NOTEBOOK.

AMY (O.S.)
Jonathan!

The woman's voice from outside the room sounds ANNOYED.
ANGRY even. Yet it doesn't stir John one bit.

The bedroom door OPENS.

Standing in the doorway with hands on hips is AMY HARRISON.
John's mother. Late 30's. Caucasian. Not in a happy mood.
She wears a NURSE'S UNIFORM.

AMY (CONT'D)
Jonathan!

John still doesn't wake. Amy storms up to John. SLAPS his
face a couple of times.

AMY (CONT'D)
Goddamnit boy, wake up!

John SPRINGS awake from the blows to his face. He holds up
his hands not knowing what is happening.

JOHN

Damn! What you doing? Are you crazy?

AMY

I don't work sixty hours a week for you to sleep all day! Get your ass up!

John rises. Swings his feet off the side of the bed. He tries to rub the remaining sleep from his eyes.

Amy slaps the back of his head again.

JOHN

Stop hitting me, Mom! Damn!

AMY

I thought you said you were going to go look for a job today?

John stands up from the bed. Retrieves a shirt and some jeans from the ground.

Amy stays right on his heels giving him an earful.

AMY (CONT'D)

I don't know what you think this is, but you are an adult. I don't have to pull your weight around anymore. Jayden is the only one I have to take care of now.

JOHN

Whatever.

AMY

What did you say? I don't think I heard you right.

John finishes putting his clothes on.

AMY (CONT'D)

You better get your ass out there and fill out some applications. I'm not putting up with this bullshit anymore, John.

A KNOCKING from the apartment's front door comes from outside the room.

John exits the room. His mother close behind.

INT. HARRISON APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sitting on a stained couch in the middle of the living room eating a bowl of no frills cereal is JAYDEN HARRISON, 8, John's little sister.

She watches basic cable cartoons on a 19 inch television set that looks like it's from another decade.

John crosses the living room en route to the front door. Amy stalks behind him stride for stride.

The KNOCKS continue from the front door.

CHICO (O.S.)

Coo Coo!

JOHN

Coo Coo!

John tussles the top of Jayden's head playfully as he passes her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What's up, Jayden.

Jayden giggles.

JAYDEN

Stop it, John!

AMY

Don't mess up her hair! I just did it for her.

John reaches the front door. Opens it.

CHICO MARTINEZ, 19. Dominican. Urban swag to the max. Greets John in the doorway.

CHICO

Johnny boy.

JOHN

What's good, Chico?

John and Chico exchange a secret handshake that has obviously been perfected over years of use.

CHICO

Chillin', my dude, chillin'. Bout to head over to Tee. You down?

Amy CLEARS HER THROAT behind John.

AMY

I want two applications filled out today, John. You hear me?

JOHN

Yeah, Mom! I got it. Get off my case. Damn.

Chico lets a slick ass grin slide across his face.

CHICO

Don't worry Ms. Harrison. I'll make sure he does.

AMY

Did I ask for your input? Now get out of my house. Both of you.

John exits the apartment. Amy SLAMS the door shut after him.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

John and Chico move down through the tight stairwell of the apartment building.

They occasionally pass HOMELESS PEOPLE sleeping in the corners of the stairwell.

JOHN

So what you going to Tee for?

CHICO

Shit, you need to ask son? I'm bout to get my HIGH on, boy. You flying with me today right?

JOHN

Nigga, you know I don't do that shit.

CHICO

Come on, papi. Time to start growing some hair on your nuts. Everybody smokes weed at least once in they life. Even them uptight ass white boys living in they mansions smoke bud. You ain't a kid no more. You can smoke a little ish now. It won't hurt.

John just shakes his head with a smile.

JOHN

You stupid.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

John and Chico exit one of the three large 22 story projects right in the middle of Rockaway Ave.

Standing outside of the entrance is MARLON BENSON, 19. African-American. Fresh clothing. Smooth as fuck.

The PRETTY GIRL he spits game to can second that opinion.

MARLON

So come on, baby. You know you way too fine for me not to know your name.

PRETTY GIRL

I don't know if I should tell you my name.

MARLON

Why not?

PRETTY GIRL

I don't think my boyfriend will like it.

Marlon holds his eye contact with the Pretty Girl.

MARLON

If you really cared what your boyfriend thought, you wouldn't be talking to me right now.

The Pretty Girl grins a little.

PRETTY GIRL

That's true. He don't own me.

MARLON

Exactly. So now that you trying be hard with it, you gotta give me your phone number too.

The Pretty Girl laughs.

PRETTY GIRL

You don't waste time do you?

MARLON

I don't waste time on YOU.

The Pretty Girl hesitates for a moment. But the smile on her face makes it obvious what her answer is going to be.

PRETTY GIRL
Aight. 555-1865. Ask for Sheena.

MARLON
That's better.

The Pretty Girl gives Marlon a wave. Walks away.

Chico and John approach Marlon. Sly grins on their faces.

JOHN
My dude, Marlon. Still chasing the females.

MARLON
Nigga, I don't chase females. Only money and vodka.

John and Chico exchange the same handshake with Marlon that they performed before with each other.

CHICO
When you gonna pick one female like the rest of us, Marlon?

Marlon pretends to convulse his head as if his brain doesn't register the phrase "one female".

MARLON
Damn. That's the stupidest shit I ever heard in my life. You about to give me a motherfuckin' stroke. Besides, stealing wack niggas' girls is fucking comedy.

Chico and John laugh.

The building's front doors open again. This time two girls exit the building, holding bookbags.

The first is NENA CRUZ, 19, sexy Puerto Rican girl.

The other is LATASHA "TASHA" BROOKS, 19. African-American. Stunningly beautiful. Upright with confidence.

Her face, however, broadcasts discomfort. Under the weather maybe?

NENA
Chico!

Nena runs up to Chico. Plants a huge kiss on his lips.

CHICO
Que pasa, mamita?

NENA

Nada, mi amor. Voy a la escuela.

MARLON

Whoa. Whoa. English, motherfuckers. This is America. You need to get that mira mira shit the fuck out of here.

Nena turns. Gives Marlon narrow eyes.

NENA

Marlon, shut the fuck up, eh? Don't you have some skanky hoodrat to go fuck?

MARLON

Actually, nah. I just got back from your Mom's. You ain't hear us last night?

Nena slaps Marlon's arms multiple times as she curses him out in UNINTELLIGIBLE SPANISH.

Marlon can't help but laugh his ass off at Nena's reaction. Chico laughs too.

MARLON (CONT'D)

You better stop. I'll call immigration on your ass.

Tasha steps over to John. John notices something is wrong.

JOHN

What's wrong, Tasha? You don't look right.

TASHA

I'm alright. I've just been feeling a little sick this morning.

JOHN

So why don't you call out or something? It's just summer school.

TASHA

You don't call out sick from college, John. Besides I need the credits. I can't miss any days.

John shrugs.

NENA

Tasha. Venga aqui, mami. We're gonna be late.

Tasha nods in Nena's direction then looks back at John.

TASHA

I got to go. I love you.

She gives John a kiss. Moves to join Nena.

Nena gives Chico a kiss. Turns to leave...

Chico lands a SLAP right on her ass which causes her to SQUEAL with delight.

Chico turns back to his friends.

CHICO

Damn I love that girl.

John stares off after Tasha. Still seeming concerned about her condition.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Yo, Marlon. Me and John bout to head over to Tee for some weed. You trying to roll?

MARLON

Word. Let's do it.

Chico playfully punches John in the arm. Like LIGHTNING, John REACTS. GRABS his arm with a tight grip.

CHICO

You ready?

John collects his thoughts. Nods his head.

JOHN

Yeah.

INT. CORNER STORE - DAY

Tasha and Nena enter a small corner store somewhere along Rockaway Ave.

A KOREAN SHOPKEEPER keeps his eye on both girls as they stroll through the store.

NENA

Tasha, what do you need now? We're already going to be late.

(MORE)

NENA (CONT'D)

You know after rush hour the C
Train takes forever to come around
again.

TASHA

It'll only take a minute.

Tasha moves down one of the aisles. She passes many FEMININE
CARE PRODUCTS. She stops when she finds what she's looking
for...

A HOME PREGNANCY TEST.

Tasha picks one up off of the shelf. Studies the back of the
box.

NENA

What you need one of them for?

TASHA

Do I need to spell it out for you?

Tasha walks towards the Korean Shopkeeper and his register at
the front of the store. Nena follows.

NENA

But you always tell me how careful
you are. You even make John wear a
rubber when you go dow--

TASHA

Could you keep your voice down?
And I just want to make sure. Is
that a crime?

Nena cocks her head to the side with concern.

NENA

Of course not. But I think you're
just being paranoid, mami.

Nena pretends to KNOCK on Tasha's head.

NENA (CONT'D)

You're too smart to be a teen mom.

This hits Tasha hard.

TASHA

I know...

Tasha DROPS the pregnancy test on the counter. The Korean
Shopkeeper rings it up.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Several pick up games are in mid-swing on the court with all age groups present.

John, Marlon, and Chico walk across the court, three across, looking like they own the place. All three lock their gaze on a metal table and chair set in a corner of the court.

Several older black men, mid 20's, stand in the corner playing a dice game of Cee-lo.

John and his friends stop behind the one player rolling the dice.

The player rolling the dice is TEE, 25. Hardcore gangster. Wave cap. Tattoos. The works.

TEE

I don't know why ya'll niggas play against me. You know I run this shit.

CREW MEMBER

Just roll the dice, Tee!

Tee BLOWS on the dice. Throws them down...

4, 5, 6. Winner.

The rest of the group GROANS there disdain as they hand Tee all their money wagers.

Tee snatches the bills with authority.

TEE

Headcrack, motherfuckers. Give me my goddamn money.

Tee's Crew Members notice the three friends standing behind Tee.

CREW MEMBER

Yo, Tee.

The Crew Member nods in their direction. Tee turns around. Gives the three a vicious stare down.

CHICO

What's up, Tee?

TEE

What ya'll niggas want?

Chico pulls out a couple of bills from his pocket.

CHICO

Looking to cop some sticky.

Tee eyes all three of them slowly. He stares John down a little longer than the other two.

TEE

Step into my office.

Chico gives a cheesy smile to John and Marlon. Follows Tee towards a chain link fence door near the rear corner of the court.

John and Marlon follow as well.

EXT. TEE'S CAR - DAY

Tee and his gang lead the three down to an old beat up LOWRIDER just outside the basketball court.

Tee places his DICE on the roof of the car. POPS the trunk.

Inside the trunk, he retrieves SEVERAL SHOE BOXES from underneath it.

He opens the shoe boxes which reveal crisp new basketball sneakers. He lifts the shoes out of the boxes revealing...

BAGS OF MARIJUANA. Scores of them.

Tee pulls out one of the bags. Offers it to Chico.

TEE

That's top of the line weed right there. I call that shit Boat. Ain't gonna find nothing like it in The Ville except here.

Chico admires the marijuana bag in front him.

CHICO

Damn. That shit look RIGHT.

Chico hands Tee his money. Takes the bag. He opens it for a split second to inhale the aroma. His face says it's the best shit he's ever smelt in life.

Tee looks at Marlon.

TEE

What about you?

Marlon pulls out some money. Hands it over to Tee.

MARLON

Whatever you gave him. That shit
smell something serious.

Tee hands Marlon another bag of weed. He directs his gaze at John.

TEE

And you?

John shakes his head.

JOHN

Nah, I'm good.

Tee looks at John as if he told him the sky was pink.

TEE

What you say?

JOHN

I don't want nothing.

Tee stands up.

TEE

Excuse me? You interrupt my game
and then want to leave without
buying something?

John's heart starts to POUND. It's getting real bad. Real fast.

JOHN

Yo man, I meant no disrespect. I
don't got no money on me.

CHICO

Hey, Tee. It's cool man.

Tee ignores Chico. He continues his up close and personal walk towards John.

TEE

It's too late for that shit. You
already disrespected me. You
better make up for it.

Suddenly, TWO OF TEE'S CREW MEMBERS grab John from behind.

JOHN

What the fuck? Get the fuck off
me!

Chico and Marlon try to help, but TWO MORE CREW MEMBERS push them up against the fence and hold them there.

Tee walks up to John. Pulls out a GUN. He holds it under John's chin. Ready to blow it off.

TEE

Nigga, you better listen up good.
And I mean real good. You gonna
buy a bag of my shit. And you
better figure out a way you gonna
pay me in the next five seconds or
I'm gonna blow your fucking brains
out right here.

CHICO (O.S.)

Yo! I got the money! Just take it
easy, man!

Tee and John turn to Chico. Chico reaches into his pocket. Pulls out some more cash.

Tee lowers his gun from John's chin. He grabs the money from Chico's hand without even counting. Pockets it.

Tee walks back to his shoe box. Retrieves another bag of weed. He tosses it at John.

The Crew Members release him just in time for him to catch it.

TEE

Thank you for your business. Now
get the fuck off my court. Bitch
ass nigga.

Chico and Marlon are also released. They join John and move to leave the park.

Tee gives them one final glance then picks his DICE up off the roof of the car.

TEE (CONT'D)

Who ready to lose more money?

John storms away from the car. Chico and Marlon hurry up behind him.

CHICO

Yo, John! Wait up! You aight?

JOHN

Fuck you!

John leaves them behind.

INT. COLLEGE BATHROOM STALL - DAY

Tasha sits on the toilet in a public bathroom stall. She holds a PREGNANCY TEST STICK in her hand. Her head is between her legs.

She finally gazes up at the test stick. The result is in...

CLOSE ON PREGNANCY TEST STICK

Positive. Because the "+" says so...

BACK TO TASHA

Tasha covers her mouth with her hand. Drops her head. After a moment, she softly begins to weep.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

John sits on the edge of the roof of the Langston Hughes Project building. A massive PANORAMIC VIEW of Brooklyn surrounds him on all four sides.

The SOUNDS of the city emanate from below. CAR HORNS, CAR ALARMS, INCOHERENT VOICES, etc.

The noise has no effect on John. His attention is focused on the small sketch notebook in his lap. He makes brief quick strokes with a pen onto the page.

CLOSE ON NOTEBOOK

The nearly completed image that John draws is beyond extraordinary. A very intricate and detailed sketch that is a mixture of urban graffiti and caricature art.

BACK TO JOHN

John finishes his latest project. He studies the sketch for a brief moment, wondering if it should get his full satisfaction.

TASHA (O.S.)

There you are.

John looks up to find Tasha staring at him. He quickly closes his notebook.

JOHN

What you doing up here?

TASHA

I stopped by your place, but Jayden said you were up on the roof.

John looks out at the city.

JOHN
You know I like to be alone up
here.

Tasha steps towards John. Takes a seat next to him on the edge of the roof. She stares at him for a brief moment.

He seems uncomfortable.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What?

TASHA
Can I see?

JOHN
No.

Tasha stares even harder into John. John tries to maintain his composure. He finally cracks. He hands her the sketch book.

Tasha smiles. She flips through the notebook.

We get brief glimpses of John's talent. And it's superfluous. The drawings would make any artist jealous.

TASHA
I still can't believe you never
went to school for this.

JOHN
I don't do school no more.

TASHA
You know, one of the professors at
my college--

JOHN
I told you. I'm not going to a
class to draw.

TASHA
I'm not saying that. I'm saying
that he might know some people--

JOHN
Just stop, Tasha. You're wasting
your breath.

Tasha frowns. She closes the sketch book. Places it down in front of her and John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What you want?

Tasha looks away for a moment. She knows the next words she says are going to change both of their lives.

TASHA
John...

She hesitates.

JOHN
Tasha, just spit it out. What you get a bad grade or something? I don't got time for this shit, girl--

TASHA
I'm pregnant.

John FREEZES with surprise.

JOHN
Pregnant?

Tasha lets out a nervous laugh.

TASHA
Yeah.

JOHN
With a baby?

TASHA
Yes, John. With a baby. Our baby.

John looks down at his hands like a little kid does when he has been caught doing something wrong.

TASHA (CONT'D)
Come on, baby. Don't just sit there. Say something.

JOHN
What the hell you want me to say? Huh? You want me to ask you to marry me or something?

Tasha scoots in closer to John. He's clearly upset.

TASHA
Just tell me what you want to do.

Suddenly, FAINT GUNSHOTS RING OUT from below. SCREAMS follow.

John and Tasha both look out at their city.

JOHN
I don't want no baby.

TASHA
Ever?

JOHN
Not here.

Tasha smiles for a split second.

TASHA
If we have a baby, I don't think
I'll be able to finish school. And
I don't want to raise a baby here
either. It wouldn't be fair.

Tasha pauses. Almost as if her next thought is painful.

TASHA (CONT'D)
I think I should get it taken care
of.

John looks back at Tasha.

JOHN
Yeah.

Tasha nods her head.

TASHA
You'll come with me, right?

John GROANS.

JOHN
Oh come on, Tasha.

TASHA
John!

Tasha lets out a little frustration. It startles John.

TASHA (CONT'D)
I want you...no...I need you to
come with me. Please.

John sucks his teeth. Looks away. He finally cracks.

JOHN
Yeah, I'll come with you.

Tasha lets out a SIGH of relief. She holds her hands out for John to hug.

TASHA
Thank you baby.

John wraps his arms around Tasha as they embrace each other with a deep, passionate kiss.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

John and Chico walk along Rockaway Avenue on foot.

JOHN
So where we going, Chico?

CHICO
City Post, my dude.

JOHN
The pawn shop? What the hell you need over there?

CHICO
Chill son. You'll see.

John and Chico reach a street crossing. They stop for oncoming traffic.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Hey yo, Nena told me last night that Tasha's pregnant. Is that shit true?

JOHN
Yeah. That's right.

CHICO
And it's yours?

John gives Chico an evil eye. Holds his hands up in a mock fighting stance.

JOHN
Don't disrespect.

Chico laughs as the two of them cross the street.

CHICO
I'm just clowning you, man. You know me. So what you gonna do? She gonna keep it?

JOHN
Hell nah. She taking care of it
this weekend.

CHICO
Damn. Just like that?

JOHN
Just like that.

INT. CITY POST PAWN SHOP - DAY

John and Chico enter the very shady looking establishment. A long counter with a cage spread across the top greets them.

LENNY, the pawnbroker, studies the two entering his shop with a watchful eye.

Chico steps up to the counter.

CHICO
What's up, Lenny?

LENNY
You here again?

CHICO
You still got it right?

LENNY
Yeah.

CHICO
Then let me see it. Damn.

Lenny points a meaty pointer finger at Chico from behind the cage.

LENNY
I'm not gonna keep doing this shit.
If you want it, you buy it. This
ain't fucking Wal-Mart. I don't do
window shopping.

CHICO
Just get the fucking ring, boss.

Lenny shakes his head. Disappears into the back.

John gives Chico a quizzical look.

JOHN
Ring?

Chico nods his head with a big ass smile.

Lenny returns with one of his fists clenched. As if he's holding something.

He opens his palm. Drops the hidden object onto the counter in front of him.

A SHINY ENGAGEMENT RING lands on the counter. Chico eyes it with wonder.

CHICO
That's the shit right there...

JOHN
Is that an engagement ring?

CHICO
You know it.

JOHN
Who you gonna give that to?

CHICO
Nena, fool!

Chico looks up at Lenny.

CHICO (CONT'D)
How much?

LENNY
You know how much. You come in here every goddamn day and ask that same question.

CHICO
I asked you how much.

Lenny shakes his head. He's not going to win this argument.

LENNY
350.

JOHN
Damn.

CHICO
Come on man. It's been here this long and it's still the same price?

LENNY
You got the money or not?

CHICO
Not right now.

LENNY
Then get the fuck out of my shop.

Lenny picks up the ring. Moves towards the back again.

LENNY (CONT'D)
And don't come back here unless you
got the money.

Lenny disappears into the back again.

Chico flips him the middle finger.

CHICO
Right here, puto.

JOHN
So you really gonna ask Nena to
marry you?

Chico nods his head confidently.

CHICO
No question. I love that girl. I
would have done it sooner but I
wanted to make sure I give her
something nice when I do it.

John's face fills with doubt.

JOHN
How you gonna do that? You ain't
got no job or a place to live.
Matter of fact, how you gonna pay
for the ring?

CHICO
I'm doing a little stuff on the
side for Jesus.

JOHN
Your cousin? Ain't he a Latin
King?

CHICO
So what? Damn man. Why you
shitting on my dream all of a
sudden?

JOHN
I'm just saying--

CHICO

Nah. You don't need to say anything, dog. That shit's minor details. We'll figure it all out. The only thing I care about is making her my wife. Entiende?

JOHN

Huh?

CHICO

Understand, nigga?

John narrows his eyes.

JOHN

You know you ain't supposed to say that word.

CHICO

We all family, son. What you go through, I go through.

Chico holds out his hand for John to slap. John reluctantly does with a small smirk on his face.

JOHN

Nigga please.

INT. CORNER STORE - DAY

The Korean Shopkeeper takes advantage of his empty store by reading a book at his register counter.

EXT. CORNER STORE - DAY

Tee and his crew approach the entrance door from both sides. They have BLACK BANDANAS around their necks, Old West bandit style.

Tee reaches underneath his shirt. Pulls out a HANDGUN. His crew mates do the same.

TEE

Ya'll ready to do this?

His Crew Members all nod their heads "yes".

Tee pulls his Bandana over his face, leaving only his eyes visible. His gang follows suit.

Tee makes one last scan of the area to make sure no one is looking.

It's clear.

Tee turns back to the front door.

INT. CORNER STORE - DAY

The front door of the store SLAMS OPEN. The Korean Shopkeeper jumps at the noise and finds...

Tee and his Crew storming into the store, guns pointed at right him.

TEE
Open the fucking cash register!

KOREAN SHOPKEEPER
What is this?

CREW MEMBER
Are you deaf, old man? He said
open the fucking register! Now!

Surprisingly, the Korean Shopkeeper doesn't move.

KOREAN SHOPKEEPER
Oh no! Not this again!

UNDERNEATH THE COUNTER

The Korean Shopkeeper reaches under where a HANDGUN rests in a holster attached to the counter.

BACK TO SCENE

Tee gets up close and personal with the Korean Shopkeeper. He jabs the barrel of his gun at the Shopkeeper's nose.

TEE
You think I'm fucking playing with
you? I'll waste your chinaman ass
right here! Open the fucking
register and hand over that money!

The Korean Shopkeeper keeps one hand low and out of sight.

KOREAN SHOPKEEPER
Okay! You want money? Here! Take
money!

The Korean Shopkeeper uses his free hand open up the register.

The cash tray spits out. The Korean Shopkeeper reaches in. Scoops out all of the bills.

TEE
Hurry the fuck up!

The Korean Shopkeeper gets the last of the bills out. Drops it into a messy heap on the counter.

KOREAN SHOPKEEPER
Go on! Take money! Take it!

Tee turns to one of his Crew Members.

TEE
Scoop that shit up.

The Crew Member nods his head. Moves to collect the bills on the counter.

TEE (CONT'D)
No funny moves old man.

The Korean Shopkeeper just stares at them. Waiting for his chance to shoot someone.

The Crew Member slowly starts scooping the money into a plastic bag.

TEE (CONT'D)
Come on! What's taking so long?

Tee loses his patience. He takes his gaze off of the Korean Shopkeeper. Starts helping his Crew Member gather the money.

This is it...

The Korean Shopkeeper YANKS the gun from its holster. Points it at Tee...

TEE (CONT'D)
Oh shit!

KOREAN SHOPKEEPER
Fuck you!

The Korean Shopkeeper pulls the trigger...

CLICK!

Safety is still on...

The Korean Shopkeeper's eyes go wide with surprise.

And that's the last thing he sees.

Tee and his Crew raise their guns. OPEN FIRE on the Korean Shopkeeper. They light him up with scores of bullets. Emptying all of their clips into him.

The Korean Shopkeeper spasms backwards. CRASHES into his liquor cabinet behind him. He slides to the ground, dead as a door nail, in a pool of his own blood.

SCREAMING and POLICE SIRENS emanate from outside the shop.

TEE

Get the fuck out! Go!

Tee and his Crew Mates take as much money from the counter as quickly as they can. They turn on their heels, and get the hell out of dodge.

EXT. CORNER STORE - DAY

Tee and his Crewmates dash out of the corner store.

A POLICE CAR comes to a stop in front of the corner store. Two NYPD POLICE OFFICERS hop out of the car.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #1

Freeze!

Tee spins on his heel. Dashes in the opposite direction of his crew.

NYPD Police Officer #1 waves in the direction of Tee's Crew.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #1 (CONT'D)

You go after them. I got him!

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #2 nods his head. Heads after Tee's Crew.

NYPD Police Officer #1 unholsters his gun and runs after Tee.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Tee runs at full tilt down Rockaway Avenue. NYPD Police Officer #1 hot on his heels.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #1

Stop!

An alley is just up ahead. Tee rounds around the corner.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Tee rounds into the alley. A TEN FOOT HIGH CHAIN FENCE promptly greets him. It's climbable, but there isn't enough time. Dead end.

TEE

Shit!

NYPD Police Officer #1's FOOTSTEPS come up fast from Rockaway Avenue...

Tee turns around. PULLS BACK the chamber on his handgun.

TEE (CONT'D)

Fucking pigs.

Tee points his gun in the direction of the corner of the alleyway. After a beat...

NYPD Police Officer #1 rounds the corner. Right into Tee's aim.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #1

Oh shit!

NYPD Police Officer #1 moves for his gun. But he's too slow. Tee FIRES. Again. And again.

Bullets pass through the police officer's body at multiple points. Midsection. Legs. Head.

NYPD Police Officer #1 falls to the ground. Dead.

Tee CONTINUES FIRING at his dead body. His gun finally CLICKS dry.

Tee SPITS on the officer's body. Starts climbing over the fence.

The POLICE SIRENS continue to sound throughout the city.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

John stands outside the front entrance of the project with his hands in his pockets. He appears to be waiting for someone.

The front entrance door opens. Tasha exits the building. She walks with her hands across her stomach, like she has a stomach ache.

John springs up towards her.

JOHN
You alright?

Tasha nods her head absently.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You sure?

Tasha nods her head more sternly.

TASHA
Yeah. I'm ready.

JOHN
Let's do it.

John turns and Tasha follows. She wraps both of her arms around John's arm. Leans her head against his shoulder.

He's her rock and she's not afraid to show it.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Tasha and John walk along the street, still in the same holding position they have been in.

The street seems eerily calm for Brooklyn, however.

JOHN
Damn. Where everybody at?

Tasha walks with her head down. Ignores John's question.

TASHA
You think it's gonna hurt?

JOHN
Probably not. A lot of people do it right? It can't be that bad.

Tasha clutches onto John even tighter.

TASHA
Yeah your right.

John and Tasha reach the subway stairwell leading to the Rockaway Ave train stop.

Just as they are about to descend...

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3 (O.S.)
Hold it right there.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3 steps out of the stairwell with his hand up, stopping John and Tasha in their tracks.

JOHN
What's going on?

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
Where you two going?

JOHN
What's it to you?

The Police Officer places his hand closer to his gun on his belt.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
I asked you a question. I suggest you answer it.

JOHN
I suggest you mind your own damn business, pig.

Tasha touches John on the shoulder.

TASHA
John...

Tasha turns to the Police Officer.

TASHA (CONT'D)
What's the problem, officer?

The Police Officer eases up a bit but keeps a close eye on John.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
There's was a shooting at the corner store on Rockaway. An officer was killed.

TASHA
Oh my God.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
Perps are still out there. The whole Brownsville section is on lockdown until we locate them. No one gets in or out.

TASHA
But I have a doctor's appointment, Officer.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
I'm sorry.

John steps forward.

JOHN
I don't think you heard her. She
got a doctor's appointment. Now
let us go.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
No one leaves. No exceptions.

JOHN
This some bullshit. You know damn
well you ain't gonna find them.

The Police Officer inches his hand towards his gun again.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
I don't know. You looking kind of
suspicious.

TASHA
John, stop it!

Tasha pulls John away from the subway stairwell.

JOHN
Who the fuck you think you are?
You can't shut down New York!

TASHA
John, let's go!

Tasha and John disappear around a corner.

The Police Officer shakes his head with a smile.

NYPD POLICE OFFICER #3
Fucking thug punk.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE, FURTHER DOWN - DAY

John storms down the street hot. Tasha follows closely
behind.

JOHN
Punk ass pig.

TASHA
What the hell is your problem?

John whirls around.

JOHN
What you taking his side for?

TASHA
I'm not! I'm just asking what your
problem is, John!

John takes a deep breath. Collects himself.

JOHN
You're right. I'm sorry. I'm just
a little crazy right now.

Tasha looks away. Crosses her arms.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

John walks over to Tasha. Moves to wrap his arms around her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We can just go another day, right?

Tasha wriggles free from his grasp.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Tasha...

TASHA
I think this happened for a reason.

JOHN
What you talking about?

TASHA
I think something's telling me not
to go through with this.

John rolls his eyes. Lets out a frustrated breath.

JOHN
Oh come on.

TASHA
What?!

JOHN
Don't start this karma bullshit
again.

Tasha explodes with rage.

TASHA

It's not bullshit! This is a baby
we are talking about! A real
person!

JOHN

You think I don't know that? But I
don't want no kid--

TASHA

Stop right there, John. Just stop.
It ain't just about you no more.
It's us now.

Tasha looks away. Her eyes start filling with water.

TASHA (CONT'D)

I'm having this baby.

JOHN

What?

TASHA

You heard me. I want this baby.
And I will not get rid of it.

JOHN

How am I supposed to take care of a
kid?! In the projects no less?

Tasha looks John straight in the eye.

TASHA

You better figure it out. And
soon. Because this baby is coming.
Whether you like it or not.

Tasha turns on her heel. Leaves John alone on the sidewalk.

John turns. Punches the air around him in rage.

JOHN

Fuck!

INT. SHOWER - DAY

John stands under the weak jet stream of water spitting out
of the spout in an old and decrepit looking shower.

He reaches over to a WINDOWSILL on an open window in the
shower. Picks up a newly lit MARIJUANA JOINT.

John studies it for a bit. He's never seen one of these in
his own hand before.

John shrugs. Takes a hit from the joint. Surprisingly, he doesn't cough or tear up. He takes another toke for good measure.

He pinches the bridge of his nose with his fingers, visualizing his stress.

Suddenly, the BATHROOM DOOR BURSTS OPEN.

AMY (O.S.)

John!

John reacts quickly. He grabs the still burning roach. TOSSES it out the window. He fans the smoke as much as he can outside the window.

AMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You hear me?

JOHN

What?

AMY (O.S.)

What the hell is this going around that you got some girl pregnant?

John sighs. He doesn't have the energy for this.

AMY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well? Is it true? Answer me!

John pulls the shower curtain aside enough for his head to pop out. Meets his mother's Medusa-like gaze.

AMY (CONT'D)

What the hell is wrong with you? You just going around knocking up random sluts in your free time, now?

JOHN

Tasha ain't no slut! She's my girlfriend!

AMY

Oh sure. Like any girl in her right mind would want your lazy ass as her man. Give me a break.

JOHN

I don't got time for this bullshit.

John moves the shower curtain back. Amy rips it back open.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What you doing?!

AMY
You don't got time?! What the fuck
are you doing that's more important
than your child?! Are you serious?

John just stares at Amy. Not sure if he should fight back or
just ride it out.

AMY (CONT'D)
I don't know where I went wrong
with you, Jonathan, but it stops
now. I will not have my son be
some deadbeat that doesn't take
care of his child.

JOHN
What makes you think I won't
provide for my child?!

AMY
I don't think that. Because I'm
going to make damn sure you do
provide and be a father for your
child. I won't let you continue
that cycle your father started.
You're going to find a job and you
are going to be there for this
Tasha and your baby. And it starts
now. Don't come back to this
apartment until you have a job.

Amy slides the curtain shut again.

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. UTICA AVE - DAY

John walks along Utica Avenue, the job market of Brownsville,
looking for places to try his luck at finding a job.

INT. TASHA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Tasha sits at a desk in her bedroom. A homework assignment
in front of her. She taps her notebook with her pen.

Mind is wandering elsewhere.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - DAY

John is turned away from a PIZZA PARLOR by a very slimy looking Italian owner.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Chico sits in the middle of a park with several other Hispanic men and women playing a game of Dominoes. Nena gives him a back massage as he plays.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

John is turned away yet again. This time by a Fast Food Manager.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

Marlon leans up against a wall of the Langston Hughes Project. He confers with another ATTRACTIVE FEMALE. After a few moments, he leans in and kisses her.

EXT. BROWNSVILLE - DAY

John walks through Brownsville, a look of dejection forever plastered on his face. He passes a LOCAL NEWSPAPER BUILDING. The Help Wanted Ad catches his attention.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Tee and his Gang rough up a BLACK TEEN in an alley. A severe beatdown is taking place.

Tee and his crew hold off for a moment.

The Black Teen reaches into his pocket. Hands Tee a roll of money through bloody knuckles.

Tee snatches the money. Gives the Black Teen one last kick in the stomach.

INT. BROWNSVILLE TIMES - DAY

John and a NEWSPAPER SUPERVISOR shake hands. John smiles with a certain air of accomplishment about himself.

END MONTAGE

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

John strolls up to one of the many doors in the hallway. He takes a deep breath. KNOCKS on it.

After a beat, the door opens...

An older woman, 50's, answers the door.

JOHN
Is Tasha here?

TASHA (O.S.)
Who is it, Grandma?

TASHA'S GRANDMOTHER turns back inside the apartment towards Tasha's voice.

TASHA'S GRANDMOTHER
Some boy looking for you.

Tasha appears behind her Grandmother. Her and John share a long awkward stare down.

TASHA
Thank you, Grandma. I'll be just a minute.

Tasha's Grandmother gives John one final stare down, then moves back inside the apartment.

JOHN
Hi.

TASHA
Hi.

Silence.

TASHA (CONT'D)
Is there something you came to tell me?

John looks down at his hands in that child-like way again.

JOHN
I got myself a job today.

Tasha's face BRIGHTENS with happiness.

TASHA
What? Really?

John smiles a bit.

JOHN

Yeah.

Tasha scoops John up with a tight hug.

TASHA

Oh my God, baby. That's great!
Where are you working at?

JOHN

For some local newspaper. I ride
in the back of one of their trucks
and toss the papers out.

TASHA

I'm so proud of you, John.

JOHN

They ain't paying me a lot, though.

TASHA

But it's something.

JOHN

Yeah.

Another awkward pause.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Listen. About the other day.

TASHA

Don't worry about it, baby.

JOHN

Nah, that's the thing. I do need
to worry about it. I know I was
acting a fool a little, but I'm
just not ready for all this.

TASHA

Me neither, John. But we can get
ready for it together.

John nods his head.

JOHN

I'ma do everything I have to do,
Tasha. My father bounced on my Mom
before I was even born. I'm not
about to do that to my kid. I'm
gonna be there. For both of you.

Tasha smiles. Gives John a kiss.

TASHA
I love you, John.

JOHN
I know.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

An ALARM CLOCK goes off on John's nightstand. John springs awake, disoriented. It's been a while since he's heard the damn thing.

John turns off the alarm. Climbs out of bed.

He finds his sketch notebook lying on the nightstand. He collects it. Moves to pick up some clothes off of the floor.

INT. HARRISON APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John strides through the living room in a groggy stupor. As he crosses the room, he notices Jayden awake and watching TV.

JOHN
What you doing up so early?

Jayden shrugs her shoulders.

JAYDEN
What are YOU doing up so early?

JOHN
I'm going to work.

JAYDEN
Work? You have a job?

JOHN
Why you saying it like that?

JAYDEN
I dunno. It just sounds weird that you have a job.

John moves to exit the apartment.

JOHN
Whatever.

JAYDEN
Mommy said you're having a baby.

John stops in his tracks.

JOHN
Yeah I am.

JAYDEN
Are you scared?

JOHN
Scared? Why would I be scared?

JAYDEN
Because having a baby is scary.

JOHN
Nah, I'm not scared.

JAYDEN
Oh. Well if you're having a baby
does that make me an aunt?

JOHN
I guess.

JAYDEN
Cool! Can I hold the baby when
it's born?

John can't help but smile at Jayden's optimism.

JOHN
Why not?

Jayden turns back to her cartoons.

JAYDEN
Auntie Jayden.

Jayden giggles to herself.

John shakes his head with a smile. Exits the apartment.

EXT. BROWNSVILLE - NIGHT

A NEWSPAPER DELIVERY TRUCK cruises through the sleepy streets
of Brownsville.

INT. NEWSPAPER DELIVERY TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

John sits on a stack of newspapers in the back of the truck.
His sketch notebook is open on his lap as he doodles in it.

A rectangular piece of the back wall in the truck slides
open. The DRIVER looks back into the cargo area.

DRIVER
You're up, kid.

John places his sketch notebook down. Reaches for a stack of newspapers.

He slides the back door up all the way open. Starts TOSSING out the bundles of newspapers onto the sidewalk on both sides outside of the truck.

QUICK IMAGES

* John jumping out of the now stopped truck and handing several bundles of newspapers to a deli owner.

* John tossing the bundles randomly out of the back of the moving truck.

* John taking a drink from a bottle of water. He looks parched.

* John dumping off even more stacks of newspapers at a NEWSPAPER STAND on the side of the street.

* John holding the bottle of water above his mouth, trying to squeeze ever drop left from it. But it's empty.

END QUICK IMAGES

EXT. BROWNSVILLE TIMES - DAY

The brand new day's sun shines brightly down onto the street. The Newspaper truck comes to a stop back at its base.

John hops out of the back of the truck, drenched in sweat, and tired as hell.

The Driver drops out of the front. Nods his head in John's direction.

DRIVER
Not bad for your first day, kid.
See you tomorrow.

John holds up his hand in acknowledgement, but clearly wishes he was somewhere else right now.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John plops down on to his bed, exhausted. He lets out a long exaggerated sigh.

JOHN

Damn.

And with that, John closes his eyes and falls asleep immediately.

LATER

KNOCKING comes from outside John's bedroom. His eyes open slowly.

INT. HARRISON APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

John opens the front door. Chico and Marlon greet him on the side.

CHICO

What's go--

Chico notices John's lack of enthusiasm.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Goddamn man? What's with you, son?

John robs his eyes.

JOHN

Nothing man.

CHICO

Yo we bout to hit the court. See if we can get some burn. You down?

JOHN

Nah man. Ya'll go on ahead. I'm tired as fuck.

Marlon cocks his head to side with interest at John's condition.

MARLON

You go partying without us last night or something? Negro, don't be holding out on a brother.

JOHN

Nah. I had work.

Marlon and Chico give themselves a "What did he just say?" look.

MARLON & CHICO

Work?

CHICO

Nigga, since when did you have a job?

JOHN

Just got it.

MARLON

What you need a job for? So you can buy some new pencils for your sketching?

Marlon laughs.

JOHN

Fuck you, Marlon.

Chico taps Marlon on the chest.

CHICO

Nah man. John got a baby on the way. So he got to be a provider.

Chico squeezes John's shoulder encouragingly.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Damn Tasha made you get a job already? She got your shit on lockdown, huh?

John brushes Chico's hand away from his shoulder.

JOHN

Ain't nobody got me on lockdown. I got the job for me. And that's all ya'll nosey motherfuckers need to know. Now bounce so I can get my sleep on.

Chico holds out his hand for John to shake. They perform their routine handshake again.

CHICO

Aight, son. Go get that paper for daddy. I'll be back for my cut. Work them streets for me.

John smiles. Gives Chico the middle finger.

Marlon and John perform their handshake as well.

MARLON

Can I borrow 10 bucks?

John points to his crotch.

JOHN

It's right down there. You might
have to reach around though.

Marlon laughs. Leaves with Chico. John closes the door
behind them.

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Nena and Tasha sit, with bookbags on their laps, in a crowded
subway car as it zooms through a tunnel.

NENA

Oh my God, so John really got a
job?

Tasha nods with pride.

TASHA

Yeah. He's doing what he has to.
He's really making an effort to
make this work.

NENA

That's so cute. Now if only Chico
would go out and get a job. All he
does is hang out with that moreno,
Marlon now. He's such a bad
influence on my Chico. Smoking and
drinking and all that other stupid
shit.

Nena scoots in closer to Tasha with a sly grin on her face.

NENA (CONT'D)

So what you think you having, Tash?
A boy or a girl?

Tasha shrugs.

TASHA

I don't know. It don't matter. As
long as the baby is okay.

Nena laughs.

NENA

Girl you sound like one of them
white women on those baby reality
shows.

Nena changes her voice to a "high pitched white person"
voice.

NENA (CONT'D)

"I just hope the baby is healthy!
But I'm just gonna lay on my back
and make another one after this one
is born anyway! So it doesn't
matter!"

Tasha laughs.

TASHA

Nena, you stupid. I'm serious
though. It's gonna be hard as it
is raising a baby in Hughes. I
don't need a sick baby too.

Nena nods her head with understanding.

NENA

You know you want a boy.

Tasha smiles.

NENA (CONT'D)

Me and Chico are gonna have 3 boys
and 3 girls.

TASHA

Really? And Chico knows that?

NENA

No. But that's what I want.

Nena leans in close to Tasha.

NENA (CONT'D)

And what Nena wants, Nena gets?
Si, mami?

Tasha laughs.

TASHA

Yes she does.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Nena and Tasha walk past the asphalt basketball court. Tee
and his crew are playing their domino game in the corner of
the court.

TASHA

Nena, we shouldn't have went this
way.

NENA

It's the quickest way. Besides, I don't feel like walking 4 blocks just to get home. Just don't bring attention to us.

Tee wins another game of Cee-lo. He raises his arms in victory.

He notices Nena and Tasha walking through the court. He licks his lips with interest. Makes his move.

Tasha notices.

TASHA

Damn.

TEE

Hey yo!

Tasha and Nena pick up the pace. Tee's crew members join him on their pursuit of the two girls.

TEE (CONT'D)

Wait up, baby.

Tee intercepts Nena and Tasha's path. Stands with dominance in front of them.

Tasha and Nena stop. An annoyed look in their eyes.

TEE (CONT'D)

Where you going in such a hurry?

TASHA

Home.

NENA

Yeah. Let's us pass.

TEE

How can I let you two fine ass bitches go without saying something?

Tasha looks into Tee's eyes with an anger filled gaze.

TASHA

Don't call us that.

TEE

What? Bitches? Then what are ya'll?

NENA

We're WOMEN, pendejo! Not like you would know what a real one was anyway, with all those ho's you chase after like horny ass dogs.

Tee laughs.

TEE

Women?

The rest of Tee's crew laughs as well.

TEE (CONT'D)

What since ya'll go to school that makes ya'll women?

Tee takes Tasha's bookbag from her hands.

TASHA

Hey!

NENA

Give it back!

Tee opens up the bag. He fishes out the textbooks inside. Tosses them onto the ground.

TEE

What's all this shit for?

TASHA

Stop it!

Tee throws out the final textbook. Drops the empty book bag to the ground.

Tasha falls to her knees. Collects her textbooks off of the asphalt ground.

TEE

Why go through all that? I got money. That's what you going to school for, right? You roll with me, I make it rain baby. Like a baller. You ain't ever got to step inside a classroom again.

Nena gets up into Tee's face.

NENA

You're an ASSHOLE! You ain't got shit on my man or hers.

Tee smirks.

TEE

What's your man got that I don't?
Huh? I run this place, ma.

NENA

They got US, papi! Something you
won't EVER have.

Nena helps Tasha to her feet.

NENA (CONT'D)

Come on, Tash. Let's get out of
here.

Tasha and Nena hurry out of the basketball court. Tee and
his crew laugh behind them.

Nena wraps her arm around Tasha's shoulders.

NENA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Tasha doesn't respond. Her anger is on overload.

NENA (CONT'D)

Oh my God, when I tell Chico about
this, he's gonna kick his ass so
bad--

TASHA

No.

NENA

What? What do you mean no?

TASHA

Don't say anything.

NENA

But Tasha, he threw your books--

TASHA

I said don't say anything! I don't
want any drama. Just let it go.

NENA

I don't know--

Tasha stops. Grabs Nena's shoulders.

TASHA

Promise me you won't say anything!

NENA

Okay. Fine. I promise.

Tasha lets go of Nena. Storms ahead.

Nena looks out after her. A confused look on her face.

INT. TASHA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tasha sits on John's lap at her desk in her room. Her attention is focused on her written assignment in front her. Her pen moves a mile a minute. Words endlessly spilling onto the page.

John stares at her for a beat. Weary of her behavior.

JOHN

Tasha...

Tasha doesn't respond. Her pen PRESSES harder onto the page.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Baby...

Tasha's pen moves FURIOUSLY FAST. Suddenly it TEARS through paper. Inks the wooden desk below it.

Tasha THROWS the pen down at the desk in anger.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Damn, Tasha! What's up with you today?

Tasha closes her eyes. She pinches her nose with both of her hands. Calms down a bit.

TASHA

I'm sorry.

JOHN

You ain't say a word since I came over. What's wrong?

TASHA

It just gets to me sometimes.

JOHN

What? Being pregnant?

Tasha laughs.

TASHA

No. Brownsville.

JOHN

Oh.

TASHA

I just hate the fact that our baby is gonna have to grow up here. It's just not fair. And I hate myself for not being able to change that.

JOHN

You know you ain't gotta worry about anything. I won't let anything happen to either one of you.

TASHA

I don't want to talk about it.

Tasha leans back onto John's chest.

JOHN

Then what you want to talk about? Say something. I hate when you all quiet like this.

A smile creeps up on Tasha's face.

TASHA

What do you want the baby's name to be?

JOHN

I don't know. John would be good. I could call him Junior.

Tasha plants a small kiss on John's jaw.

TASHA

What about for a girl?

John shrugs.

JOHN

I don't care. It's gonna be a boy. It won't matter.

Tasha softly clutches John's chin in one of her hands.

TASHA

It could be a girl. And you're going to love her just as much as if she were a boy.

Tasha and John's eyes meet.

JOHN

Shit, I will. You know that.

Tasha smiles again. She gives John a kiss on the lips.

TASHA
I love you, John.

JOHN
I know.

Tasha frowns.

TASHA
I want to hear you say it.

JOHN
Why?

TASHA
Because. I want to make sure you do.

JOHN
But you know I do. Why I got to say it?

TASHA
Because I want you to.

John hesitates. Like the phrase is actually painful for him to say.

JOHN
Aight, fine. I...love...you.

Tasha gives John another kiss on the lips. Only this time they don't stop there.

DISSOLVE TO:

BED

John and Tasha slowly descend on to her bed. Wrapped in each other's arms.

And this isn't just some late night booty call between teenage boyfriend and girlfriend...

This is love making between two people totally in love with one another...

Bodies in sync with each other's every movement...

Soft sensual kisses from head to toe...

Simultaneous climax...

The type of sex where everything can only go downhill from here...

EXT. BROWNSVILLE - DAWN

A new day is just beginning over Brownsville.

EXT. BROWNSVILLE TIMES - DAWN

John walks, among the other delivery people, towards one of the newspaper trucks with a little bounce in his step. He just got laid, can you blame him?

Right before John climbs into the back of one of the trucks, the DRIVER stops him mid-jump.

DRIVER

Yo. Supervisor wants to see you.

John's face fills with confusion.

JOHN

Now?

The Driver nods. Another DELIVERY THROWER, takes John's spot in the back of the truck.

John shrugs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Aight.

John turns back towards the building.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The SUPERVISOR flips through some paperwork on his desk.

Someone KNOCKS at the door.

SUPERVISOR

Come in.

John enters the office.

The Supervisor looks up and meets John's gaze. He just stares at him blankly.

JOHN

You wanted to see me?

SUPERVISOR

Yeah.

A beat of SILENCE. John lifts both hands up with a "And?" gesture.

JOHN

And?

The Supervisor stops flipping through his paperwork. He slowly sifts through the stack of papers. As if looking for a particular page.

SUPERVISOR

Is there anything you want to tell me?

John is beyond confused.

JOHN

Is this some kind of test or something?

The Supervisor chuckles to himself.

SUPERVISOR

Test? I hope not. You're not very good at those.

JOHN

What's that supposed to mean?

The Supervisor finds the page he's looking for. He tosses it in front of him for John to look at.

SUPERVISOR

Last chance for a self-referral.

JOHN

I don't know what hell you're talking about.

John steps forward and picks up the page. His eyes at first don't register what is printed on the page.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What is this?

SUPERVISOR

You failed your preliminary drug test from when I first hired you.

JOHN

That's impossible.

SUPERVISOR
Paper says it is possible.

JOHN
But I don't do that shit--

It comes back to John instantaneously.

INT. SHOWER - FLASHBACK

John smoking a joint in the shower. He barely takes one hit.

Amy barges into the bathroom. He tosses it out of the window.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - PRESENT

John nearly tears the paper in half with his anger grip on the page.

The Supervisor just shakes his head.

SUPERVISOR
You're a funny guy. You come into my office. Tell me this sob story about how you need a job to take care of your family. That you are straight edge kid that's just in a bad situation. But you're trying to get out of it.

The Supervisor leans back in his chair.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
But you're just another drug using thug.

Something in John is ready to burst. Pent up anger? Stress?

JOHN
Man, you don't know anything about me.

SUPERVISOR
I know one thing. You don't work for this company anymore.

John's eyes BULGE from his face.

JOHN
What? You can't do that! I need this job!

SUPERVISOR

Why so you can have more money for more dime bags? I don't run my business with drug users.

JOHN

Look, I'm sorry. It was only one time. It won't happen again.

SUPERVISOR

Too late. Ain't gonna happen.

John's anger is ready to explode from within.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

But look at it this way. Now you can spend all day smoking your dope and being a good for nothing with your "homies".

The Supervisor air quotes the word "homies".

That's does it for John.

JOHN

Man, FUCK YOU! You have no fucking idea what I'm going through! Don't fucking judge me!

SUPERVISOR

Ah, so there's the thug I actually hired.

John steps towards the Supervisor. An evil demeanor in his eyes.

JOHN

You better shut your fucking mouth before I do it for you!

The Supervisor stands up.

SUPERVISOR

Yeah? You want to go? You think you're man enough?

The Supervisor motions for John to bring it.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

Come on, you little punk. Let's go.

John lunges forward. But just as he does...

TWO NEWSPAPER EDITORS enter the office. They grab John before he can pounce on the Supervisor.

JOHN

Get the fuck off me! I'ma kill this motherfucker!

SUPERVISOR

Get him out of my fucking office before I ring his skinny little neck.

The Two Newspaper Editors lead John towards the door.

John wriggles free from his captors.

JOHN

Let me go. I'm out of here.

Just before he leaves the office, John PUNCHES a stack of newspapers off a table, scattering them all across the floor.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

Chico and Marlon sit behind the apartment building. Blunts in hand. Laughing their asses off. High as kites.

Chico fiddles with the ENGAGEMENT RING from the pawn shop in his hand.

MARLON

Yo man. I can't believe you gonna actually go through with it. You're a fool.

CHICO

Fool? What you talking about? Not too many females out there like Nena. I HAVE to put her on lock.

Marlon takes a hit from the blunt. He passes it to Chico. They frequently pass it between one another.

MARLON

See that's your problem, my dude. You have this mindset that Nena is the only bitch on this goddamn planet.

CHICO

You don't think Nena is a good girl? And watch your words, son. Nena ain't no bitch.

MARLON

I ain't say all that. Nena's a real good bit...I mean girl. But what I am saying is she's not the only one. And you wifing her up ain't gonna change that.

Chico laughs.

CHICO

So then what's your strategy when it comes to females, nigga?

Marlon takes a long, deep hit. He coughs a couple of times.

MARLON

Check it. From what I've seen, and I've seen a lot, bitches don't want you to be loyal to just them.

Chico laughs again.

CHICO

The fuck are you talking about, Marlon?

MARLON

Can I finish? Can I finish? Anyway, if you think about it, no bitch wants to be with a dude that other bitches don't want. Am I right?

CHICO

Yeah. I can see that. What's that got to do with cheating?

MARLON

CAN I FINISH? So if a bitch catches you cheating on her with another bitch, yeah she gonna be a little salty, but deep down inside she telling herself...

(high pitched voice)

"Damn I got me a good nigga. Other bitches can't keep they hands off him and he all mine."

(normal voice)

That's why I keep my ho's in the know about my extra curricular activities. That shit lets them know they dealing with a prize nigga. And they need to keep on they toes or they gonna lose me.

(MORE)

MARLON (CONT'D)
Shit works every time. Not
sometimes. EVERY time.

Chico stares at Marlon for a minute. He looks back at the blunt he's smoking.

CHICO
Are we smoking the same shit?
'Cause you are fucking OUT THERE
son.

Chico and Marlon burst into uncontrollable laughter.

John appears from around the building. Chico notices him first.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Oh shit! Look what the
motherfucking cat dragged in.

Marlon turns.

MARLON
I thought you were working?

JOHN
Man, fuck that job. I don't need
that shit. I don't need to do any
of this shit.

Chico holds out the blunt for John.

CHICO
You ready to get your high on, son?

John stares at the blunt for a beat. It doesn't take long.

JOHN
Pass that shit.

CHICO
My son growing up!

Chico hands John the blunt. John takes a hit. He COUGHS.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Still wet behind the ears. My baby
boy still got some work to do to
get like daddy.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Nena and Tasha walk through the bottom floor corridor of the Langston Hughes Project building. Both with their backpacks.

Tasha is unusually happy.

NENA

What you so giddy for this morning?

Tasha shrugs. Still grinning.

NENA (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. Did you get some
dick last night?

Tasha playfully slaps Nena's shoulder.

TASHA

Nena!

NENA

You did, didn't you? Girl, don't
lie to me.

TASHA

That is none of your business. And
you have to stop talking to me like
that. I'm going to be someone's
mother.

Nena shakes her head.

NENA

That's gross. Having sex while
you're pregnant.

TASHA

Nena--

Suddenly, a CRACKHEAD jumps in front of Tasha and Nena, hand
tapping his inner elbow. Blocking them from the front
entrance.

CRACKHEAD

Ya'll ladies got some money for a
poor old man?

TASHA

Eww.

NENA

Leave us alone.

The Crackhead doesn't budge.

CRACKHEAD

Come on. Anything will do.

Nena grabs Tasha's arm. Leads her away from the front entrance.

NENA

Let's go out the back, Tasha.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

John is now just as high as Chico and Marlon. He takes occasional puffs from the joint in between blowing smoke from his mouth.

JOHN

I'm done with this nine to five shit, man. I'm done.

CHICO

What you mean you done? How you gonna take care of Tasha and your kid?

JOHN

Nah. You ain't hearing me, my nigga. I'm done. With all of it. Ain't no law says I have to take care of that kid.

MARLON

Uh, yeah there is. It's called child support.

JOHN

That's only if you got a job. If I don't work, what they gonna take from me?

Marlon and Chico shrug.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I ain't ask for this fucking kid. She can't just plant this shit on me. She still doing what she always been doing. Why I got to be the one that has to take care of everything? I'm done.

TASHA (O.S.)

What?

John and his two friends spin around. Tasha and Nena stand behind them in silence.

Nena stares at Tasha, as if she's afraid of what she's going to say next.

Tasha just stares coldly at John.

JOHN

Tasha...

Tasha storms past John, brushing his shoulder briskly as she does.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Tasha, wait.

John follows her around the corner.

Chico and Marlon try to contain their laughter. Nena notices. She slaps Chico's shoulder.

CHICO

Ow, baby. What you hit me for?

NENA

Stop it.

Nena strides after John and Tasha.

Chico laughs.

CHICO

John in some trouble.

Chico then looks down at the ring in his palm.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Oh, shit. Damn it, Nena!

OTHER SIDE OF BUILDING

Tasha continues her brisk walk around the side of the apartment building. John tails close behind.

JOHN

Hold up girl, damn.

Tasha doesn't. John has enough of it. He grabs Tasha's wrist. Yanking her back towards him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I said wait!

Tasha whirls around. Gives John a death stare.

TASHA

Why aren't you at work? And since when do you smoke weed?

JOHN
I got fired.

TASHA
Fired?! For what?! You've only
been there for a week! How did you
fuck this up this time?

John is taken aback by Tasha's cursing. He's not used to it.

JOHN
Fuck up? What's that supposed to
mean?

TASHA
Is that really how you feel? All
that you said back there?

John shrugs.

JOHN
I don't know. This weed is hitting
me hard--

TASHA
Enough with the bullshit, John!

John straightens up. On the defensive.

TASHA (CONT'D)
When are you gonna fucking grow up!
You're not a goddamn teenager
anymore! You're an adult! And you
have a child coming!

JOHN
Yeah, and I really had a say in
that didn't I?

TASHA
Say in it? What you think you can
just hit and quit me? I ain't
force you to do anything you didn't
want to.

JOHN
Oh, get the fuck out of here Tasha!
You were the one talking all that
mess.
(high pitched voice)
"Come on baby. I don't want you to
use a rubber. Don't pull out,
John. I want you to come inside me-
_"

TASHA

Fuck you, John! Don't you dare blame this on me! I didn't put your dick inside me. You did. And now we have...

Tasha stops herself.

TASHA (CONT'D)

You know what. I really thought you were different, John. I thought you loved me. But it's clear that your just a lazy ass nigga just like all the others around here who are afraid to man up and take responsibility for their own actions.

JOHN

Oh and you're better than everyone else? Just cause you go to some bullshit ass community college? That makes you better than me?

These words hit Tasha hard. A little bit too personal.

TASHA

Yeah it does! I have goals in my life, John! Do you know what that means? I want to make something of myself so my kid doesn't have to grow up in this place like I did. You just sit around getting high with your stupid ass friends.

Nena rounds the corner of the building. She stays back far enough not to be in the way, but definitely in hearing distance.

JOHN

You talk a lot of shit, Tasha.

TASHA

And you're full of shit! Stay the fuck away from me!

JOHN

What?

TASHA

You heard me. I'm done with you, John. I don't want you in my life.
(MORE)

TASHA (CONT'D)

And I don't want you in my baby's
life. I don't ever want to see
your ignorant ass face again!

Tasha turns to leave. John grabs her again.

TASHA (CONT'D)

Get off of me!

Tasha SLAPS John across the face.

Nena covers her mouth with her hands in shock.

John and Tasha FREEZE for a beat. Both trying to realize
what just happened.

Tasha bites her lip to keep tears from spilling from her
eyes. She turns on her heel and runs away towards Rockaway
Ave.

NENA

Tasha! Wait!

Nena passes John. Gives him a dirty look. Then dashes off
in Tasha's direction.

John leans up against the side of the building. He POUNDS
the wall with his fists a couple of times in anger and slumps
down to a sitting position.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John lies on his bed smoking a joint. He carelessly puffs
away. Not caring if anyone can smell the smoke.

AMY (O.S.)

What the hell is that...is
something burning?

John blows out a cloud of smoke. He savors every whiff of
it.

His bedroom door opens. Amy stands in the doorway. A look
of complete shock on her face.

AMY (CONT'D)

Jonathan! What the HELL do you
think you're doing?!

John doesn't respond. He takes another hit from his joint.

Amy storms over to John. YANKS the joint from his hand.

AMY (CONT'D)

How dare you smoke drugs in my house?! Your sister is in the next room, you fucking idiot!

John doesn't protest. He just gives his mother a distant, drug-induced gaze.

Amy opens up John's window. TOSSES the still burning joint out the window.

Amy fans the residual smoke with her hands out the window.

Jayden comes to doorway to see what's going on. She watches on quietly.

AMY (CONT'D)

Why are you here? Why aren't you at work?

JOHN

I don't got no job no more.

AMY

You don't have a job no more?! It's only been a week!

JOHN

Oh well.

John rolls over to his side. Giving his mother a nice, disrespectful view of his back.

Amy explodes with rage. She turns John back around with force.

AMY

Oh well?! What about your child?! What about your responsibilities?!

JOHN

It's not my problem.

Amy's blood boils. Almost as if she's heard this same speech before.

AMY

Get out.

JOHN

What?

Amy pushes John off the bed. He CRASHES hard onto the ground.

AMY

Get the fuck out of my house!

Amy's eyes start to fill with tears.

JOHN

What you doing?!

AMY

I will not have you living in my house talking like that!

John stands up.

JOHN

You can't do that!

Amy GRABS John's shoulders. SQUEEZES them tight.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ow! Get off me! Are you crazy?

AMY

You're just like him. You think you can just stand around and do nothing your whole life and expect others to pick up your slack. Well I'M NOT DOING THAT AGAIN! Get the hell out of my house! I never want to see you here again!

JOHN

Where am I supposed to go?!

Amy starts slapping John's face. Hard. She's on the borderline of a panic attack.

Jayden starts crying in the doorway as well.

AMY

Get out! Just get out! I won't go through this again! I don't deserve this!

John PUSHES his mother off of him. She falls back onto his bed into a crying heap.

JOHN

I said stop fucking hitting me, woman!

John pounces on top of Amy. He holds a fist up. Ready to beat his mother up. Right before he strikes...

He catches Jayden out of the corner of his eye. She stands there, sobbing, paralyzed with fear.

John looks back down at his mother. She too is crying uncontrollably.

John's fist slowly opens. He steps back from his vulnerable mother.

Jayden runs over and hugs Amy. They hold each other, both crying their eyes out.

John stares at them for a beat. Not believing what he was about to do. He backpedals slowly towards his doorway and exits the room.

INT. HARRISON APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

John crosses the living room en route the front door. Jayden and Amy's crying is audible out here as well.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

John closes the door behind him. He leans up against the door. Doesn't make a sound. His eyes say it all...

What the hell just happened?

INT. CHICO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chico and Nena lie in bed making out.

NENA

Ay, Chico. I thought you didn't like to kiss?

CHICO

Well, it's a special occasion, mi linda flor.

Chico kisses Nena again. She pulls back. A confused look on her face.

NENA

Special occasion? You celebrating anniversaries now? What's wrong with you--

Nena's eyes open wide.

NENA (CONT'D)

Are you cheating on me? Dios mio!
You bastard! Is this how you tell
me?

CHICO

No! God damnit, Nena. Just stop
talking. You're not helping.

Chico rolls over. Opens up a drawer in his nightstand.
Inside the drawer, is the ring. Chico reaches in for it...
A KNOCK comes from the front door...

NENA

Oh shit! Your mom is home!

Chico lets out a frustrated breath. Closes the drawer.

CHICO

It can't be. She's working a
double today.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Chico opens the door. He comes face to face with John.

CHICO

John?

JOHN

What's up man.

CHICO

Nothing much. What's good? You
aight?

NENA (O.S.)

Chico?

Chico turns with an angry look on his face.

CHICO

Why would say my name with you
thinking it's my Mom? I know you
ain't that stupid, Nena.

NENA (O.S.)

Shut up, Chico. Who is it? If
it's Marlon I'm gonna kick his a--

Nena opens the door wider. Her and John lock gazes. Her
face morphs to that of disgust.

NENA (CONT'D)
Oh. It's him.

CHICO
He got a name, Nena.

NENA
I'm out of here.

Nena pushes past John, bumping his shoulder. John turns back to Chico.

JOHN
I hope I didn't interrupt anything.

CHICO
Just me trying to propose. That's all.

JOHN
Damn, my bad. You still ain't ask her yet?

CHICO
It's all good. She ain't going nowhere. So what's up, my dude? What brings you around my neck of the woods?

JOHN
Can I come in?

CHICO
Mi casa es su casa.

Chico lets John in and closes the door.

INT. CHICO'S BEDROOM - DAY

John sits in a chair at a desk on one side of the room. Chico sits on a corner of the bed.

CHICO
Damn. She just kicked you out?

JOHN
Yeah man. I didn't think she would really have done it.

CHICO
Well you don't have to worry about a thing, my nigga. You can stay here as long as you want.

JOHN
You sure that's aight?

CHICO
Man my mom works so goddamn much
she never in the house. She ain't
gonna mind.

Chico holds out a fist. John bumps it with his own.

JOHN
My dude. Good looking out.

CHICO
So what's good with you and Tasha?

John shrugs.

JOHN
I don't know. She don't want to
see me anymore. I guess we done.

CHICO
Damn...

A beat. Suddenly, Chico's eyes light up.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Yo! This calls for a celebration,
bitches.

JOHN
Celebration? For what? What you
talking about, Chico?

CHICO
Man I want to get FUCKED UP
tonight. We should have a little
house party.

JOHN
House party? Where?

CHICO
Here, fool! We can get some bud,
some liquor, some bitches. It'll
be off the fucking hook.

JOHN
Man, I don't know if I'm in the
mood for a party.

CHICO

Fuck you, man. You need to get your mind off of Tasha for a couple hours.

John is hesitant. He finally nods his head.

JOHN

Aight, man. Do what you do. But don't make this shit Taco Bell. Get some brothers too.

Chico bumps John on his shoulder.

CHICO

My nigga. Let me go make a few calls.

Chico leaves the room.

CHICO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And fuck you, you racist ass bitch!

John forces a smile. But his mind is clearly racing over something else.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Tasha sits on a park bench. Hands buried in her pockets. Alone. She stares out at nothing in particular. Eyes wet from old tears.

Nena appears from behind. She takes her time. Finally approaches her friend.

NENA

Tasha?

Tasha doesn't respond. Nena takes a seat next to her.

NENA (CONT'D)

Tasha? Talk to me, girl.

Tasha snaps out of her trance. Puts on a fake smile.

TASHA

Oh hey Nena. What's up?

NENA

Tasha, do you want to talk about what happened?

TASHA

Why would I want to do that? The past is the past.

NENA

But you two were so close. You have to be feeling a little hurt.

TASHA

I'm fine, Nena. I just needed some time on my own.

Nena opens her arms.

NENA

Venga aqui, mami. Give me a hug so I know you are alright.

Tasha hugs Nena.

NENA (CONT'D)

I bet you John is beating himself up right now as we speak over losing a good girl like you.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A woman's ass, barely concealed by a thong, fills the screen. CHANGE ANGLE to reveal...

John sitting in a chair in front of her, smiling and enjoying the show.

Chico's apartment looks like a mini nightclub. Black lights. LOUD HIP HOP MUSIC blares. Several half-naked women dance for the guys in the room.

Marlon sits in a chair with two women SHAKING THEIR ASSES on both sides of him. His head swivels back and forth between them, not being able to decide which one to focus his attention on.

Chico sits in a chair next to John. Getting his own lap dance from another sexy LATINA DANCER.

He places a ONE DOLLAR BILL inside her G-string.

CHICO

Goddamn baby. Where have you been all my life?

The Latina Dancer smiles and turns around. She removes her top revealing her wonderful breasts. She forces Chico's face in between them.

Chico RUBS his face back and forth between them.

John laughs at the sight.

Chico removes his face from the dancer's chest paradise.
Turns back to John.

CHICO (CONT'D)
This party crazy, right?

JOHN
Where you find these girls at? I
could have swore I saw this chick
in 50's music video.

CHICO
You know my cousin run things over
in Manhattan man. I just had to
make a call.

John slaps five with Chico. Chico looks over at Marlon.

CHICO (CONT'D)
You aight, over there Marlon?

Marlon now has both of the women's asses rubbing up both
sides of his face.

Marlon gives Chico a thumbs up.

MARLON
I'm doing just fine. Just fine.

Chico and John laugh their asses off.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - NIGHT

Tee and his crew lean up against the side of the building
smoking weed.

CREW MEMBER
So I told this bitch, "Do you know
who I am trick?" And she tried to
catch a attitude, but then I said
"Bitch don't make me strong arm
you! Now suck my dick and shut the
fuck up!"

Tee takes a hit from a joint. The NOISE from Chico's party
is audible even out here.

TEE
Yo...

CREW MEMBER

And she was trying to tell me she
don't swallow--

TEE

Nigga, shut the fuck up!

The Crew Member quiets down. Real quick.

CREW MEMBER

My bad, Tee.

Tee looks up towards the rows of stories above him.

TEE

The fuck is that noise?

His Crew Members look up.

CREW MEMBER

Sounds like a party or something.

TEE

A party? Who the fuck having a
party without us?

The Crew Members all shrug.

TEE (CONT'D)

Let's go.

Tee and his Crew move towards the front entrance of the
building.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The music selection has changed to REGGAETON MUSIC. The only
women that are dancing are the Latinas. Chico is having a
blast with them.

John still sits in his chair. His BLACK DANCER is now real
close on him, teasing his neck with potential kisses.

BLACK DANCER

So baby, why don't we bring this in
the bedroom so you can give me some
of that thug lovin'? You look like
a real rough nigga.

John smiles.

JOHN

I don't pay for sex.

BLACK DANCER

Baby you don't have to pay. I'll ride that dick all night long for free.

Marlon sits in his chair with his two dancers giving him a dual lap dance. He reaches into his pocket for another dollar. But it's empty.

MARLON

Oh shit. No, no, no.

The two girls slowly start to back away from Marlon.

MARLON (CONT'D)

Ladies! Wait! Just a minute!

Marlon gets up and crosses the room. He passes Chico.

MARLON (CONT'D)

Yo, Chico. Turn this BULLSHIT off, man! Stop hogging all the Latin broads!

Chico gives Marlon two middle fingers.

MARLON (CONT'D)

This shit is making me want to eat tacos!

In the corner of the living room a MAN dressed in suave clothing watches the party with a close eye. Obviously the dancers' PIMP.

Marlon approaches the Pimp. He pulls out a 20 DOLLAR BILL.

MARLON (CONT'D)

What's good. You got change for a twenty?

The Pimp takes the twenty from Marlon. He pulls out a stack of ONES and dishes them out into Marlon's hand. After ten, the pimp stops.

MARLON (CONT'D)

Um, that's only ten.

PIMP

Uh huh.

MARLON

I gave you a twenty.

PIMP

Nah you didn't. You gave me a ten.

MARLON

Bullshit! I gave you a
motherfuckin' twenty!

The Pimp gets up close with Marlon. Gives him a DEATH STARE.

PIMP

Is there a problem, little nigga?

Marlon quickly backs down. He's not the confrontational
type.

MARLON

Nah, it's cool. Thank you.

PIMP

That's better.

A KNOCK COMES FROM THE DOOR.

Marlon shouts in Chico's direction.

MARLON

Yo, Chico! Someone's at the door!

Chico doesn't hear him. Marlon turns in John's direction.
John is walking with his dancer towards the bedroom door.

MARLON (CONT'D)

John! Ah, fuck it.

Marlon moves to the door. Opens it...

Marlon is IMMEDIATELY GRABBED by Tee. He pushes Marlon back
into the apartment.

Tee's Crew follows close behind.

MARLON (CONT'D)

Whoa!

TEE

Nigga, who you think you are having
a party in this building without
going through me first?!

John notices the commotion first. He breaks away from his
Dancer and jumps to Marlon's aid. He shoves Tee off of
Marlon.

JOHN

Take it easy, Tee!

Chico gets up as well.

CHICO
What's the problem, fellas?

TEE
Nigga did you just push me?! Are
you fucking crazy?!

Chico steps in front of John.

CHICO
Yo, Tee. Let's just calm down.
There's room for all of us--

Without warning, Tee PUNCHES Chico in the face.

TEE
Shut the fuck up! I run this
fucking project! Nothing goes down
without me!

John pounces on Tee. Tee's Crew immediately jumps on top of John and start pounding him to the ground.

Chico stands up, wiping the blood from his lip. He lifts up his shirt and pulls a SWITCHBLADE KNIFE from his pocket.

He points it at Tee. Suddenly the MUSIC cuts off.

CHICO
Everybody shut the fuck up! Get
the fuck off him!

Everyone in the apartment FREEZES. John looks up at Chico with wide eyes.

Tee stares at Chico. No emotion.

TEE
You better use that knife if you
pointing it at me.

CHICO
This party's over for ya'll! Get
the fuck out! All of you!

Tee's Crew slowly gets off of John. They stand and move towards the door.

Tee doesn't move.

CHICO (CONT'D)
I said get the fuck out! I'll slit
your fucking throat, Tee!

Tee points at Chico.

TEE

You just made the biggest mistake
of your life. No one pulls a knife
on me.

Tee backs towards the door.

TEE (CONT'D)

Let's go.

Tee and his Crew exit the apartment. Chico stands for a
moment, still holding his knife at the now closed doorway.

John rises and moves towards Chico.

JOHN

Where you get that knife, Chico?

Chico finally lowers it.

CHICO

My cousin. Good thing I had it,
huh?

Chico smiles. Grabs one of the dancers and holds her close.

CHICO (CONT'D)

Turn that music back on!

Chico walks away from John with his Dancer. John just stares
after him, wondering what his friend has just done.

EXT. BROWNSVILLE - DAY

The beginning of a new day shines bright over the borough of
Brooklyn.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

John, Marlon, and Chico are fast asleep on the living room
floor. The garbage from the night before litters the floor
around them.

Chico stirs awake. He looks over at his friends groggily.

CHICO

Shit...

He punches Marlon in the shoulder.

MARLON

Damn!

CHICO
Wake up, nigga.

Chico turns to John.

CHICO (CONT'D)
John!

The commotion wakes John.

JOHN
Don't fucking punch me. I'll knock
you out.

Chico laughs. John leans up on both of his elbows.

CHICO
Ya'll two have fun last night? I
know I did.

John rubs his eyes.

JOHN
I still can't believe you did what
you did last night, Chico. That
was out of control.

CHICO
I know. I can't believe it either.

John is surprised at Chico's reaction.

JOHN
Really?

CHICO
Yeah. I can't believe I had all
these hoes surrounding me and on my
dick and I didn't fuck with any of
them. Me and Nena must be made to
get married. Nah mean?

John shakes his head.

JOHN
You know Tee gonna come after you
right?

CHICO
Man, he can bring that shit. I'm
tired of being scared of that
nigga. Everyone be shook when he
comes around. What he ever done to
anyone in the hood?

(MORE)

CHICO (CONT'D)

Yeah he'll pop off people who ain't in it, but when it comes to actual hood niggas, he fold. So I ain't worried bout nothing.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Chico stands up and answers it.

On the other side, Nena and Tasha greet him carrying their school bags. Nena observes the scene behind him.

NENA

Damn, Chico. What the hell happened?

CHICO

Nothing baby. We just chillin.

Tasha looks into the apartment as well. Her and John lock eyes for a moment. No words. But it's clear how they feel about each other.

NENA

Well anyway, I just wanted to tell you we were off to class.

Chico reaches into his pocket. Feels the ring inside. His eyes light up.

CHICO

Hey baby, why don't I walk you?

NENA

Walk me? Where? Outside?

CHICO

Nah. To the train.

Nena shares a look of amazement with Tasha. She reaches over and feels Chico's forehead for a fever.

NENA

Papi, are you feeling okay? Did you drink a lot last night?

Chico gently pushes Nena's hand away.

CHICO

Let's go.

Chico turns back to John.

CHICO (CONT'D)

You coming, John?

John and Tasha share another icy glance. He shakes his head.

JOHN
Nah, I'm good.

CHICO
Oh. Aight.

Chico exits the apartment with Tasha and Nena on either side of him and closes the door.

Marlon looks over at John.

MARLON
You learning, my nigga.

John falls back onto a pillow. He picks up a TORN PIECE OF CARDBOARD from a beer case. Starts sketching on it with a pen.

JOHN
Shut up, Marlon.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Chico walks Tasha and Nena down the street.

CHICO
Nice day out, huh Nena?

NENA
Chico, what is up with you lately?
You are acting really weird. Is
there something you want to tell me
or something?

INT. TEE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Tee, along with three of his crew members stroll down Rockaway Ave.

TEE
This is MY motherfuckin hood. No
one disrespect me. NOBODY!

Tee's Crew Mates all nod their heads in unison.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

John still sketching on his piece of cardboard...

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Chico slows down his walk pace. Nena and Tasha both adjust to his drop in speed.

CHICO

Yeah. There is something I need to tell you.

INT. TEE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

One of Tee's Crewmates looks out the driver's side window. He notices Chico, Tasha, and Nena.

CREW MEMBER

Yo. Is that the fool from last night?

Tee looks over. He lips purse in anger.

TEE

Yeah that's him. Ya'll got your pieces on you?

CREW MEMBERS

Yeah.

TEE

Go around again. This motherfucker's dead.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

John's sketch starts to form. It resembles a female's face. Tasha's?

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Chico stops. Nena and Tasha both stop. Chico falls down to one knee.

NENA

Chico...what are you...doing...?

Chico grabs Nena's hand. Reaches into his pocket with the other.

Tasha blushes with embarrassment for her friend.

INT. TEE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Chico's car rounds another corner. They all pull out their guns. Ready to fire...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

John's sketch is nearly finished. Definitely a caricature of Tasha...

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Nena is on the verge of tears.

NENA
Chico...

Chico shows Nena the ring.

CHICO
Marry me, baby.

NENA
I will!

Out of the corner of his eye, Chico notices Tee's car rounding the corner.

His eyes widen.

CHICO
Oh shit!

NENA
What?

Tee's car ACCERLERATES FORWARD...

Chico JUMPS to his feet. Grabs both Nena and Tasha...

Tee's car gains on them quick...

Just as Chico pushes them to the ground...

BAM! BAM! BAM! Gunshots ring out from the car...

Chico, Tasha, and Nena fall to the ground...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

GUNSHOTS emanate from outside. John stops his sketch. Turns to Marlon.

JOHN
You hear that shit?

MARLON
Damn. Somebody getting popped.

John rises to his feet.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

Chico and the two girls finally fall to the asphalt...

Tee's car ZOOMS away. Disappearing from sight.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

John looks outside Chico's apartment window. He looks down the scores of stories to the ground.

He sees Chico, Tasha, and Nena on the lying on the ground.

JOHN
Tasha!

John darts out of the apartment.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - DAY

The street is full of panic now. People scream. Onlookers watch on as everyone scrambles making sure their friends and family are okay.

Chico, Nena, and Tasha still lie on the ground. Hard to tell if they are alive or not.

Finally, Chico moves. He checks himself for injuries. All good.

Immediately meets Tasha's gaze.

CHICO
You aight, Tasha?

Tasha is on the verge of a panic attack.

TASHA
I...I...I...th...think so...

Chico looks over at Nena.

CHICO
Baby, it's over. It's okay now.

Nena doesn't move. Chico nudges her.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Nena? Nena get up baby. They're gone.

Chico rolls her over. The sight horrifies him.

A fresh bullet exit wound is right through the side of her head. Blood ravines from the wound. Her eyes a dull, lifeless gaze.

CHICO (CONT'D)
No, no, no. You're okay. Baby, wake up.

Tasha sees the sight for herself. She finally cracks.

CHICO (CONT'D)
No...no...no...this ain't happening...this ain't happening...

POLICE SIRENS ring in the distance...

Chico pulls Nena's corpse close to him. He hugs her with all of his might. He buries his head into her lifeless body. Refusing to accept reality...

Nena is dead.

Chico places the ENGAGEMENT RING on Nena's limp finger. He finally SCREAMS as loud as he can.

STREET CORNER

John sprints around the corner. He sees Chico holding Nena in his arms. Tasha right next to him. He hurries towards them.

SUDDENLY EVERYTHING GOES SILENT

Tasha turns. Sees John running towards her. She jumps to her feet. They meet halfway and hug each other for everything life is worth.

Police Cars finally show up to the scene. Police Officers exit the vehicles. B-line it to the crime scene...

John continues to hug Tasha as he looks at Chico and Nena...

Chico rocks back in forth, clutching onto Nena. A look of insanity brewing in his eyes. The Police Officers surround him. Gently encourage him to let go of the body.

Chico eventually let's go of Nena's body. He just remains in his same position. Staring at nothing in particular.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John sits on one of the sofas in Chico's living room. Tasha is cradled in his lap in the fetal position. She cries softly into his chest.

Marlon sits in another chair with his head in his palms. John looks over at him.

JOHN
Where's Chico at?

MARLON
Still in his room.

JOHN
I better see how he doing.

John moves to get up from the couch. Tasha CLUTCHES onto him tighter.

TASHA
Don't leave me!

JOHN
I'm just going in the next room to see Chico.

TASHA
Don't leave me...

JOHN
It's okay, Tasha. I'm not going to leave you. I'll be right back.

Tasha finally lets go of him. She lies sideways on the couch. A mess.

John saunters over to Chico's bedroom door. He KNOCKS on it softly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Chico? Can I come in?

No answer. John opens the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Chico?

BEDROOM

John enters the room. Chico sits on the edge of his bed, staring out his bedroom window.

He still wears the same clothes from earlier. Nena's blood is splattered all over it.

John slowly rounds into Chico's line of sight.

JOHN

How you doing man?

Chico just gives John an insane-like stare. Then turns back to looking out the window.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry, my dude. Nena was like a sister to all of us.

Chico looks back over at John.

CHICO

Yeah?

JOHN

That's real talk, Chico. We all family. You know that.

Chico nods his head slowly.

CHICO

So what you gonna do about it?

John's brow furrows.

JOHN

What you mean?

CHICO

What you gonna do?

John shrugs.

JOHN

I don't know. What can I do?

CHICO

You can help me kill the motherfucker that did it.

These words hit John hard.

JOHN
But you told the cops you didn't
know--

CHICO
It was Tee.

A stunned silence.

JOHN
Tee?

CHICO
Yeah. Tee killed my wife.

John sees the seriousness in Chico's demeanor.

JOHN
Yo, I know you mad, but you can't
kill Tee--

CHICO
WHY NOT?!

JOHN
Tee is the head nigga in charge of
this fucking place, man! He got a
crew that rolls at least 5 or 6
deep at all times. And you know
they all packing.

Chico stands up. Gets real close. Right in John's face.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Step back, Chico.

CHICO
Nigga, this motherfucker killed my
WIFE! Even your girl was almost
shot. You just gonna sit back like
a bitch and let him get away with
that?!

John just stares back at his friend.

CHICO (CONT'D)
This is the fucking hood! If
someone disrespects you, you
fucking take them out! He shot
Nena! He's gotta die. Come on!
You know that!

John nods his head. More confidently this time.

JOHN

So how we gonna do this? We can't take his crew on with your knife.

CHICO

I say we hit up my cousin and the Kings up in Washington Heights. He's gotta have some choppers for us to use.

JOHN

You sure he gonna give them to you?

CHICO

He got no choice. When you go after family, the family looks out for one another. No questions asked.

John holds out his hand for Chico. They perform their secret handshake.

JOHN

Lead the way, son.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John and Chico exit the bedroom. They head towards the front door.

CHICO

Let's go, Marlon.

MARLON

Where ya'll going?

CHICO

Just come on!

Tasha springs to her feet.

TASHA

John? Why are you leaving?

JOHN

I got to do something, baby.

TASHA

NO!

Tasha jumps in front of the door. Blocking their exit.

JOHN

What you doing? Move!

TASHA

No! I can't let you go and do something stupid.

CHICO

Tasha get away from the door. We gotta do this.

MARLON

Do what? What ya'll niggas talking about?

John grabs Tasha. Moves her from the doorway. She fights with all of her might, but he manages to move her.

Chico and Marlon open the door.

CHICO

Let's go, John.

John struggles with Tasha.

JOHN

Give me a minute. I'll be right there.

Chico nods.

CHICO

Hurry up.

Chico and Marlon disappear down the hallway.

Tasha wriggles like a mad person in John's grasp.

TASHA

Stop! I don't want you to go!

JOHN

Tasha, he shot at you! You almost died today! I can't let someone get away with that. And our baby--

TASHA

Yes! What about our baby? Are you going to go get yourself killed and let him grow up with out a father?! Is that what you want?

JOHN

I won't get killed!

TASHA

John, I'm begging you. Please don't go. Please don't go. We can just move on.

JOHN

Listen to yourself, Tasha! Your best friend just died today! And you just want to move on?!

John moves away. Tasha grabs him.

TASHA

You're not going!

John pushes her away.

JOHN

Get off of me! I'm going!

John exits the apartment. Slams the door shut behind him.

Tasha leans up against the door and falls to the ground in a crying heap.

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

John, Chico, and Marlon sit alone in a subway car as it zooms along the tracks under the city.

Marlon stares at his two more serious friends with a confused look on his face.

MARLON

Is one of you going to tell me what the fuck is going on? Where we going?

Chico looks up with a murderous look.

CHICO

We gonna kill Tee tonight. He's the one that shot Nena.

Marlon's eyes bulge out of his head.

MARLON

What?! You for real?

JOHN

Yeah. Real talk. We gonna go hit up Chico's cousin. He in the Latin Kings.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

See if we can get a couple guns to
smoke Tee and his crew with.

Marlon face shows his mind is racing a mile a minute.

MARLON

I can't do that.

Chico and John look up. Surprise plastered all over their
faces.

CHICO

What you say?

MARLON

Man, I can't kill nobody. That
ain't me. That ain't any of us.

Chico just stares a hole into Marlon for a beat. Then...

He PUNCHES Marlon in the face. Marlon falls to the floor
hard. Chico pounces.

CHICO

That ain't you?! My wife's life
means NOTHING to you?! Huh, you
bitch ass nigga?! I'll fucking
kill you too!

John jumps onto Chico. Holds him back.

JOHN

Chico, stop! Stop man!

John finally gets Chico off of Marlon. Marlon lies on the
ground, bloody nose, missing teeth, a real ass kicking.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Next stop will be 14th Street Union
Square.

Chico looks down at Marlon with disgust.

CHICO

Get off the train. And this is the
last time I ever see your fucking
face. If I see you again, I will
kill you.

John looks at Chico with a worried look on his face.

The train STOPS. The doors open. Marlon looks at the open
doorway. Looks back at his friends.

He stands up and exits the train. Chico turns to John.

CHICO (CONT'D)
I'm in this 100%, John. If you
ain't, you need to disappear.

John doesn't flinch. The train doors close.

JOHN
I'm in this with you, Chico. To
the end.

Chico and John shake hands.

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - NIGHT

John and Chico walk through the empty streets of Northern Manhattan. John appears to be out of his element, but Chico is all business. He knows these streets like the back of his hand.

CHICO
It's just up here.

EXT. ARLEN PROJECTS - NIGHT

Chico and John approach the Arlen Housing Project. Not as big as Langston Hughes, but still a large apartment building.

INT. ARLEN PROJECTS, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chico leads John down one of the decrepit corridors in the building.

Chico steps up to one of the doors. SPANISH MUSIC emanates from within. He KNOCKS on it.

The door opens up a crack. A SPANISH THUG peers out. A giant GOLD CROSS dangling on his neck.

SPANISH THUG
(in Spanish)
What you want?

CHICO
(in Spanish)
I need to see Jesus.

The door closes. Chico and John wait for a moment. The door opens again. Fully this time.

The Spanish Thug waves Chico in. John walks in as well. The Spanish Thug stops him with an arm.

SPANISH THUG
 (in Spanish)
 Who's the black kid?

CHICO
 (in Spanish)
 He's with me. Let him go.

The Spanish Thug lets John in.

INT. JESUS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A party is in full effect. Half-naked Latinas run around the apartment. LATIN KINGS mingle about looking as menacing as they can be.

Sitting at a dining table playing dominos with three other Latin Kings is JESUS. A Latina stands behind him giving him a back rub as he plays.

Chico and John appear in front of Jesus. Jesus smiles when he sees him.

JESUS
 (in Spanish)
 Chico! What you doing back here?

CHICO
 (in Spanish)
 I need guns.

The music is too loud. Jesus strains to hear Chico.

JESUS
 (in Spanish)
 What?

CHICO
 (in Spanish)
 I need guns.

JESUS
 (in Spanish)
 I can't hear you, papi

Chico YELLS in English.

CHICO
 I need guns!

The music CUTS OFF. Everyone in the party turns in Chico's direction.

JESUS
Guns? What for?

CHICO
I got some business to take care
of.

Jesus laughs.

JESUS
Business? What about the
switchblade I gave you?

Chico and John share a glance with one another.

CHICO
I'm gonna need a little more than a
knife.

Jesus looks at John.

JESUS
This moreno got you doing his dirty
work? Huh?

Chico shakes his head "no".

CHICO
It's something we both need to do.

JESUS
I can't have my guns roaming free
in the city, Chico. You know that.
What if you drop it, they trace it
back to me, I can't have that.

Chico is starting to lose his patience.

JESUS (CONT'D)
Besides. I don't want a moreno
putting his hands on my guns.

John opens his mouth to say something back--

CHICO
Nena got shot today.

Jesus sits back. Stunned.

JESUS
Nena? Your Nena?

Chico nods his head.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Shit.

CHICO

Yeah. So I need a couple guns so I can go kill the motherfucker that shot her.

Jesus hesitates.

SPANISH THUG

Don't do it, Jesus. It's what's best for the Kings.

Chico turns to face the outspoken Spanish Thug. Without warning, DECKS him in the face with a fist.

CHICO

Fuck you!

Two other Latin Kings jump on Chico. Right before they beat him down--

JESUS

Stop!

The two Latin Kings stop immediately. Look back up at Jesus.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Give them your pieces.

LATIN KING #1

Jesus--

JESUS

Now!

The Two Latin Kings remove TWO HANDGUNS from their waistbands. They hand them over to John and Chico.

Chico and John look on in amazement at the guns they possess.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Now get out of here before I change my mind.

Chico looks up and nods to Jesus.

CHICO

Thanks, Jesus.

John and Chico move to leave the apartment.

JESUS

Chico.

Chico stops.

JESUS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about Nena.

Chico just turns without acknowledging his cousin and exits the apartment with John close behind.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Tee and his Crew play a late night game of pick up basketball.

Tee gets a pass from a teammate. CROSSES OVER an opponent.

CREW MEMBER
Shit!

Tee sprints to the hoop. Jumps. SLAMS it home.

TEE
This my house, nigga!

Tee moves to the top of key to check the ball back in for another game.

INT. SUBWAY, ROCKAWAY STATION - NIGHT

The C Train comes to a stop at Rockaway Station. The doors slide open.

Chico and John step out. Chico nods towards a secluded corner.

CHICO
Let's go over there.

FURTHER DOWN ROCKAWAY AVENUE STATION

Chico and John cower in a dark corner of the subway station. They both pull out their handguns.

The two friends silently eject the clips from the gun. Chico is all business. But John is shaking.

They both check to make sure the magazines are full with bullets. SLAM the clips back into the gun. CLICK their chambers back into place.

John all of sudden looks scared as hell.

JOHN

Chico. You ever use one of these before?

CHICO

No. You?

John shakes his head "no".

CHICO (CONT'D)

It can't be that hard. Just point it at that motherfucker's face and pull the trigger.

Chico holds the gun out in front of him. Pointing straight ahead.

Suddenly, a PASSERBY rounds the corner. Walks right into Chico's gun. The Passerby FREEZES with fear.

CHICO (CONT'D)

The fuck you looking at?

PASSERBY

Nothing. Please. Don't shoot.

CHICO

Get the fuck out of here!

The Passerby jets in the opposite direction. John looks at Chico with an uneasy glance.

JOHN

So how is this going down, man?

Chico keeps his gun pointed in front him. Practicing his aim.

CHICO

He probably over at the park. I say we just come up behind him and bust his ass full of lead. Fuck his crew. I just want him. After that we just bounce. No one sees us.

John nods with approval. Still looks nervous.

JOHN

Aight.

Chico looks over at John. Notices his apprehension.

CHICO

You ready to do this, John?

JOHN

I think so.

Chico lowers his gun. Turns to John.

CHICO

They shot at your girl, John. The mother of your kid. Remember that.

John nods his head more confidently.

JOHN

Yeah. You right. Let's do this.

John and Chico put their guns back into the waistband. They move towards the subway stairwell and ascend to the street above.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Tee and his Crew still play their basketball game. Completely oblivious to anything else.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - NIGHT

John and Chico stroll down Rockaway Ave. Determined looks on their faces.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Tee shoots a jump shot. Nothing but net. Celebrates.

EXT. ROCKAWAY AVE - NIGHT

John and Chico round a corner of Rockaway Ave. The park is just up ahead.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Tee steals a pass from one of his opposing Crew Mates. Drives to the basket. Lays the ball up. Basket good.

EXT. CITY PARK - NIGHT

John and Chico kneel behind the fence of the basketball court. Tee and his Crew are playing on the opposite side of the court.

The two friends pull out their weapons. Flick the safety's off.

CHICO
This is it.

John looks out at Tee. Tee has no idea they are here to kill him.

Suddenly JOHN FREEZES.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha lies on the living room floor. Still crying.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

John is still FROZEN. Chico looks out at Tee. Narrows his eyes with determination.

CHICO
On three, my dude.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha finds the piece of cardboard that John sketched a caricature of her on.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico squeezes his gun even tighter. John doesn't move.

CHICO
Three...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha studies the sketch through tear filled eyes.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico continues his countdown.

CHICO
Two...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha holds the sketch up against her chest. Leans back against the front door.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico readies himself to launch towards Tee.

CHICO

One...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha stares up at the ceiling. SCREAMS one word with all her might...

TASHA

JOHN!

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

John stops Chico from jumping up.

JOHN

Wait.

Chico looks at John with surprise.

CHICO

What? What's wrong? Let's do this!

John shakes his head.

JOHN

I can't.

Chico's eyes nearly pop out of his skull.

CHICO

You can't be serious!

JOHN

I can't do this. I can't do this to Tasha.

Chico just stares at John with anger burning in his eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come on man. We can't do this. This ain't us. We ain't no better than him if we do this shit.

CHICO

John. I have nobody left. Nena was everything to me. What do I have to go back to?

John just lowers his head with shame. Chico sucks his teeth with rage.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Give me your gun.

JOHN
What? Why?

CHICO
Just give it to me, John.

John hands over his gun. Chico holds them both. Ready to use them.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Go man.

JOHN
Come with me, Chico.

Chico shakes his head "no".

CHICO
I have to do this. You got someone waiting for you. Go.

Chico holds out his hand. John looks at it.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Don't leave me hanging, nigga.

Chico forces a smile. John performs his secret handshake with Chico one more time.

JOHN
I'll see you later.

Chico nods his head "yes". John turns. Heads back towards Langston Hughes Projects.

CHICO (O.S.)
John!

John spins around.

CHICO (CONT'D)
Don't ever leave Tasha's side.

A beat. John acknowledges his friend with a nod.

JOHN
I won't.

Chico turns back towards the court. John leaves the park.

The following sequence is in SLOW MOTION until told otherwise.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - NIGHT

John approaches the entrance to the building...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico enters the basketball court. Guns akimbo. Pointing right at Tee...

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

John walks through the hallway of the apartment building...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

One of Tee's Crew Mates finally notices Chico coming towards them with two guns pointed...

He mouths the words "Oh shit!". Reaches for his own gun in his waistband...

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

John strides through the corridor that contains Chico's apartment...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Tee finally spins in Chico's direction. He reaches for his gun as well.

Chico OPENS FIRE.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha leans up against the door. Wiping tears off of her face. Suddenly she HEARS SOMETHING. Rises to her feet...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico lays a hail of bullets into Tee. Each bullet passes through him, sending BLOOD flying in all directions.

Tee's Crew Mates finally get their guns out.

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha opens up the apartment door. John greets her...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Tee falls to the ground. Dead as a doornail. Chico just stares as he falls.

Tee's Crew OPENS FIRE on Chico...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha and John just stare at one another. No movement whatsoever.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico is OBLITERATED by several bullets from Tee's Crew. He falls back to the asphalt pavement below...

INT. CHICO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tasha makes the first move. Wraps her arms around John. Hugs him as tight as she can. John reciprocates.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Chico SLAMS to the ground. Life rapidly leaving him. He stares up at the sky above him. Then his eyes close for the last time.

END SLOW MOTION

Tee's Crew SPRINTS away from the basketball court. Only Tee and Chico's corpses remain. POLICE SIRENS ring in the distance...

FADE TO:

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John lies in his bed. Eyes closed. SOMEONE nudges him O.S.

TASHA (O.S.)
John. Wake up.

John's eyes open. He looks over to the side.

Tasha lies in bed with him. A smile on her face.

TASHA (CONT'D)
Your interview is today.

John smiles.

JOHN
I know.

Suddenly, a BABY'S COOING emanates between the two of them.
John looks down at the bed.

A NEWBORN BABY BOY, lies between Tasha and John. Their son.
John leans down and kisses his son on the top of his head.

MOMENTS LATER

John finishes putting on a dress shirt and tie. He looks awkward, but refined.

Tasha watches on proudly from the bed. Baby in her arms.

TASHA
Now my teacher said they specialize
in cover art for CD's...

JOHN
I know, Tasha--

TASHA
...but he already sent a couple of
your sketches to them so they
already know how good you are--

JOHN
Tasha.

Tasha stops talking. John walks over to her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I know.

Tasha smiles.

TASHA
I'm so proud of you baby.

John leans down and kisses Tasha on the lips.

JOHN
I'm a get us out of here. I
promise.

The BEDROOM DOOR opens. Jayden sprints into the bedroom.

JAYDEN
Can I see the baby?!

Jayden jumps up onto the bed with Tasha. The baby LAUGHS at the sight of Jayden.

John moves to leave.

TASHA (O.S.)
John.

John spins around. Tasha holds his sketch notebook out for him.

John takes it. They share a smile and he walks out.

INT. HARRISON APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

John moves to exit the apartment. Amy sits on the couch, watching television.

John stops.

JOHN
I'm leaving now.

Amy doesn't respond.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I know you didn't have to let me back in. And I'm glad you let Tasha and the baby stay until I can get a place of my own.

Amy still doesn't acknowledge him. John saunters over to her and kisses her on the cheek.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Thanks for everything. And I won't let you down. Any of you.

John stands up to leave. He doesn't notice that Amy's eyes start to well up with tears.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Brownsville. My home. My hood.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

John walks through the corridor of the apartment building. He passes Marlon who is talking to another girl in the hallway.

JOHN (V.O.)
From day one we all learn that you
need to earn respect. That shit is
never given.

John and Marlon shake hands. John continues on his way.

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And the minute you forget that,
it's the last minute you live.

INT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS, FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

John shuffles towards the exit of the apartment building.

JOHN (V.O.)
I told you before that you would
understand what that exactly means.
And what it means is that everyone
in the hood has a time.

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

John exits the building.

JOHN (V.O.)
No matter who you are or what you
do, the hood will get you.
Everyone's time comes.

Suddenly one of TEE'S CREW MATES appears out of nowhere.
Pulls out a gun. SHOTS at John.

Before John even has a time to defend himself, he is falling
to the ground. Two bullet holes in his chest.

John's eyes slowly close on the ground.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. LANGSTON HUGHES PROJECTS - DAY

John's eyes are closed. He opens them up again. He finds
himself standing in front of the apartment building.

No one threatening is in front of him. It was just a
daydream. John looks around. A confused look on his face.

JOHN (V.O.)
I guess it just ain't my time yet.

FADE OUT.