

*'UNSCRIPTED'*  
an original screenplay by

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A Raw Concepts Entertainment conception

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DISRUPTED

FADE IN:

EXT. BROOKLYN, BROWNSTONE ROOFTOP - DAWN

SAMARIA DEVEREUX. A young black woman, mid-twenties, stands facing the first sign of the morning sun glimpsing through the horizon.

There are tears streaming down her cheeks, a scrunched look of acrid emotion legible in her countenance like engraving in a stone. She wipes her eyes, looking pensively at the sunrise.

SKY

Birds fly by overhead.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
My grandmother used to say that  
tragedy can strike in the blink of  
an eye...

ANGLE - 747 AIRLINER

It's soaring towards the horizon of the expanse firmament.

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...like a plane that suddenly goes  
down without warning. The tragedy--  
she used to say--wasn't in that  
instant, but in that aftermath...

The plane disappears into the stream of morning clouds.

ON SAMARIA

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...because the plane going down  
wouldn't leave half as much  
devastation as the loss of the lives  
aboard it.  
(beat)  
...Leaving the lives of everyone  
they knew... disrupted...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. OPEN FIELD -- DAY -- ESTABLISHING

A sunny mid-autumn day. A gust of wind blows through the foliage and pastures of the field.

SUPER IN/OUT - "MISSISSIPPI, 1992"

Two little girls appear. Both nine years old. Running and laughing through the field, schoolbooks in hand.

The girls race toward a dirt trail.

EXT. DIRT TRAIL -- DAY

The girls run along the trail until they reach a dilapidated and boarded old white house--the remnant of what used to be a plantation.

The girls stop and look at the old house. Their expressions change to one of trepidation.

The house sits covered by dense foliage and withering vines. The shutters SQUEAK in the breeze of the wind.

The girls look at each other. One of them, a YOUNG SAMARIA, takes a step backward.

YOUNG SAMARIA

There are nigger ghosts in there.

Her friend, SHAYLA, gives her a look.

SHAYLA

Nigger ghosts?

YOUNG SAMARIA

Uh-huh. Dead slaves.

SHAYLA

Who called them nigger ghosts?

YOUNG SAMARIA

That boy in Mr. Benoit's class. The one that raps.

SHAYLA

Ain't no such thing as nigger ghosts, Samaria.

YOUNG SAMARIA

Uh-huh. There are. And that boy said they be in that house walking around, rattling their slave chains.

SHAYLA

You believe that dumb boy? He's been left back three times. Teacher said if he keeps getting left back the school's gonna just hire him.

YOUNG SAMARIA

What if he's right?

SHAYLA

Samaria...that boy's the real nigger.  
He just ain't a ghost. I hate him.  
His whole family are niggers. I  
wish they were ghosts.

YOUNG SAMARIA

I don't care. I'm out of here.

Young Samaria takes off running.

SHAYLA

Samaria! Samaria, wait! Stop  
running!

Those words never reach Samaria. She hauls ass up the dirt trail and veers off into the woods, disappearing.

EXT. FARM HOUSE -- DAY

Samaria races across the roadway and onto a grassy field as she barrels her way toward an old, run-down house.

When she reaches the front door, she shoves it open and races inside.

INT. FARM HOUSE -- DAY

She drops her books to the floor.

YOUNG SAMARIA

Mama! Mama!

The house is dark, filthy... squeaky. The shades pulled down and the air dreary and monotonous.

YOUNG SAMARIA (CONT'D)

Mama...?

No answer.

YOUNG SAMARIA (CONT'D)

Mama...? You here?

Quiet.

Samaria stares down the hallway.

HER P.O.V - A HALF OPEN DOOR

A shadow moves across the floor from inside the room, behind the door.

RETURN TO SCENE

Samaria begins walking toward the door, each step a hesitant one. When she reaches the door, she pushes it open slowly.

YOUNG SAMARIA (CONT'D)

(softly)

Mama...

Samaria steps inside.

A woman is sitting at the foot of the bed, smoking a cigarette, a glass of wine in her hand. This is SAMARIA'S MOTHER, mid-twenties, thin, dressed only in shorts and wearing a bra, sweating profusely.

INT. BEDROOM

Samaria approaches her mother hesitantly. She knows something's wrong. This isn't new.

She sits down next to her mother, looks at her. When she sees the bruises on her face, her busted lip and swollen eye, tears pour from her eyes.

YOUNG SAMARIA

Why does he keep doing this to you,  
mama?

Her mother flicks the ashes of her cigarette to the floor.

SAMARIA'S MOTHER

(Southern drawl)

I don't want you 'round dis no mo',  
Samaria.

(drags on cigarette)

It's time for you to go stay wit  
grandma.

YOUNG SAMARIA

You coming too, right, mama?

SAMARIA'S MOTHER

Not now, girl.

(laughs to herself)

I gots sum real soul searchin' to  
do.

YOUNG SAMARIA

Mama, please!

Her mother gets up.

SAMARIA'S MOTHER

Grandma will meet you at the airport.

She walks out the bedroom.

SAMARIA'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Your stuff's already packed.

Samaria sits on the bed crying.

EXT. SAMARIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Young Samaria comes walking out the house carrying a suitcase and plastic garbage bag with clothes in it. She heads toward a taxi cab waiting for her at the end of the walkway.

Her mother appears in the doorway, smoking a cigarette.

Samaria stops and looks back at her, tears in her eyes.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

My mother was only seventeen when she had me. I never knew who my father was. Maybe she didn't neither. We were always broke, poor, struggling. But I realized later that my mother did the best she could... the only way she knew how. I never remember her smiling. I never remember her being happy.

Samaria gets into the taxi, closes the door.

Her mother watches as the cab pulls off.

INT. TAXI -- CONTINUOUS

Samaria sits up in the back seat, peers out the window.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

I never saw my mother again. She never left Mississippi. She never left that house. She never left that situation.

EXT. FARM HOUSE, DOORWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Samaria's mother falls back against the door, crying.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

Two weeks after I left to go be with my grandma in Louisiana, the police found my mother beaten to death in the backyard of our old house.

The cab dwindles into the distance up the road, Samaria still staring out the back window.

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

Over a year later, the police found the man who had been abusing my mama. He was living in Texas with some teenage girl. They also found them wearing jewelry my mama had passed down to her from her grandmamma.

(MORE)

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
When the police asked him why'd he  
do it, they told us that he had told  
them because my mama kept bugging  
him about coming in late...

Samaria's mother heads into the house, slowly closing the  
door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Samaria, now 18, is on a podium singing and dancing, the  
church choir singing backup behind her.

SUPER IN/OUT - "RURAL LOUISIANA, 2001"

Samaria sings a Hem that gets the church congregation jumping  
to their feet. As she takes the lead, the vocal range of  
her voice reverberates throughout the church.

ON PEWS

Her grandmother is in the front row, clapping her hands,  
proud and excited.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
I stayed in church... back then. Me  
and my grandmother never missed a  
Sunday. She just loved hearing me  
sing. But I think more than that...  
she loved seeing me happy.

ON SAMARIA

She puts on a performance, every now and then looking to her  
grandmother and smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's a simple country-style home in a middle-class  
neighborhood.

Samaria's voice echoes from within, singing melodies and  
hitting high notes.

INT. SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

Samaria is at a dresser, combing her hair in a mirror and  
singing.

Her grandmother enters. She walks up to Samaria and takes  
the comb from her, combing her hair.

SAMARIA

I got it, grandma.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Excuse me. I forgets you ain't a little girl no more.

SAMARIA

I'm sorry, grandma.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Oh, girl, please. You ain't hurt my old feelings.

Her grandmother walks over to the foot of the bed and sits down. She looks around the room, picks up a teddy bear on the bed.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

You kids grow too fast these days.

(beat; sighs)

So where you off to tonight, baby?

SAMARIA

Cecil's taking me to some new jazz club downtown. He said he knows the manager there and I might be able to get a singing gig.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Uh-huh. Is that right?

SAMARIA

I know you don't like Cecil, grandma, but he's really nice and talented. He has big dreams like me.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Uh-huh. Right.

SAMARIA

I like to sing and he wants to help me.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Uh-huh.

SAMARIA

He knows I can sing just as good as some of those female artist out there today and he just wants me to prove it.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

You prove it to God every Sunday, child. The Lord blessed you wit dat voice for His glory, not yours.

(MORE)



SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

But I guess you're getting to that age now. You have to learn sum things fer yourself.

SAMARIA

I want to sing to crowds, grandma. I want my own CD. I never wanted anything so bad. Cecil says he can help me.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Oh, baby, that peasy-head boy don't even have a job. I don't like his eyes. Something about his eyes. That boy got sum evil about him. I've seen his type before. Reminds me of those slick-back low-lives you see in them bars scheming people out of their money.

SAMARIA

You got those types in some of these churches around here, grandma.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

I just don't trust 'im. Can't even look at me when he comes over here. I tell you he's a little Lex Luthor, a spawn of something gone wrong, a Damien omen child. I just don't like 'im.

SAMARIA

I'll be all right, grandma.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Young and stupid peoples always say the same thing. You don't know your elbows from your ankle bones yet. How you gonna know what being all right is when you don't know what being all right is all about. You young people are too fast with every thing. Too impatient. Too damn spoiled. You're too busy going all the time to see what's really coming.

SAMARIA

But I listen to you, grandma.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

Samaria, the one thing I've never been is stupid. I made bad choices and sum mistakes along the way, but never stupid. I lived life long enough to pass on some wisdom.

(MORE)

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

Women are women by creation and purpose, from one generation to the next. Times change, but people never do. That's why this world sees the same problems over and over again. This is a world of predators and prey. You has peoples and situations that will eat you alive out there. If you go out in that world naive, one of two things are gonna happen. You either gonna end up failing or falling. Then you gonna have to face knowing the difference between the two.

(sighs, shaking her head)

Come 'ere, baby. Sit down.

Samaria walks over to her and sits down at the foot of the bed. Her grandmother embraces her.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

I never got much of a chance to have these talks wit your mama. Your grandfather, my husband, was a hard man, always disciplining his children, and that drove your mama away. She must've been fifteen when she left, ran off with that daddy of yours--

SAMARIA

--Who was he?

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER

(quickly)

Another peasy-headed loser.

(beat)

Baby, I just feel that if I would've stood up to that man, I would have had more time to talk to your mama and help guide her. But I let my husband control how--

(beat)

Listen, baby, grandma's just gonna tell you this: You young peoples have everything at your disposal-- except common sense. Some of you know about the history, but you never experienced the struggle. And some of you think you know more than the old folks. If we old folks made it this far we made it this far for a reason. Sometimes an old fool's purpose is trying to keep you young fools from becoming old fools. Or at least living long enough to die of ripe old age instead of stupidity.

Samaria's grandmother takes a deep breath, pensive for a moment. Then she looks at Samaria intensely.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

Baby, nothing in this world ever comes easy. White, black, rich or poor everyone pays sum dues someways. This life is about stages and how different you see that life at 20, then 30, then 40, then 50, and, if you're blessed enough, the point of no return where the social security kicks in and your body is beyond repair. I know the stages. And grandma also knows how blind you really become through the eyes of ambition. Now I'm not gonna discourage you or stop you from your dreams. I'm a let you make your own mistakes... and hopefully you grow and learn from them. The advice I give you is just to help you... come to mind when you need it. I'm a tell you this and hopefully it sinks in somewhere. Don't ever let no one tell you, "life is what you make it". Don't believe that nonsense. Ever! Because life is what it is! Life has been and will be what it is till GOD decides to change it. You are born into life. You don't mold life, life molds you. The thing that determines your fate in this life are the choices you make. If I had a choice to make life--or if life was what I made it--then I would've made it free of prejudice, crime, death, stupid peoples and monthly cycles. Those things are what they are, some by nature. How you deal with them is the choice you end up having to make.

Samaria's grandmother gets up and heads out the bedroom.

SAMARIA'S GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

You be careful tonight, baby.

SAMARIA

Okay.

Samaria is at a loss, trying to take in everything her grandmother told her. She stares off into space. Then she looks toward the mirror, gazing at her reflection.

FADE TO BLACK:

Applauds. Faint at first. Then rising in momentum like the orchestration tempo during a classical concert.

STROBE IMAGES OF SAMARIA AT A MIC.

FADE IN:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

It's a jazz and blues hangout. Mixed crowd. Some young, some old. Some from the streets, others from the suburbs.

Samaria is on the stage singing to a jazz tune. She has the crowd going. They love her.

ON BAR

A middle-aged young black man is there, stirring his drink. This is CECIL, A.K.A: MONEY CLIP, Samaria's older boyfriend. A smooth, slick ladies man, and he knows it. Always smiling, always showing his gapped teeth. Always looking at his diamond-studded watch.

When the waitress walks past him, he throws money onto her tray and taps her on the butt. She smiles at him. Then he returns his focus to Samaria.

ON STAGE

Samaria works it, singing with soul and flare. At the end of her song, the crowd gives her a standing ovation.

ON BAR

Cecil looks to an older man behind the bar, the CLUB MANAGER, and gives him dap.

CECIL

What I tell you, nigga. She's hot.

CLUB MANAGER

That there is raw talent.

CECIL

So we got a deal or what?

CLUB MANAGER

Yeah. I can book you four nights a week to start. Seven a week.

CECIL

What I look like--a new jack. My drugs bring business up in here. This Money Clip you talking to, remember. I share in the profits. Non-negotiable.

CLUB MANAGER

We'll see.

The Club Manager walks off. Cecil returns his focus to the stage.

HIS P.O.V -- THE STAGE

Samaria is waving to him.

BACK ON CECIL

Cecil smiles and blows her a kiss.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

I spent the next two months performing at that sleazy, bootleg nightclub. And I did it for Cecil. I did any and everything that man told me. I even lied for him. I even lied to my grandmother about him. I never told her he was twenty years older than me. But I think she knew. I think, like she said... she just wanted me learn the hard way.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CECIL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

Cecil is on the couch popping popcorn into his mouth and watching television.

INTERCUT -- THE KITCHEN AND LIVING ROOM

Samaria is washing dishes. Suddenly, the PHONE RINGS.

SAMARIA

Cecil, can you get that.

Cecil has the cordless on his lap. He answers it.

CECIL

Hello?

(beat)

Hold on.

(calls out)

Samaria, pick up!

SAMARIA

Who is it?

CECIL

I don't know.

Samaria sighs, then dries her hands and answers the phone mounted on the wall.

SAMARIA  
(into phone)  
Hello.

There is a moment of silence. Suddenly, Samaria becomes horrified. She drops the phone and falls back against the kitchen counter, knocking over pots and pans and utensils.

Cecil comes racing into the kitchen. He sees Samaria on the floor holding her mouth and shaking her head. Tears fill her eyes.

CECIL  
What is it, Samaria? What's wrong?  
What happened? Samaria?

Samaria screams.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Everyone is leaving, walking toward their cars.

Samaria stands alone near a headstone.

INSERT - HEADSTONE

which reads: "EMMA GREEN, WIFE, MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, BELOVED  
CHURCH ELDER, BORN MARCH 12TH, 1934, DIED AUGUST 25TH, 2001"

RETURN TO SCENE

Samaria falls to her knees, reaching out and touching the headstone.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
Losing my grandmother was the worse  
feeling I had ever felt in my life.  
I took it harder than the loss of my  
mother. I couldn't explain in words  
what she meant to me. I couldn't  
explain the choking feeling I felt  
from my grief. Like I wanted to  
die, too. Like life just would never  
be the same again. How could I go  
on? Who would be there for me?  
Love me so unconditionally? Her  
loss came too suddenly for me.  
(sighs)  
And so would the chain of other losses  
that were awaiting around the bend...

FADE TO BLACK:

BLACK SCREEN

The sound of chaos, screams, and sirens fill the darkness.  
Then a voice:

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)  
--This is unbelievable! Apparently,  
that the report is, that a commuter  
jet had some trouble and crashed  
into-- we heard reports that it's  
both the Southern Tower and Northern  
Tower--looks to me to be the Southern  
Tower--is on fire. The top 15 to 20  
floors look like they're on fire.  
There is a hole in the sides of the  
World Trade Center. It's massive.  
It's--

FADE IN:

ON TELEVISION

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)                    TELEVISION VOICE  
(interrupting)                                #1 (V.O.)  
--Did you just see that on your      --Oh my God.  
television?

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)  
--A huge explosion--

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)  
There's been a huge explosion!

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)  
Did that just happen?

TELEVISION VOICE #3 (V.O.)  
Just right now.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)                    TELEVISION VOICE  
A massive explosion--looks like from      #2 (V.O.)  
the other tower--                            --Did that happen from the other  
   tower?

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)  
--That was about a--a two hundred  
foot ball of fire that came out--

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)  
--That was just now--

TELEVISION VOICE #3 (V.O.)  
That is on the other tower.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
It is?

TELEVISION VOICE #3 (V.O.)

Yeah.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Oh, Jesus.

CECIL'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Samaria, Cecil and several friends of theirs are gathered around a television watching footage of the horrific 9-11 events. Their expressions are ones of horror and disbelief as they watch the images of that day take place.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The other tower--as Brian said--is on fire. Both towers are now on fire.

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Oh, my God! There's the explosion! They showed it again!

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

There's something going on.

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)

It's definitely the other tower that blew up--

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

And it's about twenty to thirty stories below where the plane--or whatever--flying object hit the World Trade Center--

TELEVISION VOICE #3 (V.O.)

--It's a little questionable.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

This is real questionable.

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Yeah, it is the other one and it's much lower.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Oh, my God!

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

It really is both towers.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Both towers are now on fire.

TELEVISION VOICE

#2 (V.O.)

Was that another airplane?

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Another airplane--



TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)  
--No, no, watch this footage they  
just showed. They showed another  
airplane. A second airplane just  
hit the second tower.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
(gasping)  
It's a suicide bomber.

TELEVISION VOICE #2 (V.O.)  
It is suicide.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)  
Another airplane just hit the World  
Trade Center! That's what caused  
the second explosion! What the hell  
is going on?!

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
It's terrorism.

TELEVISION VOICE #1 (V.O.)  
Oh, it's gotta be!

Samaria turns away from the television.

SAMARIA  
Excuse me everyone.

She hurries out of the room. Everyone else stays glued to  
the television in shock and disbelief.

BATHROOM

Samaria races into the bathroom and starts running water  
from the sink, washing her face. She starts crying over the  
sink, collapsing to the floor.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
I didn't think it could get any worse  
than what happened on nine eleven...  
but it did...

CUT TO:

EXT. CECIL'S HOUSE - DAY

It's a cloudy day, rain, wind. People are running through  
the neighborhood, hurrying out of cars and into their homes.

SUPER IN/OUT - "AUGUST 28TH, 2005" (FOUR YEARS LATER)

The wind seems to pick up, gusting through the neighborhood  
with more intensity, blowing people around.

INT. CECIL'S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Cecil is stretched out on the bed, knocked out, a liquor bottle is his hand, the television on playing the news.

Samaria BURST into the room.

SAMARIA

Cecil! Cecil, get up! They saying that this storm was just upgraded to a Category 5. They talking about evacuation. Cecil! Cecil, this is serious!

Cecil is comatose.

Samaria sighs and races out the room, heading toward the living room.

There are duffel bags and a suitcase packed near the door.

Samaria races to the duffel bags, opening them and adding more items, clothes, canned foods, personal hygiene products. Then she heads back to the bedroom.

Samaria rushes back in, heading for the dresser, grabbing whatever she can into her arms. She stops and looks to the television. She sees an image of the Louisiana Mayor, Ray Nagin.

THE TELEVISION SCREEN -- MAYOR NAGIN

MAYOR RAY NAGIN

(on television)

I wish I had better news for you, but we are facing a storm that most of us have feared. I do not want to create panic, but I do want the citizens to understand that this is very serious and it's of the highest nature.

BACK TO SAMARIA

She winces.

SAMARIA

Oh, God.

She turns to Cecil.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

Cecil! Cecil, you have to wake up! This is serious! Cecil! Cecil, we have to evacuate! Cecil!

Cecil turns over, dropping the liquor bottle to the floor.

CECIL  
Leave me alone, bitch.

SAMARIA  
Forget your stupid ass, then!

She throws clothes at him.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)  
Dumb, nigga! That's why your ass is  
gonna die! Stay here, then! I'm  
leaving!

She storms out of the bedroom.

Cecil puts a pillow over his head.

EXT. CECIL'S HOUSE, STREET - DAY

Samaria races out of the house and out into the street.

A neighbor from across the street is backing his car out of  
the driveway.

His wife races out of the house and spots Samaria. She runs  
toward her.

NEIGHBOR  
(calls out)  
Samaria! Where's Cecil?

SAMARIA  
Inside. He won't get up. He was  
getting high all night last night.  
I can't bother with him right now.  
I'll call his brother and tell him  
to come get his stupid ass.

NEIGHBOR  
Herbert and I are headed to Interstate  
10 before it gets bumper to bumper.  
You can ride with us.

SAMARIA  
Okay.

Samaria runs behind her neighbor and over to the car.

NEIGHBOR  
Herbert! Pop the trunk!

They race around the car to the trunk and open it, throwing  
in Samaria's belongings. Then they close the trunk and climb  
into the car.

INT. CAR

The driver, HERBERT, puts the car in drive.

HERBERT  
Hey, Samaria. Where's Cecil?

SAMARIA  
Drunk again.

The radio is playing, giving updates on the impending storm.  
Samaria, in the back seat, dries herself off with a towel.

RADIO VOICE  
(filtered)  
There will be extensive to potentially catastrophic damage to many structures... and inland. We'll have a lot of trees that are going down, perhaps millions of trees. But the first threat is going to be the storm surge. You must get away from the coast now.

Samaria's neighbor, in the passenger seat, looks back at Samaria.

NEIGHBOR  
This is really bad. I think this is going to be the worse storm to ever hit this country.

HERBERT  
Just relax. We gonna make it out of here.

SAMARIA  
Where are people going?

HERBERT  
All traffic is reversed on Interstate 10, heading west of New Orleans. We follow them out, then head to Georgia.

SAMARIA  
I can't wait to get out of here.  
I'm just sorry it had to be under these circumstances.

No one responds. They continue listening to the reports on the radio.

EXT. CAR, STREET

The car heads up the street and turns off, disappearing from view.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
As devastated as I was about Katrina  
and the damage and the loss of lives,  
(MORE)

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
deep down inside I looked at it as  
that push that I needed to get out  
of Louisiana and away from that  
abusive relationship. I saw it as  
an opportunity to move on... to  
finally follow my dreams on my own.

SERIES OF SHOTS - HURRICANE KATRINA

A) The storm hits the coast, powerful waves relentlessly  
hammering the shoreline.

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
My grandmother used to say that  
tragedy can strike within a blink of  
an eye. That's how Nine eleven hit  
New York and Washington, DC. That's  
how Hurricane Katrina hit us. You  
never see tragedy coming.

B) VARIOUS DISSOLVES of people in boats, making their way  
through flooded streets, holding their children, animals in  
the water, people trapped on the rooftops of their homes  
holding up signs, people heading into the Louisiana Super  
Dome, and dead bodies floating in the water.

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Our lives had been... disrupted.  
And still... it was only the  
beginning.

FADE TO BLACK

BLACK SCREEN

Applauds. Whistles.

In the darkness, Samaria's voice:

SAMARIA  
Thank you, thank you. How's everyone  
doing tonight? We ready to heat it  
up in here? Let the music flow into  
your souls and minds.

FADE IN:

INT. MANHATTAN NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The lights on a stage turn on. Samaria is on stage at the  
mic. She begins singing a smooth, mellow tune, then gets  
into a real upbeat rhythm.

Some in the audience snap their fingers, others nod their  
heads. The mature crowd enjoys the groove and their drinks.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

When I got my chance to piggy-back with some drifters headed to New York City, I jumped at the opportunity. After Katrina, I fell into the system and the FEMA nonsense like so many others who had been misplaced. They bounced me all over Atlanta with never the relief I needed to stand on my own two feet. For a year I just moved around from one state to the next, until the New York opportunity came my way. Right away I found a gig performing at a little night club on the Lower East Side.

SUPER IN/OUT - "NEW YORK CITY, TWO YEARS AGO"

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

The owner loved my voice and the fact that he could pay me close to nothing. I just took it. I was just eager to hit the stage and get discovered. Tell you how naive I was, I gave myself seven months to hit the big time after landing in the city that never slept.

(laughs)

In reality, I had a better chance of singing a Karaoke tune to Vanity 6's "Nasty Girl" on an LA ho strip and being discovered by Richard Gere for a "Pretty Woman" sequel.

CUT TO:

THE BAR

The MANAGER, a young, handsome Greek man, is serving drinks. He peers over at the stage from time to time, admiring Samaria's melody and voice. Even he starts dancing.

ON SAMARIA

She finishes her song to loud applause. She takes a bow, then heads off stage.

THE BAR

The Manager is counting money from the cashier draw as Samaria comes up to the bar.

SAMARIA

Hey, Sam. I was wondering if I could get paid tonight instead of Thursday.

MANAGER

Okay. That's cool. Everything okay?

SAMARIA

I wish I could say yes.

MANAGER

What's up?

SAMARIA

I'm behind in my rent and I'm down to my last can of albacore.

MANAGER

'Maria, I keep telling you to find a cheaper place to live.

SAMARIA

Yeah, I know, but I like living in the city... being in the heart of things, you know. The energy, the--

MANAGER

--I know, I know, but you need five roommates just to make up the difference to a one bedroom apartment these days. Anything else you're sharing with multi-legged occupants. You should look in the papers for roommates.

(suddenly enlightened)

Hey, hey, I know. Wait. I know someone looking for another roommate.

SAMARIA

Male or female?

MANAGER

Female.

SAMARIA

White or black?

MANAGER

Does it matter?

SAMARIA

White girls are jealous of my hair.

MANAGER

(laughs)

Got it. No, really, it's a black woman. Her name is Lena. She bought a brownstone in downtown Brooklyn like six or seven months ago. She has two other roommates now, but she was looking for a fourth person.

(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)

They all share the Brownstone together--  
like a family thing. You'll have  
your own room. Lots of space. Like  
four bathrooms. Two kitchens, I  
think.

SAMARIA

How do you know this Lena person?

MANAGER

We met at a seminar some time back  
on starting your own business. She  
went on to start a poet's cafe... I  
think. I started this place. She's  
a real saint, you know. Always  
helping people out. We throw business  
each other's way.

(pulls his wallet out  
of his pants pocket  
and starts going  
through it)

I have her business card somewhere...

(looks)

Yeah, here it is.

(hands it to Samaria)

Give her a call. See if she can  
help you out. Save you some money,  
you know.

SAMARIA

Thanks, Sam. That's real nice of  
you. I mean, I really appreciate  
this.

MANAGER

Whatever. Just remember to call.

SAMARIA

Thanks, Sam, I will. Is it okay for  
me to--

MANAGER

--You're good. See you Friday.

SAMARIA

Thanks again, Sam.

MANAGER

Good-night, Samaria.

Samaria walks off. The Manager goes back to mixing drinks.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Establishing.



INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Samaria is seated at a table near the window. A WAITRESS comes over, setting down a plate of breakfast and glass of orange juice.

WAITRESS

Anything else, hon?

SAMARIA

No thank you.

The waitress walks off. Samaria sips her glass of juice. Looks out the window. Ponders. Then she reaches into her hand bag. She pulls out that business card, looking it over for a long moment. Then she reaches into her bag again and takes out her cell phone. She dials. Waits a moment.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hello?

(beat)

Hi. My name is Samaria Devereux.  
I, uh, was just calling to inquire  
about a room-- hello?

(beat)

Hi. My name is Samaria Devereux.

(beat)

No. I was calling to speak to Lena.

(beat)

Uh, no, I was recommended by Sam.

(beat)

Sam. Sam Gristole. He said you  
were friends who met at a seminar.  
He runs a bar on-- Yes! That Sam.  
Yes, he is a cutie. Uh, well, he,  
uh, told me to call you regarding a  
roommate--

(beat)

Yes. Roommate. Sam told me to call  
you regarding renting-- Yes, yes.

Uh-huh, yes. I am looking for--

(looks at her watch)

Uh, today? At three? Uh... yeah, I  
can do that. That would be fine.

Can you hold on while I look for a  
pen to write down that address?

Thank you.

Samaria searches through her bag for a pen, digging desperately. After a moment the waitress walks past and she reaches out to her.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

Excuse me, do you have a pen on you.  
I'm sorry to bother you.

The waitress reaches into the pocket of her apron and pulls out a pen, handing it to Samaria.

WAITRESS

That's okay. Here you go.

SAMARIA

Thank you.

(into phone)

Hello. Hi. Sorry about that. What's that address.

(writing it down)

Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay. Corner of-- okay. Okay. I have it. Thank you.

See you then. Thank you so much.

Okay. Bye.

Samaria throws her cell phone into her hand bag, gets up, rushes over to the waitress to hand her back her pen, and bolts for the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Lined with trees. Quiet. The perfect middle-class environment.

Samaria rounds a corner and walks up the long block, checking addresses, feeling excited.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

My grandmother used to say that the people who come into your life are a part of a circumstance that changes your life forever.

Samaria stops in front of a brownstone. She looks at the paper she wrote the address on and sees that she has reached her destination. She starts up the steps, BUZZES the intercom.

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

On that day, I was about to meet the players in a life changing experience that would always stay with me.

Samaria BUZZES the intercom a second time. After a moment, someone answers:

FEMALE VOICE

(over intercom)

Who?

Samaria leans closer to the intercom.

SAMARIA

Hi. My name is Samaria Devereux. I called earlier and spoke to--

FEMALE VOICE

(over intercom)

--Hold on.

The intercom BUZZES.

FEMALE VOICE (CONT'D)

(over intercom)

Push the door and come in. Top floor.

Samaria opens the door and walks into the brownstone.

INT. BROWNSTONE, HALLWAY - DAY

Samaria comes up the stairs, reaching a door. It opens.

A woman steps out. This is FRANCINE. An attractive black woman, mid-thirties, but could still pass for a vibrant twenty year old. She greets Samaria with a smile.

FRANCINE

Hi. I'm Francine. Lena's other roommate.

They shake hands.

SAMARIA

Hi. I'm Samaria.

FRANCINE

Nice to meet you, Samaria. Come in, come in.

Samaria smiles politely and enters the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Samaria looks around in astonishment. She cannot believe the size of the place. A huge open floor plan, lots of space, modern, clean, styled like something out of a magazine.

FRANCINE

You can have a seat in the living room, Samaria. I'll go get Lena and Sassy.

SAMARIA

Okay. Thank you.

Samaria walks into the adjacent living room. She takes a seat on the sofa. She looks around the room.

HER P.O.V - LIVING ROOM

Photographs on the wall, on the fireplace mantle, art and statues and paraphernalia of Jazz and blues and gospel decor every area of the place.

BACK TO SCENE

Samaria stands up, hearing Francine return with her roommates.

LENA enters the living room first, mid-forties, attractive, dressed in African garb. SASSY follows right behind her. Already, it becomes clearly obvious that she's the GHETTO-FABULOUS one out of the bunch, tight spandex, fake gold jewelry around her neck, rings on every finger. She is picking her teeth and sucking her teeth at the same time. She looks Samaria over.

SASSY

Uh-uh. Nah. Already I don't like her.

LENA

Sassy!

(to Samaria)

Hi, I'm Lena. We spoke on the phone.

SAMARIA

Nice to meet you. I'm Samaria.

LENA

You can sit back down, Samaria.

Francine walks around Lena and sits down on the other side of the sofa.

FRANCINE

Would you like anything, Samaria?  
Coffee? Tea? Soda? Water?

SAMARIA

Water would be fine.

FRANCINE

Sassy, can you get it for her?

Sassy is still eyeing Samaria up and down.

SASSY

Hell-to-the-nin-no. I'm interviewing.

Francine rolls her eyes at Sassy.

FRANCINE

I'll get it.

SASSY

Get me one while you're at it.

Francine walks past Sassy rolling her eyes. Sassy remains fixed on Samaria.

Lena hands Samaria several printed forms.

LENA

Samaria, I need you to go through those forms. Read them carefully.

SAMARIA

What are they?

LENA

Just an application. I like to do a thorough background on my roommates. I know you know Sam, but I still have to follow preliminaries.

SASSY

You ain't got no felonies?

LENA

Sassy!

SASSY

What? This girl could be a gangster bitch for all we know. She could be a shoplifting mom from Dateline.

LENA

Don't mind, Sassy, Samaria. Just fill out your name, birth date, former addresses and references with numbers on that first page. Are you from New York?

SAMARIA

Uh, no. Louisiana.

SASSY

Louisiana?! So you came here looking for sympathy, huh? Well, we ain't got none. Noah told your asses to get on the ark and ya didn't listen.

Francine returns with the bottled water.

FRANCINE

Sassy, you have no class.

Francine hands Samaria the water.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Here you are, Samaria.

SAMARIA

Thank you.

SASSY

Where's mine?

FRANCINE

You got two legs.

SASSY

I'll remember that. I'm parched and you couldn't do a simple thing like bring me some water. I look out for you.

FRANCINE

When do you look out for me?

SASSY

I haven't slept with any of your men, right.

Lena sits down next to Samaria.

LENA

Most of that stuff on there's self-explanatory. Let me know if you need help.

SAMARIA

Okay.

LENA

So what do you do for a living?

SAMARIA

I sing.

FRANCINE

Oh, that's nice.

LENA

You're a recording artist?

SAMARIA

Not really. I mean, right now I just sing at Sam's club three nights a week.

Lena, looks over at Francine, who looks over at Sassy. Uh-oh.

LENA

So, uh, Samaria, where do you work? Or do you... just sing?

SAMARIA

I just sing at Sam's right now.

SASSY

Oh, shit. Here we go.

(shakes her head)

Okay--Aretha--how much do you think  
the room we're renting cost?

Samaria looks around, confused.

SAMARIA

Uh... Sam didn't tell me--

LENA

Can you afford seven hundred a month.  
That's the rent. And you will need  
a deposit as well. One month's rent,  
one month's security.

SAMARIA

Fourteen hundred...?

LENA

This area of Brooklyn has become an  
expensive area.

SASSY

You got the dough or don't you?

SAMARIA

Sam didn't tell me--

(sighs)

I thought because he said you two  
knew each other--

SASSY

Sam knows her, not you.

LENA

Samaria, how much is Sam paying you  
for those nights you work?

SAMARIA

Sometimes fifty to a hundred a night.

SASSY

Is that in tips or salary? If that's  
your take home, well, then, well,  
er, girl, ya betta get a cup and do  
some subway cabaretting.

SAMARIA

I'm sorry I wasted your time.

Samaria gets up to leave.

Francine gets up and runs over to her.

FRANCINE

Wait, Samaria. Hold on a second.  
(to Lena)  
There's gotta be something we can  
do.

SASSY

Francine, she's broke. Like that  
security guard who kept hitting on  
you at the mall.

LENA

Samaria, did you ever look into the  
housing that FEMA was providing for  
Hurricane Katrina victims?

SAMARIA

I did. They helped me in Atlanta,  
but not since being here. They only  
help you for a short time, then you're  
on your own. But I'll find some  
way. I can look into hotels or motels  
or something.

FRANCINE

Oh, no. Uh-uh. No. Lena. We can't  
let this girl stay in a hotel in New  
York. Those places are filthy and  
foul. Most of the young women coming  
to New York usually end up becoming  
prostitutes after staying in those  
places.

SASSY

Francine--what!? What the hell are  
you talking about? Prostitution is  
a choice, stupid, not a circumstance.  
Stop watching HBO!

FRANCINE

Whatever. I don't care. I just  
don't want to see this girl end up  
in the street.

SASSY

You act like you know her.

FRANCINE

She's a young black woman. A sister.  
She's probably been through a lot.  
She was a victim of Katrina. You  
know what, Sassy, we have seen so  
many disasters and death in this  
country since September 11th. So  
many violent crimes and job losses.  
So much pain and hurt.

(MORE)



FRANCINE (CONT'D)

The only thing we haven't seen too much of are people who give a damn. People with sincere hearts.

SASSY

Oh, boo-who. Put it on a reality show.

LENA

Francine, I am still trying to pay off the loans to this brownstone. Unless I can rent the basement and ground floor apartments as well as that room, things are going to get tight. Samaria, I'm sorry, hon, but unless you can pay the rent--

FRANCINE

(cutting her off)

--I'll pay her deposit.

Lena and Sassy look at each other, agape. Then Lena puts her hands on her hips and gives Francine a look.

LENA

Since when do you have money like that?

SASSY

She's been holding out. She's got Oprah bank and ain't been telling nobody.

FRANCINE

I got my raise and my credit union loan. I can help her out until she gets a real job and gets on her feet.

SASSY

Why you ain't help me out like that when I first came here. That's foul, Francine.

SAMARIA

You don't have to do that for me. I'll be okay. God allowed me to make it this far.

FRANCINE

God also allowed you to make it over here to this place, to meet us. That had to be for a reason. I don't think you're a bad person. I don't see that. I just think you need some help until you get on your feet.

SASSY

Samaria, no offense, I feel for you and all but you're a stranger. I don't know you. We don't know you-- Francine. You could be a "Single Black Female" case, get all obsessed with me and try and be me and steal my life and shit. Uh-uh. I can't be living in fear like that.

LENA

Sassy, shut up. You say some crazy things.

SASSY

What if I'm right.

FRANCINE

Samaria, I am willing to help you if you are looking to be helped. I can't support you, but I can help you out with a loan. That I can do.

SAMARIA

I appreciate it, but what-- I don't want to burden you. I can find other ways.

FRANCINE

Don't let pride blind you from knowing the difference between a handout and an opportunity, Samaria.

LENA

I'll tell you this, Samaria. I have known Fran for sixteen years, and I have never seen her go out on the limb for a total stranger like this before. If she's willing to look out for you like that, then I support her decision and have her back.

Francine looks at Lena and smiles.

Samaria, hesitant, finally breaks a slight smile.

SAMARIA

Are you sure it's okay?

LENA

Fran...?

FRANCINE

It's up to you, Samaria.

SAMARIA

Okay. Okay.

(MORE)

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

I really appreciate it. And I will pay you back every cent.

FRANCINE

So finish filling out Lena's paperwork, then we'll show you the room.

SASSY

Francine, didn't you go to the doctor's the other day?

FRANCINE

Why?

SASSY

'Cause you must only have six months to live to be doing this Jimmy Stewart, "It's A Wonderful Life" second chance shit.

Francine brushes Sassy off and sits down with Samaria to help her with the application.

Sassy sucks her teeth and walks off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE, SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Samaria is unpacking, pulling clothes out of suitcases and putting them into dresser drawers and closets.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

So much moving around. The life of the artist. I haven't felt that sense of home since my grandmother. It hurt sometimes. The memories. The things you missed. All that made home, home.

Samaria removes pictures of famous jazz singers and popular R&B artists from her suitcase. She places them on dressers and shelves around the room.

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

You always try to carry around as much of your world with you as you can. The things you treasured and just couldn't let go of.

Samaria pulls a picture frame from her suitcase.

INSERT - PICTURE

It is a picture of Samaria as a little girl standing in church, hugging her grandmother.

BACK TO SCENE

Samaria sits down on the bed, staring pensively at the photograph, rubbing her finger across it. She starts to cry.

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

Some things you could never let go of weren't just things in your possession. They were things in your heart. I missed my grandmother. I missed the warmth and comfort and reassurance she gave me. Sometimes I wondered how I was going to make it on my own. Without guidance. As a woman. Without a man. With just a dream...

The tears do not stop flowing from Samaria's eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE APARTMENT, DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Lena and Francine are setting plates on the table.

LENA

(calling out)

Hey, Sassy, Samaria, food's ready!  
Come on if you're eating with us!

Sassy comes out from the back room, heads into the dining room, sits at the table.

Francine looks at her.

FRANCINE

I know you are not expecting maid service, Sassy.

SASSY

What? A sista can't get some quality service around here?

LENA

Sassy, get up and go make your own plate.

(calling)

Samaria! You better hurry up if you're eating with us!

Samaria comes out from the back room. She heads over to Lena.

SAMARIA

Can I help with something?

LENA

Just get your plate and start serving yourself.

Samaria takes a plate from the table and follows Francine into the kitchen. Sassy joins them.

A few moments later, they exit the kitchen with food piled onto their plates. They each take seats at the dining room table.

Lena, having made her plate already, sits at the head of the table.

SASSY

Mmmmm. Smells good, looks good, looks FDA approved. Good job, Lena.

Samaria raises her hand.

They stop and look at her.

SAMARIA

Is it all right if I pray first?

LENA

Of course. We can all pray together. We usually do.

FRANCINE

Hands everyone.

They all reach out and clasp hands.

LENA

You wanna say grace, Samaria?

SASSY

And make it quick. No long drawn-out ass-kissing speeches about how thankful you are to have found us.

LENA

Sometimes you speak your mind a little too much, Sassy.

SASSY

That's why I'm not a mute.

FRANCINE

Go 'head, Samaria. Start grace.

Samaria smiles and closes her eyes.

SAMARIA

Heavenly Father, thank you for the blessing of this food we're about to  
(MORE)

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

eat and thank you for blessing us with it. Thank you Father for continuing to provide for our hearts, our minds, our bodies and our spirits. Thank you so much Father for bringing us together and keeping us together and blessing us enough to know that we are really blessed. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

FRANCINE

Amen.

LENA

Amen.

Sassy sits there looking Samaria over.

SASSY

Whatever happened to: "Good food, good meat, thank you Lord, let's eat."?

LENA

I liked that prayer, Samaria.

FRANCINE

So did I.

LENA

We pray like that in church. Prayers that come from the heart, that you can feel in your soul.

SASSY

Oh, please. Ain't neither one of you started praying like that until after you turned thirty, your hips got wider and your man was seen cruising down the boulevard with that nineteen-year old hoochie down the block from where you lived. Y'all need to keep it real. Stop faking the funk.

LENA

Well, what about you, Sassy?

SASSY

What about me?

LENA

A little heavy on the Zinfandel since your man got back with his ex.

SASSY

First of all, I got class. It's Henny, not Zinf. Secondly, he didn't get back with his ex.

(MORE)

SASSY (CONT'D)

He wanted a threesome between me,  
him and his transsexual homey, Clyde.  
I told him I don't get down like  
that. I keeps to my principles. So  
he got all mad and left me for Clyde  
anyway--look, I don't want to talk  
about that. Let's just eat.

Lena and Francine smirk and chuckle to themselves.

SASSY (CONT'D)

It ain't funny. Black men ain't  
shit. Either they're too broke, too  
lazy, too conceited, too undercover,  
too sugar sweet, too incarcerated,  
too uneducated, or too much into the  
hot pursuit of the blonde persuasion.

FRANCINE

What are you gonna do?

LENA

Let's just eat. This is not the  
dinner conversation I'm trying to  
have right now.

SASSY

Remember that nigga, Rasheim I went  
out with last year? That soft, silly-  
putty weak-ass nigga left me for a  
stripper. A damn ho. He'd rather  
throw some filthy skank his bank  
than his woman! Hmp! Could'a given  
me that money. He don't know if I  
would've dropped it like it's hot  
for him!

LENA

Anyway. So, Samaria, how's the  
singing going? Sam's place getting  
you exposure?

SAMARIA

It's been kind of slow lately. I  
wish I could find a different outlet.

FRANCINE

It'll come, girl. You gotta give it  
some time.

Suddenly, Lena lights up. She smiles.

LENA

I think I may know of that outlet...

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB NUBIAN'S - NIGHT

CLOSE UP - A MAN'S LIPS APPROACHING A MIC.

POET

(poetic lyrics)

Sweet. Your lips, your neck, your  
taste. Sweet. Like honey, rare  
wine, gotta brother wanting to be  
with you all his time. Sweet. Like  
rare fruit, juices in my mouth, honey  
dew, girl, I'm feeling you, digging  
you, got first dibs on you!  
Perceiving divinity in the subliminal  
regions of your mind that sets in  
motion the animal magnetism of  
chemistry we were created to feel  
for all time...

CUT TO:

THE CLUB -- CONTINUOUS

VARIOUS SHOTS of patrons coming and going. Waitresses are moving from one table to the next. A few people are focused on the poet on stage. It's an artist crowd, mixed audience.

CLUB ENTRANCE

Lena, Sassy, Samaria and Francine enter the club.

A WAITRESS walks over and greets the women, leading them over to a table to be seated, then handing each of them a menu.

WAITRESS

Let me know when you're ready to  
order, Miss Brown.

LENA

Thank you, Theresa.

The women open their menus as the waitress walks off.

Samaria looks around the club.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

The place was called Nubian's Cafe.  
I found out later that Lena owned  
the place. It was an investment she  
made after getting laid off from  
some big time financial company on  
Wall Street.

Samaria turns her focus to the stage, observing the poet.  
She gets into his poetry.



SAMARIA

He's good.

Sassy looks up toward the stage.

SASSY

He better be. He's on the payroll.

Lena looks toward the stage and smiles.

LENA

That's Bentley. He can flow.

(beat)

He's a good dude.

SASSY

That's not the one who came to the interview looking for benefits and a stimulus package?

LENA

Funny, Sassy.

Francine and Samaria scroll through their menus.

FRANCINE

Oooh, Lena, they put banana pudding on the menu. Mmmm. Yummy.

LENA

Uh-uh. You're supposed to be on a diet, remember?

FRANCINE

It's a domestic diet and it's null and void when you leave the house.

SAMARIA

I know that's right.

SASSY

I don't see no alcoholic beverages on the menu.

LENA

This is a family environment, Sassy, not a bar. I like to promote good health, good food, and a good creative atmosphere. Getting a buzz doesn't quite fit in that.

SASSY

You got a lot of diet shit on this menu. What's up with that? You might be on a diet, but America isn't.

(MORE)

SASSY (CONT'D)

Crispy Cream, Dunkin Donuts, The Cheesecake Factory, Big Macs, Whoppers, Blimpie's--get it--blimp, fat--get it. All these things tell you America's diet plan is awry!

(leans forward)

Okay, I hate to tell you sisters this, but the word "diet", is really just a synonym to the term try it. Okay. So get wit the program. Those who are on a diet always find themselves in situations where they just have to try it.

Samaria, Lena and Francine all laugh.

FRANCINE

You something else.

CUT TO:

CLUB ENTRANCE

Several young men are entering the club. Leading the pack is AC, late twenties, handsome, suave, kool, dressed to impress in an expensive blazer and slacks, showcasing his wrist jewelry and gold watches. Next to him is LANCE. Late thirties. Tall. Dark. He carries himself like a Muslim, wearing a Kufi skull cap and Karim tunic. Behind him comes KWASHAWN, mid-twenties, a wannabe street thug, jeans hanging from his waist, the hood to his pullover over his head. Behind him is KEVIN, late twenties, IRISH, the type of guy anybody can get along with. At his side is FABULOUS, the Eminem hip hop white boy wannabe, dressed much like Kwashawn. And last comes DARREN, early twenties, the youngest out of the bunch. A clean-shaven baby face. And obviously the follower.

They walk in like a gang of superstars, looking around, demanding attention.

ON SAMARIA

She turns and spots the crew of men, noticing AC right away.

ON AC

He looks and stops, noticing her, too.

ON SAMARIA

She blushes and turns away.

ON AC

He smiles, still looking in her direction.

Kevin comes up behind him.

KEVIN

You scheming on some chick already?  
We just got here.

AC

Nah, nah. I'm good.

AC doesn't take his eyes off Samaria.

ON SAMARIA

Still blushing, cutting looks toward AC every chance she gets.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

This was it. The first night I saw  
him. The night that would change my  
life forever.

AC starts walking inside, smooth as he wants to be, chewing on an unlit cigar. He stops to give handshakes and dap to everyone he knows, playing the celebrity role to the tee.

He joins his friends at a table in the middle of the club.

ON SAMARIA

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

Damn. Any girl would've been up in  
his face. He was that fine. And he  
knew it.

AC'S TABLE

He notices Samaria checking him out. He nudges Kevin and makes a gesture for him to look.

SAMARIA'S TABLE

Samaria quickly turns away, embarrassed.

She waits a moment, pretending to be reading her menu. Then she looks over toward AC's table again.

HER P.O.V -- AC'S TABLE

He smirks and blows her a kiss.

BACK ON SAMARIA

She puts her head down into her menu.

SAMARIA

Oh, my god.

Sassy looks over at her.

SASSY

What's wrong with you?

SAMARIA

Don't look, but there's this cute  
guy over at that table to my left.  
He blew me a kiss.

Sassy looks anyway.

SASSY

Where?

SAMARIA

I said don't look.

SASSY

Girl, please.

FRANCINE

What's going on?

SAMARIA

He's three table's over. See him?

SASSY

Do I. Uh-oh. Silky, silky now. And  
he's got friends. Heyyyyy!

LENA

What are you two doing?

SASSY

There's a flirt blowing kisses at  
Chaka Khan over here. He looks good,  
too. And he has friends.

FRANCINE

Where?

LENA

Ohhhh. I see them. I'm not into  
white boys, though.

SASSY

They probably wouldn't be into you  
neither.

(checks out Kevin)

Shit. I'll take him! He's Matt  
Damon cute.

CUT TO:

ON AC'S TABLE

AC

Yo, fellas, heads up.  
(MORE)

AC (CONT'D)

We being clocked. Four O clock,  
dead ahead. Four at a table. One  
of them is checking out Kevin.

KEVIN

Really.  
(looking)  
Which one?

AC

The redbone with the braids.

Kevin spots Sassy.

HIS P.O.V - SAMARIA'S TABLE

Sassy waves to him.

BACK ON KEVIN

KEVIN

Not bad. I'd hit it.

Everyone around the table laughs.

ON SAMARIA'S TABLE

LENA

Sassy, you have no class. You don't  
wave to them. That's not lady like.

SASSY

Shut up and pass me some lip gloss  
and eyeliner out your bag. Fran,  
you brought your vanity mirror, right?  
I gotta do a booga check.

Francine goes through her purse and pulls out a mirror.

FRANCINE

Yep. Got it right here.  
(hands it to Sassy)  
Never leave home without it.

LENA

You heifers are acting like y'all  
back in high school.

SASSY

Those were the easy days. Tighter  
abs, firm butts, and excess donuts  
didn't leave evidence.

SAMARIA

Oh, my god! They're coming over  
here! They're coming over!

FRANCINE

Oooh. They sure are.

SASSY

Straighten up! Lady mode! Lady mode!

LENA

Y'all are real pitiful.

SASSY

Samaria, stop looking so damn anxious.

AC, Kevin, Kwashawn, Lance, and Darren approach the table. Fabulous stays back at the table.

AC walks up to Samaria and reaches out to shake her hand.

AC

Hello.

(to the table)

Hi. How you ladies doing tonight?

LADIES

Fine!

AC

Good, good. Forgive me for intruding, but my name is AC. These are my boys. Kevin. Lance. Darren. Kwashawn.

KEVIN

Hey. How are ya?

DARREN

Sup.

LANCE

Ladies, nice to meet you.

KWASHAWN

Aw'ight. That's what I'm talkin' 'bout.

SASSY

Hi, Kevin!

KEVIN

Hey. How are you?

SASSY

Good. I'm Sassy.

KEVIN

Sassy?

SASSY

Yep.

KEVIN

Nice to meet you there, Sassy.

FRANCINE

You from Boston, Kevin. I can hear the accent.

KEVIN

Yeah. Born and raised. How 'bout yourself.

FRANCINE

My name is Francine Bennett. Born and raised right here in Brooklyn. I was educated in Los Angeles, at the school of--

SASSY

(interrupting)

Francine, this ain't Wikipedia! The man didn't ask for your bio.

ON AC

AC

(to Samaria)

What's your name?

SAMARIA

Me? Uh, my name is Samaria. Samaria Devereux.

AC

All right, all right. I like that. Got some Creole to you, huh?

SAMARIA

Uh-huh.

AC

Samaria, my mother raised me to approach a beautiful woman with respect. So I hope I'm not being disrespectful by letting you know how attractive you are. I got hit with inspiration as soon as I saw you.

Samaria giggles like a teenager.

Sassy cuts a look to Lena, who is smiling and shaking her head.

AC (CONT'D)

You going anywhere any time soon?

SAMARIA  
Me? Uh. No. Why?

AC  
You'll see.

AC turns to his friends.

AC (CONT'D)  
Fellas. Hold it down.

AC winks at Samaria and walks off, heading toward a man sitting near the stage. He begins talking to him.

Lance is shaking his head.

LANCE  
What is AC doing now?

KEVIN  
You know, AC. He's gotta showboat.

SASSY  
Excuse me, but your friend isn't about to sing, is he?

KWASHAWN  
That nigga can't sing.

KEVIN  
We have no idea what he's about to do.

DARREN  
We can't take him no place.

LENA  
Why don't y'all grab some chairs and sit down here with us. We can see what your friend is about to do together.

KEVIN  
Thanks.

Kwashawn grabs a chair and sits down right next to Sassy. He smiles at her.

KWASHAWN  
How you doing tonight, lovely?

SASSY  
(holds her nose)  
Oooh, nigga, you smell like liquor and corn chips!

CUT TO:



THE STAGE

The HOST walks up onto the stage and takes the mic from the last poet as he exits.

HOST  
Okay, give it up for the Mandingo of Lyrics!

There are applauds from the audience.

HOST (CONT'D)  
Okay. So let's keep the rhythm flowing up in here. Next up, from our very own Brooklyn, we have AC. Let's give it up for AC!

There are applauds and whistles from the crowd.

AC walks up onto the stage and takes the mic from the host.

ON SAMARIA'S TABLE

Everyone watches earnestly, except for Kwashawn who is eyeing Francine.

ON STAGE

AC  
What's up, Nubians!

There are some applauds.

AC (CONT'D)  
Nah, nah. I said **WHAT'S UP NUBIANS!**

The audience cheers and whistles in a roar.

AC (CONT'D)  
Aw'ight. That's what I'm talking about. Get that positive energy up in here. Now I know I wasn't on the roster to kick some poetry tonight, but I just got hit with some inspiration. And oh yeah! She's all that!  
(adjusts the mic)  
I call this piece, "A Brother's Gotta Be Deep." This is for you Samaria.  
(pause)  
Now a brother's gotta be deep when he plans to creep, 'cause gaining your attention is always the hardest feat. What can he say that probably hasn't been said before. Words so deep you'll feel 'em in your heart's core.

(MORE)

AC (CONT'D)

You look good girl is never enough,  
and all that "Yo, baby, yo, baby!"  
Is a little too rough. So again, a  
brother's gotta be deep when he  
expects the opposition to be strong--  
but those other brothers make  
impressions that are all wrong.  
What can I say that'll make me stand  
out from the rest? Maybe I'll just  
let you decide by putting my heart  
to the test. Now in a world where a  
smile is far and between, can I tickle  
you with the details of every fantasy  
I dream? Girl, your hair, your  
clothes, your style, your grace!...I  
bet you can't keep a brother up outta  
your face! So here I am, ready to  
stand in line--against all those  
fake brothers who thought it would  
be all about how to wine and dine.  
You see, I know it's gotta be deeper  
than that-- especially since I didn't  
see no ring on that finger with  
diamonds mad fat. Now other men  
might look at that as their chance,  
but I'm deeper than most, so I look  
upon the circumstance. All in all  
the game of love has gotten steep...  
so that's why a brother just got to  
be deep...

AC drops the mic and blows a kiss toward Samaria's table.

The audience gives him a standing ovation, especially the women.

He takes a bow and walks off the stage.

ON SAMARIA'S TABLE

Lance, Kevin, Darren and Kwashawn are laughing their asses off.

AC comes up to the table.

LANCE

Yo, I didn't know a brother had to  
be that deep, man.

KEVIN

Whatever happened to, "Hi, my name's  
AC, would you like to go out to dinner  
sometime?"

DARREN

Damn, AC, you on some Denzil  
Washington kool shit tonight.

KWASHAWN

Yo, that was whack, my nigga. You make smooth look real corny.

AC

Stop hating.  
(to Samaria)  
That piece came from the heart.

SAMARIA

Was that for me?

AC

You know it was.

He walks up to Samaria, taking out his wallet and pulling out a business card, handing it to her.

AC (CONT'D)

Is it okay if I leave you my number?

Samaria takes the card and looks it over.

AC (CONT'D)

You can call anytime. We can go out sometimes. Movie, dinner, whatever. Even a walk in the park. That kool?

SAMARIA

I never had someone recite a poem just for me before.

AC

That's because they were never deep enough to see just how special you are.

Kevin and Lance AD LIB in the background: "Awwwww. Isn't that 'tweet!" Then they start laughing.

KWASHAWN

Yo, AC, stop playing yourself, yo. You corny, nigga.

AC

Let the lady decide that. So would you like to go out sometimes, Samaria? Ever had Italian?

SAMARIA

No.  
(hesitant)  
I... have...to...see. Um. I guess it would be nice.

AC

Just let me know what you'd like to do and we'll do it. Boat ride, carnival, theater, dancing-- girl, I'd even take you shoe shopping. And you know that's a big sacrifice for a man.

Samaria laughs.

SAMARIA

Okay. Okay. We'll talk. I'll call you.

AC

Make sure of it.  
(to the table)  
Ladies, you all have a pleasant evening.

LADIES

Good-night. Thank you.

SASSY

Yeah, come again.

AC

Fellas, we ready?

The guys get up, some still laughing.

LANCE

Have a good night, ladies.

KEVIN

Good-night, Ladies.

KWASHAWN

Yo, I ain't get no numbers.

SASSY

Boy, the only number you could ever get would be the one the judge hits you with at the sentencing. Bye!

KWASHAWN

Oh, wow, that's cold.

AC

Samaria, don't forget.

SAMARIA

I won't.

AC

(to the ladies)  
Good-night.

SASSY

Yeah, bye.

AC and his entourage head back to their table.

Samaria watches them as they gather their things and Fabulous and then head for the door.

Samaria is in a trance. She's moved.

Sassy snaps her fingers in her face to bring her back into reality.

SASSY (CONT'D)

You liked that little poem he did for you, huh, Samaria?

SAMARIA

I liked the way he did it. It was... creative.

SASSY

Uh-huh. Yeah, well, they're always creative when you first meet them. They show you a lot of teeth in the beginning. Spend a little money. Buy some flowers or gifts here and there. You see, Samaria, men are... businessmen. And by nature they are in the business of getting the draws. So like any other businessman, they say what you want to hear and pull out all their creative marketing tricks. That is, until they seal the deal. Then watch what kinda poem a nigga like that will be reciting to you: **Sorry, but, A BROTHER'S GOTTA BE OUT!**

FRANCINE

Not every man is like that, Sassy.

LENA

Yeah, let the girl have her moment. It's obvious he moved her. I saw you blushing, Samaria, when he finished that poem.

SASSY

Lena, why did you and Ty divorce?

LENA

Different relationship, different circumstance. Ty and I grew apart. Really we outgrew each other. We married too young to begin with. He became too boring and lazy.

SASSY

What about you and Emilio, Fran?

FRANCINE

Same thing, really. When a relationship--no, excuse me--a marriage-- gets to the point where he would rather hump than kiss or sleep than talk, then that's it. He's gotta go.

The SOUND of Lena, Sassy and Francine's conversation begins to fade out as Samaria looks over AC's business card with a smile.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

I never had a man ever move me the way AC did that day. To me, it was electric. Left me in a daze. There was nothing anyone could have said to me to persuade me to feel any different. That brother had me open... and it was on.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE, KITCHEN -- DAY

The phone is RINGING.

Francine, dressed in exercise spandex, runs into the kitchen and answers it, out of breath.

FRANCINE

Hello?

(beat)

Oh, hi. Yeah, she's here. Hold on a minute.

(calls out)

Samaria! Samaria, phone!

Francine sets the phone down.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Samaria!

Samaria walks into the kitchen.

SAMARIA

Who is it?

FRANCINE

That guy from the other night.

Samaria makes a face, confused. Francine walks out the kitchen.

Samaria picks the phone up from the counter.

SAMARIA

(into phone)

Hello.

(beat)

Hi.

(beat)

Yeah, I remember you. But how did you get my number?

(beat)

What waitress?

(beat)

Oh. At Nubian's. Wow. That's not safe to be giving people's number out like that. This is Lena's phone and I think she's gonna be pissed. She might fire that waitress.

(beat)

No, I won't tell her. So, what's up?

(beat)

Today?

(beat)

No, I'm not doing nothing. Yeah, so I guess that would be okay. You wanna meet out here or in the city?

(beat)

Okay. That sounds good. I'll meet you there.

(beat)

Yeah, I know where it is. I'm getting real familiar with the city.

(beat)

Okay. See you then. Bye.

Samaria hangs up the phone, and, as she is about to turn and leave the kitchen, bumps right into Sassy.

SASSY

So where are you off to, miss?

SAMARIA

That guy from the club. AC. That was him. He wants to meet and talk. You know.

SASSY

Yeah, uh-huh, I do know.

SAMARIA

He seems harmless, Sassy.

SASSY

They all do in the beginning, Samaria. Then--BAM! You're pregnant, and he's messing around with one of your trifling ass girlfriends.

SAMARIA

I'll be okay.

SASSY

Look, Samaria, this is your first date. I'm a give you advice to take along with you. You just make sure you stick to the "no" rules.

SAMARIA

What are no rules?

SASSY

No, I ain't going over to your place, no, I ain't trying to kiss you now, no, I ain't inviting you over to my place. No, I ain't paying for dinner, and no, your boys can't come with us on this date.

Samaria sighs then heads out the kitchen.

Sassy walks after her.

SASSY (CONT'D)

And don't forget about the yes rule, Samaria. It's the most important one.

SAMARIA

The yes rule?

SASSY

Yes, I'm on my period right now.

SAMARIA

See you later, Sassy.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK -- DAY

A breezy sunny afternoon of playful activities-- Frisbee, joggers, bicyclists, baseball and couples hand-in-hand.

AC and Samaria come walking along a path. They have that slow, "just met", side-by-side swagger about them. All laughs and smiles.

AC

--So you do like it here so far, then.

SAMARIA

I guess. It's big here. I'll give New York that.

(MORE)



SAMARIA (CONT'D)

I'll never forget when I got off the bus and saw all the lights and big buildings. I felt the energy right away.

AC

You sure it wasn't somebody going through your pocket?

(laughs)

SAMARIA

Ha, ha. Very funny. No, I was impressed. I had never seen anything like New York before. I never really traveled out of Louisiana after leaving Mississippi.

AC

You a farm girl?

SAMARIA

Nooo. I had civilization around me, if that's what you mean. We got cities, just not as huge. And the people aren't in a hurry like they are here.

AC

So, what you're saying is Louisiana has more class?

SAMARIA

A little more hospitality. But don't get it twisted now. There's crime and stuff there. A lot in Louisiana has changed before and after Katrina. It's kinda sad.

(beat)

I--I really don't like talking about it.

AC

I feel you. That Katrina thing is messed up. I think that George mother--

SAMARIA

(cutting him off quick)

--It's not Katrina that made me leave. Louisiana was a wasteland to me way before Katrina. After my grandmother died, I really felt I had nothing left there.

AC

I'm sorry to hear 'bout your grandma.

SAMARIA  
I thought she would live forever.  
(beat)  
Hmm. I thought my first love would  
be forever. Naive.

AC is silent, walking and admiring Samaria. She turns and looks at him.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)  
What?

AC  
Nothing.

SAMARIA  
Why are you looking at me like that?

AC  
You seem sad. I didn't mean to take you there.

SAMARIA  
Where were you trying to take me?

AC grins.

AC  
Soooo. Um... do you have someone special right now? Anyone back at the Mardi Gras I should know about?

SAMARIA  
No. No such person back there or here. What about you?

AC  
Nope. No one.

SAMARIA  
Yeah, right.

AC  
Nah, I'm serious. I'm as single as they come.

SAMARIA  
And why is that? Keeping yourself on the market?

AC  
For the right woman, yes.

SAMARIA  
Are you even looking for the right woman or you just ho hopping?

AC laughs.

AC

Nah, nah. That's funny. Good one. But straight up, I've been thinking about settling down if the right female came along and we clicked.

SAMARIA

So what's the right female for you?

AC

(laughs)

You gotta lotta questions there, don't you? Got me feeling like I'm being sized up.

SAMARIA

You said we should meet and talk to get to know about each other. Doesn't that take asking questions?

AC

Right, right.

(beat)

Well, whew, let's see. The qualities I look for in a woman? Hmm. Well, I guess I would have to say someone who's conservative and not fast. I don't want no chick who likes to hang out with her girls, go out dancing, clubbing, have a lot of male friends. I'm not feeling that shit at all.

SAMARIA

So you want somebody naive who you can control?

AC

Doesn't every man?

They laugh.

AC (CONT'D)

For real, though. I like good girls. Wholesome girls.

SAMARIA

What man doesn't?

(off of AC's smirk)

Most men marry the wholesome, good girls while having the fast, hot mamas on the side.

(looks at him)

Come on. You know it's true.

AC

Yeah, well--

SAMARIA

--Uh-huh--

AC

--depends. I mean, it depends on the depth and substance of the relationship you're in. A wife can be freaky with her man.

SAMARIA

Not a self-respecting one. My grandmamma always told me to keep your legs crossed while sitting anywhere in public and keep your fingers crossed when choosing a man.

AC laughs to himself. He looks around.

AC

You wanna hang out here a bit or would you like to go get something to eat.

SAMARIA

You treating?

AC

I'm a real man, Samaria. I'm treating.

(beat)

Just watch how many items you choose from the value menu at Mickey D's.

Samaria laughs.

SAMARIA

That was cute.

They walk and laugh.

EXT. RESTAURANT -- DAY

Establishing.

INT. RESTAURANT -- DAY

AC and Samaria are seated at a table near the window. The waitress comes over and pours AC some coffee and takes their order. Then she walks off.

AC sips his coffee, smiling at Samaria.

AC

So, yeah, like I was saying, it's getting expensive to live in the apple now.

SAMARIA

It's getting like that everywhere.  
I thought Atlanta was overpriced for  
what it was.

AC

And what was it?

SAMARIA

A mini New York. Georgia is nice,  
though.

AC

So what are you into, Samaria? What  
do you like doing?

SAMARIA

I like entertaining. I love music.  
Especially R&B and oldies. I sing  
myself.

AC

Say word?

SAMARIA

Okay: Word.

AC

Nah, for real, I'm in the music  
business! Matter of fact, I'm  
promoting this rap group right now.  
They're called "Ill Lyrics", these  
two kids from the Bronx. They're  
good.

SAMARIA

I hate rap. I hate what the lyrics  
promote: sex, violence, materialism,  
drugs, prostitution. It's so one-  
sided.

AC

It's not rap music. That's the  
artist. Not all rap is negative.

SAMARIA

Well, I just wanna sing sing. Like  
Ella Fitzgerald, Gladys Knight, Patti  
Labelle, Chaka Khan, Stephanie Mills.  
Back then, you recognized the person,  
not the image. Nowadays, when a  
woman sings, she has to be labeled a  
diva. Why does she have to be all  
of that? Why can't she just sing?

AC

'Cause a lotta of these female artists  
out there today can't sing.

(off her look)

Yo, anyway, it's about the money  
today. The image makes the money.  
If that's what it takes, then I'm  
down for it. I gotta get paid.

SAMARIA

Is that all you care about?

AC

That's right! Make-that-money.  
There's enough of it to go around.

SAMARIA

Aren't we in a recession since two  
thousand and two?

AC

Bullshit. You can be working for a  
corporation earning twenty thousand  
a year. But the executive takes  
home six figures. Why is that?  
'Cause money is a piece of paper.  
It's made--processed like government  
cheese. And the only reason why  
that exec is making more than you is  
because he or she is a part of the  
system's equation. See, money puts  
people in a class. You're either  
rich, poor or somewhere in between.  
It's a game. Like chess. Kings set  
themselves up. The chessboard is  
the land, the empire, and everyone  
else either becomes knights, bishops,  
rooks... or pawns. Life plays out  
like a game of chess. You just have  
to decide which position you are  
going to play. Me, I refuse to be  
somebody's pawn. I refuse to let  
the rule-makers make or break me.  
I'm playing my own position.

SAMARIA

So getting paid helps you play your  
own position?

AC

That's right!

SAMARIA

I don't believe that.

AC

Why not?

SAMARIA

Some execs become execs because of their education, and some mailroom workers become what they become because of their lack of education. Most rich money is passed down inheritance and wealth.

AC

Okay. I give you that. But there's another side to rich money. It's called embezzlement, taxation, swindling, under-the-table pay-offs and extortion. And half of that inherited wealth you talking about, that comes from slave profits. Some of the wealthiest, most set-up people in this earth made a fortune from one form of slavery or another. People profit off of people. People pimp people. It's been that way since the first civilization of man, Egypt.

AC seems a bit touchy. Samaria struck a nerve. This is obviously a sensitive topic. He sips his coffee, looks out the window, pensive for a moment.

SAMARIA

You okay?

He turns to her, his face scowling.

AC

You wanna know what else? I don't believe this country, the system, is broke. Individuals might be broke, but not the privately owned Federal Reserve, not the government, and not the capitalists. They use their power to tax, they use inflation and deflation to keep the rich, rich, the poor, poor and the working class worrying about their jobs. They know the business cycle, how the money supply is flowing, so the same people who cause inflations and deflations can also prevent it. It's an old game being played on us and it's called greed. Race, class, it's all an excuse. Ever heard of globalization?

Samaria shakes her head no.

AC (CONT'D)

Well, globalization is a term used to describe the growing interdependence of people and countries. The process of globalization has grown like crazy because of all these advances you see in technology. We think all this technology is a good thing because it makes our lives in this busy business world easier. The world has become financially richer because of scientific advances, but the gap between the haves and have-nots has widened. This world has never been fair when it comes to distributing wealth. Ever! Egypt, Rome, Europe, America have all made their wealth through slavery, extortion and conquering. I don't know one large empire in history that was ever set up through peace and equality and fairness. Not one. Not in the history books. Not in human reality.

Samaria looks at AC, impressed.

SAMARIA

Wow. I would never have--you must read a lot.

AC

Nah. I just happen to have a white roommate who has a masters in economics and hard-on for the History Channel.

Samaria smirks.

SAMARIA

You're funny.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- DAY -- LATER

Samaria and AC walk along a Brooklyn street, still talking, laughing.

AC

--okay, okay, I give you that.

(beat)

But, seriously, Samaria, let's talk some real shit here. Let's talk some business. How 'bout it?



SAMARIA

How about what?

AC

The music thing. I wanna put you down with us. We've been looking for a singer to add some flavor to our sound.

SAMARIA

I'm not sure about that, AC.

AC

Why not? We got the--

SAMARIA

--It's just that I had a man manage my career before. He was older than me and-- we dated... it just never works.

AC

Different person, different situation-- entirely.

SAMARIA

I'm busy looking for a job right now. I owe one of my roommates a lot of money. I have to start being realistic about some things. Like bills and responsibility.

AC

You need to be real about your gift. If you got a voice, make money from it.

SAMARIA

I want my voice to be appreciated... not extorted.

AC

What did I tell you earlier. It's a pimping system.

SAMARIA

If you're looking to be an Ike Turner, I am not looking to be a Tina.

AC

It ain't even like that. This the real deal here. We got major labels looking to sign us. We already have a lot of connections. It's about to happen for real. We're about to blow up.

(MORE)

AC (CONT'D)

The rap industry's been hurting a little but we're about to change that. Unlike a lot of those corny dirty dirty artists out there, we're about to hit 'em with originality-- raps from a new era. Not that, "Uh. My gold tooth got stuck in my biscuit" kind of rap.

SAMARIA

AC, I don't know.

(smiles)

I tell you what, give me some time to get myself together and give it some thought later on.

AC

But if you put it off, it might never happen. The time is now, Samaria.

He stops her, looks into her eyes.

AC (CONT'D)

Yo, I'm dead serious. We were meant to meet. I feel that. You can't pass up this opportunity. This might just be destiny calling. Can you hear it?

SAMARIA

AC... I... I started becoming afraid of the idea of becoming a starving artist.

AC takes her by the hand and they start walking again.

AC

Okay, then, let me ask you this. What else do you want to do with your life? What other job do you see yourself at? Some man's secretary or receptionist? A waitress? A welfare wife? Or maybe a cashier at some hole-in-the-wall boutique? You got your pick, you know.

He stops again, looks at her.

AC (CONT'D)

You can settle for that life if you want to, but would you be happy? Don't you feel like you were meant for something better... something greater?

Samaria looks at him, seeing his sincerity. She looks around, skeptical. She shakes her head no.

He gently places his hand on her face.

AC (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not out to fill your head with empty promises. I mean, I like you on the real. I'm feeling you. The fact that you sing just adds to what's already there. I ain't out to take advantage of you. But if we make our dreams come true and do this music thing together, then I'll use that to my advantage. And yours.

She gazes into AC's eyes. She's feeling him, too. She eyes his lips. Then she quickly turns away.

SAMARIA

You just trying to get me weak in my knees.

AC laughs.

AC

It ain't even like that. Look, come with me to the studio tonight. Come peep the talent for yourself. Maybe we can do a demo, hear how you sound. That kool?

Samaria hesitates, then nods.

AC (CONT'D)

Kool.

He takes her hand into his.

She looks at his hand, then up at him. She feels reassured.

They start walking back up the street.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

Did I tell you that man had me open right away? It was about to get even deeper than that. And I was about to go into another relationship heart first, feet wet.

CUT TO:

INT. LENA'S BROWNSTONE, DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Sassy and Francine are at the table playing cards.

Lena is coming down the spiral stairs from upstairs in her bathrobe. She heads for the kitchen.

LENA

Samaria ain't get in yet?

SASSY

Hell no.

FRANCINE

I hope she's okay.

LENA (O.S.)

Did she call?

SASSY

Hell no! She's grown tonight!

LENA (O.S.)

If something was wrong, she would've called.

SASSY

How the hell you gonna be able to call someone if you're getting robbed or raped? Tell the nigga assaulting you to hold on a minute while you call home?!

Lena walks out of the kitchen with a plate of cheesecake. She sits down at the table.

LENA

I just know it ain't serious like that. She's just out having fun.

SASSY

Or getting busy.

LENA

I don't even wanna hear about that.

SASSY

That's because you ain't the one getting busy.

LENA

Well neither are you, Sassy.

SASSY

I put this in hiatus until Mr. Right comes along. I ain't giving out samples no more. Tired of those broke-ass niggas who try the samples but are too cheap or broke to buy the entree.

LENA

I hear that.

Suddenly, the SOUND of keys jingling in the front door.

Everyone turns in that direction.

Samaria comes in the door all smiles.

Sassy and Francine hop from the dining room table and go running over to her.

SASSY  
Come right over here, Miss  
Thang, you got some  
explaining to do.

FRANCINE  
Samaria, what happened?  
Where were you? We  
were worried. Come  
right on in here and  
give us the 4-1-1.

They drag Samaria into the dining room.

SASSY  
You know only people with  
real jobs can hang out  
past midnight on a week  
day. You ain't there yet.

FRANCINE  
Was you with AC? Where'd  
he take you? Where'd  
y'all go? Did you have  
a nice time? I hope  
not.

LENA  
Damn, let the girl breathe. You  
okay, Samaria?

SAMARIA  
I'm fine. I just went with AC over  
to the studio where he does his music.  
He's an artist, you know.

SASSY  
Yeah, but what kind? Con artist,  
bullshit artist? Which one?

SAMARIA  
Nooo. He does music. He puts beats  
together and writes music and lyrics.  
He's really talented, too.

SASSY  
Did he try and molest you?

SAMARIA  
What?

LENA  
Sassy! She is over twenty-one you  
know.

SASSY  
You know what I meant.

SAMARIA  
He was polite and respectful. We  
just talked and ate and then I watched  
him and his friends put music together  
in the studio.

(MORE)

SAMARIA (CONT'D)  
(removes her shoulder  
bag)

I was wrong about rap music. AC  
really has some talented artists  
putting together some hot music.  
And he wants me to sing on their  
album.

Sassy makes a face. She is obviously skeptical.

SASSY  
I think you and I need to sit down  
and watch the Wizard of Oz.

SAMARIA  
Huh? Why?

SASSY  
I think you need to see how the great  
wizard was selling big dreams.

Samaria ignores Sassy's retort and walks into the living  
room.

Sassy and Francine follow her.

Lena gets up from the dining room table and heads back  
upstairs.

LENA  
Good-night y'all.

They ignore Lena. Sassy and Francine are too busy trying to  
drill Samaria.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
I could'a cared less what Sassy or  
anybody else had to say that night.  
I was on cloud nine. I met my knight  
in shining armor who just happened  
to have a recording deal to go along  
with the nobility.

Samaria continues to try and tune Sassy and Samaria out as  
we--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLUB NUBIAN'S -- NIGHT

It's packed! Nearly every table is occupied.

At one table, AC, Kevin, Lance, Lena and Francine are sitting  
and talking.

The host makes his way to the stage and takes the mic.

HOST

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,  
and welcome to another new talent  
night at Club Nubian's. How's  
everyone feeling tonight?

The audience clap their hands and whistle.

HOST (CONT'D)

All right. That's what I'm talking  
about. We got some good vibes up in  
here tonight. Okay. First off, we  
got some raw performers hitting the  
stage tonight. We have some poetry,  
singing, and a little jazz session.

(audience applauds)

So, yeah, that's right. We're mixing  
it up in here tonight. First up is  
a new poet on the scene, and this is  
her first time ever hitting the stage.  
She calls herself Sassy and she is  
here to deliver. So let's give it  
up for Sassy!

The audience gives it up.

Sassy walks out onto the stage and snatches the mic from the  
host. He gives her a look as he makes his way off the stage.

SASSY

Hey, party people. How y'all doing?  
I'm Sassy.

The audience erupts into applauds.

SASSY (CONT'D)

Thank you, thank you. Oh, the love,  
the love. I like that.

(pans the audience)

I see a lot of couples in here  
tonight. Wow. Some of you holding  
hands, too. So how many of you are  
just faking the funk 'cause you out  
in public? Uh-huh.

ON AUDIENCE

Some of them are looking around at each other with stumped  
expressions: "Did she just say what we think she said?"

ON SASSY

SASSY (CONT'D)

Anyway, I wrote this poem last week  
and I think it's time to share it.  
Get it off my chest, you know.

(MORE)

SASSY (CONT'D)

I call this: "Oh So I'm the One With the Attitude!" I just wish my ex had been here to hear it, but he never responded to my texts or emails.

(to herself)

Shady nigger.

(to the audience)

Okay, here we go. Ready? Okay.

She clears her throat. Then she gets into her mode.

SASSY (CONT'D)

So you say I have an attitude 'cause your ass stayed out late. Blaming me when you got hit with that frying pan--nigga that was just fate. Now all I ask for is just a little time. Hmp! Should'a known better-- you never did loan me that damn dime. "Carry your weight, woman," that's what he used to say. "Tonight I'm coming in late, woman," that's how he used to play. So let me get this straight. You say I'm the one with the attitude, after I cooked and cleaned and washed all your dirty clothes?! Keeping you looking good just for all your raggedy ass hoes. So now here you come again with another sorry ass story. Save it, brother. I found the number. Her name is Laurie. Now what would you do if I dissed you that way? Excuse me? It'll never happen, you say. Don't you know history? Arrogance is the sin, the key, the downfall of every great nation. Keep being arrogant and I swear, you're headed for damnation. What do you mean I'm taking this to another level? Ain't you the one who's been living like a devil? I did a lot of crying over you the first few years. But I refuse to cry over you anymore. Experience has dried up all those tears. Now I ain't saying someone won't have me open again. But he better have patience; six months later and we're still just friends. Oh! So I'm the one with the attitude? I don't remember you saying that when we first met. Remember that, nigga? That's when you treated me like your new pet. Who made all those weak promises, sold dreams, said it was time to get the ring?

(MORE)



SASSY (CONT'D)

And now I'm the one being rude.  
Don't forget, you walked out on this,  
nigga. But, oh, so now I'm the one  
with the attitude.

Sassy frowns. She really does have an attitude.

SASSY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

(beat)

And, ladies, one more thing, if you  
can't mold 'em or scold 'em, don't  
think you can hold them.

With that Sassy exits the stage.

The host walks past her, looking at her with his mouth dropped  
open. He is dumfounded. He takes the mic, gawking, still  
at a loss for words. Then he shakes his head, getting his  
head back to where he is.

HOST

Wow. Well, uh, there you have it.  
Sassy. Still waiting to exhale, I  
see. Okay. Uh, give it up for Sassy  
y'all.

There are hesitant applauds.

At the table, Lena, AC, Kevin, Lance and Francine are looking  
at each other, just as shocked as the host.

HOST

He gets back into his groove.

HOST (CONT'D)

Okay, let's change the tempo a bit,  
shall we. Next up, we have Samaria  
Devereux, right here from Brooklyn.  
She will be singing a jazz tune taken  
from Miss Billie Holiday herself.  
Let's here it for Samaria Devereux!

ON AUDIENCE

They applaud.

ON STAGE

Samaria walks out onto the stage, smiling.

ON AC

He leans back in his chair, taking out a cigar, looking proud.

ON STAGE

The host hands Samaria the mic.

ON TABLE

Sassy walks up to the table. Everyone, except for AC, is looking at her.

FRANCINE

Girl, what was that?

SASSY

What?

FRANCINE

I thought you were doing a poem about roses and spring?

SASSY

That other poem wasn't about no roses in spring. It was about weeds in the garden.

LENA

Sssh. She's about to sing. Sassy, sit down.

SASSY

Oh, Lena, calm down.

ON STAGE

The lights dim. Samaria looks out at the audience with a smile. Then she closes her eyes and the words begin to flow from her mouth.

After Samaria finishes her song, there are cheers and whistles and even some standing ovations from the audience.

She stands there on stage smirking, feeling good about herself in her meek and humble way.

ON AC

He gets to his feet, blows her a kiss. Claps.

ON SAMARIA

She is amazed by the love the audience continues to give her.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. SOUNDLAB CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

EXTREME CLOSE UP -- AC

He is talking into a microphone.

AC

Okay, try and relax. Feel the rhythm.  
Let the words just flow to the beat.  
I want you to feel ready for this.  
I want you to be ready for this.  
Just let me know when you're ready  
to take it from the top.

CUT TO:

STUDIO -- CONTINUOUS

Samaria is sitting on a stool, headphones on. She nods,  
takes a breath.

CONTROL ROOM

AC is leaned over Kevin, who is at the MIDI workstation.  
Fabulous is behind them going through papers and reciting  
lyrics. Kwashawn stands next to him drinking his forty ounce  
of beer.

AC

(to Kevin)

How you wanna bring her in?

Kevin is working the sound controls.

KEVIN

After the first verse. We'll raise  
the beat after her humming.

AC

Sounds kool.

(into mic)

Okay, Samaria, you ready?

She nods from inside the studio.

Kevin begins to play the beat.

Samaria starts bopping her head. Then she comes in singing,  
her voice strong.

AC is feeling it. He grabs Kevin by the shoulders.

AC (CONT'D)

You the man, Kev.

KEVIN

I know.

Kwashawn is in the background dancing.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

AC had finally convinced me to take my voice to the next level. He helped me to believe in myself... in him. My first time in the studio, I was as nervous as a first time virgin. But by my second to third times, I began to loosen up, feel more and more confident each time until I started feeling like I was meant to be there... until it became... a job.

AC

Let me get more vocals, Samaria.  
All right, yeah, there you go.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

Within a week, AC had me recording a track. One became two and two became three. And that was only the beginning of my troubles...

KEVIN

She's good. I can work with her vocal range.

AC

Yeah, but something's missing.

KEVIN

Like what?

AC

Let's try it again. From the top.  
I'll figure out what it is.

(into mic)

Okay, Samaria, great, great, but we wanna do another take. From the top.

Samaria sighs.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

The fun quickly ended.

CUT TO:

INT. AC'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

AC, Kevin, Samaria, and another woman, MINDY, late 20s, brunette, and attractive all come walking into the apartment laughing and talking.

AC  
--Yeah, but you could hear  
that on the tape during  
recording--

KEVIN  
--Ah, that's nothing.  
I can filter most of  
that stuff.

SAMARIA  
--That was my first time ever having  
Thai food.

MINDY  
Did you like it?

AC  
--We need to get cracking on the  
composite track pronto.

KEVIN  
Already told you I got your back.

The couples head into the living room.

AC turns on the lights.

AC  
Welcome to our humble abode, Samaria.

MINDY  
This your first time here, Samaria?

SAMARIA  
Yes.

KEVIN  
They just met.

AC  
We just met.

MINDY  
Oh, okay. That's nice. New to the  
scene, then.

AC  
Sit down, Samaria.

She does.

AC (CONT'D)  
You want anything to drink? Mindy?

MINDY  
I'm actually good.

SAMARIA  
I'm okay, too.

AC  
Saves me a walk.

AC sits next to Samaria on the sofa.

Kevin and Mindy sit on the other sectional.

MINDY

So, Samaria, how was your time in the studio?

SAMARIA

Good.

AC

More than good. She's getting better.

KEVIN

I'd say. I think we're just about ready to complete a CD.

AC

Now that's what I'm talking about. Headed to the big time, baby.

MINDY

Kevin tells me you sing jazz and R&B?

SAMARIA

I come from a gospel background, really. I sort of blend that into jazz and R&B.

MINDY

I can't sing a note.

KEVIN

(under his breath)

Not outside of a bedroom.

(coughs)

Anyway.

MINDY

That wasn't kool, Kevin. Grow up.

Kevin laughs.

KEVIN

Ah. Lighten up.

(gets up)

Speaking of bedroom. Early day tomorrow. You guys have the living room to yourselves. Samaria, have a good night. See you in the studio. AC, tomorrow, buddy.

AC gets up and gives Kevin dap.

AC

Kool, baby. Later.

MINDY

Good-night, Samaria. Nice meeting you.

SAMARIA  
You, too, Mindy.

MINDY  
We'll talk again soon.

SAMARIA  
Okay. Have a good night.

MINDY  
You, too. Let's go, Kevin.

Kevin is lead away by Mindy into one of the back rooms.

AC sits back down on the sofa next to Samaria.

AC  
You wanna watch some TV?

SAMARIA  
It doesn't matter.

AC  
Or would you rather talk?

SAMARIA  
Either or.

AC looks Samaria over, like a dog looking over a bone. We know what's on his mind.

She notices, blushes. Then perks up. Distraction mode.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)  
So you and Kevin seem pretty compatible.

AC  
That sounds gayish, Samaria.

SAMARIA  
No, what I meant, you two get along so well.

AC  
Kevin's been my best friend since junior high. We grew up in Boston together, about four blocks away from each other.

SAMARIA  
You two moved here together from Boston?

AC  
That came off gayish again, Samaria.

SAMARIA

Stop. You know what I meant.

AC

Just joking. Nah. Kev actually moved here before me. He went to college here. I came here later and he let me room with him. His other roommate moved back to Toronto or something. Yep, I've been here for about three years now.

SAMARIA

What does he do for a living-- I mean, outside of music.

AC

Kevin's mad talented. He writes and composes themes and music scores for TV commercials, corporate videos, all of that. He's also an audio engineer. That's my dawg for real.

SAMARIA

So what about you? What do you do outside of the music?

AC

I smoke crack.

SAMARIA

**WHAT!**

AC

(laughs)  
Nah. Just kidding.

SAMARIA

Don't play like that.  
(she hits at him,  
gently, smiling)  
Seriously. That's not funny. That's a horrible drug.

AC

I'm sorry. For real. I hustle my money.

Samaria looks at him intensely, suddenly all serious.

SAMARIA

What--what do you mean "hustle"?

AC

Yo, look at your face. It ain't that serious. Hustle just means I don't have one job. I have several.

(MORE)



AC (CONT'D)

I do different things to earn my cheddar.

SAMARIA

I don't know how to take that, AC.

AC

What do you mean?

SAMARIA

I mean, I know I want to be a singer. I know the economy isn't great. But I work jobs to keep a roof over my head, you know. I mean, I don't like office work, but I'll do that, I'll wait on tables, work at my favorite fashion store, whatever, you know, do what I have to do to survive. My grandmother did teach me about the value of good honest work.

AC

I hear ya. Nothing wrong with that.

SAMARIA

AC, it's just that I had a boyfriend in Louisiana, he never held down or had an honest job. He sold drugs, ran cons, had so many schemes just so he could have a gold tooth, cell phones, expensive suits, name brand clothes and shoes, and a reputation. He was always in and out of jail. He was an alcoholic and coke head.

(beat)

And... he was abusive.

(looks intently at AC)

I don't want to go through that again.

AC

What happened to him.

SAMARIA

(nonchalant)

He might've drowned in Katrina. I don't miss him.

AC

You don't have to worry about that with me.

SAMARIA

Every guy out there trying to be the man always says that.

AC

Well, yeah, I can't lie. I like being the man, you know--that nigga. That's just me. If I don't feel good about me, I can't expect anyone else to.

SAMARIA

You're a smart person, AC. I know you're different. I see good things in you, but I just--

AC

--It's kool, Samaria. In fact, let's move on. Let's enjoy the moment. Let's enjoy each other's company.

AC reaches over to the coffee table and picks up a remote, turning on the stereo.

INSERT - STEREO

The LED display changes to CD mode.

BACK TO SCENE

AC sets the remote down as MUSIC begins to BLARE from the speakers. It's a slow jam.

AC gets up, goes over to the wall and dims the lights.

Samaria looks at him.

SAMARIA

Setting the mood?

AC smirks.

AC

Too bright in here.

He sits back down on the sofa, gets closer.

AC (CONT'D)

You did a good job in the studio tonight. You really starting to open up.

SAMARIA

Just my voice, not my legs.

AC laughs.

AC

Oh, snap. Good one. Nah, it's not even like that. Even though I am feeling you, Samaria.

SAMARIA

I'm feeling something. Music, dim lights... is this why a brother had to be deep?

AC

I like you, Samaria. I really do.

SAMARIA

I like you, too, AC.

AC

You know what I've noticed about you--

SAMARIA

--What?--

AC

--outside of your attractive features. You have very soft skin. Smooth. I dated this one girl with hard, ashy skin. I started thinking she worked around volcanoes.

SAMARIA

Really.

AC takes Samaria's hand into his hand and rubs it.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

I think it's getting time for me to leave. I'm still looking for another job, you know.

AC

The way your music career is about to blow up, you won't need one.

SAMARIA

Yeah, right, I won't be waiting around for that to happen.

AC

It could happen like that.  
(snaps his finger)  
You never know.

SAMARIA

I can't live on dreams right now. I have to pay Francine back the money I owe her.

AC

It'll happen. I'm a make this CD thing happen. Believe me.

He inches closer to Samaria.

SAMARIA  
What are you doing?

AC  
I wanna kiss you.

SAMARIA  
AC...

He kisses her hand. She pulls it away from him.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)  
Ac, I'm feeling you, too, but I don't  
wanna rush this. I'd rather be in a  
relationship. I'd rather know that  
I'm not just your main girl, but  
your only girl. Know what I mean?

AC  
Yeah. I hear you.

SAMARIA  
AC, I don't just want you to hear  
me. I want you to understand me.  
Respect me.

AC  
I like that. You know what you want.

SAMARIA  
But can you respect what I'm saying?

AC  
I'm not a dog, Samaria. I'm not  
seeing anyone else right now. I'm  
not trying to blow up so I can tag  
every woman I see. For the last two  
years I have been really focusing on  
promoting my artists and doing music.  
But I ain't gonna lie neither. A  
brother could use a hug every now  
and then.

SAMARIA  
You got Kevin, Kwashawn and Fabulous.

AC  
Funny. Ha ha. I'm being serious.

SAMARIA  
I know. I just don't feel comfortable  
with that right now. I don't mind  
cuddling.

AC  
Cuddling? What am I? A pooch.

SAMARIA  
I'm sorry, AC. It's just how I feel.

AC  
Okay, that's kool. No pressure.

He reaches for the remote and turns off the stereo.

Samaria looks at him, feeling bad.

SAMARIA  
I'm sorry, AC. I don't want you to  
feel bad... feel like you struck  
out.

AC  
Well, I certainly didn't strike in.

She leans her head against his shoulder.

AC (CONT'D)  
So TV it is, then. What's on:  
"Sexless in the City"?

Samaria taps his leg.

SAMARIA  
Don't be like that.

He smiles, puts his arm around her, and uses the remote to  
turn the on the television.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
I can't begin to explain to you how  
special AC was to me. He was  
different from any man I had met  
before. He had confidence and  
charisma and self-assurance-- all of  
the qualities I liked in a man. He  
wasn't no street thug, and he wore  
the best cologne I ever smelled. I  
had a million and one reasons to  
fall over heels for that man. But...  
sad to say... sometimes it only takes  
one to fall out of that stupor. And  
the one reason usually ends up being  
the mother agony of them all.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOUNDLAB CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

AC, Kevin, Kwashawn, Lance, and Fabulous are busy at controls  
or listening to Samaria singing in the studio.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- SAMARIA

A.) Singing on a stage at a night club

B.) Walking through the park hand-in-hand with AC

C.) Singing in the studio.

D.) In her room sitting up on her bed, putting a picture frame of AC next to a picture frame of her grandmother.

E.) PUSH IN to AC's bedroom through a cracked door. He is laying in bed, making out with Samaria. He removes his shirt. We know what happens next.

F.) Samaria is on the rooftop of the brownstone, watching the sun settle into the horizon.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE, SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Samaria is sitting at the edge of her bed, staring into space, a distraught look on her face.

Suddenly, a KNOCK at her bedroom door.

Samaria snaps out of her trance and looks as Lena pops her head in.

LENA

Hey, lady, food's ready if you want to join us.

SAMARIA

Thank you, Lena. I'm not all that hungry.

Lena steps into the room.

LENA

You? What? Everything okay?

SAMARIA

I'm okay.

Lena looks at her.

LENA

Uh-huh. I know that look. Something's wrong.

Lena sits down next to her.

LENA (CONT'D)

You wanna talk about it?

SAMARIA

It's not a big deal really.

LENA  
Must be something. You gotta see  
your face. Look like you ate  
something sour. What happened?

SAMARIA  
(hesitant)  
I--I had sex with AC last night.

LENA  
Okay. Did he use protection?

SAMARIA  
I don't even remember.

LENA  
Samaria! You should know better--

SAMARIA  
--Lena, I really care about AC, but  
I feel like-- I feel dirty. I feel  
like I just should'a waited. I  
thought that making love to him would  
make me even more in love with him.  
I thought it would put me in  
wonderland, but, I don't know, I  
just feel so damn ashamed of myself.

LENA  
I can understand that. But, Samaria,  
having sex with someone these days  
without protection is like setting a  
hot comb to a synthetic hair weave  
that's flammable. You gonna get  
burned, girl. That really wasn't  
smart. And if you feel like crap,  
then you shouldn't have rushed into  
giving up a part of yourself so soon.

SAMARIA  
But I have such strong feelings for  
AC. Why would I feel this way about  
a man I love.

LENA  
Maybe because it's not love you're  
really in.

Samaria gives Lena a look: "Could that be it?" But she turns  
away, shaking her head and sighing.

CUT TO:

INT. AC'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

It's a card game. Kwashawn throws a hand down on the living  
room table and collects his winnings.

AC, Fabulous, Lance, Kevin, and Darren are seated around the table.

AC is smoking a cigar.

Fabulous is checking his cell phone.

Kevin deals the next hand.

LANCE

So how's everything going with the recordings at the studio?

AC

Good.

FABULOUS

I was spitting some hot shit on those tracks.

AC

We just finished doing some recordings with Ill Lyrics. Our stuff is tight. Tight!

LANCE

When's that meeting with Silk Records supposed to take place?

KEVIN

This week. AC got them the demo and they loved it. They love Samaria.

AC

Yeah, but they can't have her without us and Ill Lyrics and Fab over there. We worked hard putting this together. Hard.

DARREN

No doubt.

KWASHAWN

Nigga, you ain't do nothing.

DARREN

I know. But I'm still a part of the entourage. I'm down regardless. Right, AC?

AC

All my peeps are down.

LANCE

What about a lawyer?

AC

We haven't found one yet.



LANCE

Don't you have connects, Kev?

KEVIN

Not really. I've been looking on  
Craigslist.

LANCE

You know how shady the business is  
without good lawyers and managers.  
I would think first before going  
into a meeting with Silk Records or  
any other label without the right  
representation.

(beat)

I have a Muslim lawyer friend who--

AC

--Nah, that's okay!

KEVIN

We should be good there,  
Lance.

LANCE

What? What's wrong with a Muslim  
lawyer? Why the hate?

KEVIN

Nothing personal there, brother man,  
but we already decided on industry-  
professional representation.

AC

For real.

LANCE

Okay. Your loss. The brother has  
credentials.

KEVIN

I'm sure he does.

KWASHAWN

With who? Bin Laden?

LANCE

Now you're stereotyping. You're a  
black man. You can't afford to do  
that.

KWASHAWN

Whatever. Jewish lawyers are still  
the best.

FABULOUS

I have to agree with K dog.

LANCE

Fab, your pops is Jewish, man.

FABULOUS

But he's not a lawyer. Big difference.

AC

Fellas, can we please focus on the game. Kev and I already decided on how we're going to manage Samaria and our groups. Let's just play.

KEVIN

Fabulous, how long are you going to deal those cards?

LANCE

It ain't that serious.

DARREN

Speaking of serious, I seriously need to borrow some money from you guys.

Kwashawn laughs.

FABULOUS

I'm wasted this week.

KWASHAWN

I'm brok-a-licious.

AC

You always need money, Darren. You need a job.

LANCE

What you need money for this time, little brother?

DARREN

Doc. I owe him seven G's.

Everyone at the table burst into grunts and sighs.

KEVIN

Come on, D! What's wrong with you?

AC

Why you still messing with Doc, man? He's old school genocide!

LANCE

Darren, we had this talk before. Stop getting high, my little brother.

KWASHAWN

Hasn't anyone learned anything from the immortal poet, Sir Biggie Smalls--

FABULOUS  
(singing)  
--"Never get high on your  
own supply!"

KWASHAWN  
(singing)  
"Never get high on your  
own supply!"

DARREN  
I know all that, man! But on the  
real, Doc's pissed. I have to pay  
him, yo. He's got people looking  
for me.

KWASHAWN  
Damn, D!

AC  
What were you thinking, Darren?  
What made you smoke up seven gees  
worth of a killer's drugs.

LANCE  
The real questions is: did you smoke  
that all up in one day?

KWASHAWN  
Why you gotta get high for, anyway,  
D. Just drink forties. It's a cheap,  
safer way to get fucked up.

Fabulous and AC laugh.

DARREN  
Y'all making jokes. This is real.  
I need to pay, Doc.

AC  
You better talk to Doc, then. We  
don't have any money.

DARREN  
I know you or Lance gotta have  
something. Y'all still hustling,  
right?

AC  
Yo, man, why don't you just get a  
bullhorn and announce that shit in  
front of the eighty-eight precinct.

LANCE  
All of our money's been going into  
the music. And correction, I've  
never hustled anything outside of  
imitation clothes and bootleg DVDs.

DARREN  
I just need enough money to lay low  
for a while.

KEVIN

I can withdraw twelve hundred from my account tomorrow.

LANCE

I can get you eight hundred. But you gotta give me two days.

KWASHAWN

See, Darren, you got friends.

AC

I think you need to go to Doc and talk to him... get this straighten out.

DARREN

Now you bugging.

AC

Look, I'll go with you. You need to take care of this right away.

(gets up from the table)

I'm serious. Let's go to the spot right now. Come on. Don't worry. I got your back. I've talked to Doc before.

DARREN

You sure? Doc crazy, yo.

AC

Yo, let's go. Come on.

Darren throws in his hand, gets up from the table, and puts on his jacket.

AC (CONT'D)

Keep the game going. We'll be back.

KEVIN

Nah. I'm out.

FABULOUS

Me, too.

LANCE

Ditto.

KWASHAWN

Oh, how y'all gonna be like that when I was winning. That's foul.

Everyone ignores Kwashawn and gets up from the table.

KHASHAWN (CONT'D)  
(counting his winnings)  
That's okay. I got enough here for  
a lap dance.

Kevin walks over to AC.

KEVIN  
You want me to drive you?

AC  
Nah. I'm good.

KEVIN  
Sure?

AC  
Yeah. Let's be out, Darren.

AC and Darren head for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. AC'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

AC and Darren come walking out. They stop on the steps.  
Darren looks around nervously.

DARREN  
Yo, you see that? Across the street?  
Who dat? They creeping.

AC  
This ain't LA, man. Let's go.

AC begins walking toward the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER STREET CORNER -- CONTINUOUS

AC and Darren come walking from around a corner. They cross  
the street and walk along the sidewalk. Darren is looking  
ahead. Something catches his eye. He squints, trying to  
make it out.

DARREN  
Yo, who dat?

AC  
Man, come on.

DARREN  
Nah, I'm serious. Someone just went  
behind a tree up ahead, yo.

AC sucks his teeth, keeps walking, looking ahead.

AC'S P.O.V -- THE TREE

A figure moves out from behind the tree, out of the shadows.  
It's a woman. She is heading straight for them.

BACK TO SCENE

ON DARREN

DARREN (CONT'D)

See. Who dat?

AC looks, tries to make the person out.

She gets closer, her face suddenly revealed in the street  
light.

ON AC

He slows down. Then freezes. He recognizes who it is.

AC

Oh... shit.

The woman looks tired, burned out, drugged out, dark circles  
around her eyes. This is MIRANDA. Mid-twenties. Someone  
well known to AC.

AC (CONT'D)

Mi--Miranda? That you?

MIRANDA

We need to talk, AC.

AC

Where you coming from? Where've you  
been?

MIRANDA

I need to talk to you.

AC

Why didn't you call me first?

MIRANDA

Please, AC.

AC

You okay?

MIRANDA

Do I look okay?

AC

Well... I was about to take care of  
some business with my boy here.

MIRANDA  
(to Darren)  
Excuse us, please.  
(to AC)  
I just need ten minutes.

AC puts his head down, then looks at Darren.

AC  
Do me a favor and wait here a minute.

DARREN  
I got you. But hurry up, yo.

AC starts walking up the sidewalk. Miranda tags along.

Darren stands back against a tree. He watches AC and Miranda as they walk off.

SAMARIA (V.O.)  
Some things happen in our lives as  
simple wake up calls. Then there  
are those things that happen in our  
lives as retribution for something  
foul we may have done at another  
point in our lives.

DARREN'S POV -- AC AND MIRANDA

As they come to a stop up the block. She is telling him something...something that gets him upset... something that begins to piss him off. He grabs her by the shoulders and begins to violently shake her.

SAMARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I would later find out just how foul  
AC had been living...

ON DARREN

He straightens up, seeing that their argument has become physical.

DARREN  
Yo, AC, what up? AC? Yo! Everything  
aw'ight?

Suddenly, behind Darren, a hooded figure comes from across the street, head down, hands in pockets.

But Darren's focus is locked on the drama between AC and Miranda. He begins slowly moving up the sidewalk toward them, putting his hands in his pockets.

Behind him, the figure moves to a jog, rushing up on him.

Just as Darren hears him, about to turn around, the figure runs up on him, pulling a gun from the pocket of his hooded pullover, and putting it to the back of Darren's head.

Then-- POW! The gun EXPLODES! Darren's head RUPTURES like a shattered egg, spraying blood.

The gunman takes off into the street, back the way he came, back into the dark and shadows as Darren body falls convulsing to the sidewalk.

AC and Miranda react to the sound of the gunshot. AC crouches to the ground while Miranda takes off running up the street.

After the fear passes, AC gets to his feet, looking around, then runs over to Darren's body. At first he doesn't know what to do, stiff with shock and horror.

AC  
D?! D! HELP! SOMEBODY HELP! HELP!  
THEY SHOT HIM, THEY SHOT HIM! HELP!  
HELP! Deeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Finally, AC collapses to his knees next to Darren's body, screaming in anguish.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. BROWNSTONE, SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Samaria is on the phone. Her eyes are watered with tears, her hair frazzled. She looks as if she hasn't slept in years.

SAMARIA  
(into phone)  
Yeah, I'm still here. Okay. Well,  
let me know something, okay. Just  
call me. I don't care how late.  
(beat)  
Okay. Thanks, Kevin. Okay. I will.  
Bye.

Samaria puts the phone down on her bed and gets up and walks over to the window. She looks out, wiping the tears from her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Samaria is walking along when suddenly she sees Kwashawn across the street coming out of a store holding a forty ounce bottle of beer.

She races across the street.



SAMARIA  
(calling out)  
Kwashawn! Kwashawn!

He stops, hearing her, but not seeing her. He looks behind him. Then he sees her coming toward him.

KWASHAWN  
Oh, yo, Samaria, what up.

SAMARIA  
Kwashawn, hey, hi, listen, have you seen AC?

KWASHAWN  
Nah.

SAMARIA  
You haven't even heard from him?

KWASHAWN  
Nah. It's like he fell off the face of the earth. He must still be tripping off of what happened to Darren.

SAMARIA  
I heard about that.  
(beat)  
Well... if you hear from him or see him, please tell him to call me, okay.

KWASHAWN  
You ain't heard from him neither, huh? He must really be tripping.

SAMARIA  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
Tell him to call me if you see him, okay?

KWASHAWN  
Oh, yo, no doubt. So where you been hiding yourself lately. I ain't been seeing you around neither.

SAMARIA  
Silk Records has me in the studio. They're doing my CD.

KWASHAWN  
Oh, word! Nobody told me.

SAMARIA  
Silk Records only wants to work with me for now.

KWASHAWN

Oh, that's fucked up. They just pushed us out.

SAMARIA

Okay. I gotta go. Don't forget.

She is about to walk off--

KWASHAWN

Hold up, hold up.

(she stops)

You ain't gotta rush off like that. We never get to kick it, you know.

SAMARIA

Huh?

KWASHAWN

Yo, you look cute in that outfit. I like that. Getting all fly on a brother.

SAMARIA

I really have to go, Kwashawn.

KWASHAWN

I feel you. But, check it out, when you gonna let me take you out sometimes.

SAMARIA

What?

KWASHAWN

You know. A brother like me treat ya right.

SAMARIA

Aren't you and AC supposed to be boys?

KWASHAWN

Has he been calling anybody? He ain't even been calling you. That nigga don't care. See, me, I wouldn't do that. I'd treat you right.

SAMARIA

Are you serious? I know you can't be serious.

KWASHAWN

Dead serious. Yo, check this out, the ninety-nine cent store has a sale on baby oil.

(MORE)

KWASHAWN (CONT'D)

I can go there, get some, we go to my mom's crib, set the mood. What's up? You wit it?

SAMARIA

I don't believe you. Your friend disappears after your other friend is killed and you're trying to get with me? You're a foul nigga, Kwashawn, and I don't have anything left to say to you. Bye!

She walks off angrily, running back across the street.

Kwashawn watches her go.

KWASHAWN

Yo, Samaria! Samaria! Yo!  
(beat)  
Yo... **DON'T TELL AC!**

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD -- CONTINUOUS

Miranda is crossing the street, carrying shopping bags.

She heads toward a run-down building. The projects.

INT. BUILDING

Miranda enters through the front entrance, walks into the lobby. Several bums and drug addicts are loitering around, talking, smoking, coming in and out.

Miranda ignores them, waits for the elevator. When it comes, she gets on.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

She enters the apartment, heading straight for the kitchen.

A moment later, she walks out of the kitchen, heading into the living room. It's dark, dirty, old containers of food and drug paraphernalia are scattered across tables and the floor.

Someone is balled up in a blanket on the couch.

Miranda walks past the couch and to the window. She opens the blinds to let in the sunlight.

The balled up figure on the couch grunts and rolls over.

MIRANDA  
You gonna sleep all day?

No answer.

She heads back into the kitchen.

MIRANDA (O.S.)  
I got us some food. You hungry?

No answer. Just grunts.

MIRANDA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You can't sleep this away, you know.  
We have to do something. We can't  
go on living like this.

INTERCUT -- MIRANDA IN KITCHEN

She's at the kitchen counter, removing items from the shopping bag.

MIRANDA  
We can't.

LIVING ROOM

The figure moves out from the blanket. It's AC. Wearing only underwear. He yawns. Sits up. Looks around.

Miranda walks back into the living room. She starts clearing the table.

AC  
Don't move shit around. My shit's  
there.

He goes through the mess on the table until he finds a crackpipe. He finds a lighter and sparks up.

MIRANDA  
It's too early for that shit, AC.

He pulls on the pipe. Inhales. Coughs.

AC  
Mind your business.

MIRANDA  
What are we going to do, AC? We've  
been going like this for weeks.

He ignores her, laying back down.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)  
We have to do something.

AC

Go get me some beer, Miranda. I  
don't want to talk about this.

Miranda hesitates, looks him over. Then she storms off.

After a moment, he gets up, throwing the blanket to the floor,  
frustrated. He looks toward the window, then gets up and  
closes the blinds. Then he returns to the sofa, rubbing his  
face.

AC (CONT'D)

I can't believe this. Why me, man?  
Why me?

He drops his head in anguish.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

She is sitting at the window, looking out, singing to the  
sound of an R&B track playing from a handheld recorder in  
her hand.

After a moment, a KNOCK comes at her bedroom door.

Lena sticks her head in.

LENA

Lance and Kevin are here.

SAMARIA (O.S.)

Okay. Thank you, Lena.

Lena walks off.

Samaria gets up from the window, sets down the recorder, and  
heads for the door, glancing at a photograph of her and AC  
on her dresser.

CUT TO:

LIVING ROOM

Kevin and Lance are sitting on the sofa. Francine and Sassy  
are in chairs across from them.

Lena and Samaria walk into the living room.

Both Kevin and Lance get up from the couch, taking turns  
hugging Samaria.

SAMARIA

Hey.

KEVIN

Samaria.

SAMARIA

Hi.

LANCE

You good?

SAMARIA

Hanging in there.

LENA

You can sit down.

Kevin and Lance return to the sofa.

Samaria and Lena remain standing.

SAMARIA

I'm glad you came. I'm also glad to see you. I know I should'a called sooner... but... well.

LANCE

That's kool, Samaria.

KEVIN

We understand.

SAMARIA

Well, Kevin, I've been practically calling you everyday--

KEVIN

--He'll pop up, Samaria. I've known AC a long time. But we're looking for him.

LANCE

--And we'll find him.

SAMARIA

This isn't just about AC. Well, in a way, it is and it isn't.

(sighs)

Silk Records is drawing up a contract for me and I intend to sign with their label. They're producing my CD and I will doing a video shoot at the end of the week.

She looks to Kevin and Lance for a reaction.

Kevin doesn't seem bothered, but Lance does. He sighs.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

I wanted to talk to you personally because you, along with AC, made this happen for me.

LANCE

So what did they say about Ill Lyrics  
and signing our other artists?

Samaria looks to Lena. She lowers her head.

SAMARIA

They just want me.

Lance gets to his feet.

LANCE

**I KNEW IT!** Record label bullshit.

(to Kevin)

I told you! I said it. Go  
independent. I warned everybody  
that Silk was a crook. How many  
artists' shit has he sampled? Eleven  
hundred! That should'a thrown up  
the red flag right there. He's the  
Michael Bolton of hip hop. That's  
what I said. Nobody wanted to listen--

KEVIN

--Calm down, Lance. Look, the world  
isn't ending. Let's just be happy  
for Samaria. Can we do that?

Kevin gets up and hugs Samaria.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Everything will be okay.

SAMARIA

Thank you, Kevin. Thanks so much.

KEVIN

Not a problem.

LANCE

(under his breath)

Silk Record's the problem.

(beat)

AC better stay in hiding, man. He  
better stay in hiding. This is his  
fault.

KEVIN

Samaria, we're gonna go. If we hear  
from AC, we'll call you.

SAMARIA

Kevin...

(hesitates)

Thank you.

Kevin and Lance head for the door. Lance is grumbling all  
the way to the door. Lena lets them out.

Then she heads into the living room.

She notices Samaria tearing.

LENA

You okay?

SAMARIA

No.

Sassy grunts, heading toward the kitchen.

SASSY

Aw, girl, get over it. The nigga's gone. Just be happy he left without leaving you fat and broke.

FRANCINE

It'll be okay, Samaria. Give it time.

LENA

I know that's right. It's just like the Bible says: "And this, too, shall pass."

FRANCINE

At least you got the music, right? Your career is on its way.

SAMARIA

That would be good... if I didn't feel like I dissed the man who helped me get to this point.

Sassy comes back out of the kitchen with a beer.

SASSY

He could be right here sharing this with you. That is not your fault.

SAMARIA

(pensive)

Yeah. I guess.

Suddenly, the ROAR of cheers and APPLAUDS grow louder.

CUT TO:

INT. APOLLO THEATER -- NIGHT

The applauds continue as the HOST of the Apollo Theater makes an introduction at the mic.

APOLLO THEATER HOST

Give it up for Samaria, Apollo!



Samaria walks onto the stage and takes the mic. MUSIC begins. A funky beat. Samaria begins dancing, then her melodious voice fills the theater.

As she sings...

CUT TO:

SAMARIA (V.O.)

I had found that image I had been so desperately looking for. But after finding it, I began to wonder... was it the image I really wanted to become.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- SAMARIA

- A.) In the recording studio, singing into the microphone.
- B.) At a photo shoot on a stage being compounded with makeup.
- C.) At a dance studio with several other dancers practicing dance moves.
- D.) In a dressing room being outfitted with a dress.
- E.) On a stage singing to a crowd of conservatives in tuxedos and dresses.
- F.) Sitting in a dressing room, gazing at herself in the mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. SILK RECORDS, SILK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Silk is sitting behind a huge desk in a huge elaborate office. He is a young black man, late twenties, dressed like urban street wear thug-- baggy jeans, pullover, baseball cap, but with plenty of jewelry around his neck, wrist and fingers.

SILK

--just sign right there and we're in business. We'll get started on your next video. Then, if the CD keeps climbing the charts and the videos do well, it's on to touring.

Samaria signs the forms and documents on the desk laid out before her.

SAMARIA

Do I need a lawyer?

SILK

Got lawyers. All Jewish. The best.

SAMARIA

What about black lawyers?

SILK

What about 'em?

SAMARIA

I mean, I would rather have a black lawyer. I would just feel more comfortable if--

SILK

(interrupting)

--Girl, you crazy.

SAMARIA

--I'm just saying I would feel more comfortable with one. I don't really want someone to represent me who doesn't even want to live around me.

SILK

Lawyers of any race would live around anybody as long as that person lived someplace worth living in. If you live in Marcy projects, then, no, you ain't getting no Jewish lawyer to live around you. If you live in Bel Air, Brentwood, the Upper West Side, the better part of Forest Hills, then, yeah, he or she just might move in.

SAMARIA

I just--

SILK

Look, lawyers don't represent race. They represent color. And the only color that matters is green. Make 'em that green and you got representation.

SAMARIA

Shouldn't I have a lawyer present right now?

SILK

You could. But you dealing with the head nigga in charge directly.

SAMARIA

What about AC?

SILK

Who?

SAMARIA

AC. He's the man who sent you in my demo. He's the one who made this all possible for me.

SILK

Is he your manager?

SAMARIA

N--no. Not really.

SILK

Then you don't need him. Right now, you're the one in my office about to get paid. You're the one in my office about to blow up. He might have sent me in your recordings, but it's your voice I am signing. Not his efforts. That's the business, girl.

Samaria looks away, drops her head.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

AC brings a crackpipe to his mouth. He inhales. After a moment, he passes the pipe to--

--Miranda, who inhales it and starts zoning in and out. Then she starts coughing.

After a beat:

MIRANDA

What're we gonna do, AC?

AC

Leave me alone about that, Miranda.

MIRANDA

This is serious.

AC snaps:

AC

**I KNOW THIS IS SERIOUS!** I don't need you telling me that all the time, okay! Kill that noise!

MIRANDA

Okay, first of all, don't yell at me like that, okay--

AC

--Miranda--

MIRANDA

--second, I didn't ask for this,  
okay.

AC

You know, Miranda, you ain't right.  
You get caught out there--never  
warning me--then you go out there  
and do your own thing, then have the  
nerve to come back and screw up my  
whole life.

MIRANDA

Are-- are you saying that this is my  
fault? My fault? You forgot... I  
sold myself for you. I ate shit for  
you.

AC

Whatever.

MIRANDA

Yeah, whatever.

(lights a cigarette)

Don't forget, you broke out. You  
left me in Cleveland. I didn't run  
out on you.

AC

I told you I was coming back for  
you.

MIRANDA

Wha-- nigga, that was four years  
ago.

AC

So what you think? I was going to  
blow up overnight?

MIRANDA

No. You thought that. You left me  
to fend for myself. You left me in  
those streets.

(takes a drag on her  
cigarette)

And now I'm HIV positive.

AC drops his head. There is a long, tense moment of silence.

AC

Did you tell anybody else?

MIRANDA

Like who?

AC

Like your mother!

MIRANDA  
I tell mama everything.

AC  
Did you tell her about us?!

MIRANDA  
Are you crazy?  
(starts tearing)  
She'd die. She couldn't handle that.  
I--I couldn't put her through that.  
This is bad enough.

AC  
Good. One less person in my business.

Miranda stares at him coldly.

MIRANDA  
Is that all you ever think about?  
You? You're a cold, selfish bastard,  
Anthony. A cold bastard.

AC  
Whatever.

He drinks from a bottle of beer.

AC (CONT'D)  
What do you think she would do if  
she knew? What do you think would  
happen if anybody knew.

Miranda doesn't answer. She sucks her teeth.

AC (CONT'D)  
They'd put our asses in a mental  
clinic and lock us up for life.  
That's what would happen.

Miranda starts crying.

AC (CONT'D)  
Yeah. Whatever. Cry.

MIRANDA  
I loved you.

AC  
LOVED ME? See, that's just what I'm  
talking about. That's why we'd be  
in a clinic. I'm your stepbrother,  
Miranda! It's incest! Even though  
we did it, we're still considered  
clinically, criminally insane!

MIRANDA  
I don't care.

AC

Tell that to your self-righteous father who married my mother. Remember what he used to make us do to each other... while he watched! This is his fucking fault! He needs to be the one dying of some disease. He is a fucking disease!

AC starts crying.

AC (CONT'D)

You ruined my life, Miranda. I should have died with Darren that day. I was about to be on top. I was about to have everything I wanted. My music, success, I found a good woman, had good friends. Everything was about to go right for me for the first time in my life.

MIRANDA

What did you say?

AC

You heard me!

MIRANDA

What woman?

AC just looks away, wiping his eyes.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Were-- were you dating someone before I showed up?

AC doesn't answer.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Were you?!

AC

Fuck you.

MIRANDA

Oh, my god, AC. Oh, my god. Please don't tell me you were dating someone.

AC

What if I was?

MIRANDA

Did you sleep with her?

AC

What if I did?

MIRANDA

Then she could be at risk, too, dumb  
ass! Did you tell her?

AC

What for?

MIRANDA

She needs to know.

AC

No she doesn't.

MIRANDA

**YES SHE DOES!** Ac, if you slept with  
her she could be infected with the  
HIV just like you are! You have to  
tell her! She needs to know! This  
isn't about you anymore!

Miranda gets to her feet.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

You have to tell her... or I will.  
That's not right. That girl needs  
to know. Man up, AC, man up.

AC

Miranda--

MIRANDA

Miranda my ass! Go tell that girl,  
AC! That's how shit like this passes  
around.

AC gets to his feet and heads to the door.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Where're you going?

AC

I can't deal with this right now.

MIRANDA

You can't run from this, AC!

She chases after him as he rushes out of the apartment. She  
tries to stop him at the door, but he breaks away from her.

HALLWAY

She slams the door shut and chases him into the stairwell.

AC

Get off me, Miranda! Get off me!  
Leave me alone, Miranda!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Sassy is coming around a corner arm-in-arm with a YOUNG MAN, obviously a date. They are laughing and smiling.

They walk a few feet along the sidewalk until something catches her attention.

SASSY'S P.O.V -- ACROSS THE STREET

AC comes running out of the building and onto the street. Miranda is right behind him, grabbing at him. He pushes her away.

BACK TO SCENE

Sassy shakes her head.

SASSY

Oh, Lord, I see a couple fighting.  
That's what I get for dating another  
nigga from the projects.

YOUNG MAN

What? Who me?

Suddenly, Sassy notices something.

SASSY

Wait a minute. I think I know that  
guy.

YOUNG MAN

Who?

SASSY

The one fighting.

Sassy heads across the street. She tries to get a closer look without getting too close. Her date comes up behind her.

SASSY (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Is everything all right?

Miranda stops to look back, but AC doesn't.

MIRANDA

It's kool! We're fine!

Miranda chases AC out into the street, under a street light.

Sassy definitely recognizes him.

SASSY

(calls out)

Okay!



She turns and starts rushing back up the street.

YOUNG MAN  
Where you going?

SASSY  
Home!

YOUNG MAN  
What?

SASSY  
There's some shit about to go down!

YOUNG MAN  
(calls out)  
With who? Yo! Yo, wait up!

SASSY  
(calls back to him)  
Go back! You can't come with me!

YOUNG MAN  
Why not?

SASSY  
(calls out)  
You weren't gonna get none anyway!

Sassy disappears around the corner.

Her young date laughs to himself, standing there looking stupid.

CUT TO:

INT. LENA'S BROWNSTONE, DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

SASSY  
--I said it was him! I know that  
big ass head anywhere! It was that  
nigga! With another woman. And  
they were fighting the way lovers  
do.

Samaria is agape. Lena and Francine are standing around her. Lena holds her by the shoulder.

SAMARIA  
Well... I guess that's it, then.  
Now I know.

LENA  
Don't let that bother you, Samaria.

FRANCINE  
Yeah, girl, it's been over.

SAMARIA

I just wish he would've been man  
enough to come to me.

SASSY

Wait, what? What you mean, that's  
it?

LENA

Let it go, Sassy.

SASSY

Uh-uh, no, no, no. Uh-uh, nope,  
hell to the-- No, we can't let him  
get away with that!

LENA

Sassy, let it go! That  
man made his choice and  
what's done is done. It's  
over. Let's just move on.  
Samaria-- Samaria needs us  
right now. Okay. Sassy?  
Are you listening to me?  
Let it go.

SASSY

Uh-uh, that what's done  
is done crap went out  
with MC Hammer. No,  
Lena, it ain't over. I  
don't care. So what.  
I know she needs us.  
But that was a sucker  
move he did.

FRANCINE

Sassy, you acting like it happened  
to you!

SASSY

It did! Back in eighty-nine! I  
ain't let that shit happen since!

LENA

Let's just drop this please.  
(to Samaria)  
Do you want anything? Tea?  
Something?

Samaria sits down at the dining room table.

SAMARIA

I just need some time to take this  
in. I'll be okay.

LENA

Give her some space y'all.

Lena and Francine walk off slowly.

LENA (CONT'D)

Sassy?

SASSY

In a minute.

Lena and Francine each head off in different directions.

Sassy pulls a chair up next to Samaria.

SASSY (CONT'D)

I know you're hurting right now,  
baby. I can feel your pain. That's  
why you need to give me the okay to  
get that man jumped.

(with a smile)

Help me to help you.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- DAY

AC is coming out of the projects, walks along a sidewalk,  
hands in pocket.

He makes his way into a bodega. After a minute, he comes  
back out, carrying a plastic bag in one hand and a forty  
ounce in a bag in the other.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

I didn't believe Sassy when she said  
she was going to have AC jumped.  
Sassy had a big mouth. I just thought  
she was all talk...

AC makes his way back toward the projects.

ANGLE -- ACROSS THE STREET -- ON A PARKED JEEP

Four men climb out of the jeep. One of them is holding a  
framed photograph in his hand. It's obvious that it has to  
be a picture of AC.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- CONTINUOUS

As he crosses the street with his friends, he looks from AC  
walking along the sidewalk to the photograph. Then he tosses  
it aside.

ON AC

He's in his own world, never sees the four men coming up  
behind him.

The leader of the pack runs up on him and hits him from  
behind.

AC

Oh, shit!

THUG #1

Yeah, nigga, what!

The other three men rush AC as he keels over from the blow,  
dropping his forty ounce and bag.

The four thugs swarm him, swinging wildly, taking him down quickly in a relentless onslaught of punches. All he can do is curl up on the ground and cover his face.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

Sassy kept to her word, though. She did get AC jumped... giving black men just another excuse to go and hurt one of their own.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Miranda is putting ice on AC's head wounds.

MIRANDA

Do you know who did it?

AC

Who do you think?

MIRANDA

You think it was that girl? Hmp.

(beat)

You think she found out?

AC

She must know something.

Miranda throws the ice pack to the floor and walks off angrily.

MIRANDA

Then you got what you deserved.

AC reaches down to the floor and picks up the ice pack, putting it back on his forehead. After a moment he throws it back to the floor. He grimaces, grunts. He sits there a moment trying to get his head together. Then he nods to himself, knowing what has to be done.

CUT TO:

INT. LENA'S BROWNSTONE APARTMENT -- DAY

Lena is coming down the stairs.

Francine is running from the kitchen dressed for work. She heads for the door.

Samaria is coming out from the back room at that time.

FRANCINE

Okay, everybody, I'm in the wind.  
See you guys tonight.

LENA  
Have a good day, Fran.

FRANCINE  
You, too. Bye, Samaria.

SAMARIA  
(showing obvious pain)  
Yeah. Okay. Bye.

Francine notices her pain, but she heads out the door, knowing she is already late for work.

Samaria heads into the living room. Lena follows her.

LENA  
So... what's on your agenda for the day?

Samaria sits down at the table, looks around.

SAMARIA  
I don't know. Just relax, I guess.

LENA  
You wanna talk, Samaria.

Samaria lowers her head... hesitates.

SAMARIA  
I don't know.

There is a long moment of silence.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)  
I barely knew AC. I barely knew anything about his personal life.  
(beat)  
But... I liked him. I really, really liked him.

LENA  
I know you did.

SAMARIA  
Why am I feeling this way, Lena?  
Why am I hurting?

LENA  
Because you're human.

Samaria sighs, starts tearing.

LENA (CONT'D)  
You wouldn't be human if you felt nothing at all. But you have to be strong, Samaria.

Lena reaches over and puts her arm around Samaria's shoulder.

LENA (CONT'D)

Let it out, girl.

Samaria begins crying.

LENA (CONT'D)

I know it hurts. It's never easy in the beginning. But you told me your grandmother had you in church. The good book says, "Cast all your cares and burdens upon me, saith the Lord." Right? Or something like that.

SAMARIA

I think I started caring too soon.

LENA

Some of us do. You're not alone. Men and women are both looking for the same thing in each other that they should be looking for in themselves. That's where the answers are. That's where the love is. It starts with self. With God. The good book says we are to love God with all our hearts, all our minds, and all of our strength. Or something like that. Then it tells us to love our neighbors and each other. So if two people have the love of God, the love for God and a love of self in their hearts, then they will find true love.

SAMARIA

Is there really such a thing?

LENA

Maybe. But true love and perfect love are two different things. You gotta remember, Samaria. Love doesn't get in the way of relationships... expectations do.

Samaria takes a moment to ponder that statement.

LENA (CONT'D)

Samaria, you gotta go out there and face this as just another chapter in life with many more chapters to go. When life shifts or changes or deviates from what you expected or how you thought it was going to turn out, you have to remember that... all things happen for a reason.

Samaria wipes her eyes and looks at Lena.

LENA (CONT'D)

The question you have to ask yourself  
now is... are you going to grow from  
this... or fall from this?

Samaria ponders the question.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET, LENA'S BROWNSTONE -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS

AC stands next to a tree, looking across the street, waiting.

AC'S P.O.V -- LENA'S BROWNSTONE

Samaria is coming out of the front door still talking with  
Lena. They walk to the bottom step and stop to finish  
talking.

ON AC

He waits there, looking skeptical, nervous.

ON BROWNSTONE

Lena and Samaria end their conversation and walk their  
separate ways.

ON AC

He ducks behind a tree, watches Lena as she gets into a parked  
car and drives off.

He pauses a moment then looks in the direction Samaria headed.  
He sees her as she crosses the street, rounding the corner.

He drops his head. Then looks up, sighing, taking a deep  
breath.

CUT TO:

PARK -- CONTINUOUS

People are walking their dogs, jogging, sitting on benches,  
feeding the pigeons.

Samaria appears, strolling along a path, hands in her jacket  
pocket, still looking sad, pensive.

She nears a playground area and looks over at several children  
playing on swings and monkey bars and running around laughing.

She stands there scrutinizing them for several moments.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

I never knew laughter as a child. I never knew what it was really like to have a normal, playful childhood. But I did know innocence.

Her gaze becomes intense... tearful.

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

Where does that innocence go?

She remains fixed on two little girls playing games.

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

Is it lost forever? Will you ever get it back?

Suddenly:

AC (O.S.)

Samaria...

She turns. Shock.

AC is standing there, his hands nervously fidgeting.

AC

Can we talk?

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERFRONT -- DAY

Establishing.

AC (O.S.)

--and that's why it took me so long to get up the nerve to see you. There wasn't one day I wasn't thinking about you, Samaria. That's my word.

Samaria stands staring out at the water, avoiding eye contact with AC, who stands beside her begging and pleading with his eyes and body gestures.

AC

Samaria, I wish that there was something I could say to make this easy. I know I should have called. I know I should've called and congratulated you on the CD. I mean... I knew you could do it. I knew you had that gift.

She rolls her eyes, sighs, shaking her head, growing impatient.



AC (CONT'D)

Look at me, Samaria. I mean... look at me. Look. Look at what I've become in the last few weeks. You know. I had it going on before. You know that. I was on point. I was headed in the right direction. Now look at me. Come on, you have to know I've been going through some serious shit to fall off like this.

Samaria quickly glances over at him, then returns a bitter stare to the water.

AC (CONT'D)

I lost it, Samaria. I lost it and I can't get it back. It's over for me. I'm done.

(beat)

That's why I came to see you. One last time. To let you know that. To make amends. Square this away.

Samaria sighs, looking to the heavens. Then she waves her hand.

SAMARIA

Okay, stop it, AC, stop it! I don't want to hear anymore of your bullshit! Okay! Just stop it!

AC

(softly)

Samaria, I'm being real with you.

SAMARIA

You know what, I'm here because I wanted to hear what you'd say-- give you a chance. Now, I gave you the benefit of the doubt and you-- you just messed up, AC. You're a fucking liar, AC, and you're a fucking bullshit artists!

(to the heavens)

Forgive me Lord.

(to AC)

AC, if I was a man right now, we'd be fighting. I hate you for what you did. I can't stand you for that. No calls, no nothing. My roommate sees you having a lover's quarrel with another woman. You couldn't even be man enough to come to me. You just left me hanging. That was selfish and foul. That was wrong!

AC

Samaria, I wasn't with no other woman!

SAMARIA

Oh my God!

(to the heavens)

Lord, please strike this man down!

Please Lord!

(to AC)

I hate liars, AC! I can't stand--

AC

Samaria, now you tripping. I didn't stop calling because I wanted to be with another woman.

SAMARIA

So you gonna deny that Sassy saw you with someone else?

AC

No. She did see me with someone, but Miranda isn't my--

SAMARIA

(interrupting)

--Miranda! Is that her name? Hmp.

AC

Samaria, would you listen. Can I tell you what's going on? Please.

SAMARIA

We're done, AC. It's over. You should'a stayed in your hole.

She is about to walk off and AC reaches out, grabbing her arm.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

Don't touch me, AC. Don't touch me!  
I will scream!

AC

Go 'head. I'm not letting go until you hear the truth.

SAMARIA

AC... let me go.

AC

Samaria, I loved you. My feelings were growing for you everyday. I would've never left you for another woman. But that's just easier for you to accept. That's what you want to believe.

SAMARIA

Okay, then, AC, who is she?

(MORE)

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

How do you know her? Tell me AC!  
You tell me what's going on!

AC hesitates, lets her go, takes a step back. He spends several moments looking at her, the fear, the anguish clear in his countenance.

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

Well? You said-- you know what, let me get out of--

AC

--She's my stepsister!

SAMARIA

AC...

AC

There's more.

SAMARIA

More lies?

AC

She came back here to tell me she's HIV positive and dying.

Samaria looks him in the eye. She sees that he is not lying.

AC (CONT'D)

I--I got it, too.

Samaria grimaces, horrified.

SAMARIA

What?

AC

I--I tested positive. I'm infected.

Samaria looks around in dismay, then it hits her!

SAMARIA

(grimacing)

You--you-- you slept with your own stepsister!

AC

Samaria...

She turns, begins walking off. She's in total shock.

SAMARIA

(to herself)

Oh my god oh my god, I don't believe this--no, no, this isn't happening.

(MORE)

SAMARIA (CONT'D)

No, he didn't tell you--no, Samaria, girl, hold it together, girl, hold it together. This isn't real, girl, it isn't real. Walk away... find someone--okay, you never knew that man, you never dated him. It's not real.

AC starts to follow her.

AC

Samaria.  
(beat)  
Samaria.

Samaria stops, crying, shaking her head and looking around.

AC (CONT'D)

Can we talk?

Samaria turns toward him.

SAMARIA

TALK?

Suddenly she lunges for him, hitting and swinging at him, and screaming to the top of her lungs: "**DIE! DIE! I HOPE YOU DIE! I HOPE YOU DIE!**" over and over again.

He tries blocking her wild swings, then starts to run.

She takes off her shoes and throws them at him.

He leaps over benches and heads up a trail, stopping at the top to look back at her.

AC

Samaria...

She collapses in anguish and tears to the ground.

SAMARIA

Die, AC! Die! I hate you! I hate you!

He stands there a moment, then turns and slowly walks off, looking back one last time before he disappears from view.

Samaria sprawls out on the ground, crying uncontrollably.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LENA'S BROWNSTONE APARTMENT -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS

Francine is in the living room exercising to music BLARING from a nearby stereo.

Suddenly the sound of keys JINGLING in the door. Someone is trying to get in, force their way in.

Francine goes over to the stereo, turns it off, then walks toward the door.

FRANCINE  
(calling out)  
Who's that? Who's there?

The doorbell begins to RING sporadically, frantically.

Lena appears at the top of the spiral stairs.

LENA  
Who is that?

FRANCINE  
I don't know. They won't answer.

LENA  
Well look through the peephole.

FRANCINE  
Uh-uh. I'm about to call the police.

Lena sucks her teeth and heads down the stairs. She walks past Francine and over to the door, looking through the peephole.

LENA  
Hello? Can we help you?

Suddenly the front door pushes open, nearly knocking Lena down. Samaria burst into the apartment and shoots past both women, heading to the back.

FRANCINE  
Oh my God! Samaria!

LENA  
Samaria! What happened?

Francine looks to Lena who shrugs then starts heading to the back. Francine follows her.

HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

They come to a closed door. Water is RUNNING from inside. Lena knocks.

LENA (CONT'D)  
Samaria? Come on, honey, open the door. Samaria?

FRANCINE  
Samaria... girl what's wrong? What happened?

No answer.

LENA

Samaria, whatever happened we're here for you.

FRANCINE

That's right. Open the door.

LENA

Samaria...?

Sassy appears, walking up to them.

SASSY

What's wrong?

FRANCINE

Samaria locked herself in the bathroom.

SASSY

For what?

FRANCINE

We don't know.

SASSY

What happened?

LENA

We're still trying to find that out, Sassy.

SASSY

I'll go get my lock picking tools.

LENA

Just hurry up.

Sassy hurries off.

Lena looks at Francine. Then she tries turning the knob and knocking again.

LENA (CONT'D)

Samaria, come on now. Open the door. Everything's gonna be okay.

FRANCINE

That's right. Don't do anything stupid in there. We don't know who your next of kin are.

LENA

Fran! Why would you say something that stupid. I can expect that from Sassy...

Sassy returns at that moment.

SASSY  
Stand aside. Let me do my thing.

Sassy pulls out some special tools and goes to work on the lock, opening the door in a matter of seconds.

All three women rush into the bathroom.

BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Samaria is inside the bathtub, running water from the shower head over her clothed body.

SASSY (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

FRANCINE  
Oh my God.

Lena rushes over and turns off the water, then she grabs a towel and puts it around Samaria.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)  
Samaria, you all right?

SASSY  
What happened?

Lena leans over into the tub, embracing Samaria.

LENA  
It's okay. It's going to be okay.  
You're fine. We're here. We'll get  
through this.

Francine and Sassy come over and lean over into the tub to console their friend.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

AC is sitting in the living room, on the window sill, looking out, smoking a cigarette. He hears keys in the front door.

Miranda walks into the apartment. She stops.

They make eye contact.

Miranda sighs, heads toward the kitchen.

AC  
I did like you said, you know.

Miranda walks back, into the living room.

AC (CONT'D)  
I saw her today. I told her.

There is a moment of silence.

AC (CONT'D)  
She knows everything.

MIRANDA  
Good.

AC extinguishes his cigarette in a nearby ashtray.

AC  
I lost her. That's it. I lost  
everything.

MIRANDA  
What do you want me to tell you?

AC  
There's nothing you can tell me at  
this point.

MIRANDA  
I'm going to get help, AC. I'm  
checking myself into rehab.

AC  
Good for you.

MIRANDA  
I'm going to get treatment for this.

She waits for AC to respond, but he doesn't.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)  
What are you going to do?

AC  
What I've been doing. Stay high.

Miranda shakes her head.

AC (CONT'D)  
No one cares about aids anymore,  
Miranda. Cancer's the big scare  
these days. No one's gonna help us.  
No one's gonna save us.

MIRANDA  
I'm not looking for anyone to. I'm  
looking to save myself. You should  
too. But you always were full of  
excuses.

Miranda is about to walk away when AC gets to his feet.



AC

I'm not going out like this, Miranda.  
I'm not living with no HIV. I'm not  
living with no failure.

MIRANDA

Then you've already given up.

Miranda walks off, heads into a rear bedroom.

AC lights another cigarette. A tear trickles from his eye.

AC

(under his breath)

Nope. Ain't no way I'm living with  
this. No way at all.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Samaria is in bed, under the covers, wide awake, staring off  
into space.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

Somehow we had lost our way. And  
nothing made sense anymore. It was  
like being a child again. A two-  
year-old. Always asking why. Why?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AC'S BEDROOM -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS

He is writing in a notebook, sitting on a night table,  
surrounded by empty liquor bottles and burning drug  
paraphernalia.

A demo tape of beats is BLARING from a desk radio on a  
dresser.

AC is bopping and nodding his head to the beat.

LATER

AC is standing in front of the mirror, rhyming and drinking.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Samaria is sitting up in bed, staring toward the window.  
Pensive. Eyes watery.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

AC is smoking a crack pipe.

CUT TO:

INT. SAMARIA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Samaria is going through a photo album, looking at pictures of herself with her grandmother as a little girl.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- DAY

AC is passed out on the floor in the living room.

Miranda comes in carrying a suitcase and duffel bag around her shoulder. She places an envelope and letter on a night table. Then she bends down and kisses AC on the cheek. Afterwards, she heads out the door.

AC never hears her, never budges.

CUT TO:

INT. SILK RECORDS, SILK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Samaria is sitting in a chair explaining something to Silk, who is sitting across from her. He doesn't look happy. After a moment he holds up her contract and tears it in half.

She looks at him and nods.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

AC is reading the letter Miranda left for him. He reaches over and takes the envelope from the night table. He opens and pulls out money, lots of money.

CUT TO:

EXT. REHAB CENTER BUILDING -- DAY

Miranda gets out of a cab and heads toward a building.

She stops and looks up at the sign on the building, which reads: "ALCOHOL & DRUG REHABILITATION CENTER"

She smiles, then walks into the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. HEALTH CLINIC -- DAY

Samaria is coming out of the health clinic. She walks out to the street, looks around. Then she looks up at the sky, to the heavens, and smiles, her eyes watering.

Lena, Sassy and Francine get out of a parked car and run up to her. She nods to them that everything is okay. They all embrace each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY -- DAY

AC and another man, a young, hooded drug dealer, are having an argument behind a garbage dumpster.

AC pushes the young thug and starts to walk off. The moment he turns his back to the thug, the thug pulls out a gun and fires one round into the back of AC's head. He drops to the ground, convulsing for a moment before going limp.

The drug dealer takes off, running out of the alley, leaving AC there to die.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN -- DAY

Kevin and Mindy are in the kitchen cooking and having a good time. The phone rings. Kevin answers it. He pauses, then throws the phone up against the wall, shattering it.

Mindy comes over and holds him by his shoulders. He grabs her into his arms and holds her tight.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. BROOKLYN, BROWNSTONE ROOFTOP -- DAWN

Samaria stands facing the first sign of the morning sun glimpsing through the horizon.

SAMARIA (V.O.)

My grandmother used to say that tragedy can strike in the blink of an eye. When it struck my life, I survived. I was given another chance... to grow... to be thankful... to live and learn another day. To tell my story.

(beat)

But I would never forget what happened. What it did to me and what it did for me.

(MORE)

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

Because when our lives become  
disrupted... by any tragedy... any  
circumstance... for whatever reason...  
it all happens... for a reason.

Samaria looks to the heavens and stretches out her arms,  
spinning around in a circle, inhaling the air, taking a  
breath, then embracing herself and smiling as a spirit reborn,  
a woman renewed... a woman content with the simplicity of  
being alive.

FADE OUT

THE END

