

## SCENE 2

Lights up on Jamaica Avenue in front of the combination  
Pizza Hut and Taco Bell. THORN stands and performs bars  
off of a notebook as LIZARD beat boxes.

THORN

I HADDA LEAVE NEW YORK CITY.  
I HADDA LEAVE NEW YORK CITY.  
I HADDA LEAVE NEW YORK CITY.

I HELD IT DOWN IN JAMAICA  
WHERE THE BUS AND TRAINS CONVERGE.  
WAS ON THE VERGE  
OF A FIT.  
TELL IT.  
I HAD EMERGED.  
IN SPITE MY FEELINGS.

BUT WASN'T LIVIN' IN MUTHAFUCKIN' ILLINOIS  
THERE IN JAMAICA, QUEENS WE TAKE AND DESTROY.  
A PLOY  
SUPPRESS THE HONEST  
USE 'EM LIKE TOYS.  
NEW YORK CITY KEEP PEOPLE DISTANT, LIKE THAT.  
I WEAR ANOTHER KIND OF HAT.  
GHETTO BARD  
SWALLOW HARD  
LIKE YOU LIVIN' FOR FAT.

NYC WHERE YOU GO  
WHEN YOU'RE SOCIALLY MEABLE.  
CLOSING THE DOOR TO THAT STEEPLE.  
DON'T WANT TO SEE ALL THEM PEOPLE.  
OR INTERACTION,  
VULNERABLE ABSTRACTION  
OVERREACTION TO THE FEEBLE...  
FABLE NYC IS CONSTRUCTIN' -  
CONDOS DESTRUCTIN' ANY SENSE OF NOSTALGIA.

NOSTALGIA'S FOR STRAIGHT WHITE DUDES.  
THEY GOT LUXURY TO REFLECT...  
MEANWHILE, IMMA TRY TO DEFLECT  
ANOTHER ASSHOLE

WALKIN' ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD.  
GET THE FUCK OUT MY WAY, BRO!  
BEFORE I BUST YOUR NOSE.

BUT WASN'T LIVIN' IN MUTHAFUCKIN' KANSAS  
IN JAMAICA, QUEENS WE A CANVAS.  
FOR THE SCAMMERS,  
PANHANDLERS

SLANDERERS  
BRUTAL CANDOR  
LIKE A PLASTIC MOLD PUSSY.  
LIVIN' LIFE LIKE IT'S CUSHY.  
A GOLDEN BIDET UP YOUR TUSHY.

IT MAKES YOU SICK  
SMOG UP ALL IN YOUR NOSTRILS  
LIKE BLOW SNORTED FROM HOSTILE  
PEOPLE LOOKIN' LIKE FOSSILS  
OR WALKING DEAD,  
IT ALL FUCKS WITH YOUR HEAD  
LIKE UTILITY BILLS  
STACKED UP AND OVER-SPILLED  
NYC IS DEAD.  
THAT'S THE POINT OF THIS THREAD.

IT'S LIKE A HANNIBAL MASK UP IN JAMAICA  
WHERE THEY BEG FOR COINS.  
THEY WANT THAT LOOT.  
EVEN IF THEY GOT TO GIVE UP THE COOT.  
THE ONLY ROUTE.  
POINT'S MOOT.  
"LOVE THE SUIT!"

BUT AIN'T LIVIN' IN MUTHAFUCKIN' CT  
WHERE IT'S MANSIONS AND PRETTY  
ANTI- CITY SHIT.  
THEY GOT THEM DOLLARS  
BUTTONED-DOWN COLLARS.  
NEW YORK CITY GOT THAT GAME  
MONEY THE SAME, BUT THE NEEDY TAME  
ON THE PAVEMENT.  
NO SHAME.  
OR FUCKHEADS TO BLAME.

NYC A SYMBOL OF INTERLACE  
WHAT A FUCKIN' DISGRACE  
THAT AS LONG AS I BEEN LAYING MY LINEAGE TO TRACE  
LADY LIBERTY DOESN'T EVEN BELONG TO THIS PLACE.  
IN ALL HER GREEN GRACE.  
SHE FLOATIN' IN JERSEY  
IMMIGRANTS THIRSTY  
IN A HURRY  
TO END UP IN A GURNEY.

AMERICAN DREAMS ARE FOR RICH WHITE DUDES.  
THEY GOT THE MEANS TO TRY AND FAIL...  
LET DREAMS SAIL  
AND MARINATE FOR THE VICTORY AND HAIL.  
THIS AIN'T THE PATH FOR THE REST OF US.  
WE JUST ANOTHER ROSA FIGHTIN' FOR A SEAT  
IN THE FRONT OF THE BUS.

NOSTALGIA'S FOR STRAIGHT WHITE DUDES.  
THEY GOT LUXURY TO REFLECT...  
MEANWHILE, IMMA DEFLECT.  
CHECK IT...

I WAS BORN INTO JAMAICA, EATIN' AN E TRAIN CHURRO  
I WAS BORN INTO QUEENS, I WAS BORN INTO THAT BOROUGH.  
IT'S ALL CONCRETE AND TRASH AND CONCRETE  
THAT'S WHY THIS PLACE THAT DON'T SLEEP  
OR HOWEVER THE FUCK THE SAYIN' GOES  
ON TOURIST BAIT T-SHIRTS HOES.  
IT'S JUST SHARP EDGES WAITIN' TO CUT YOU AT EVERY TURN.  
THORN-WORTHY ASS SHIT AND LESSONS LEARNED.

LIZARD is still beat boxing, but THORN stops.

THORN

This sucks.

LIZARD

It's all right.

THORN

Thanks a lot.

LIZARD

I'm just being real witchu.

THORN

I appreciate the realness.

LIZARD

I told you, you on some deep intellectual shit.

THORN

That's art.

LIZARD

Pffft. You tryin' to make "art" for America's Got Talent...

THORN

That's what they do. They promote artists.

LIZARD

They promote popularity. Popularity ain't art.

THORN

It can be.

LIZARD

Not whatchu spittin'. Ain't nobody wanna hear that.

THORN

Oh, you suddenly a critic?

LIZARD

I ain't trying to get four X's.

THORN

Ain't I lucky to have a support system like you?

LIZARD

Alls I'm sayin', your audience from the hood. Ain't nobody from the hood wanna hear 'bout how the hood sucks. It's depressin'. We know it depressin'. We don't need you to confirm. Rich folk either, Heidi Klum ain't gonna give you a golden buzzer after you made her feel that white guilty and shit.

THORN

She don't got no white guilt over the hood. She ain't even American.

LIZARD

None of them American.

THORN

Uh, Howie?

LIZARD

Uh, Canadian?

THORN

Whatever. Canada is like America Lite.

LIZARD

Pfft. Audiences want to feel good about where they be, you feel me? Think 'bout the best... right? "Ain't Nutin" But a G Thang?" Shit was a celebration of Long Beach. "IT'S LIKE THIS AND LIKE THAT AND LIKE THIS AND UH. IT'S LIKE THAT AND LIKE THIS AND / LIKE THAT AND UH..."

THORN

Yeah, but they had a beach. I'd feel refreshed too if Jamaica had a beach.

LIZARD

Jamaica has a beach.

THORN

JAMAICA, QUEENS... Stupid ass.

LIZARD

Alls I'm sayin' is that a large percentage of the population ain't that deep. They don't wanna think and you askin' them to think. That's like a downward spiral to Loser Land. People want to hear mindless shit, because they day to day life is fucking awful. They need that mental escape. That's why you got assholes like Taylor Swift winning like 50 Grammys.

THORN

Taylor Swift don't got no 50 Grammys.

LIZARD

If Kanye ever let her finish she would.

THORN

You stupid.

LIZARD

Alls I'm sayin'.

THORN

You so dumb...

LIZARD

You missing the point.

THORN

The point is... I gotta rap about what I know.

LIZARD

But shit that make people feel good.

THORN

I don't know nothing about stuff that make people feel good.

LIZARD

Yeah, you do.

THORN

I do?

LIZARD

Yeah.

They kiss. LIZARD pulls his sagging cargo shorts down a bit further, and places his hand on the back of THORN's head and pushes them down towards his crotch. THORN pulls away.

THORN

What the fuck?

LIZARD

Come on.

THORN

I ain't doing that here.

LIZARD

No one's around.

THORN

We on the street.

LIZARD

Real quick like...

THORN

No.

LIZARD pushes her head down. THORN complies and is about to begin giving LIZARD head. OLD FART has entered, holding a Taco Bell Chaulpa.

OLD FART

I believe Thorn said, "No."

THORN and LIZARD jump to their feet.

THORN

What you want, old man?

OLD FART

Helping you from this degenerate.

LIZARD

What you call me?

THORN

It means low life or immoral...

LIZARD

I know what it means, Thorn!

OLD FART

Why don't you make your way home, Thorn.

LIZARD

Mind your own business.

OLD FART

I will not. You need to go on home, Thorn.

LIZARD

He gonna do what he wants.

OLD FART

I thought it was "she."

J. Julian Christopher - Bruise & Thorn Excerpt 8.

LIZARD

It's "he," and he fine. Ain't ya?

OLD FART

You don't look fine.

LIZARD

He said he fine.

OLD FART

Thorn can answer.

LIZARD

He already did.

OLD FART

That was a nod. For all I know, Thorn got a kink in the neck.

LIZARD

Back off, old man.

OLD FART

I want hear it from Thorn.

LIZARD

You ain't his Daddy.

OLD FART

Bruise know you out here?

LIZARD

Take your taco and fuck off.

OLD FART

It's a Chalupa.

LIZARD

Bitch, I don't give a fuck. Get outta here.

LIZARD kicks OLD FART in the ass twice.

THORN

Hey. HEY! Leave him alone.



LIZARD

Who's side you on?

THORN

I ain't on any side, Liz.

LIZARD

Sure look like it.

THORN

You don't need to be doin' that.

LIZARD

He don't get to tell me what to do, all of a sudden!

LIZARD pulls out a blade.

THORN

Old Fart... leave.

LIZARD

I ain't playin', old man.

THORN

Please. Please.

OLD FART leaves, reluctantly.

LIZARD

You disrespectin' me like that?

THORN

I wasn't disrespectin' you.

LIZARD

The fuck you weren't...

THORN

He's just a stupid old man. He didn't mean nothing.

LIZARD

You don't have a clue what he means. Nosey pieces of shit like that can fuck everything up. They ain't got nothin' better to do than stir up some shit. He already stirring shit up by sayin' you a she... What the fuck, Thorn?

THORN

What?

LIZARD

You my boy or not? Why you telling that old fuck you a “she”?

THORN

I didn’t.

LIZARD

The fuck you didn’t.

THORN

He thinks all homos want to be girls...

LIZARD

You mean to tell me he came up with that shit by himself? I know you confused or whatever,  
/ but that shit gotta stop.

THORN

I ain’t confused. I ain’t wearing no weave no more.

LIZARD

Damn straight you ain’t. Because you ain’t pulling that shit off.

THORN

I ain’t tryin’ too...

LIZARD

Fuck, Thorn. Stop... Okay? You know you is... And either you giving realness or you a fuckin’ dude. Okay? And you ain’t givin’ realness and you never will. Okay? And there ain’t no way in hell I goin’ on AGT thinkin’ I rock with that shit.

THORN

What shit? What won’t you rock with?

LIZARD

This in between... I ain’t tryin’ to explain that...

THORN

But you gonna claim your fagdom on national TV?

LIZARD

Fuck, yes. I ain't tryin' to hide nothing on National TV. Throw that boy pussy my way,  
Niggas don't bat an eye, but I ain't tryin' to claim this confusion.

THORN

I ain't confused.

LIZARD

Fine. You ain't confused. But, I don't wanna be attached to a bitch. You feel me? You need to  
be a boy. If you want me to drop a beat ... If you want this dick.. You need to a boy. You my  
boy?

After a moment THORN leans over and gives him head.

LIZARD (CON'D)

Good answer.

Lights shift. THORN begins his freestyle. As they do,  
LIZARD slowly vanishes and the Combination Pizza Hut  
and Taco Bell disappears and the basement of "Clean It" is  
revealed.

THORN

THERE'S A WHOLE LOTTA COCK,  
'BOUT TO BE SERVED.  
THERE'S A COCK 'TWEEN MY LEGS  
THAT HOLDIN' ALL THE NERVE -  
ENDIN'S FOR ME TO FEEL ECSTASY

BUT WHAT'S ECSTASY  
WHEN COUPLED WITH ENTROPY,  
EMPATHY,  
AND A DASH OF ANXIETY  
THAT KEEPIN' ME FROM  
ENJOYIN' THE GIFT OF MY HEAD.

MY HEAD GAME'S THE REALEST,  
BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT,  
SOMETHIN'S WRONG WITH THESE FEELINGS.

LIKE I GOT TO BE WHAT I WAS ASSIGNED.  
BUT NO TIME  
LIKE THE PRESENT TO ANALYZE SUCH THINGS,  
WHEN THOSE HORMONES  
I JUST FLUSHED WAS MAKIN' MY MOODS SWING -

BACK AND FORTH  
LIKE A TASSELED PASTIE  
ON A BOYLESQUE DANCER AT THE STONEWALL INN,  
LIT ON GIN,  
WHILE HIS FAMILY BACK IN GEORGIA  
BE PRAYIN' FOR HIS SIN.

I MEAN, I GET IT,  
I WAS ONCE HIM,  
BEFORE BRUISE TOOK ME IN  
AND GOT ME POURIN' FABRIC SOFTNER  
BEFORE THE MACHINE REACH THE SPIN  
CYCLE.

LIFE IS CYCLICAL, I MEAN...  
ROUND AND ROUND LIKE A WASHIN' MACHINE.  
WASHIN' YOU OUT,  
RINSIN' A STAIN,  
BREAKIN' DOWN THE DIRT,  
MAKIN' YOU THE SAME...

AS YOU WERE WHEN CREATED.  
BUT LIKE...  
WHAT IF THE STAIN MAKES YOU MORE YOU?  
WHAT IF THE STAIN MAKES YOU MORE ELATED?

Lights shift.

THORN vanishes.