WU-TANG: AN AMERICAN SAGA

"Pilot"

Episode #101

Written by
The RZA & Alex Tse

Directed by
Chris Robinson
WU-TANG: AN AMERICAN SAGA
"Pilot"

TEASER

MALE VOICE
These are the men who lead the
crime families of America...

ANOTHER MALE VOICE
I control 26 thousand men. Except
for dope, we operate in all aspects
of organized crime. And if there’s
one thing I’m sure of, it’s that
drugs destroy your mind and destroy
your home. In the end, it’ll only
lead our country into ruin.

CLOSE ON A TV SCREEN playing the anime CRYING FREEMAN:
Portrait of a Killer... WE PULL BACK, REVEALING...

1
INT. DENNIS’ APARTMENT - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (N/1) 1

1990. DARIUS COLES (14), in the living room of a Staten
Island apartment, a BREATHING TUBE in his mouth, sitting in
his WHEELCHAIR, watching the Magnavox TV with RABBIT EAR
ANTENNAS as Crying Freeman shoots a crime boss in the head.

DARIUS
I-I looooove th-thiiiis shiiiit,
 nig-niggaaaah...

REVEAL more of the small, sparsely furnished apartment. In
the kitchen area is DENNIS “D-LOVE” COLES (19) making an
oatmeal dinner for his two younger brothers DARREN (11) and
Darius, both of whom are wheelchair bound because of muscular
dystrophy. CUT TO:

DARREN IN THE KITCHEN, reads an IRON MAN COMIC BOOK on the
table. He reaches with his hand, struggling to turn the page--

DENNIS
I got you.

He puts the oatmeal on the table and turns the page for him.
Then he walks through the living room, past Darius--
INT. DENNIS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (N/1)

to the bedroom where their mother ANN COLES (40) is out
cold, drunk, in bed, half-empty bottle of BOONE'S FARM in
hand. Dennis takes the bottle, sets it on the dresser then
closes the door behind him.

EXT. 218 BUILDING - STAPLETON PROJECTS - NIGHT (N/1)

A collage of eight buildings covering four city blocks in all
directions. The buildings resemble a city jail with its
enclosed courtyard and tier-style structure. WE LAND on
Building 218 -- considered the most dangerous because it
houses some of the project's most ruthless tenants -- we see
GRAFFITI that exclaims "STAPLETON"; A YOUNG MAN getting
ROBBED for his TIMBERLANDS...

...when a BLACK MAZDA MPV pulls up outside of the building...
we make out two SHADOWY FIGURES INSIDE...

Right past the MPV, we see a window on the first floor. And
we see Dennis through it, as he--

INT. DENNIS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (N/1)

--wheels Darius away from the TV and parks him at the kitchen
table next to Darren, who reaches to turn the page again.
Again, Dennis does it for him.

DENNIS
(re: Iron Man comic)
This is an old one. This is right
before Tony Stark got paralyzed --
he was in a wheelchair, too, just
like y'all. But he was still a
superhero.

Darren makes some noises with his mouth and gestures--a
language that only Dennis can truly understand.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
What happened? He got shot.

He shuts the comic book--revealing a .9mm PISTOL underneath.

EXT. 218 BUILDING - STAPLETON PROJECTS - NIGHT (N/1)
The shadowy figures inside the MPV watch Dennis through the
window...
In the driver’s seat is POWER GRANT (20s), “Top Dog” of Park Hill projects aka Killer Hill, while in the passenger seat sits his shooter, SHA RADER (19), armed with a German Luger TRC-9, the weapon of choice for ‘90s drug dealers. Power hands Sha a TEC-9 clip that has been altered to an “uwop,” giving it 48 rounds of ammo.

Sha slams the clip in...

Dennis spoon feeds Darius the oatmeal as Darren “speaks” some more.

DENNIS
(re: Iron Man)
His ex-girl put one through him.
(laughs)
See, this nigga fucked up all the bad guys, the Hulk, whoever, but in the end, all it took was a crazy ass bitch to lay Iron Man down.

He and Darren laugh--

--when suddenly BULLETS fly through the window--SHATTERING IT AND OTHER KITCHEN ITEMS--

--as the FIRING continues--through the broken window, we see Dennis drop--

--as BULLETS STRIKE THE WALL, behind him, missing him. Dennis instinctively KICKS Darius’ wheelchair into the living room, out of the line of fire--

--another SPURT OF BULLETS whiz into the apartment as Dennis YANKS Darren out of his wheelchair onto the floor for cover--

--when the GUNFIRE SUDDENLY STOPS... and, Dennis hears TIRES SQUEALING outside. He looks over at Darren on the floor, then takes a quick scan out the window and sees the MPV speeding off.

DENNIS
Yo, you hit?!

Darren manages to shake his head. CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)
DENNIS PUTTING Darren back in his wheelchair; then rushing over to Darius, wheelchair stuck in the corner. Dennis turns the wheelchair around--

DARIUS
Ni-nigga, y-you almoooost k-
kiiiiiilled meeeeee...

He’s okay. Dennis lets out a sigh of relief... when he follows the BULLET HOLES in the wall to his mother’s bedroom--

INT. DENNIS’ APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (N/1)

Dennis bursts in--

--and sees SPLATTERS OF RED on the wall--BLOOD...

Panicked, he steps towards his mother on the bed--

--when he notices the SHOT UP and SHATTERED remnants of the bottle of Boone’s on the dresser--the red splatters are from the cheap wine...

Dennis looks down at his mother laying in bed--she’s unharmed, still passed out from drinking, oblivious to the shooting... Off Dennis’ look--

INT. DENNIS’ APARTMENT - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (N/1)

Dennis heads straight for the kitchen table, picks up his pistol, stuffs it in his pants, and turns toward the front door, walking straight ahead into the CAMERA--CUT TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

14 EXT. DIGGS' HOUSE - NIGHT (N/1)

ESTABLISHER of a SMALL COLONIAL STYLE HOUSE on Laurel Ave which serves as the border between the warring Park Hill and Stapleton neighborhoods of Staten Island. Laurel Ave is considered a neutral zone.

As WE MOVE CLOSER to the house, WE HEAR the heavy BASS, banging sound of hip hop coming from inside the home...

15 INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - BOBBY'S ROOM - NIGHT (N/1)

A midsize BASEMENT that's been converted into a bedroom, messy with RCA wires, vinyl records, video game cartridges, VCR tapes, and comics scattered about.

At the center of this chaos is BOBBY DIGGS (19) playing with a ROLAND 909 DRUM MACHINE, blending beats with an obscure new age piano loop spinning from a blacked out record on a TECHNIQUE 1200 TURNTABLE. CUT TO:

BOBBY'S HAND SLIDING the pitch control fader down on the turntable, adjusting the piano notes to the drum machine's tempo. CUT TO:

BOBBY NODDING to the new groove developing. CUT TO:

BOBBY'S HAND MOVING from the fader and PRESSING RECORD on a YAMAHA 4 TRACK RECORDER. CUT TO:

AN OLD ZENITH TV PLAYING SHAOLIN AND WU-TANG. CUT TO:

BOBBY MIXING the music when he hears the SOUNDS from the kung fu movie serendipitously blending well...

Bobby takes notice... he pauses the music and re-winds the movie. He plays them together again... it sounds cool—a discovery.

He's about to press record when he's interrupted by multiple KNOCKS on the window accompanied by the sound of a BARKING DOG. He looks up at the window...

It's Sha holding a black KNAPSACK. Bobby opens the door.

SHA
What's up, son? Yo, that shit sounding dope.

BOBBY
You know how I do, Sha -- trying to come up with a new banger.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Bobby stops the recording on the 4 track but leaves the record spinning. (We recognize the drums from "7th Chamber.")

As Sha enters, Bobby turns and notices he’s sweating profusely.

BOBBY (CONT’D)
Damn, G, it’s cold out there -- why the fuck you sweating?

SHA
Yo, I had to put in some work.

He hands Bobby the knapsack.

SHA (CONT’D)
I need you to stash this for me.

He hands the knapsack to Bobby, who feels its weight and looks inside--

--and sees a TEC-9.

BOBBY
Shit’s still hot.

Meaning he knows it’s literally just been used. Meaning that it can’t be good that he’s dropping this off so quickly after (though only we know it was used to shoot up Dennis’ pad). Bobby and Sha share a moment of uncomfortable silence between each other... that’s broken by the irritating sound of a NEEDLE FUZING at the end of a vinyl record.

Bobby relents, stashing the knapsack into a MILK CRATE of vinyl records. Then he stops the turntable.

SHA
Yo, play the beat again.

They share one last look--Bobby wondering if Sha really wants to hear that beat, or if he’s just trying to change the subject.

Whatever. Bobby hits play on the 4-track and the MUSIC instantly changes the energy between them, changes the whole mood, because music is that powerful.

Bobby and Sha begin smiling and nodding to the beat when Sha breaks into a quick freestyle:

SHA (CONT’D)
“Champion gear that I rock/You get your boots knocked.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
Then I attack you like a pit and lock shit down/case I come to freak the sound. Hard core/But giving you more and more/Like ding!"

BOBBY
Yo, that sound right! Let me plug up the mic and record it...

INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - BOBBY'S ROOM - LATER (N/1)

The verse has been recorded and the guys are listening to the playback--a rough version of "7th Chamber" as Sha finishes rolling a BLUNT. He lights it, takes a few drags and passes it to Bobby as Shaolin and Wu-Tang plays in the background.

SHA
Damn, that track kinda ill, son.

BOBBY
This is where you should be putting your work into. Fuck the streets.

SHA
Son, nigga gotta eat. Ain't getting no bread from no music, just a hobby we picked up in the lobby.

BOBBY
Where you think Rakim and KRS-ONE started from? I told you in Miss Hoover's class -- we're gonna do big things.

SHA
That was third grade, son -- c'mon now.

The song ends, and they turn their attention to the movie when the two best friends Ming-Kai and Tat-Chi fight each other for the Qing Lord. Both Bobby and Sha enjoy the fighting when Sha's MOTOROLA PAGER VIBRATES. He checks it--it's a PHONE NUMBER tagged 911.

SHA (CONT'D)
Yo, I gotta make a move--peace!

Bobby knows that the streets just called. Sha's gone before Bobby can say peace back.
WE MOVE down Broad Street, normally a hub of activity during the day, but at this time of night, in the October winter, it’s dead... WE PASS a closed liquor store, a pharmacy, barber shop, bodega, laundromat, check cashing spot... landing on the only brightly lit SIGN on the block--A CHINESE RESTAURANT. CUT TO:

ACROSS THE STREET, where FAT LARRY (50s), Italian, straight out of a Scorsese flick, smokes a stogie in front of his restaurant “THE RIB SHACK,” closed for the night. Behind him, a 9-year-old BLACK KID cleans the windows with Windex and newspaper.

FAT LARRY
When the Verrazano opened, so many Italians came over here from Brooklyn they called that bridge the “Guinea Gangplank,” you know that?

The Black Kid says nothing, keeps cleaning when a middle-aged black woman wearing a uniform, LINDA DIGGS, exits the restaurant.

LINDA
Okay, Larry -- I re-stocked the to-go boxes, forks, and all that. Jimmy forgot to clear the grease trap again.

FAT LARRY
You wanna take care of that?

LINDA
You wanna give me a raise?

Fat Larry watches her leave with a smirk on his face. Then:

FAT LARRY
Italians built Staten Island -- working together, as a community. (beat) That’s the problem with you moolies -- you’ll never build anything for yourselves because you pick fighting and folly over family.

He holds out a FIVE DOLLAR BILL. The Black Kid takes it as Fat Larry heads inside.
As the Black Kid pockets the bill, he spots a lone, scary looking man wearing a hoodie heading his way. The Black Kid looks around—no one else is on the street. He decides he better get the hell out of there and hurries off. CUT TO:

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - MIDDLE OF BROAD STREET - CONTINUOUS (N/1)

DENNIS—the lone, scary looking man—wearing a black bubble goose, black sweats, black hoodie, walking with purpose down the dark street, hand clutching the gun in his waistband... when he's approached by FREDO, a crackhead.

FREDO
Yo, D Love -- let me get two for five?

DENNIS
I'm not working.

FREDO
Come on, dog, bless a nigga.

DENNIS
I said I'm not fucking working.

Fredo knows not to push any further. He scurries off.

FREDO
Yeah, nigga, those red tops in the Hill is better than your bullshit blue tops anyway. Fuck a Stapleton nigga!

Dennis keeps it moving to the Chinese Restaurant from before. There's a GREEN (not Black) Mazda MPV parked out front.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DINING AREA - NIGHT (N/1)

A storefront establishment that can seat about a dozen people but is mostly used as a takeout joint. Inside, eating beef lo mein from a carton, is DIVINE DIGGS (22), sporting a Ralph Lauren Polo Goose down jacket, Hilfiger jeans, Gucci sneakers, a thick gold rope around his neck, 4 finger gold brick, and a gold nugget watch—if this isn't the uniform of a boss, then show me something better. While Power is top dog in Park Hill, Divine is the man in Stapleton.

Over at the counter ordering food is Russell "ASON UNIQUE" Jones (20), Divine's cousin, wearing a black leather bomber, Wrangler jeans and Timberlands.

(CONTINUED)
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CONTINUED:

ASON
Throw an extra wing in there and
some of that spicy red shit -- make
my hair curl like James Brown--
Owww!

He does a James Brown-esque dance move.

ASIAN CASHIER
One dollar more.

ASON
Come on, sister Lee -- we all
family out here. You know I love
you.

Dennis enters, fuming.

DIVINE
What’s up, son?

DENNIS
Shit just got real, yo.

Off Divine’s look--

INT. DIVINE’S MPV - (PARKED) - NIGHT (N/1)

Divine sits in the driver’s seat, talking to Dennis in the
passenger, but eyes looking around outside, always alert for
threats.

DIVINE
Yeah, well, what did you think them
niggas was gonna do?

Dennis starts to object, but Divine holds a hand up.

DIVINE (CONT’D)
Leave it alone. We only a few grand
away from getting these kilos. We
gotta keep it tight, son.

DENNIS
Naw ‘Vine–fuck Power! Fuck that
bitch nigga Shal! Fuck Park Hill!
What about our rep? Niggas gonna
try to clown us.

DIVINE
It’s better to have a rep in the
street than a rep in jail.

(CONTINUED)
Dennis understands... but he doesn't like it. Ason hops into the backseat with his order of wings.

DIVINE (CONT'D)
Ay, you know no eating in my whip, son -- have my shit smelling like Chinatown.

ASON
Come on, 'Vine, it's cold out there.

DIVINE
Better getcha some more hot sauce.

Ason exits the whip. Divine continues with Dennis. He opens the GLOVE COMPARTMENT revealing a BAG of BLUE TOP CRACK VIALS—blue tops are the "brand" of Stapleton.

DIVINE (CONT'D)
Check it, I want you and Ason to do the pick ups and drop offs with my brother tomorrow--hit the Statue, too--then meet me back on Victory.

He hands the bag to Dennis who snaps back into business mode.

DENNIS
Got you.

DIVINE
Look, D, we going to get them niggas -- trust me that's going to be a pleasure, but business is first. Those keys are coming to Staten Island next week -- no more having to go Uptown for our re-up.

DENNIS
I heard that.

DIVINE
Hear me on this--we need to focus on that cream, then we let off that steam.

He looks over at Dennis... who nods in agreement... but his eyes tell a different story...

EXT. WORLD TRADE PARK - DAY (D/2)

Wall Street. The park is crowded with stockbrokers on their lunch break. On one end of the park, a group of older folks practice Tai Chi, a WOMAN playing a GUITAR busks for money.

(CONTINUED)
On the other end of the park, members of the FIVE PERCENT NATION gather—one on a MEGAPHONE talking about how the Black Man is God on Earth... nearby, WE FIND Bobby sitting across from an OLD CHESSPLAYER engaged in a game of speed chess. Bobby ponders his next move--

OLD CHESSPLAYER
Ka-boom!
(points to CLOCK)
Time's up, young blood.

Bobby's frustrated that his time expired, he glances up at the Five Percenters, annoyed, like they distracted him.

BOBBY
Let's go again.

Bobby passes him a five dollar bill. CUT TO:

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PARK, WHERE DENNIS scans the crowd, Aon with him. Both dressed in Carhart jackets and BLACK HOODIES, obscuring their faces. They're clearly on a mission, searching for a target... Bobby... BACK TO:

OLD CHESSPLAYER
Okay, it's your money -- if you got the dime, I got the time -- set 'em up!

Bobby begins to set up the pieces as the Old Chessplayer sets the clock. CUT TO:

DENNIS MOVING through the park, eyes darting... when Aon taps him.

ASON
There he go.

Dennis turns and sees Bobby at the chessboard. He heads that way, determined... CUT TO:

BOBBY SETTING UP THE BOARD when a white STOCKBROKER interrupts.

STOCKBROKER
(whispering)
Yo, homeboy -- let me get a dime bag.

BOBBY
What?

STOCKBROKER
Weed, man.

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
Wrong, homeboy.

The Stockbroker walks away, disappointed. He heads over to some other BLACK GUYS to cop.

OLD CHESSPLAYER
Yeah, they all come out for their lunch break, buy weed, smoke it; then go back to work and run the world while we play games.

BOBBY
Alright -- round four.

As he readies to play, he doesn't notice Dennis and Ason approaching from behind... CUT TO:

ASON PULLING OUT A BROWN PAPER BAG. We don't know what's inside... CUT TO:

BOBBY ABOUT TO MOVE A PIECE when he spots Dennis and Ason heading his way, looking serious. He quickly takes his hand off the piece--

BOBBY (CONT'D)
I gotta roll.

He stands but is immediately cut off by Dennis and Ason--

ASON
What up, my nuh?

He raises the brown paper bag like it's a gun--Bobby just stands there, frozen... when Ason reaches inside the bag and TWISTS OFF THE CAP of the 40oz of OLDE ENGLISH inside. He takes a SWIG.

ASON (CONT'D)
You wanna hit this?

They seem to be friends...

BOBBY
I'm good.

He and Dennis lock eyes.

DENNIS
Let's do these pick ups.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

22 EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY/STATUE OF LIBERTY CONCESSION SHOP - 22 DAY (D/2)

TOURISTS enjoy the wonder of the STATUE OF LIBERTY... as Bobby, Dennis and Ason step off of the Liberty Island Ferry. They head towards the CONCESSION SHOP in mid-conversation:

BOBBY
How do you know Sha was with him?
He ain’t the only shooter on P’s team.

ASON
C’mon, cousin, you know that sneaky bastard be everywhere with Power.

He finishes the 40oz and lets out a large BURP.

DENNIS
I know that nigga ya man’s and all but stop trying to make excuses. He from Park Hill.

BOBBY
What, you ain’t got no niggas in Park Hill? I know you got bitches there.

DENNIS
True, true, you know how the kid move, but they all on the sidelines -- your man Sha in the starting five. When’s the last time you seen him?

Bobby hesitates a split second.

BOBBY
Not in a minute.

DENNIS
I don’t give a fuck if y’all go all the way back to eatin’ cupcakes and playing G.I. Joe and shit -- I’m gonna peel that nigga’s cap back. It’d be done already if your brother didn’t pump the brakes on it.

We now understand that Divine is Bobby’s older brother. Bobby gives a serious look before entering the concession shop.
The shop is a small court which sells fast food, novelty gifts, cameras, film, etc. Standing behind the gift counter is ORIN (22). Helping him is a beautiful, voluptuous girl named ERIKA (18), who smokes so much weed everybody calls her MOMMA GANJA. Orin notices Bobby approaching with Dennis and Ason. He knows they're here for and signals for Bobby to meet him in the back. Bobby and Dennis follow, but Ason has his eyes on Momma Ganja. He cuts the checkout line, in front of some EUROPEAN TOURISTS who object in foreign languages.

ASON

Y' all got any 40 ounces back there?

MOMMA GANJA

We don't sell beer.

ASON

Yo, you know you some ol' chocolate deluxe-type sugarplum yum yum momma. I'd love to rub your ass in the moonshine... Erika.

MOMMA GANJA

Oh, you can read.

ASON

Yeah, and when I look into those pretty eyes I can read your soul. It says you descended from a Egyptian Queen, and if me and you get together, I promise I will put you back on your throne.

She cracks a smile, actually finding his demeanor and tactics rather cute. The foreign customers behind Ason are getting antsy.

MOMMA GANJA

Come on, you're holding up the line And I wanna start my lunch break.

Ason turns to the tourists:

ASON

I'm not moving until she gives me her number! Voulez-vous cocochie avec moi!
INT. STATUE OF LIBERTY CONCESSION SHOP - BACK ROOM - SAME 24
(D/2)

The dimly lit back storage room is full of boxes of KODAK
FILM, Duracell batteries, plastic bags of stuffed animals and
Liberty crowns.

SHOTGUN (O.S.)
I’ll fucking put your naked body
into a barrel of honey, right? Then
lock you in a dark room full of
killer bees like -- bzzz!

REVEAL SHOTGUN (19), tall, uniform crisp, bullshitting with
another WORKER.

SHOTGUN (CONT’D)
No, no, no -- I’ll fucking have
your bare ass sliding down a razor
blade sliding board, real slow--
ssss--and splash into a pool of
alcohol -- arrgh!

WORKER
That’s fucked up.

Bobby, Dennis, and Orin enter.

BOBBY
Fucked up indeed. What up Shotgun?

SHOTGUN
Bobby D, what it do?

They dap, but Dennis just clocks the room.

Orin pulls out a stack of CASH and hands it to Bobby, looking
worried. Bobby counts it...

BOBBY
Suppose to be fifteen hundred.

ORIN
Shit been slow. It should pick up
over the weekend.

DENNIS
Come on, son, we ain’t got no time
for no games!

Shotgun sees the money in Bobby’s hand, puts two and two
together.

(CONTINUED)
SHOTGUN
Yo, fam -- whatever y'all doing you
can't be doing it here.
    (shoots Orin a look)
This is a place of business.

DENNIS
Yeah -- our business.

SHOTGUN
This ain't Stapleton.

DENNIS
It's not Park Hill either, nigga.

He steps up to Shotgun--Bobby steps between them.

BOBBY
Hold up--

SHOTGUN
I live in Park Hill, but I'm good
wherever I go. I don't play your
petty neighborhood bullshit. Now,
like I said, y'all gotta go.

DENNIS
Fuck are you?

SHOTGUN
(points to name tag)
I'm the assistant manager.

Dennis is about to snap back, but Bobby cuts him off.

BOBBY
Yo, let's us just have five
minutes, fam.

Shotgun considers it.

SHOTGUN
(to Orin)
Alright, lunch break is over in
five.

Shotgun and the Worker head out. Bobby pulls out a TAPE from
his jacket.

BOBBY
Yo, check out my shit -- I got some
new beats. Stop by my lab, and we
can record some of that heat.
Shotgun nods, takes the tape, takes one last look at Orin, and heads out. Dennis steps up to Orin.

DENNIS
Yo, nigga, you better have the rest of that cheese by Sunday.

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY CONCESSION SHOP - DAY (D/2)

Bobby and an annoyed Dennis exit the back. Ason approaches, WAVING a RECEIPT.

DENNIS
What you buy?

We see the receipt has Momma Ganja's PHONE NUMBER written on it.

ASON
Some PUSSYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!
And, yo, she gave me a few rolls of film for free.

DENNIS
Nigga, you don't even own a camera.

All the tourists turn their way as they leave, Bobby chuckling and shaking his head. (NOTE: Ason sounds awfully like the Ol' Dirty Bastard here...)

EXT. BATTERY PARK - STREET - DAY (D/2)

Bobby, Dennis, and Ason walk away from the slip where the Liberty Island Ferry docks.

DENNIS
Fuckin' bullshit -- you let the "assistant manager" punk us.

Bobby pulls out the cash, takes a twenty and gives the rest to Dennis.

BOBBY
Give that to 'Vine. I'll meet y'all on the island later.

DENNIS
How you moving?

Before Bobby can answer, a MITSUBISHI ECLIPSE comes SCREECHING to a halt in the middle of the street ahead. A flamboyantly dressed--almost comically so--young black man, JAH SON, steps out--he's a friend.
JAH SON
What up, Bobby D -- we gonna rob some tourists or what?!

He opens his coat, revealing a PISTOL. Dennis and Ason immediately stop him, laughing. Bobby looks around, worried... but even he cracks up.

Bobby
Yo, chill, Jah!

JAH SON
I just got my quarter Uptown, I’m feelin’ like Scarface!

DENNIS
(re: gun)
Put that away and give us a ride back to the Island.
(to Bobby)
This nigga, Jah Son, crazy!

Bobby waves at Jah Son, hearing all the HONKING from cars now in a traffic jam because Jah Son’s left his car in the middle of the street. Bobby heads his own way.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN #1 - (MOVING) - DAY (D/2)

Bobby’s on the subway listening to his Sony WALKMAN. A skeleton version of the future song “7th Chamber” plays in his ears as he scans around the subway car extracting ideas.

He notices a PRETTY GIRL in a seat. They share a smile... when Bobby notices a WATCH AD above her with the word “Time” in its slogan... which triggers an idea--Bobby WRITES in his notebook, and WE HEAR HIS INNER VOICE:

BOBBY (V.O.)
“Time is moving slow/Life is a drag/There’s money to make and more girls to bag/Fully aware I step into the square looking, for what?
The cutie in the chair.”

The train comes to a stop at Times Square. Bobby WINKS at the Pretty Girl before exiting.

EXT. SAM ASH - MIDTOWN - DAY/DUSK (D/2)

Bobby strolls down the block, window shopping, looking at all the electronic gadgets and DJ equipment on display in various stores as he walks towards 48th & 7th. He turns the corner and sees the ILLUMINATED SIGN OF SAM ASH. Bobby’s eyes light up like a kid in a candy store.
INT. SAM ASH - DUSK (D/2)

The store is a haven for aspiring musicians, producers, composers, etc., looking for the latest: DJ equipment, keyboards, synthesizers, drum machines, sheet music -- you name it.

Bobby is dazzled by it all... when he notices a GROUP OF PEOPLE surrounding something over in the PRO AUDIO SECTION. He heads over, curious...

...and hears a BEAT of a famous break (to be determined) being looped to precision--must be a dope DJ in the store--that explains the crowd. Bobby's excited to see who it is, moving through the crowd--

--when he sees that there isn't any DJ, isn't two turntables--the loop is coming from a new drum machine--the EMU SP 1200. The SALESMAN is simply pressing the play button and music loops continuously.

This excites Bobby way more than seeing any DJ.

BOBBY
What is that?

SALESMAN
An SP 1200 -- drum machine with a built in ten second sampler.
  (beat)
This thing never makes a timing error.

Which he demonstrates. Bobby watches in awe.

BOBBY
How much?

SALESMAN
Two thousand bucks out the door.

BOBBY
Can I try it?

A CUSTOMER tries to cut in.

CUSTOMER
Back off, nigga, I was here first.

Bobby stands to his full height and gives the guy a look that we would have expected him to use on Shotgun earlier.

The Customer backs off. Bobby turns to the Salesman.

(CONTINUED)
SALESMAN
You break it, you own it.

Bobby goes over and presses a few PADS. Digs it. Then he presses more pads as he forms a rhythm with a kick, snare, hi-hat, and some sample horn hits.

It's as if Bobby's found the Holy Grail. Bobby knows he has to have one of these machines. As the tapped beat plays...

EXT. 160 PARK HILL - DUSK (D/2)

The Park Hill aka Killer Hill Projects are different from the open structure of Stapleton, consisting of 12 main buildings—six on each side of a narrow two-way street. The graffiti here exclaims: "Killer Hill."

The most notorious building is the 160 aka the "One Six Uuu". It's outside here that we find Sha and Power serving crackheads, selling their "brand" in RED TOP VIALS. Fredo, the crackhead from earlier, is already there talking to Sha and Power.

FREDO
Yeah, the nigga D Lover talkin'
'bout he ain't serving. Shit,
nigga, I told him his shit can't
fuck with y'all red tops anyway--
come on, baby, two for five.

Sha and Power look at each other with the revelation that Dennis wasn't hit. Then Sha serves Fredo two red tops. After Fredo leaves, Power spots a DELIVERY MAN filling the NEWSPAPER BOX with the "STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE." Power grabs a copy from the man's pile and opens the paper up to the CRIME ROUND UP, which describes the drive-by shooting.

SHA
Yo, you think D know it was us?

Power holds his thoughts and folds the newspaper.

SHA (CONT'D)
We gotta hit him again before he hits us.

POWER
He ain't gonna hit us. Not yet.
That's not Divine's way. He's on
his suit and tie shit -- wants to
be a businessman, but the problem
is what we do isn't a business --
it's a hustle.
SHA
What's the difference?

POWER
All niggas got an expiration date.
We ain't here to build no business —
— we're here to beat the clock.
You're a fool if you think
otherwise.
(beat)
Where you stash the TEC?

A pause.

SHA
This chick's house. She's good.

POWER
Go on and get that back. I want
Dennis in the ground by the time
those keys come to us.

He serves another crackhead the last of their supply.

SHA
We all out.

POWER
Indeed, we are.
(they walk)
Where you headed?

SHA
Home.

POWER
I got you.

SHA
I'm good, son, I'ma walk it.

POWER
Alright then.

Sha heads around the corner and stops once he's out of sight.
He peeks out from behind the building. Sees Power get into
his MPV and drive off. Once he's gone, Sha heads back the way
he came from.

EXT. SECTION 8 APARTMENT BUILDING - FRONT DOOR - EVENING

Not a project apartment but a building where many Section 8
tenants live.

(CONTINUED)
Sha waits outside the building trying to look like he’s not waiting outside the building...when someone finally comes out.

Once that person passes him, Sha hurries to catch the door before it shuts and slips inside.

EXT. SECTION 8 APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOFTOP - EVENING (N/2)

Sha emerges onto the roof, blowing into his hands for warmth. It was cold on the street, but the wind hits harder up here.

He goes over to an old FAN UNIT, which is clearly not being used during the winter, and PULLS the COVER OFF, REVEALING a ratty SLEEPING BAG, A TRASH BAG full of CLOTHES, and a bag of CHIPS. CUT TO:

Sha sits in his sleeping bag, making himself comfortable and as warm as possible. This is where he lives.

He opens up the bag of chips and eats. Pulls out a Walkman with a cassette tape in it. He presses play, and we hear Slick Rick’s “Hey Young World.” Sha gets lost in the MUSIC while staring out at the skyline...

INT. DIGGS’ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING (N/2)

Sitting at the coffee table doing homework, drinking a cup of KOOL-AID is TERRENCE DIGGS (10), Bobby and Divine’s little brother. He’s wearing his heavy jacket inside the house. A premature born kid, Terrence is a total introvert that can be mistaken to be slow. On closer inspection, he’s not doing homework—he’s DRAWING PICTURES on his homework. The pictures look more like something a kindergarten-age kid would draw. WE HEAR METAL BANGING--CUT TO:

THE OTHER SIDE OF the room where SHURRIE DIGGS (17), going on 37, uses a WRENCH on the RADIATOR, trying to get the heat back on. She’s Bobby and Divine’s younger sister, but in certain ways is more of a mother to the whole family. Divine’s dog, SHEBA, lies near the radiator.

Terrence holds up his empty cup.

TERRENCE

More.

(Shurrie ignores)

More.

(CONTINUED)
SHURRIE
You remember what happened to
Oliver in the movie when he asked
for more? Get it yourself.

Terrence turns back to his work when Bobby enters.

BOBBY
What up, 'Rie? What up, cool T?

Terrence smiles as Bobby gives him dap when Bobby notices a
BRUISE on his face.

BOBBY (CONT’D)
What happened?

TERRENCE
School.

BOBBY
Someone messin’ with you?

TERRENCE
Someone got messed up!

He says it proudly, laughing.

BOBBY
You tear him up like Mike?

TERRENCE
Nah. Shurrie did -- clotheslined
him like Rowdy Roddy Piper!
(re-enacts with glee)
The whole schoolyard laughed!

Bobby sees Shurrie working on the radiator, getting it to
turn back on. She stands when they hear YELLING UPSTAIRS.

BOBBY
Who’s Mom talking to?

SHURRIE
Jerome. Something about putting
more money in his commissary. At
least that’s how the call started.

BOBBY
Divine home, yet?

Shurrie shakes her head as she grabs Terrence’s cup.

LINDA (O.S.)
Bobby?! That you?
INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING (N/2)

Bobby comes up the stairs, arriving at the doorway to his mother's bedroom. It's Linda, who we met earlier with Fat Larry, scarf on head, face covered with a thick layer of NOXZEMA.

LINDA
(on phone)
What do you expect me to do? I've got my hands full here!
(to Bobby)
I need you to head over to Stapleton and put my numbers in -- they close in twenty minutes.

BOBBY
I'm hungry, Ma -- can't I make a sandwich first?

LINDA
Boy, you got to go now to make it in time. Play Terrence's birthday straight.

She hands him a ten dollar bill, then gets back on the phone:

LINDA (CONT'D)
(on phone)
What about your mother? Your brothers? How about they step up for a change?

She shuts the door on Bobby.

OMITTED

EXT. VICTORY BLVD - EVENING (N/2)

Another main hub of activity in Staten Island--legal and otherwise. Divine hangs on the corner, working. Dennis, Ason, and Jah Son are in the background, sharing a 40oz and serving crackheads their blue tops but also bullshititng, enjoying themselves.

Bobby comes around the corner, takes his Walkman headphones off and heads straight for Divine, who nods at him.

BOBBY
Yo, I gotta talk to you.

DIVINE
About?

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
I need, like, an advance.

DIVINE
You come up short on pick ups, and you’re asking for an advance? And you know we been saving up for that key. Son. How much?

BOBBY
Two thou.

DIVINE
You’re fucking with me. The fuck you need two thousand dollars for?

BOBBY
There’s this, this new drum machine--

Divine just laughs.

BOBBY (CONT’D)
I’m telling you, this is gonna change the game. The quality of demos I can make with that? Shit’ll be sick tight.

(Divine laughs harder)
Let me hold the money then -- I’ll get you back.

Divine just turns toward the others, calls out:

DIVINE
Ay yo! My little brother needs two Gs for a drum machine -- who got him?

ASON
Fuck a drum machine! You got the human beat box right here!

He starts BEAT BOXING.

DIVINE
And all that costs is a 40 of O.E.

He laughs again. Bobby walks off, disgusted, as Dennis freestyles to Ason’s beat.
38
EXT. 67 WARREN - STAPLETON PROJECTS - EVENING (N/2)

67 Warren is located at the end of the Stapleton Projects. Its entrance doesn’t face the courtyard which makes it possible to enter and exit without being noticed by the other building residents.

Bobby enters, Walkman headphones around his neck.

39
INT. 67 WARREN APARTMENT 3D - EVENING (N/2)

The small, one bedroom apartment is crowded with Residents and Gamblers. Bobby places a bet with the NUMBER RUNNER, 40, who smokes a Virginia Slim and hands Bobby the slip of paper.

40
INT. 67 WARREN - CORRIDOR - EVENING (N/2)

As Bobby walks the corridor towards the elevator, he hears the sound of a DISTRESSED COUPLE arguing. It’s hard to make out the words but it sounds like it’s over drugs and money. An APARTMENT DOOR violently SWINGS OPEN, REVEALING A MIDDLE-AGED COUPLE in a domestic fight—the MAN is clearly a crackhead.

The fight spills out into the corridor—the Man PINNING the WOMAN to the wall. Bobby gets a glimpse inside their apartment and notices a TODDLER inside, CRYING for his parents to stop fighting.

The Man is about to lay a crushing blow to the Woman’s face--

—when Bobby intervenes, GRABBING the Man’s arm.

MAN
What the fuck you doing, boy? You
best mind your business!

He turns to swing on Bobby, but is too cracked out to do much—
—Bobby PUNCHES him in the gut—he immediately drops to the floor.

BOBBY
Walk it off.

Knowing he’s outmatched, the Man gets to his feet and leaves. The Woman heads back inside to tend to her child.

WOMAN
Thank you.

Bobby looks down at the Toddler and smiles. The Woman shuts the door, locks and chains it. Bobby puts his Walkman headphones on. A cool DRUM LOOP plays...
...and the beat of the drums are replaced with the sound of things being thrown against the wall...

YOUNG BOBBY (8) sits up from his makeshift bed on the floor. YOUNG DIVINE (12) and YOUNG SHURRIE (6) are already awake, listening to a ferocious fight between their parents through the door.

Bobby stands and steps toward the door when Divine stops him.

YOUNG DIVINE
What are you doing? Don't go out there.

They stare at one another... then Bobby moves past him.

Young Bobby enters and finds his FATHER, late 20s, eyes wild with rage, PINNING Linda, several months PREGNANT with Terrence, to the wall. Linda sees Bobby and is horrified.

LINDA
Baby... baby, go back to bed, okay?

BOBBY'S FATHER
(to Bobby)
Get your ass back in there!

Bobby doesn’t. He stands there, locking eyes with his Father.

Bobby’s Father finally breaks the stare, goes to a drawer and pulls out a HAMMER.

LINDA
No, no, no--

Bobby’s Father RUSHES Bobby with the hammer--

--but instead of hitting Bobby, he picks him up and faces Linda...

...then he proceeds to DESTROY THE KITCHEN with the hammer, with Bobby in his arms, screaming:

BOBBY'S FATHER
See what you make me do, bitch?!
See!

(CONTINUED)
We can barely hear Linda's cries over the sounds of the HAMMER PUNCHING HOLES IN THINGS. Bobby shuts his eyes, trying to drown out the terrible noises...

OMITTED

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - (PARKED) - FLASHBACK 1980 - MORNING (D/2)

The next day, after that frightening ordeal--Linda DRAGS Young Bobby by the arm onto the bus and into a seat. He's crying.

YOUNG BOBBY
Why do I have to go?

LINDA
Because I need divine, and Shurrie's too little.

She says it forcefully, which only makes Bobby bawl harder.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Bobby, please. It's for the best. (starts to break)
Don't make Mama cry.

After a moment, Bobby stops. Linda wipes his tears and hugs him tight. CUT TO:

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - (MOVING) - FLASHBACK 1980 - MOMENTS LATER (D/2)

THE BUS LEAVING. Young Bobby looks out the window at his mother. They don't wave at each other... FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - (PARKED) - FLASHBACK 1980 - NEXT MORNING (D/3)

Young Bobby's asleep. He opens his eyes and sees the bus is empty. He looks toward the front and sees the DRIVER stepping off.

EXT. NORTH CAROLINA BUS STATION - FLASHBACK 1980 - MORNING (D/3)

Young Bobby steps off the bus... and finds on older black man waiting, holding a DUFFEL BAG. This is Bobby's UNCLE HOLLIS.

UNCLE HOLLIS
Bobby?
(Bobby nods)
Do you remember me?
(Bobby shakes his head)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE HOLLIS (CONT'D)
This bag yours?
(Bobby nods)
Where we’re at, you speak when spoken to. Understand?

A beat.

YOUNG BOBBY
Okay.

UNCLE HOLLIS
Okay is not an answer -- it's an adjective. You say yes and sir.

Another beat.

YOUNG BOBBY
Yes. Sir.

I./E. UNCLE HOLLIS' CAR - (MOVING) - FLASHBACK 1980 - DAY 48 (D/3)

Young Bobby looks out the window as they drive down a single lane road past fields of... he can’t even imagine. He’s never seen anything like this before. He might as well be on Mars.

Uncle Hollis listens to the RADIO which plays Gladys Knight and the Pips’ "The Way We Were, Try to Remember" (a sample used on "Can It Be So Simple").

I./E. UNCLE HOLLIS' CAR - (MOVING) - FLASHBACK 1980 - CONTINUOUS (D/3)

They turn off the road down a long drive... toward the biggest house Young Bobby has ever seen, by itself, on a patch of land, that to Bobby might as well be as big as Central Park.

UNCLE HOLLIS
Welcome to your new home...

Off Bobby’s look--

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

50

EXT. UNCLE HOLLIS' HOUSE - FLASHBACK 1980 - DAY (D/3)

Young Bobby gets out of the car and looks up at the house ahead. He follows his Uncle Hollis towards it. CUT TO:

Young Bobby walks past a fence where he sees a COW grazing. He hears CLUCKING and turns--there are CHICKENS in a COOP on the other side. Bobby's never seen live animals like these before... when AUNT GOLDIE (50), appears with FEED for the chickens.

UNCLE HOLLIS

This is my sister Goldie. She looks over my properties.

YOUNG BOBBY

Hello.

(off Uncle Hollis' look)

Hello, Ma'am.

Aunt Goldie smiles warmly.

AUNT GOLDIE

We're happy to have you, Bobby.

(to Hollis)

I'll feed y'all after I feed them.

51

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK 1980 - 51 DAY (D/3)

Young Bobby follows Uncle Hollis through the front door into a living room that's as big as his old apartment was. He walks past photos of Martin Luther King... JFK... and a JESUS STATUE.

52

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS' HOUSE - YOUNG BOBBY'S ROOM - FLASHBACK 1980 - DAY (D/3)

Uncle Hollis opens the door for Young Bobby, who steps in and sees a BED, nightstand, closet, etc. Bobby turns to Uncle Hollis.

YOUNG BOBBY

This is mine?

53

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS' HOUSE - YOUNG BOBBY'S ROOM - FLASHBACK 1980 - NIGHT (N/3)

Later that night. Young Bobby climbs into bed. Gets comfortable. Turns off the LAMP on the nightstand...

(CONTINUED)
...and hears strange sounds... FLOOR CREAKING... AN OWL HOOTING... CRICKETS... CRICKETS... CRICKETS...

And the room is so DARK. The kind of dark that only exists in the country. Bobby is wide awake, unnerved.

He TURNS THE LAMP BACK ON. Then goes to the door and TURNS THE ROOM LIGHT ON. Gets back in bed... and stays sitting up; we see the fear in his eyes...

EXT. NY STREET - EVENING (N/2)

Back to the present. Bobby heads down the street when a STREET LAMP COMES ON...

OMITTED

INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (N/2)

Shurrie stands over the stove cooking chicken in a pan, referring to a BOOK as she does. We assume it's a cookbook... but when we get closer, we see she's studying a HISTORY TEXTBOOK for school.

Linda enters, dressed in her Rib Shack outfit, gathers her purse, getting ready to leave.

    LINDA
    (re: chicken)
    You're burning it.

Shurrie says nothing, focused on her textbook.

    LINDA (CONT'D)
    Shurrie, you hear me?

    SHURRIE
    Divine likes his skin crispy.

She says it like Linda should know that. Which doesn't get lost on Linda.

    LINDA
    I'm going to be late for my shift.

As she walks past--

    SHURRIE
    Don't forget your purse.

Linda turns, sees she's left her purse on the chair.

They hear the FRONT DOOR OPEN. After a moment, Divine enters with Dennis.
DIVINE
Hey, Mommy.

He kisses her on the cheek.

LINDA
I’ll be home late.

Dennis gives her a hug.

DENNIS
Be safe, Mrs. Diggs.
(beat)
Damn, something smells right.

With that, Linda leaves.

INT. DIGGS’ HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (N/2)

Divine, Dennis, Terrence, and Shurrie eat at the table, in the middle of conversation. Sheba lies by Divine, eating a scrap he’s given her.

DENNIS
(re: Jah Son)
Wasn’t Cross Colours even -- the nigga Jah Son looked like rainbow man -- way he came out the whip, like one of them clowns in the circus.

Laughter.

DIVINE
Like Ronald McDonald.

TERRENCE
Happy meal, haha.

DENNIS
All he need was the red afro.

More laughter--Shurrie laughs especially hard... when Bobby enters. Divine looks up at Bobby who ignores him, still irritated about the drum machine.

BOBBY
(to Shurrie)
You save me a plate?

SHURRIE
On the stove.

(CONTINUED)
Bobby continues into the kitchen—Dennis and Shurrie share a subtle look with each other, but Bobby, Divine, and Terrence don’t catch that. It feels like something’s going on between the two of them.

Bobby returns with his plate, then plays a record on the stereo.

He sits down and eats when the MUSIC starts: "Hard Times" by Baby Huey. Wu-Tang nerds would recognize this from Ghostface’s song “Buck 50.”

DENNIS
Ooch, that’s the shit.

A few bites.

DIVINE
Turn it off.

Bobby doesn’t. Sits there and eats, ignoring Divine’s glare. Dennis and Shurrie glance at each other, staying out of it, eating to the music.

Finally, Divine goes over to the stereo, TURNS IT OFF.

BOBBY
Yo, why you buggin’?

He finally makes eye contact with Divine. An epic staredown ensues.

DIVINE
(to Shurrie)
Go finish your homework.

SHURRIE
I did already.

Divine shoots her a look. After a moment, she leaves, ushering Terrence out with her. Dennis takes his cue, too.

DENNIS
I’ll get up with, y’all.

He leaves. It’s just the two brothers now.

DIVINE
Kilos are coming to Staten Island for the first time in whenever. You know how long I’ve been stacking my chips for this? We get our hands on a whole key and flip it?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
DIVINE (CONT'D)
Now that’s some life changing shit
right there.

BOBBY
So you gonna give me the money
after you flip it then?

Divine makes a face.

DIVINE
You want more money to buy your
little music machine or whatever?
Then you need to put in work.

BOBBY
I put in work.

DIVINE
You put in part time. This work we
do? It’s all for the family. You
only family part time? Is that what
you’re saying?

Bobby says nothing.

DIVINE (CONT’D)
We’re at war out there with Park
Hill while you down in the basement
with Gladys Knight. They tried to
wet D -- you don’t think they’ll
try and touch you?

It’s clear that Divine isn’t fully aware of how deep Bobby
and Sha’s relationship is. Bobby doesn’t enlighten him.

BOBBY
I don’t roll like D.

DIVINE
That’s right -- you don’t.

The implication being that Dennis rides harder for the family
than Bobby does. Which stings.

Divine then leans into Bobby’s face, dead serious.

DIVINE (CONT’D)
I remember when you and Sha were
shorties chewin’ Bubble Yum
together -- that’s why I’ve been
giving that nigga a pass... but if
he had anything to do with that
move on D... ain’t gonna be his
bubble that’ll get popped, nameen?

(CONTINUED)
Bobby looks him in the eye, defiant.

BOBBY
Sha ain’t have nothing to with that.
(turns away)
We’re just trying to make music, yo.

DIVINE
Must be nice to have dreams, but they ain’t real. This house is real. The food on your plate, the money that pays for all of it is real.

BOBBY
Music can pay for this, too. Your way ain’t the only way.

Divine laughs.

DIVINE
You know the other thing about dreams? They’re there for you to wake up from.

He stands.

DIVINE (CONT’D)
Going to North Carolina was the worst thing that could have happened to you.
(bean)
You want to make it in this world? Put in the fucking work.

He leaves. Bobby sits at the table alone with his food; though, he’s now lost his appetite. Off his look, we--

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS’ BARN - FLASHBACK 1980 - DAY (D/4)

Young Bobby does his chores in the barn--QUICK CUTS OF:

-- Bobby struggles to carry a bucket full of WATER... and then dumps the water into a larger bucket for a large pig, PEANUT, to drink from.

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS’ BARN - FLASHBACK 1980 - LATER (D/4)

-- Young Bobby pours FEED into another bucket.
INT. UNCLE HOLLIS' BARN - FLASHBACK 1980 - LATER (D/4)

-- Young Bobby cleans manure out of the PEN.
This would be hard enough work for an adult, let alone a kid.
CUT TO:

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS' BARN - FLASHBACK 1980 - LATER (D/4)

Young Bobby, SWEATY AND EXHAUSTED, tries to coax Peanut into the pen, pulling on its TETHER.

YOUNG BOBBY
C’mon, Peanut... c’mon now...

It looks like Peanut’s about to go into the pen... when it suddenly breaks away, leaving the barn, knocking Bobby down in the process--Bobby falls right into some manure he missed.

Bobby throws a CLUMP OF HAY, frustrated.

YOUNG BOBBY (CONT’D)

Shit!

He looks up and sees Uncle Hollis in the doorway pulling Peanut with the tether.

UNCLE HOLLIS
We don’t use that word here. Even when we’re neck deep in it.

YOUNG BOBBY
Sorry.

Uncle Hollis stares at Bobby... then suddenly, unnervingly, bursts loudly into song:

UNCLE HOLLIS
“O Lord, trouble so hard/O Lord, trouble so hard/Don’t nobody know my troubles but God/Don’t nobody know my troubles but God.”

Bobby’s perplexed.

UNCLE HOLLIS (CONT’D)
Back in the days of slavery, our people would sing songs while they worked to try and take them someplace else. Any place else. Maybe that’ll help.

He hands the end of the tether to Bobby. Bobby leads Peanut toward the pen... Peanut enters and Bobby shuts the gate.

(CONTINUED)
Peanut eats some feed from Bobby’s hand. Bobby looks up at Uncle Hollis who smiles back.

INT. DIGGS’ HOUSE - BOBBY’S ROOM - NIGHT (N/2)

The present. Bobby enters the dark room, TURNS ON HIS MUSIC EQUIPMENT but not the lights—ONLY THE LIGHT FROM THE EQUIPMENT METERS ILLUMINATE THE ROOM. CUT TO:

Bobby puts two records on the turntables. He begins spinning the records back and forth creating a continuous flow—just as we saw the Salesman do at Sam Ash... only Bobby makes a timing error which causes him to stop in frustration.

The Salesman’s words echoing in Bobby’s ear: “This thing (the SP-1200) never makes a timing error...”

INT. SAM ASH - DAY (D/3)

Bobby enters the store, eyes immediately on the Pro Audio section where the SP-1200 is. Someone’s already there messing with it.

Bobby plays it cool, “browsing” around the store... one eye on the Customer with the SP-1200...

Finally, the Customer leaves. Bobby moves into the Pro Audio section, but keeps away from the SP-1200, eyes darting around the store, tracking all the EMPLOYEES, including the Salesman from before.

Bobby sees the CASHIER is busy checking customers out... he sees other SALESMEN helping other Customers... sees the Salesman from before disappearing into the back...

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DINING AREA - DAY (D/3)

Divine is enjoying his chicken fried rice when B-BLACK (19), a worker at Divine’s crack spot, enters. He walks over to Divine and whispers.

B-BLACK
Yo, we sold out -- shit was popping last night.

Divine takes a final bite of his food and exits.

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - BROAD STREET - DAY (D/3)

Divine is at a PAY PHONE dialing a number... He looks over to his car where his dog Sheba is inside, anxiously awaiting scraps.
INT. SAM ASH - DAY (D/3)

With the staff occupied, Bobby makes his move toward the SP-1200, opening his knapsack as he does...

He arrives at the display and quickly unplugs the SP-1200.

He stuffs it into his knapsack discreetly, then tries to ZIP IT...

...but it won’t zip all the way...

His PAGER goes off--Bobby quickly turns it off without even looking at the number to not draw attention to himself.

Bobby tries to reposition the SP again into his knapsack. It still won’t close. He yanks on the zipper, getting desperate--

SALESMAN (O.S.)
That’s not going to fit.

Bobby turns to see the Salesman from before. Looking guilty.

The Salesman stares him down... then sighs, softening.

SALESMAN (CONT’D)
You put it back now, I won’t report you to the manager. Otherwise, he’ll ban you from the store.

Bobby’s too ashamed to even reply. He puts the SP-1200 back... then walks out of the store, tail between his legs.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

EXT. ND STREET - DAY (D/3)

CLOSE ON DENNIS; on the PHONE, but we don’t see where.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PAY PHONE - BROAD STREET - DAY (D/3)

JAH SON HANGING on Broad Street, near a RINGING PAY PHONE. After a moment, he answers:

JAH SON
(on phone)
Welcome to McDonald’s -- can I take your order, motherfucker?

DENNIS
Tell ‘Vine I’m runnin’ late -- I’ll do the drop off later. I gotta do something for my brothers.

JAH SON
He’s down the street eating lo mein -- Why don’t you just page him?

DENNIS
Just tell him.

When he hangs up, WE PULL BACK and see he’s also at a pay phone, outside somewhere. He walks off.

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - BROAD STREET - DAY (D/3)

Divine still punches numbers at the pay phone, paging Bobby again, impatient.

B-BLACK
Yo, boss, if we don’t re-up in the next 30 the fiends are gonna go to the Hill to cop them red tops.

Divine puts more coins in the pay phone, dials another number.

EXT. DIGGS’ HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY (D/3)

Dennis KNOCKS on the door. After a moment, Shurrie opens it.

Dennis nods at her.

DENNIS
Where Terrence at?

(CONTINUED)
SHURRIE
At his friend's... like I told you already...

She opens the door wide for him...

Dennis smiles and starts to step in when his PAGER GOES OFF--it's Divine.

SHURRIE (CONT'D)
Hurry up -- my mom will be home soon -- we don't have much time.

Dennis ignores Divine's page and enters.

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - BROAD STREET - DAY (D/3)

Divine waits for a call back when he sees Jah Son approaching.

DIVINE
Yo, where D at?

JAH SON
He gotta take care of his brothers -- he told me to get at you.

Divine turns to B-Black.

DIVINE
Head back to the spot.

B-BLACK
Who's dropping off? Bobby or D-Love?

Divine sighs.

DIVINE
I'll do it my damn self.

INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - SHURRIE/TERRENCE'S ROOM - DAY (D/3)

The room Shurrie shares with Terrence. Dennis and Shurrie make passionate love against her bed--because it's too small for them to actually make love on it.

The walls SHAKE--some of Terrence's TOYS FALL from the shelf. CUT TO:

A VOLTRON FIGURE on the floor... as we continue hearing Dennis and Shurrie...
EXT. DIGGS’ HOUSE - BASEMENT DOOR - DAY (D/3)

Sha looks around, approaching the house...

...coming around to the basement door of Bobby’s room. He KNOCKS on the window. No answer.

INT. DIGGS’ HOUSE - SHURRIE/TERRENCE’S ROOM - DAY (D/3)

Shurrie puts her clothes back on as Dennis relaxes against her bed, playing with the Voltron figure.

DENNIS
You get this for your brother? You ain’t gonna hook your boy up, too?

SHURRIE
C’mon, you gotta go.

Dennis notices her putting her shirt back on--

DENNIS
Hold up, let me hit it again.
(re: nipples)
Your bon buns are still hard.

He tries to undress her, but Shurrie KICKS him.

SHURRIE
Get out of here!

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN #2 - (MOVING) - DAY (D/3)

Bobby sits on the 1 train listening to his Walkman, deflated.

EXT. SOUTH FERRY MANHATTAN SIDE - DAY (D/3)

Bobby approaches the ferry. Now that he’s above ground, he remembers to turn on his pager. After a moment, it VIBRATES. He checks the number which is followed by code: 14-5-5-4-21-14-15-23. Then almost immediately, his PAGER GOES OFF AGAIN... AND AGAIN.

BOBBY
Shit.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - MOMENTS LATER (D/3)

BOBBY AT A NEARBY PAY PHONE, quickly dialing, feeling the pressure and guilt of wasting a day at Sam Ash.
EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - BROAD STREET - DAY (D/3)
The pay phone outside the restaurant RINGS but no one is there to answer...

...in the background we see Divine's MPV pulling away...

EXT. 280 PARK HILL - DAY (D/3)
Divine parks his MPV up front. He looks out his window, sees Power's men pushing red tops. Sees all the "Killer Hill" graffiti on the walls. He's definitely in enemy territory...

When he feels the coast is clear, he pets Sheba, steps out and heads toward the building.

A couple of YOUNG BOYS, 8-9, notice him go inside...

INT. 280 PARK HILL - OUTER HALL - DAY (D/3)
Divine, head down but eyes alert for hostiles, passes a couple of people and stops at apartment 6S. He knocks.

After a moment, the door opens, REVEALING his girl MAYA (19). She lets him inside.

EXT. DIGGS' HOUSE - BASEMENT DOOR/FRONT YARD - DAY (D/3)
Sha waits by the basement door, anxious to get his TEC-9 back. He KNOCKS on the window again, more urgent. No answer.

Sha tries opening the door, but it's locked.

Sha stares at the door, frustrated, debating whether or not he should kick it in...

...when he hears a NOISE inside the house.

Sha DUCKS...

...then moves around the corner...

...and PEEKS through the window--

--and sees Dennis inside...

Sha's eyes go wide. He doesn't have a gun on him...

...but he spots a SHOVEL on the ground. He goes to pick it up.

He comes back to the window, gripping the shovel, ready to jump Dennis when he comes out...

(CONTINUED)
...when through the window, Sha sees Shurrie come down the stairs.

Sha watches them, curious...

...when he sees the two of them KISS...

Off Sha's stunned look--CUT TO:

DENNIS EXITING the house...

...he walks toward the sidewalk--

--when he notices something on the ground nearby. He goes over to it.

It's the shovel Sha was holding. Dennis picks it up and leans it against the side of the house.

Then he leaves... *Sha is nowhere to be seen*...

EXT. 280 PARK HILL - DAY (D/3)

Divine's MPV is still parked outside...

...when a CAR slows down next to it... Like someone inside recognizes it...

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT #6S - BEDROOM - DAY (D/3)

Divine kneels in the closet opening a DUAL COMBINATION SAFE--CUT TO:

THE SAFE DOOR OPENING... revealing STACKS OF CASH Divine has saved for that kilo of cocaine, and a PLASTIC BAG FULL OF BLUE TOP CRACK VIALS. Divine GRABS the bag.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT #6S - LIVING ROOM - DAY (D/3)

Divine, carrying a BACKPACK with his re-up of crack, is about to exit the apartment, pausing to kiss Maya good bye. CUT TO:

INT. 280 PARK HILL - OUTER HALL/STAIRWELL/LOBBY-DAY (D/3)

DIVINE ARRIVING at the elevator. He presses the button. Waits. And waits. As people come and go.

People who could recognize him here in Park Hill. CUT TO:

DIVING HEADING down the stairwell. CUT TO:

DIVINE REACHING the lobby. He heads toward the door--

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VOICE (O.S.)
The fuck you think you’re going?

Divine freezes... then slowly turns TOWARD THE CAMERA--CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR
ACT FIVE

INT. RIB SHACK - DINING AREA - EVENING (N/3)

It's the evening dinner rush--Linda attends to customers while Fat Larry sits at his table, holding a half smoked cigar, giving a history lesson about Staten Island to a few patrons.

FAT LARRY
If New Jersey would've won that boat race then this rock we call Staten Island would be part of Jersey and the micks from Bayonne would've moved in.

Fat Larry notices a KID, 10, trying to cheat the ARCADE GAME in the corner. He throws a COUNTER RAG at the kid, hitting him in the back of his neck.

FAT LARRY (CONT'D)
Hey, coco-puff, get out of here! If we catch you doing that again we'll break your little fingers!

Linda goes over to the kid, picks up the rag. She puts another quarter into the game so the kid can continue playing.

FAT LARRY (CONT'D)
You see, how you expect them learn that way?

Fat Larry lights up his cigar.

LINDA
When are you going to learn to listen to your doctor and quit smoking?

FAT LARRY
Doctors, whatta they know?

The phone RINGS. He answers it.

FAT LARRY (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Yeah, she's here--
(to Linda)
It's for you, doll -- one of your boys.

Linda walks over, takes the receiver as Fat Larry continues his story.

(CONTINUED)
LINDA
(on phone)
Hello?
(beat)
What?

Off her shock--

INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (N/3)

Linda, Bobby, Dennis, Shurrie, and Terrence are gathered around the phone, all waiting anxiously.

Bobby shoots a look at Dennis, but for some reason Dennis won't make eye contact. Neither will Shurrie.

TERRENCE
Why can't I watch Fresh Prince?

Shurrie shushes him.

LINDA
He said he would call at eight.

The phone RINGS--Linda snatches the receiver--

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE OF DETENTION - NIGHT (N/3)

Sitting ten stories high at the edge of downtown Brooklyn is the infamous correctional facility...

INT. BROOKLYN HOUSE OF DETENTION - DAY ROOM - NIGHT (N/3)

TIGHT ON Divine, wearing COUNTY CLOTHES, on the pay phone, a CROWD of PRISONERS behind him, some waiting for the phone. He was arrested.

DIVINE
(on phone)
I'm OK, put Bobby on.

As Divine turns, we see he has a nasty CUT over his right eye and some BRUISES on his face. We don't know if that's from the cops or from the inside.

BOBBY
(on phone)
I'm sorry, 'Vine, I was--

DIVINE
Ain't no time for that--
(looks over his shoulder)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
DIVINE (CONT'D)
--you and D can apologize after you
get me out of here.

BOBBY
Your bail's two fifty -- so we
gotta come up with ten percent. And
Mom wants to hire a lawyer.

DIVINE
We can't afford to have our cream
tied up in the system or with no
lawyer. We gotta use that money on
that brick, know what I'm sayin'?

Meaning the kilo of cocaine they were planning to buy.

BOBBY
But we need to get you out--

DIVINE
We need a roof over our heads and
food on the table first. Put that
money to work, then we can talk
about lawyers, getting me out and
all that.

(beat)
Listen, lil' bro -- you're gonna
have to man up right now and hold
shit down. Ya hear me?

BOBBY
Yeah. I hear you.

Off screen we hear PRISONER #1:

PRISONER #1 (O.S.)
Yo, money, Dougie Fresh time up in
here. Six minutes and off.

Divines ignores him.

DIVINE
Put D on.

Bobby hands Dennis the phone.

DENNIS
Yo, fam -- you good up in there?
Them BK niggas trying to press
hard?

(CONTINUED)
DIVINE
It is what it is -- listen, first thing first--we continue with the movement. Get ya man Homicide on the team fl-zip that cake fast then we can talk about b-zail.

DENNIS
I got you.

DIVINE
My brother can have his head up in the clouds so I need you to be my boots on the ground, know what I mean?

DENNIS
(over phone)
Word is bond.

PRISONER #1
Six minutes is up, Staten.

Divine turns to face him...

...when PRISONER #2 cuts Prisoner #1 off for the phone.

PRISONER #2
I got next, yo.

PRISONER #1
The hell you do--

He PUNCHES Prisoner #2 leading to an all out BRAWL.
CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS pour in--CUT TO:

DENNIS LISTENING to the fighting through the phone.

DENNIS
(on phone)
Yo, 'Vine! Vine!

Bobby grabs the phone--

--and hears the HORRIBLE SOUNDS of a beating on the other end.

LINDA
What's happening? What's happening to my baby?

(CONTINUED)
She takes the phone from Bobby. Bobby just stares ahead, feeling responsible for his brother’s predicament, the sounds of the ass whupping through the phone getting LOUDER... and LOUDER... CUT TO:

EXT. UNCLE HOLLIS’ HOUSE - FRONT YARD - FLASHBACK 1980 - DAY (D/5)

The sounds of Young Bobby getting his ass whupped... WE PULL BACK--

REVEALING Young Bobby in the front yard getting his bare ass beaten with a SWITCH by his Aunt Goldie. She stops when the switch BREAKS.

AUNT GOLDIE
You gonna forget to turn the lights off in your room again?

YOUNG BOBBY
No... no, ma’am.

Aunt Goldie goes to a nearby tree and breaks off another SWITCH.

YOUNG BOBBY (CONT’D)
Please, Auntie, no --

Aunt Goldie continues whupping; Young Bobby continues crying--

OMITTED

INT. UNCLE HOLLIS’ BARN - FLASHBACK 1980 - TWILIGHT (D/5)

The SUN IS ALMOST SET and the darkness is hovering. LIGHTNING BUGS begin to appear, floating in the air doing their dance. With all the chores done, Young Bobby sits, resting.

YOUNG BOBBY
She’s so mean. She beats for no reason.

Uncle Hollis arrives with a jar of SWEET TEA for Bobby.

UNCLE HOLLIS
“Whoever needs discipline shows the way of life. But whoever ignores correction leads others array.”
Mind the bible as my sister, Goldie, does. She’s a strict woman, but she means well. Now what’s this I hear about you keeping the light on all night?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE HOLLIS (CONT'D)
Goldie sleeps with her window open
and those mosquitoes be having a feast on her.

YOUNG BOBBY
There's demons in my room... they be there in the dark.

UNCLE HOLLIS
Okay, no more horror movies for you. Bobby, most fear comes from
the bad things we expose ourselves to in the light, and they enjoin
our imagination and taunt us in the dark.

YOUNG BOBBY
So that big demon in the closet is just my imagination?

UNCLE HOLLIS
Yep. The largest nation is the imagination. It can be your
greatest enemy, but when you have control of it and understand how to
use it. It becomes your greatest weapon.

Uncle Hollis stands.

YOUNG BOBBY
So your imagination is like a superpower...

UNCLE HOLLIS
Well, that's one way to put it.
Now, tie the barn down and come on in and wash for supper.
(beat)
Don't tell Goldie I gave you that sweet tea.

They both smile as Uncle Hollis exits.

Bobby takes the final gulp of tea and takes notice to the
lightning bugs. He catches one, in awe of their ability.

YOUNG BOBBY
I wish I was like you.
INT. UNCLE HOLLIS’ HOUSE - YOUNG BOBBY’S ROOM - FLASHBACK 92
1980 - NIGHT (N/5)

The Indian inspired decorated room is rather tidy. There’s a bookshelf with some odd shaped trinkets, reading chair in the corner with a fluffy blanket, an open faced closet filled with clothes and pillows. In the dark you can imagine the “demons” that this setup produces.

Young Bobby is being tucked in by Uncle Hollis, his gaze on all the abstract shapes in the room.

YOUNG BOBBY
If God made light, why does darkness still exist?

UNCLE HOLLIS
Actually, Bobby, light is always shining, it’s just that we turn ourselves away from it and end up in the shadow of something that blocks the light.
(beat)
Sometimes it’s our own shadows.

Uncle Hollis ponders his own words as if they’re invoking a mistake he once made. He finishes tucking Bobby in; then walks over to the light switch.

UNCLE HOLLIS (CONT’D)
Look around the room, Bobby, you see the bookshelf?

YOUNG BOBBY
Yes, sir.

UNCLE HOLLIS
The closet?

YOUNG BOBBY
Yes, sir.

Uncle Hollis CUTS THE LIGHT OUT.

UNCLE HOLLIS
What’s in the dark is also in the light, it’s just your perception that changes.

Bobby scans the room and sees the different shapes. Hollis TURNS THE LIGHT BACK ON.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE HOLLIS (CONT'D)
See, everything is the same. Now get some rest.

YOUNG BOBBY
Yes, sir.

Hollis TURNS OFF THE LIGHT, waits a few seconds, then--

UNCLE HOLLIS
BOO!

Bobby jumps. Uncle Hollis laughs.

UNCLE HOLLIS (CONT'D)
Good night, Bobby.

YOUNG BOBBY
Good night, Uncle.

(beat)
I love you.

Bobby lays in the dark as we hear Uncle Hollis' FOOTSTEPS fade away. We hear the BEDSPREAD SHUFFLING. Then we see Bobby appear with a JAR FULL OF LIGHTENING BUGS. He places them on his dresser, a self-made night-light--A use of his imagination.

The JAR OF LIGHTENING BUGS PULSATE and the lights magically grow bigger and brighter to the point they don't look real--

INT. DIGGS' HOUSE - BOBBY'S ROOM - NIGHT (N/3)

--WE FADE into the PULSATING METERS of Bobby's equipment in the present. CUT TO:

BOBBY AND DENNIS SITTING around, depressed, as the rough version of "7th Chamber" plays on the 4-track.

DENNIS
I can't believe Divine's gotta do a bid right when the keys are finally coming to Staten Island.

BOBBY
Stop saying that. He might get off.

DENNIS
With what he had on him? Ain't no way he's walking unless he snitches and Divine ain't no snitch.

(beat)
How many years you think he'll get?
BOBBY  
(snaps)  
I don’t know. I’m not a lawyer.

DENNIS  
(snaps back)  
Use your imagination, nigga.

Bobby’s troubled and clearly doesn’t want to talk about it. He stops the 4-track and presses play on the VCR, continuing Shaolin and Wu-Tang from where it left with Sha.

Dennis rolls a blunt. Offers it to Bobby. Bobby refuses it. They watch the movie.

ON SCREEN: The Qing Master tells the two best friends that if they don’t fight each other to the death his men will kill them... the fighting begins.

DENNIS (CONT’D)  
Wooo... that shit is crazy.

He laughs at the fighting. CUT TO:

BOBBY NOT LAUGHING at all, TEARS welling in his eyes as he watches the best friends fight.

Dennis stands, leaves the blunt on top of a record sleeve. Bobby wipes his eyes and turns away from Dennis.

Dennis goes over to the crates, searches through records to get his mind off things. Bobby doesn’t pay attention, smoking the blunt... CUT TO:

DENNIS DIGGING through a crate... when he notices something in a crate nearby. He goes over to it...

...and finds Sha’s knapsack. Curious, he opens it--

--and pulls out Sha’s TEC-9--

DENNIS (CONT’D)  
Yo, when did y’all get this?

Bobby turns and is sick to his stomach.

BOBBY  
Divine, I mean... I been having that for a minute.

DENNIS  
From where?

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
My cousin Gary's man in Brooklyn.
Repo man was coming for his car, so
I got it for cheap.

DENNIS
And you never showed me? This shit
fire.

He messes with it.

BOBBY
Yo, put that back.

DENNIS
Nah, son. This is exactly what I've
been needing.

BOBBY
For what?

DENNIS
To hit back at Power. And your boy
Sha.

BOBBY
Divine told you to dead that.

DENNIS
Well, Divine ain't here, is he?
We're in charge now...

He finishes checking out the TEC-9, confident he knows how to
use it now.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
And our first order of business is
to get them niggas back.

He slaps the uwop mag back in, hard, then pulls the BOLT for
effect. Off Bobby's look...

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF SHOW