

DAMNED.

Directed and Written by Mark Negron Jr.

Characters:

Damian Duckworth - 23, Male. A young man whose father, Kenny, was a famous rapper and poet who mysteriously vanished and is presumed dead. He listens to his father's music in order to feel connected with him, and strives to make his own music to continue his father's legacy.

Habit - (will use the pronouns of whoever plays them). A physical, living, and breathing manifestation of the Duckworth son's distinct passions and drives. Is not necessarily good or evil, but will forgo all other emotions and humanely necessities in order to quench his own thirst. Spirit incarnation of Amaru, Kenny's dead brother.

Kenny Duckworth - 54, Male. Damian's father. Lauryn's husband. A poet, artist, and rapper who, along with his brother, Amaru, sought to spread a positive message of togetherness and unity and love to the world, but often found his battles to be against the trappings of fame and his own personal demons. Disappeared when Damian was 7.

Lauryn Duckworth - 49, Female. Damian's mother. A strong woman who is emotionally scarred at Kenny's disappearance, and is haunted by visions of Habit.

Amaru Duckworth - 60, Male. Kenny's brother. A poet, artist, and rapper who, along with his brother, Kenny, sought to spread a positive message of togetherness, unity and love to the world, but often found his battles to be against those he loved the most. Deceased.

Jayla White - 23, Female. Damian's girlfriend. A painter who finds herself playing therapist when Damian isn't feeling well more often than she'd like. Is an empath, but also vies to support herself.

Renee Bell-Duckworth - 27, Female. Amaru's daughter. Hasn't been heard from by anyone in the Duckworth family in years. Is rebellious and independent.

Apparitions (Ensemble) - An assortment of spirits who move with the feelings of the art they receive.

Setting:

The Duckworth home.

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Song List:

ACT I

BLOOD.

Kenny feat. Apparitions

DNA.

Kenny and Habit feat. Amaru and Apparitions

YAH.

Damian feat. Apparitions

ELEMENT.

Damian and Habit feat. Apparitions, Kenny and Amaru

FEEL.

Kenny feat. Habit, Lauryn, Amaru and Damian

LOYALTY.

Damian, Jayla, Lauryn and Kenny feat. Apparitions

PRIDE.

Kenny and Damian feat. Lauryn, Habit and Apparitions

HUMBLE.

Damian and Habit feat. Apparitions

ACT II

LUST.

Habit feat. Damian and Apparitions

LOVE.

Damian and Boone ft. Apparitions

XXX.

Habit and Amaru

FEAR.

Kenny, Habit and Damian

GOD.

Habit, feat. Kenny, Renee and Apparitions

DUCKWORTH.

Damian, Kenny and Habit

***TW**// Explicit language, Mentions and discussions of suicide, Alcohol abuse, Drug use, Racism, Implications of sexism, Bad Fox News Impression

SCENE I - BLOOD.

LIGHTS UP. The display reads "Present Day." The stage is set to DAMIAN's bedroom. DAMIAN enters, holding a record in his hand. He analyzes the cover art. It reads "DAMNED." He opens the cover where the actual vinyl sits inside. He places it on the record player. He takes a deep breath and places the needle onto the vinyl. LIGHTS OUT except for a single spotlight of four APPARITIONS.

"BLOOD."

APPARITION CHORUS

(sung)

IS IT WICKEDNESS?
IS IT WEAKNESS?
YOU DECIDE.

APPARITIONS enter all around the room. HABIT enters. He walks around the stage, with a hooded cloak, a cane, and a blindfold over his eyes.

APPARITION CHORUS (cont'd)

(sung)

ARE WE GONNA LIVE?
OR DIE?

KENNY enters, pacing around the stage.

KENNY

(spoken)

So I was takin' a walk the other day
And I seen a woman—a blind woman
Pacing up and down the sidewalk
She seemed to be a bit frustrated
As if she had dropped something and
Having a hard time finding it
So after watching her struggle for a while
I decide to go over and lend a helping hand, you know?

KENNY walks over to HABIT and places a hand on his back.

KENNY (cont'd)

"Hello ma'am, can I be of any assistance?
It seems to me that you have lost something
I would like to help you find it."
She replied: "Oh yes, you have lost something.
You've lost... your life."

In a moment, HABIT removes his hood and blindfold, revealing himself to KENNY. A gunshot is heard, both KENNY and HABIT react, grasping their chests in pain and grabbing one another.

APPARITION CHORUS

(sung)

IS IT WICKEDNESS?

A spotlight on HABIT appears.

HABIT

But what if we went back in time?

HABIT walks out of his spotlight and into the darkness. A spotlight on KENNY, frozen in place, appears. HABIT walks into KENNY's spotlight.

HABIT (cont'd)

Back in time to before Justice went after Kenny Duckworth?

DAMIAN walks around the stage.

HABIT (cont'd)

Back to when Kenny Duckworth went after himself?

DAMIAN
(to himself)

What is this...

*HABIT exits. A small fuzz is heard.
 The display reads "2002". Two
 voices are heard, one of them -
 AMARU - over the phone.*

AMARU (V.O)

You'll come visit me, right?

KENNY (V.O)

Yeah, of course, man, of course. Wouldn't ever leave my brother behind in his time of need.

AMARU (V.O)

Ain't no need, bro, I just haven't seen you in forever.

KENNY (V.O)

I know, and I'm sorry, 'Maru. I've been working on a new project-

AMARU (V.O)

Yeah, yeah, I know about your new project.

A beat.

AMARU (V.O) (cont'd)

Y'know, I'm not gonna lie, Kenny, I've been kinda worried about ya lately.

KENNY (V.O)

Why's that?

AMARU (V.O)

You've just been... different over the last couple months. Is everything okay? *(waiting for a response, gets none)* Kenny, are you there? *(no response)* Kenny? *(no response)* KENNY!

*AMARU echoes until ultimately
 fading out.*

Meanwhile, the following moment is happening simultaneously with KENNY and LAURYN.

KENNY

Hey, Lil' Miss.

KENNY walks over to LAURYN, gently holding her face in his hand. Then, HABIT enters holding a black record in his hand. He drops it on the ground. KENNY hears this, his gaze is pulled away from LAURYN and his expression drops to a deadpan.

LAURYN

Kenny, please. Don't go.

KENNY looks LAURYN in the eye. A beat. He kisses her forehead as tears stream down her face. He begins to exit, and stops when he reaches HABIT. The two exchange an intense glare, and KENNY picks up the record. He walks towards LAURYN, and hands it to her.

KENNY and HABIT

Did you hear about the rose that grew from concrete?

LAURYN

W-what?

KENNY and HABIT exit. LAURYN watches them both. The sound of a bus approaching is heard, followed by children talking to one another. YOUNG DAMIAN enters.

YOUNG DAMIAN

Hey mom. (*noticing her mom's tears*) Is... everything okay?

BLACKOUT.

SCENE II - DNA.

LIGHTS UP. The display reads "2005". APPARITIONS appear in DAMIAN's bedroom and shove him onto the bed..

"DNA."

HABIT

I GOT,

KENNY

I GOT,

KENNY and HABIT

I GOT,

I GOT

KENNY

LOYALTY, GOT ROYALTY INSIDE MY DNA
 COCAINE QUARTER PIECE, GOT WAR AND PEACE INSIDE MY DNA
 I GOT POWER, POISON, PAIN AND JOY INSIDE MY DNA
 I GOT HUSTLE THOUGH, AMBITION, FLOW, INSIDE MY DNA
 I WAS BORN LIKE THIS, SINCE ONE LIKE THIS
 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
 I TRANSFORM LIKE THIS, PERFORM LIKE THIS
 WAS YESHUA'S NEW WEAPON
 I DON'T CONTEMPLATE, I MEDITATE, THEN OFF YOUR FUCKING HEAD
 THIS THAT PUT-THE-KIDS-TO-BED
 THIS THAT,

KENNY and HABIT

I GOT,

I GOT,

I GOT,

HABIT

I GOT
 REALNESS, I JUST KILL SHIT 'CAUSE IT'S IN MY DNA
 I GOT MILLIONS, I GOT RICHES BUILDIN' IN MY DNA
 I GOT DARK, I GOT EVIL, THAT ROT INSIDE MY DNA
 I GOT OFF, I GOT TROUBLESOME, HEART INSIDE MY DNA
 I JUST WIN AGAIN, THEN WIN AGAIN LIKE WIMBLEDON, I SERVE
 YEAH, THAT'S HIM AGAIN, THE SOUND THAT ENGINE IN IS LIKE A BIRD
 YOU SEE FIREWORKS AND CORVETTE TIRE SKRRT THE BOULEVARD
 I KNOW HOW YOU WORK, I KNOW JUST WHO YOU ARE

KENNY

SEE, YOU'S A,

HABIT

YOU'S A,
 YOU'S A
 BITCH, WHAT SIDE YOU TRYNA SWITCH INSIDE YOUR DNA?
 PROBLEM IS, ALL THAT SUCKER SHIT INSIDE YOUR DNA
 DADDY PROBABLY SNITCHED, HERITAGE INSIDE YOUR DNA
 BACKBONE DON'T EXIST, BORN OUTSIDE A JELLYFISH, I GAUGE
 SEE, MY PEDIGREE MOST DEFINITELY DON'T TOLERATE THE FRONT
 SHIT I'VE BEEN THROUGH PROBABLY OFFEND YOU
 THIS IS LUCY'S OLDEST SON

KENNY

I KNOW
 MURDER, CONVICTION
 BURNERS, BOOSTERS, BURGLARS, BALLERS, DEAD, REDEMPTION
 SCHOLARS, FATHERS DEAD WITH KIDS
 AND I WISH I WAS FED FORGIVENESS
 YEAH,

HABIT

YEAH,

KENNY

YEAH,

HABIT

YEAH,

KENNY and HABIT
SOLDIER'S DNA

APPARITIONS
I'VE GOT SOLDIER'S DNA!

KENNY

BORN INSIDE THE BEAST
MY EXPERTISE CHECKED OUT IN SECOND GRADE
WHEN I WAS 9, ON-SALE MOTEL, WE DIDN'T HAVE NOWHERE TO STAY
AT 29, I'VE DONE SO WELL, HIT CARTWHEEL IN MY ESTATE
AND I'M GON' SHINE LIKE I'M SUPPOSED TO
ANTISOCIAL, EXTROVERT
AND EXCELLENT MEAN THE EXTRA WORK
AND ABSENTNESS WHAT THE FUCK YOU HEARD
AND PESSIMISTS NEVER STRUCK MY NERVE
AND THAT'S A RIFF, GONNA PLEAD THIS CASE
THE REASON MY POWER'S HERE ON EARTH

KENNY, HABIT and APPARITIONS
SALUTE THE TRUTH, WHEN THE PROPHET SAY

FEATURED APPARITIONS
I GOT LOYALTY, GOT ROYALTY
INSIDE MY DNA
I GOT LOYALTY, GOT ROYALTY
INSIDE MY DNA
I GOT LOYALTY, GOT ROYALTY
INSIDE MY DNA

AMARU
(voiceover, echoing, spoken)
Remember: anybody can get it, the hard part
is keepin' it, motherfucker.

KENNY
(spoken)
I live a better life, I'm rollin' several dice,
/fuck your life

HABIT
(taking over, spoken)
/Fuck your life, I live a better, fuck your life.

KENNY
THIS IS MY-

HABIT
-HERITAGE,

KENNY HABIT
 ALL I'M- -INHERITIN'

KENNY HABIT
 MONEY- -AND POWER,

KENNY AND HABIT
 THE MECCA OF MARRIAGES!!

HABIT
 TELL ME SOMETHIN'
 YOU MOTHERFUCKERS CAN'T TELL ME NOTHIN'
 I'D RATHER DIE THAN TO LISTEN TO YOU

KENNY
 MY DNA NOT FOR IMITATION
 YOUR DNA AN ABOMINATION

HABIT
 THIS HOW IT IS WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MATRIX
 DODGIN' BULLETS, REAPIN' WHAT YOU SOW
 AND STACKIN' UP THE FOOTAGE, LIVIN' ON THE GO
 AND SLEEPIN' IN A VILLA
 SIPPIN' FROM A GRAMMY AND WALKIN' IN THE BUILDIN'
 DIAMOND IN THE CEILIN', MARBLE ON THE FLOORS
 BEACH INSIDE THE WINDOW, PEEKIN' OUT THE WINDOW
 BABY IN THE POOL, GODFATHER GOALS
 ONLY LORD KNOWS,

KENNY
 I'VE BEEN GOIN' HAMMER
 DODGIN' PAPAZZI, FREAKIN' THROUGH THE CAMERAS
 EAT AT FOUR DAUGHTERS, BROCK WEARIN' SANDALS
 YOGA ON A MONDAY, STRETCHIN' TO NIRVANA
 WATCHIN' ALL THE SNAKES, CURVIN' ALL THE FAKES

PHONE NEVER ON, I DON'T CONVERSATE
 I DON'T COMPROMISE, I JUST PENETRATE
 SEX, MONEY, MURDER - THESE ARE THE BREAKS
 THESE ARE THE TIMES, LEVEL NUMBER 9
 LOOK UP IN THE SKY, 10 IS ON THE WAY
 SENTENCE ON THE WAY, KILLINGS ON THE WAY

KENNY and HABIT
 MOTHERFUCKER, I GOT WINNERS ON THE WAY

KENNY
 YOU AIN'T SHIT WITHOUT A BODY ON YOUR BELT

HABIT
 YOU AIN'T SHIT WITHOUT A TICKET ON YOUR PLATE
 YOU AIN'T SICK ENOUGH TO PULL IT ON YOURSELF

KENNY
 YOU AIN'T RICH ENOUGH TO HIT THE LOT AND SKATE
 TELL ME WHEN DESTRUCTION GONNA BE MY FATE

HABIT
 GONNA BE YOUR FATE,

KENNY and HABIT
 GONNA BE OUR FAITH.

KENNY
 PEACE TO THE WORLD,

HABIT
 LET IT ROTATE.

KENNY and HABIT
 SEX, MONEY, MURDER-OUR DNA.

*The music ends abruptly. DAMIAN
 sits at the foot of his bed, in shock.*

DAMIAN

...Woah.

SCENE III - YAH.

The sound of a door being knocked on is heard. DAMIAN raises the needle off of the vinyl.

DAMIAN

Come in!

LAURYN enters.

LAURYN

Did I hear what I think I was hearing before?

DAMIAN

I... I don't know, what do you think you were hearing?

LAURYN picks up the album cover.

LAURYN

Don't play that game with me, boy, I know how much you listen to your father's old stuff.

A beat.

DAMIAN

I just... I found this in the basement, and I didn't recognize it from anywhere, so I thought/ that I-

LAURYN

/Thought *what*? Since you found something while snooping around that you could do whatever you want with it?

DAMIAN

I just want to remember him. I wanna know what he was like.

A beat. LAURYN sits down next to DAMIAN and sighs. She places the album down on the bed.

LAURYN

(chuckles) Come on, Dame, don't act like this is the first time you've asked.

DAMIAN

I know, you've told me the story before: a Compton man, born-and-raised, writing poetry, the whole thing, but I just... I mean, you married the guy, so you must've seen something nobody else did.

LAURYN

Damian, we just have to put it in the past?

DAMIAN

Do we? I feel like there's more about him that I'm missing.

LAURYN

And that's probably a good thing, honestly. The last thing you wanna do is go digging up old skeletons.

LAURYN stands up and makes a move for the door.

LAURYN (cont'd)

Speaking of, man, you gotta go outside! Get some sunlight, eat a burger, get a job.

DAMIAN laughs this off.

DAMIAN

I have a job, mom.

LAURYN

Then go to it! Do something with your day!

DAMIAN

I'm not even scheduled to go in today!

LAURYN

What's that you kids these days call it... *(trying to recall, then finding it)* a GRINDSET! Yeah, get on your grindset, kid.

The two laugh at this.

DAMIAN

What are you even doing today, mom?

LAURYN

I'm actually going on a date tonight.

DAMIAN

Woah, a date? Mom, you're 50 and going on a date?

LAURYN

You're 23 and not already moved outta my house?

DAMIAN

Oh okay, well that's kinda unfair.

LAURYN

Oh, NOW we're being unfair.

DAMIAN

I just wanna make sure you're okay. Besides, I like being around you, anyway.

LAURYN

I know, darling, and that's a privilege that not a lot of mothers get to have these days. I'm just teasing you.

DAMIAN nods, but also starts to hang his head low.

LAURYN (cont'd)

But you can't be here forever, son. The past ain't everything.

LAURYN exits. DAMIAN looks out towards the audience.

DAMIAN

But it's gotta be *something*, right?

HABIT appears from behind the bed and slowly places the needle back on

*the record. He then quickly exits.
 APPARITIONS enter, dancing to the
 subdued groove.*

DAMIAN (cont'd)
 (to the APPARITIONS)

Guess I'm just stuck with y'all now, huh? *(no response)* Alright then.

“YAH.”

BOONE

New shit, new Kung Fu Kenny!

DAMIAN

I GOT SO MANY THEORIES AND SUSPICIONS.
 I'M DIAGNOSED WITH A REAL MAN'S CONDITIONS.

*As he sings, he finds that he knows
 the words to a song he's never heard
 before. He picks up the prescription
 medication on his nightstand
 wondering if this has something to
 do with it. He then picks out some
 clothes for the day.*

DAMIAN (cont'd)

TODAY IS THE DAY I FOLLOW MY INTUITION:
 KEEP THE FAMILY CLOSE - GET HONEY'S AND RICHES,
 SO I CAN DOUBLE PARK THE ASTON IN THE RED.
 I SWEAR MY MAMA WANTS ME TO WORK MYSELF TO DEATH.
 MY GIRL TOLD ME DON'T LET THESE HOES GET IN MY HEAD.
 MY WORLD BEEN ECSTATIC, I CHECKED THE SIGNAL THAT READ:
 BUZZIN'

*DAMIAN quickly opens a door to
 what looks like a bathroom and exits
 with the medication.*

APPARITIONS

RADARS IS BUZZIN'

YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH
 BUZZIN', RADARS IS BUZZIN'
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH

DAMIAN re-enters.

FEATURED APPARITIONS
 INTERVIEWS WANNA KNOW HIS THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS.

*APPARITIONS run up to DAMIAN
 and hand him a sheet of paper
 labeled "TRANSCRIPT".*

DAMIAN

(reading off the transcript)

WOLF NEWS WANNA USE MY NAME FOR PERCENTAGE.
 MY LATEST MUSE IS MY NIECE, SHE WORTH LIVIN',
 SEE ME ON THE TV AND SCREAM: "THAT'S UNCLE KENDRICK!"
 YEAH, THAT'S THE BUSINESS.
 SOMEBODY TELL GERALDO THIS BROTHER GOT SOME AMBITION
 I'M NOT A POLITICIAN, I'M NOT 'BOUT A RELIGION
 I'M A ISRAELITE, DON'T CALL ME BLACK NO MO'
 THAT WORD IS ONLY A COLOR, IT AIN'T FACTS NO MO'
 MY COUSIN CALLED, MY COUSIN 'MARU DUCKWORTH
 SAID "KNOW MY WORTH."
 AND "GOD TALKING TO ME, HE SAID 'WE ALL BEEN CURSED'"

*DAMIAN hands the paper back to
 the APPARITIONS.*

DAMIAN (cont'd)

YEAH MAYBE HE WALKS THE EARTH,
 BUT THERE'S MONEY TO GET, BITCHES TO HIT, YAH
 ZEROES TO FLIP, TEMPTATION IS, YAH
 FIRST ON MY LIST, I CAN'T RESIST, YAH
 EVERYONE TOGETHER NOW, KNOW THAT WE FOREVER-
 BUZZIN',

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS

RADARS IS BUZZIN',
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH
 BUZZIN', RADARS IS BUZZIN',
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH
 YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH, YAH

*As the music ends, the
 APPARITIONS exit in a hurry.*

SCENE IV - Wolf.

DAMIAN looks around. He notices that the transcript is still on the ground. He picks it up and scans it over again.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

There's something that's not making sense to me here. How did I know the words to that song? I thought this was just dad's music? And what was all that other stuff in the transcript? Wolf News, Uncle 'Maru, talking to God, a niece... I gotta look into this more.

*DAMIAN moves over to the laptop
 and types into the keyboard.*

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Wolf... News... interview... with... Kenny Duckworth. *(a beat)* Wait, there's no interview... What's this?

*He clicks on the mouse. A spotlight
 shines on a newsroom set with two
 ANCHORS sitting at a newsdesk.*

MALE ANCHOR

Mr. Duckworth stated his views on police brutality with that line in the song, quote - and this is a quote, by the way, just so you know, we're not misquoting here, we're quoting him here, just making it clear, alright? Okay, so quote: "Snatch your little secretary... uh... B for the homies, A blue-eyed devil with a fat... uh... A monkey..."

FEMALE ANCHOR

Oh please, ugh, I don't like it./

MALE ANCHOR

/A direct quote, by the way, direct quote.

FEMALE ANCHOR

Disgusting that we let people who say things like that. It's only dangerous.

MALE ANCHOR

I know, I know, I'm telling ya, hip hoppers and their evil, violent quotes are what is ruining this country, these hoodlums have no idea what kind of destruction they're causing.

FEMALE ANCHOR

What's even worse is that these are the kind of people the left wants in our society.

MALE ANCHOR

These gangbangers and pants-sagging hooligans are gonna rape your daughters and steal your hard-earned dollars behind your back, or maybe even the worst thing they could do, pay for her abortions. And we don't use these terms lightly, he even calls himself a "gangbanger" in one of his songs! It's true... it's a quote!

FEMALE ANCHOR

They said it, clear as day, they're gonna take over our country and bring us into national ruin.

MALE ANCHOR

(to FEMALE ANCHOR)

Is that a direct quote? Do we have a source on that?/

FEMALE ANCHOR

/Shut up, Tim./

MALE ANCHOR

/Okay, sorry./

FEMALE ANCHOR

/We can't afford to lose this country to illegals and blacks that wanna set the world on fire instead of work like the rest of us.

MALE ANCHOR

They hate America, and anyone that doesn't agree with their anarchist rhetoric, so watch out. *(a beat)* Also this is sponsored by Aflac, if you need a quote on your insurance today just call

1-800-AFLAC. Thank you AFLAC for sponsoring today's program. Now, to Jan with the quotes- I MEAN the weather.

The spotlight goes out and back onto DAMIAN.

DAMIAN

Well, that was... just terrible. I mean, how unfair is that? They didn't even do any analysis on the line, they just took it at its most surface level and tried to push their narratives based on that.

DAMIAN looks around a little more until he sees another video.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Okay, something that actually has him in it.

DAMIAN taps his mouse. The spotlight comes back up on a chill talk show set. KENNY is in one chair and facing him, in a chair with a desk to the side of him is YOYO.

YOYO

Yo yo, what's going on, it's ya boy, Yoyo with the Yoyo Bozo Morning Show, OH! How y'all doing, hope y'all got ya coffee in ya system and yo morning reps UP! We have a very, very, VERY special guest in the house this morning, it's the one, the only, the greatest rapper, the great poet, the greatest artist of our generation, please give a warm, warm honk of the horn for Mr. Kenny Duckworth! *(a beat for applause)* Mr. Duckworth! How are you doin' this fine morning? Someone as enlightened as yourself, I bet you're feeling fresh and lively.

KENNY

Y'know, Yoyo, honestly, man I'm so fuckin' tired, it's ridiculous. But man, if I wasn't awake before, I know I am now.

YOYO

I get that, man, I understand. You're human just like everybody else. Now I'm gonna get right into why I asked for you to come here today. I don't even have to explain how beautiful and insightful your last album was and how much of an inspiration it's been to everyone who's heard it. I gotta ask you: What was going through your mind as you worked on the project? Were you

thinking about the critics and what they might say to it, the youth that really needed to hear your words on this project, or someone else entirely?

KENNY

I had so much on my mind, so many things running through my brain, and I gotta say, the critics were not one of them. Not at any point did I care about what anyone would say about my art. Either they understand it, and understand my story just a bit more, or they don't. And that's that. I did have two people in mind when I wrote this project, though.

YOYO

And that would be?

KENNY

My best friend, my brother, Amaru and my son, Damian.

YOYO

That's beautiful, man, that's beautiful. What a dynamic duo you two turned out to be.

KENNY

I miss him more and more every day.

YOYO

We all do, brother. We all do. I'd like to circle back those critics we brought up before, some of them had some particularly strong words to say.

KENNY

Oh, trust me, I heard.

YOYO

We can't play the clip here 'cause we don't wanna get in trouble or anything, but if you would like to speak on that at all, on the record, the floor is yours.

DAMIAN gets more and more fired up as KENNY speaks.

KENNY

I don't have much to say, I'm just so angry at the statement. I mean *Butterfly* is about hope, about beauty, celebrating what makes us unique and what brings us together as one people, as BLACK people, and you're gonna say something that harmful - that hateful - about it? That's what this is

really about, the *hatred* of it. How are you gonna take an album that's all about hope and make it about hate?/ Crazy how they twist it, man. Crazy.

The spotlight for the talk show set goes out and comes up for DAMIAN at his desk.

SCENE V - ELEMENT.

DAMIAN gets up from his chair.

DAMIAN

Exactly! I mean they just don't understand what he was saying, they didn't even pay attention!

HABIT and some members of the APPARITIONS enter.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

They don't understand how dedicated my father is to what he did, how important he was!

A beat. DAMIAN realizes what he said.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

How important he *is*. He *is*...

HABIT and APPARITIONS begin to repeat the words of critics to DAMIAN, approaching closer and closer to him as they do so.

HABIT

He's gonna ruin this country. His violent messages and evil statements are gonna destroy us all.

APPARITION GROUP 1

He's a hoodlum, a dirty hoodlum. Pants-saggers and gangbangs, he even calls himself one.

APPARITION GROUP 2

We're losing this country to illegals.
Job-stealing immigrants and their hip hop
and latin music.

"ELEMENT."

APPARITION GROUP 3

This is why I say that hip hop has done more
damage to the blacks than racism in recent
years.

BOONE

New Kung Fu Kenny!

*At once, all the sound cuts out. ALL
are still.*

BOONE (cont'd)

Ain't nobody prayin' for me!
Y'all know what happens on Earth stays on Earth!

*HABIT appears behind DAMIAN,
who doesn't see him.*

BOONE (cont'd)

Here we go!

DAMIAN and HABIT

I don't give a fuck!
I don't give a fuck!
I don't give a, I don't give a, I don't give a fuck!

DAMIAN

I'M WILLIN' TO DIE FOR THIS SHIT,
I DONE CRIED FOR THIS SHIT, MIGHT TAKE A LIFE FOR THIS SHIT,
PUT THE BIBLE DOWN AND GO EYE FOR AN EYE FOR THIS SHIT,
D.O.T. MY ENEMY, WON'T CATCH A VIBE FOR THIS SHIT, AYY.
I BEEN STOMPED OUT IN FRONT OF MY MAMA,
MY DADDY COMMISSARY MADE IT TO COMMAS.
BITCH, ALL MY FRIENDS FOUND DEAD,
SO AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN' FOR ME, I'M ON YOUR HEAD, AYY.
30 MILLIONS LATER, KNOW THE FEDS WATCHIN'.
AUNTIE ON MY TELEGRAM LIKE, "BE CAUTIOUS".
I BE HANGIN' OUT AT TAM'S, I BE ON STOCKTON,
I DON'T DO IT FOR THE 'GRAM, I DO IT FOR COMPTON.

I'M WILLIN' TO DIE FOR THIS SHIT, BROTHA.
 I'LL TAKE YOUR FUCKIN' LIFE FOR THIS SHIT, BROTHA.
 WE AIN'T GOIN' BACK TO BROKE, FAMILY SELLIN' DOPE.
 THAT'S WHY YOU MANEY ASS RAP FUCKERS BETTER KNOW.

IF I GOTTA SLAP A PUSSY-ASS PLAYA, I'MMA MAKE IT LOOK SEXY.
 IF I GOTTA GO HARD ON A BITCH, I'MMA MAKE IT LOOK SEXY.

DAMIAN and HABIT

I PULL UP,

DAMIAN, HABIT and APPARITIONS

HOP OUT,
 AIR OUT,
 MADE IT LOOK SEXY.

BOONE

THEY WON'T TAKE ME OUT MY ELEMENT.

BOONE and HABIT

NAH, TAKE ME OUT MY ELEMENT.

DAMIAN

I'M ALLERGIC TO A BITCH HITTA, AYY.
 AN IMAGINARY RICH HITTA, AYY.
 SEVEN FIGURES, ONE DAY SLIMMER THAN MY GIRL'S FIGURE, AYY.
 GOIN' DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL ON ALL Y'ALL, AYY,

DAMIAN and HABIT

BUNCH OF CRIMINALS AND MONEY IN MY PHONE CALLS, AYY.
 WE OKAY, WE LET THE A1 FLY.
 RELOCATE, JUMP ON THE SAME G5.

DAMIAN

CHECKIN' FOR ME HEAVY, 'CAUSE I GO, YEAH, I GO, YEAH.
 THEY NEVER BEEN READY, YEAH, I KNOW, YEAH, I KNOW, YEAH.
 100K SPREAD, 'CROSS THE FLOOR, 'CROSS THE FLOOR YEAH,
 NONE OF Y'ALL FUCKIN' WITH THE FLOW YEAH, THE FLOW YEAH.
 YEARS IN THE MAKIN' AND DON'T Y'ALL MISTAKE IT.
 I GOT 'EM BY A LANDSLIDE, WE TALKIN' 'BOUT RACES.

YOU KNOW THIS'LL NEVER BE A TIE, JUST LOOK AT THEIR LACES.

DAMIAN and HABIT

YOU KNOW CAREERS TAKE OFF,
JUST GOTTA BE PATIENT.

DAMIAN

MISTER ONE THROUGH FIVE THAT'S THE ONLY LOGIC,
FAKE MY DEATH, GO TO CUBA, THAT'S THE ONLY OPTION.

IF I GOTTA SLAP A PUSSY-ASS PLAYA,
I'MMA MAKE IT LOOK SEXY.
IF I GOTTA GO HARD ON A BITCH,
I'MMA MAKE IT LOOK SEXY.

DAMIAN and HABIT

I PULL UP,

DAMIAN, HABIT and APPARITIONS

HOP OUT,
AIR OUT,
MADE IT LOOK SEXY.

BOONE

THEY WON'T TAKE ME OUT MY ELEMENT.

BOONE and HABIT

NAH, TAKE ME OUT MY ELEMENT.

DAMIAN

DAMNED IF I DO, IF I DON'T.
GODDAMN US ALL IF YOU WON'T.
DAMN, DAMN, DAMN, IT'S A GODDAMN SHAME,

DAMIAN and HABIT

YOU AIN'T FRONTLINE, GET OUT THE GODDAMN WAY.

DAMIAN

REALLY THOUGHT THEY WEREN'T GONNA SEE ME, HUH? REALLY THOUGHT
 THAT K-DOT REAL LIFE WAS THE SAME LIFE THEY SEE ON TV, HUH? REALLY
 WANNA FLEX ON ME AND BE IN L.A. FOR FREE, HUH?
 NEXT TIME THEY HIT THE 10 FREEWAY, WE NEED RECEIPT, HUH?

DAMIAN and HABIT

'CAUSE MOST OF Y'ALL AIN'T REAL,

DAMIAN

MOST OF Y'ALL GO SQUEAL,
 MOST OF Y'ALL JUST ENVY, BUT JEALOUSY GET YOU KILLED,
 MOST OF Y'ALL THROW ROCKS AND TRY TO HIDE YOUR HAND,
 JUST SAY HIS NAME AND I PROMISE THAT YOU'LL SEE CANDYMAN.
 BECAUSE IT'S ALL IN YOUR EYES, MOST OF Y'ALL TELL LIES,
 MOST OF Y'ALL DON'T FADE, MOST OF Y'ALL BEEN ADVISED.

HABIT

LAST LP I TRIED TO LIFT THE BLACK ARTIST,
 BUT IT'S A DIFFERENCE 'TWEEN BLACK ARTIST AND WACK ARTIST.

*The music moves in slow-motion, as
 a voiceover of KENNY and AMARU
 plays. DAMIAN looks around
 frantically, unsure of where the
 following lines are coming from.*

AMARU and KENNY

(voiceover)

IF I GOTTA SLAP A PUSSY-ASS PLAYA, I'MMA MAKE IT LOOK SEXY.
 IF I GOTTA GO HARD ON A BITCH, I'MMA MAKE IT LOOK SEXY.
 I PULL UP, HOP OUT, AIR OUT, MADE IT LOOK SEXY.
 THEY WON'T TAKE ME OUT MY ELEMENT.
 NAH, TAKE ME OUT MY ELEMENT.

DAMIAN searches the empty stage.

DAMIAN

Who was that? *(calling out)* Hello! Is someone here?

HABIT appears for a moment.

HABIT
(echoey)

Always here. Always on Earth.

HABIT disappears. DAMIAN looks for where the voice came from, but it's already gone.

SCENE VI - Heart.

LAURYN enters.

LAURYN

Okay, now I know for a fact that I heard one of his damn songs. I told you to go to work.

DAMIAN

Ma, I can't just go into work when I'm not scheduled.

LAURYN

Sure you can! Y'know what, matter of fact...

LAURYN marches to the record player and rips the vinyl off of it.

DAMIAN

Mom!

LAURYN

Let me make sure you aren't distracted anymore.

DAMIAN

Why are you ripping this away from me? I wanna know more about who my father is.

LAURYN

WAS, Damian. WAS. And besides, there's nothing to know.

DAMIAN

You're telling me there isn't more to know about the most important person I've never met?

LAURYN

He's gone, we can't stay in the past forever.

DAMIAN

Staying close to my father doesn't mean I'm staying in the past.

LAURYN

Well, he's *in* the past, so-

DAMIAN

But what if he isn't?! (*a beat*) What if he's out there, somewhere, making music and wanting to be with us, but needing time to understand himself? What if he never was in the past, and we've been leaving our family behind when he might really need us? I mean, it doesn't even add up to me. How could we even get a hold of this record if he disappeared before we even got it? He's gotta be out there, somewhere, right? Have you ever even considered it?

A beat.

LAURYN

Yeah, I have. I have considered it. I've mulled over that thought for years. I was at our doorstep every day for the last 15 years waiting for him. And do you know what happened? He never came. I wasted 15 years of my life on a man who didn't show up. Do you remember who I was all those years ago? I was so... full of life. Full of hope and purpose. I never thought a woman's life could look so promising. But look at me now, after all that waiting. More grays than hopes. More ashy skin than purpose. More wrinkles than life. All for a man who didn't. Show. Up. He told me he'd be there. Is he here for me now?

DAMIAN keeps his eyes glued to the floor.

DAMIAN

I know it's been a lot for you, Mom, and I'm sorry. You deserve better than that./

LAURYN

/I know I do.

DAMIAN

That being said, though, what's the problem with *me* listening to it?

LAURYN takes a deep breath.

LAURYN

He wasn't there for you, either. And you deserve better, too.

DAMIAN

Maybe there's a good reason he wasn't there.

LAURYN

Damian, it's been 15 years. At this point, I don't give a damn what the reason is.

A beat.

DAMIAN

Do you still love him?

Another long, tense beat.

LAURYN

I... gotta go. *(motioning to the record)* Don't go looking for this while I'm out, understand?

DAMIAN sighs.

DAMIAN

Got it, Mom.

*LAURYN exits, record in hand.
DAMIAN walks around the stage.*

DAMIAN

I'VE GOT SO MANY THEORIES AND SUSPICIONS.
I'M DIAGNOSED WITH A REAL MAN'S CONDITION.

*His eyes land on the bottle of
medication.*

DAMIAN (cont'd)

REAL MAN'S CONDITION...

*An uncomfortable beat. HABIT
enters, unnoticed by DAMIAN.*

HABIT

TODAY IS THE DAY YOU FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION.

*DAMIAN makes eye contact with
HABIT.*

HABIT (cont'd)

KEEP THE FAMILY CLOSE, OR FACE YOUR PERDITION...

DAMIAN

Who are you?

HABIT

Who am I? Ho-oooooh, who am I...

HABIT moves to DAMIAN's bed.

DAMIAN

You're from before, aren't you? I thought I /saw you before.

HABIT

/Yes, yes, you got it, let's not act like you didn't.

DAMIAN

But that still doesn't answer my question.

HABIT extends a hand to DAMIAN.

HABIT

Name's Habit. It's so nice to finally meet you face to face and all grown up, Damian.

*DAMIAN begins to shake HABIT's
hand, but upon hearing his own
name, he retreats.*

DAMIAN

... How do you know my name?

HABIT

Oh, trust me, I may seem like a stranger to you, but you are the furthest thing from one to me. I've been with you every day that you've been on this plane, even if you didn't know it.

DAMIAN studies him.

DAMIAN

(scoffs) W-what? Bullshit.

HABIT

Hey, believe it, my friend. I'm real as can be.

HABIT sits on the bed, DAMIAN watching his every move.

DAMIAN

I don't understand, how-

HABIT

The world isn't just everything you see day-to-day. There's beauty under the surface, a beauty that lives in the same place as the darkness. A warmth that neighbors the cold.

A beat. DAMIAN cocks his head to the side in confusion.

HABIT (cont'd)

(sigh) I probably should've expected that response. Your father wasn't much for conversation either... at least, not at first.

DAMIAN

Wait, you knew my father?

HABIT

Longer than I've known you. He's my best friend.

DAMIAN

Really? Can you tell me about him? What w- *(catching himself)* -is he like?

HABIT

Kenny Duckworth is one of the most creative people I've ever met. He was very focused on creating something wonderful for the masses, something that he felt related to his experience. He

wanted to craft a world that he could show to people and say “this is what I went through.” He thought it’d explain it better than his words could.

DAMIAN

And he succeeded, right? Him and Amaru, they must’ve.

HABIT

I’m not so sure.

DAMIAN

What do you mean?

SCENE VII - FEEL.

HABIT

Ahh, I’ll save it for a rainy day. Tell me more about you.

DAMIAN

What? Why? What do you want me to tell you?

HABIT

I dunno, you could say anything, really. Why not just start with how you’re feeling?

A beat.

DAMIAN

Okay... um, I’m feeling... kinda frustrated right now. Basically I’d been listening to this unreleased album my dad made so I could learn more about who he was. But it has something weird about it. I know the words to some of the songs, almost as if I’ve been listening to it my entire life, but I’ve never heard any of it before.

HABIT perks up at the mention of the album.

HABIT

Interesting...

DAMIAN

And right as it was really getting started, my mom took it away from me. She’s hated my dad ever since he left and while I can understand that, I don’t get why I can’t learn more about him.

HABIT

Hmm... I see. What did you want her to do?

DAMIAN

I guess just... let me have the vinyl? *(to himself)* God that sounds so childish.

HABIT

It's not at all. Having a want isn't childish.

DAMIAN

Well, everything I want lately feels childish.

HABIT

What makes you say that? What do you want?

A beat.

DAMIAN

I want a family. One that I'm close to. I want a home that feels warm and accepting. I wanna have a future with my girlfriend, Jayla. I want to create something beautiful, like my father did. I want the world to know *my* experience. I want to be the man I was meant to be.

HABIT

So... you want fame?

DAMIAN turns to HABIT.

DAMIAN

What? No, I don't want fame! Did I say that at any point?

HABIT

I don't know, Dame, did you? Think about it: you want to create a family with the love of your life and be able to provide for them by doing something you love, something that runs in your family as a legacy. You want to be known just as he was, to be validated and treated as he was. You want yours, and in a way, you want you. The REAL you. Is that not the colorings of fame?

DAMIAN

I mean, I guess it could be.

HABIT

Lemme ask you a question: do you associate fame with evil?

DAMIAN looks HABIT in the eye.

DAMIAN

Do you?

HABIT

I mean, the question is meant for you.

DAMIAN

I know, but I'm not stupid, I can see you have an answer for that question in your head already, so let's talk about something at least one of us doesn't know.

HABIT

(chuckles) Fair play. I don't associate fame with evil. Evil may come with fame, but fame itself is not evil. And neither is wanting a family. *(calling offstage)* Boone! Can you bring it out for me, please?

BOONE enters, carrying an all black record. He hands it to HABIT.

HABIT (cont'd)
(to BOONE)

Thank you, Boone, much appreciated.

BOONE exits. HABIT hands DAMIAN the record.

DAMIAN

How did you get this? I thought my mom had it?

HABIT

Beings like Boone and I don't play by the same rules you and your mom do.

DAMIAN

Wait, what even are you?

HABIT

How was this not your first question? Boone, myself, all the other spooky guys, gals, and non-binary pals you see are Apparitions. Ghosts from your ancestors' past. We can only be seen by your family, and only come in times of need.

DAMIAN

I guess now is a "time of need"?

DAMIAN puts the vinyl on the record player.

HABIT

Like you wouldn't even know.

DAMIAN places the needle on the vinyl.

HABIT (cont'd)

This one... it always struck a chord with me.

KENNY and LAURYN enter on opposite sides.

"FEEL."

KENNY

Ain't nobody prayin' for me
Ain't/ nobody prayin' for me
Ain't nobody prayin' for/ me

LAURYN

/Ain't nobody prayin' for me
/Nobody prayin' for me

LAURYN

Ain't nobody -

KENNY

-Prayin' for me

LAURYN

Ain't nobody prayin' for me
Nobody prayin' for me

KENNY

I FEEL LIKE A CHIP ON MY SHOULDERS
I FEEL LIKE I'M LOSIN' MY FOCUS
I FEEL LIKE I'M LOSIN' MY PATIENCE
I FEEL LIKE MY THOUGHTS IN THE BASEMENT
FEEL LIKE, I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE MISEDUCATED
FEEL LIKE I DON'T WANNA BE BOTHERED
I FEEL LIKE YOU MAY BE THE PROBLEM
I FEEL LIKE IT AIN'T NO TOMORROW, FUCK THE WORLD
THE WORLD IS ENDIN', I'M DONE PRETENDIN'
AND FUCK YOU IF YOU GET OFFENDED
I FEEL LIKE FRIENDS BEEN OVERRATED
I FEEL LIKE THE FAMILY BEEN FAKIN'
I FEEL LIKE THE FEELINGS ARE CHANGIN'
FEEL LIKE MY THOUGHT OF COMPROMISE IS JADED
FEEL LIKE YOU WANNA SCRUTINIZE HOW I MADE IT
FEEL LIKE I AIN'T FEELIN' YOU ALL
FEEL LIKE REMOVIN' MYSELF, NO FEELINGS INVOLVED
I FEEL FOR YOU, I'VE BEEN IN THE FIELD FOR YOU
IT'S REAL FOR YOU, RIGHT? SHIT, I FEEL LIKE-

AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN' FOR ME
AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN' FOR ME
AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN' FOR ME
AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN'

I FEEL BROTHERS BEEN OUT OF POCKET
I FEEL LIKE THEY TAPPIN' THEY POCKETS
I FEEL LIKE DEBATING ON WHO THE GREATEST CAN STOP IT
I AM LEGEND, I FEEL LIKE ALL OF Y'ALL IS PEASANTS
I FEEL LIKE ALL OF Y'ALL IS DESPERATE
I FEEL LIKE ALL IT TAKE IS A SECOND TO FEEL LIKE
MIKE JORDAN WHENEVER HOLDIN' A REAL MIC
I AIN'T FEELIN' YOUR PRESENCE
FEEL LIKE I'MMA LEARN YOU A LESSON
FEEL LIKE ONLY ME AND THE MUSIC, THOUGH
I FEEL LIKE YOUR FEELIN' AIN'T MUTUAL
I FEEL LIKE THE ENEMY YOU SHOULD KNOW
FEEL LIKE THE FEELIN' OF NO HOPE
THE FEELIN' OF BAD DOPE

A QUARTER OUNCE MANIPULATED FROM SOAP
 THE FEELIN', THE FEELIN' OF FALSE FREEDOM
 I'LL FORCE-FEED 'EM THE POISON THAT FILL 'EM UP IN THE PRISON
 I FEEL LIKE IT'S JUST ME
 LOOK, I FEEL LIKE I CAN'T BREATHE
 LOOK, I FEEL LIKE I CAN'T SLEEP
 LOOK, I FEEL HEARTLESS, OFTEN OFF THIS
 FEELIN' OF FALLIN', OF FALLIN' APART WITH
 DARKEST HOURS, LOST IT
 FILLIN' THE VOID OF BEIN' EMPLOYED WITH BALLIN'
 STREETS IS TALKIN', FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH COFFINS
 FILL UP THE BANKS WITH DOLLARS
 FILL UP THE GRAVES WITH FATHERS
 FILL UP THE BABIES WITH BULLSHIT
 INTERNET BLOGS AND PULPIT, FILL 'EM WITH GOSSIP
 I FEEL LIKE THIS GOTTA BE THE FEELIN' WHAT 'PAC WAS
 THE FEELIN' OF AN APOCALYPSE HAPPENIN'
 BUT NOTHIN' IS AWKWARD, THE FEELIN' WON'T PROSPER
 THE FEELIN' IS TOXIC, I FEEL LIKE I'M BOXIN' DEMONS
 MONSTERS, FALSE PROPHETS SCHEMIN'
 SPONSORS, INDUSTRY PROMISES
 BROTHERS, SISTERS, HONKIES, CRACKERS, COMPTON
 CHURCH, RELIGION, TOKEN BLACKS IN BONDAGE
 LAWSUIT VISITS, SUBPOENA SERVED IN CONCERT

KENNY and HABIT

FUCK YOUR FEELINGS, I MEAN THIS FOR IMPOSTERS
 I CAN FEEL IT, THE PHOENIX SURE TO WATCH US
 I CAN FEEL IT, THE DREAM IS MORE THAN PROCESS
 I CAN PUT A REGIME THAT FORMS A LOCH NESS
 I CAN FEEL IT, THE SCREAM THAT HAUNTS OUR LOGIC!

AMARU

(offstage, voiceover)

I FEEL LIKE SAY SOMETHIN'.

KENNY

I FEEL LIKE TAKE SOMETHIN'.

HABIT

I FEEL LIKE SKATIN' OFF.

LAURYN

I FEEL LIKE WAITIN' FOR 'EM.

AMARU, HABIT, LAURYN and DAMIAN
MAYBE IT'S TOO LATE FOR 'EM.

KENNY

I FEEL LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD WANT ME TO PRAY FOR 'EM
BUT WHO THE FUCK PRAYIN' FOR ME?

HABIT

AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN' FOR YOU.
WHO PRAYIN' FOR YOU?
AIN'T NOBODY PRAYIN'

*The instrumental slowly fades out.
HABIT exits.*

DAMIAN

Dad... I get it. But I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you.

*DAMIAN looks to the door where
LAURYN left from.*

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Is anybody praying for me?

SCENE VIII - Desire.

KENNY and LAURYN slow dance in each others' arms, exiting. A knock is heard.

DAMIAN

Hello?

The door opens, and JAYLA enters.

JAYLA

Hellooo yourself!

DAMIAN softens, and immediately runs to hug her.

DAMIAN

Oh boy am I glad it's you!

JAYLA

What? Is everything okay?

DAMIAN

No, no, yeah, totally, it's just been a REALLY weird day today, I have so much to tell you about. I swear it felt like a dream. I mean it must've been, it was too insane to be real.

JAYLA

... What happened? Did you take your meds today?

DAMIAN

Yeah, of course I did, I always do. Not the point, we should sit down, it's a lot.

DAMIAN and JAYLA sit down, DAMIAN holding her hand the whole way.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Okay, so basically, I wanna find my dad.

JAYLA

Oh! That's great! Man, you made it seem like it was gonna be so much worse than that./

DAMIAN

/That's cause it gets weirder./

JAYLA

/Oh god.

DAMIAN

Basically, I-

HABIT enters (unseen by Jayla), immediately making eye contact with DAMIAN.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

I just need to show you this, gimme one second.

DAMIAN walks over to his record player. JAYLA watches.

JAYLA

Dame, I love you so much, but there's nothing on there.

DAMIAN

Oh shit, yeah, okay just wait one minute. Uhhh, turn around, also, it's a surprise.

JAYLA

Not gonna lie, that's a really tough ask right now.

DAMIAN

Please, just do it.

JAYLA shakes her head and covers her eyes. DAMIAN runs back over to JAYLA and kisses her on the cheek.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Also, I love you too.

DAMIAN jogs back to the record player. HABIT walks over to him, pushing him away from it.

HABIT

What are you doing?

DAMIAN

(points to the record player) I wanna show her. Can you do something to make it so that she can see it?

HABIT

(chuckles) No way, not a chance.

DAMIAN

Why? What's so wrong with that?

HABIT

If she can see it or listen to it, that means that she can see all of the Apparitions, and that's a big no-no. Your family is the only one allowed to see me.

DAMIAN

Does 'not supposed to' mean 'impossible?'

HABIT

It's not about whether or not it's possible, it's about whether or not it's wise, and it's not!

DAMIAN

And why not? What would be the problem with her seeing them?

JAYLA

Dame, who're you talking to?

DAMIAN

(to JAYLA)

No one, Jay, just thinking out/ loud.

HABIT

/He's talking to multiple women simultaneously./

DAMIAN

/Not talking to multiple women at all-

JAYLA

-You're talking to WHO?

HABIT

(proud of his work)

(to DAMIAN) Heheheh, dumbass.

DAMIAN punches HABIT in the arm.

DAMIAN

I'm just thinking out loud, my love, don't worry, just talking to myself.

JAYLA

Well, your thoughts seem very... active, is everything alright?

DAMIAN

Yes, dear, more than!

JAYLA

Okay, are you sure you don't want me to help?

DAMIAN

Yes, I'm sure!

HABIT

Nope, I'm not!

DAMIAN

(to HABIT)

God, shut the fuck up!

JAYLA uncovers her eyes and gives DAMIAN a look of murder.

JAYLA

What the fuck did you say to me just now?

DAMIAN

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I didn't mean that to you, I'm so sorry.

DAMIAN

That's my bad, you're right, my mind is really active and all over the place today, I'm sorry.

DAMIAN grabs his phone and his best pair of headphones and hands it to JAYLA.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Here, just so there's no more misinterpretations or anything like that, maybe you could listen to this song I've been working on while I get the surprise ready?

JAYLA

(more confused than angry)

You want me to listen to a song...

DAMIAN

Uh huh.

JAYLA

... so that I can listen... to a song?

A beat.

DAMIAN

Yep. Sounds about right. Please?

JAYLA slowly nods.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Thank you, Jay. I am sorry, once again.

DAMIAN smiles at and backs away from JAYLA while she slowly puts the headphones on, still glaring at him.. DAMIAN approaches HABIT.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

What was that all about?!

HABIT

I don't know, I just thought it'd be funny.

DAMIAN

I love this girl, a lot. I'm really not looking to get on her bad side because some ghost tried to fuck with me. And, again, I don't see the problem.

A beat. HABIT considers DAMIAN's offer.

HABIT

I need you to know that if she sees me, I'm dead.

DAMIAN

Wait, like, actually? Promise?

HABIT

No, not actually just-... just make sure she doesn't see me. Bad shit can happen if she does.

DAMIAN

Perfect, I get to be free from you for a bit. This deal keeps getting better and better.

A beat. HABIT snaps his fingers and a light flashes momentarily.

HABIT

Just so you know, you should watch your step when I get back. If you think you hold all the power between the two of us, you got another thing coming.

HABIT exits.

SCENE IX - LOYALTY.

DAMIAN looks at JAYLA. He walks over to her and sits down next to her. She takes off the headphones.

DAMIAN

Soo, what'd you think?

JAYLA

It's really good, I really liked it. There was this one line that really caught my eye.

DAMIAN

Oh, I think I might know which one it was.

JAYLA

"I recommend every inch of your lunatic ways?"

DAMIAN

“Praise the lord!” That’s the one, I thought you’d find that one interesting.

JAYLA

Is that you singing on that first part, too?

DAMIAN

Actually, yes, that’s me!

JAYLA

Really? Wow, your singing has come so far!

DAMIAN

That was the goal! Heheh.

JAYLA

So. I believe there was something you wanted to show me?

DAMIAN

Oh, yes! I almost forgot! *(runs over to the record player)* I found an unreleased album from my dad, and there’s something about it that’s felt really... Strange to me, I can’t fully explain it.

JAYLA

Well, play a song for me, then, show me what’s up.

KENNY and LAURYN enter once again, still romantically dancing. JAYLA looks at DAMIAN, stunned by the appearance of KENNY, LAURYN and the APPARITIONS that surround her.

[“LOYALTY.”](#)

KENNY

I SAID I'M GEEKED AND I'M FIRED UP.
ALL I WANT TONIGHT IS JUST GET HIGH UP.

KENNY and MALE APPARITIONS

GIRL, YOU LOOK SO GOOD, IT'S TO DIE FOR.

OOH, THAT PUSSY GOOD, IT'S TO DIE FOR.

KENNY and LAURYN

IT'S A SECRET SOCIETY.
 ALL WE ASK IS TRUST,
 ALL WE GOT IS US.
 LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.
 LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.

KENNY

KUNG FU KENNY NOW.
 MY RESUME IS REAL ENOUGH FOR TWO MILLENNIUMS.
 A BETTER WAY TO MAKE A WAVE, STOP DEFENDIN' THEM.
 I MEDITATE AND MODERATE ALL OF MY WINS AGAIN,
 I'M HANGIN' ON THE FENCE AGAIN.
 I'M ALWAYS ON YOUR MIND.
 I PUT MY LYRIC AND MY LIFELINE ON THE LINE.
 AND AIN'T NO LIMIT WHEN I MIGHT SHINE, MIGHT GRIND.
 YOU ROLLIN' WITH IT AT THE RIGHT TIME, RIGHT NOW.

MALE APPARITIONS

ONLY FOR THE DOLLAR SIGN!

LAURYN

BAD GIRL LAURI NOW
 SWERVE, SWERVE, SWERVE, SWERVE, DEEPER NOW
 ON YOUR PULSE LIKE IT'S EDM
 GAS IN THE BITCH LIKE IT'S PREMIUM
 HAUL ASS ON A BITCH ALL IN THE FAST LANE
 BEEN A BAD BITCH WAY BEFORE ANY CASH CAME
 I'M ESTABLISHED
 HUNDRED CARATS ON MY NAME
 RUN THE ATLAS, I'M A NATURAL, I'M ALRIGHT

KENNY

I'M A SAVAGE, I'M A ASSHOLE, I'M A KING

KENNY and LAURYN

SHIMMY-YEAH, SHIMMY-YEAH, SHIMMY-YEAH, ROCK

KENNY

IF YOU GOT A MAN THEN HE CAN MEET ME OUTSIDE
YOU CAN BABYSIT HIM WHEN I LEAVE HIM OUTSIDE.

KENNY and LAURYN

AIN'T NO OTHER LOVE LIKE THE ONE I KNOW.

KENNY

I DONE BEEN DOWN SO LONG LOST HOPE.
I DONE CAME DOWN SO HARD I SLOWED.
HONESTY FOREVER,

KENNY and LAURYN

MAN IT'S WHAT WE ALL WANT.

DAMIAN

I SAID I'M GEEKED AND I'M FIRED UP.
ALL I WANT TONIGHT IS JUST GET HIGH UP.

KENNY

ALL I WANT IS, ALL I WANT IS,

DAMIAN

LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.
LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.

KENNY and LAURYN

10-4, NO SWITCHIN' SIDES
FEEL SOMETHIN' WRONG

KENNY and LAURYN

YOU ACTIN' SHIFTY, YOU DON'T RIDE,
WITH ME NO MORE,

DAMIAN and JAYLA

YOU ACTIN' SHIFTY, YOU DON'T
RIDE!

*JAYLA looks at DAMIAN, shocked
that she knows the words.*

KENNY

I NEED,

KENNY, LAURYN, DAMIAN and JAYLA
 LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.
 LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.

DAMIAN and KENNY
 TELL ME WHO YOU LOYAL TO
 IS IT MONEY? IS IT FAME? IS IT WEED? IS IT DRINK?
 IS IT COMIN' DOWN WITH THE LOUD PIPES AND THE RAIN?
 BIG CHILLIN', ONLY FOR THE POWER IN YOUR NAME
 TELL ME WHO YOU LOYAL TO
 IS IT LOVE FOR THE STREETS WHEN THE LIGHTS GET DARK?
 IS IT UNCONDITIONAL WHEN THE 'RARI DON'T START?
 TELL ME WHEN YOUR LOYALTY IS COMIN' FROM THE HEART

JAYLA and LAURYN
 TELL ME WHO YOU LOYAL TO

JAYLA
 DO IT START WITH YOUR WOMAN OR YOUR MAN?
 DO IT END WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS?
 OR YOU'RE LOYAL TO YOURSELF IN ADVANCE?

JAYLA and LAURYN
 I SAID, TELL ME WHO YOU LOYAL TO.

JAYLA, LAURYN and DAMIAN
 IS IT ANYBODY THAT YOU WOULD LIE FOR?
 ANYBODY YOU WOULD SLIDE FOR?

JAYLA, LAURYN, DAMIAN and KENNY
 ANYBODY YOU WOULD DIE FOR?

KENNY
 THAT'S WHAT GOD/ FOR.

DAMIAN
 /I SAID I'M GEEKED AND I'M FIRED UP.
 ALL I WANT TONIGHT IS JUST GET HIGH UP.

KENNY

ALL I WANT IS, ALL I WANT IS,

DAMIAN

LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.

JAYLA

LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.

DAMIAN and JAYLA

10-4, NO SWITCHIN' SIDES
FEEL SOMETHIN' WRONG

DAMIAN and JAYLA
YOU ACTIN' SHIFTY, YOU DON'T RIDE,
WITH ME NO MORE,

KENNY and LAURYN
YOU ACTIN' SHIFTY, YOU DON'T
RIDE!

KENNY

I NEED,

KENNY, LAURYN, DAMIAN and JAYLA
LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.
LOYALTY, LOYALTY, LOYALTY.

*The lights change to four spotlights
on KENNY, LAURYN, DAMIAN, and
JAYLA.*

JAYLA and KENNY

IT'S SO HARD TO BE HUMBLE.

JAYLA

IT'S SO HARD TO BE.

LAURYN and DAMIAN

LORD KNOWS I'M TRYIN'.

LAURYN

LORD KNOWS I'M DYIN', BABY.

*Spotlights out on LAURYN and
KENNY as they exit – DAMIAN and
JAYLA return to sitting on the bed.*

JAYLA
... Woah.

DAMIAN
I know, right?

JAYLA
Wait so like, wha-... what even was that?

DAMIAN
I don't know, I couldn't explain it either, it was so strange.

JAYLA
I didn't know the words to that song, but I sang along with it like I did.

DAMIAN
And you saw the... (*gesture of an APPARITION moving*) those things, right?

JAYLA
YES! It was like we went to their world or something.

DAMIAN
And then put right back out afterwards, right?

JAYLA
RIGHT.

DAMIAN
So, this album... This is my father's. His last one before he... yeah, and he never released it, and I'm trying to listen to all of it to try and understand more of his story.

JAYLA
But what more would there be to get from it than from his past work? I mean, it's not like he's gonna just tell you his life story.

DAMIAN

But that's just it, I think it might.

JAYLA

How?

DAMIAN

There's this... (*noticing HABIT*) There's just something about it. I hear him in it, his hurt and what he's mentally going through.

JAYLA

Okay, well that makes sense, I mean we literally saw him, AND a younger version of your mom.

DAMIAN

Right, so I think he could tell me more if I get more and more into the album.

JAYLA

Hmm... you think maybe other people could see that too?

DAMIAN

What do you mean?

JAYLA

Well, maybe more of his story could be out there, and more people could see his story. Maybe people could be stirred up to try to find him if more people could listen to it.

DAMIAN

Maybe...

JAYLA

Do you want me to help you with that at all?

DAMIAN

No, that's okay, I think I'd rather do it on my own for now.

JAYLA

Oh... alright then. Y'know, I feel like we haven't had a lot of time alone together in forever.

DAMIAN

I know. I'll make sure we don't have to wait much longer.

JAYLA

You better! You gonna ask me out?

DAMIAN

Do I still have to ask you out? We've been together for 3 years now.

JAYLA

Yes, you still gotta ask me out, romance ain't dead, stupid.

DAMIAN

Alright, alright. Maybe I will. You'll see.

JAYLA

Good. *(reaches the door, then turns back to DAMIAN)* and you might wanna put that album out.

DAMIAN

You think so?

JAYLA

Yeah! I mean, maybe that's what he would've wanted. And, I mean, it being your father's work, it's sure to get you a lot of credit, right?

DAMIAN

You think it could help me get to where he was?

JAYLA

Oh, Dame, I know it can. Love you.

DAMIAN

I love you too.

JAYLA exits. HABIT appears behind the door.

HABIT

No.

SCENE X - Pool.

DAMIAN laughs.

DAMIAN

No to what?

HABIT

Releasing the album. Under no circumstances can you put this into the world, especially not under your own name.

DAMIAN

When the hell did I say I was gonna release it under my own name?

HABIT

I could just see that look in your eyes. Kenny's eyes always had that same glimmer.

DAMIAN

Y'know, I just met you today, what makes you think I trust you, anyway?

HABIT

Have you done anything that should make me think you don't?

A beat.

HABIT (cont'd)

When I first met your father, I didn't know what to think of him. Nobody did, not even Lauryn.

DAMIAN

You know my mom, too?

HABIT

Yes, of course. We all met at the same time. At the same party. And even though we didn't know what to think of each other at first, all we remember of those first years as friends and the fun we had, and the music we made together. You see, the past is a finicky thing, Damian. One moment it can be clear and bright, but the next, it can be murky and chaotic. A puddle to an ocean. An ocean to a swimming pool.

HABIT looks at KENNY, who's just entered. He is unseen by DAMIAN.

KENNY

You sure Mom's gonna be cool with this? I don't wanna get in trouble with her or anything...

AMARU (V.O)

Nah, Kenny, don't worry! It'll be fine. Just try to loosen up a bit.

An APPARITION comes onstage and hands KENNY a bottle of alcohol.

AMARU (V.O) (cont'd)

C'mon, bro, drink up! We're gonna have fun tonight.

KENNY takes a big swig of the alcohol. The lights begin to change and twist a bit. He takes a bigger swig, and starts to get dizzy. Then he chugs the rest of the bottle, and gets to his dizziest. Then, after a beat, KENNY hunches over and throws up. He's drunk. YOYO enters, running to KENNY and patting him on the back.

YOYO

Aye, you good cuz?

After a moment to catch his breath, KENNY stands upright again, holding his beer to the sky.

KENNY

Never better, Yoyo.

YOYO

Yeahhhh, that's my guy! Hey, you want me to grab Amaru real quick, though?

KENNY

Uh, sure, that'd be- be good.

YOYO exits, and LAURYN enters, coming to KENNY's side.

KENNY (cont'd)

Hey, Lil' Miss.

LAURYN

Yo, Kenny, what are you doing, babe?

KENNY

Just have a good- havin' a good time, my sweet.

LAURYN

You get like this every time we go out, Kenny. I dunno if you should keep drinking.

KENNY

Ahh, calm down, Laury, I'm fine, I'm fine. It's just how it is at parties, right guys! *(reciting)* I'm kinda buzzed and it's all because *(imitating a deep voice)* this is how we do it-

LAURYN

Kenny, I'm serious.

KENNY stops for a second and looks at LAURYN, then down at himself, then back at her. She puts her hand out, motioning for the beer bottle in KENNY's hand.

LAURYN (cont'd)

Let's go home.

KENNY considers for a beat, instead giving LAURYN his empty hand. The two exit, KENNY still holding the bottle. BLACKOUT.

SCENE XI - PRIDE.

LIGHTS UP. One week later. DAMIAN has a microphone in his hands as he records on his laptop. He sings some of the words to "DNA." when HABIT enters, shaking his head.

HABIT

Damn... and here I was thinking you weren't gonna act on this one.

DAMIAN

Habit, this is the right thing to do.

HABIT

You wouldn't know the right thing if it slapped you across the face.

DAMIAN

Yeah, well, how do you know that?

HABIT

Because- Well, I- *(unsure)* It's my *job* to know! I'm basically your guardian angel here.

DAMIAN

Oh, shut up. You're no guardian angel. More like the devil on my shoulder.

HABIT

(to the audience)

Oh my god, he is turning into an artist.

DAMIAN

You're just my id. You're an unhinged mangle of desires that nobody should listen to.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

This is what I want, and when it comes out, this is what everyone else will want to.

HABIT

You call *me* "unhinged"? You're making a cover of your father's unreleased music and putting it under your name, how is that not unhinged?/

DAMIAN

/Cause I'm doing it out of love. Love for my father, love for my family.

HABIT

Is that so?

DAMIAN

It is.

A beat. HABIT nods.

HABIT

Well, alright then. *(begins to exit before noticing the medication on the nightstand. He picks up the bottle and taps it, counting the amount of pills remaining inside of it.)* Starting to run a little low, aren't we?

DAMIAN looks at him silently. He returns to his work.

HABIT (cont'd)

(places the bottle back on the nightstand) See you later, Dame. *(waits for a response, but gets none. He exits, but then re-enters)* Whoops, almost forgot.

He snaps his fingers and exits. Lights transition to a flashback. KENNY enters, drunk, and looks for something.

KENNY

I'm here. I'm Kenny Duckworth. Kenny's here... Where is my...

He finds nothing and trips. LAURYN enters and runs to KENNY.

LAURYN

Kenny! What the hell is happening with you? This is the third night in a row you've come back home like this, you need to STOP!

KENNY

D-do you know who I am? I'm Kenny goddamn Duckworth!

DAMIAN watches this scene closely.

DAMIAN

What is happening?

KENNY

I'm Kenny. God. Damn. Duckworth!

["PRIDE."](#)

*The end of KENNY's words echo.
HABIT and APPARITIONS enter.*

APPARITIONS

LOVE'S GONNA GET YOU KILLED
BUT PRIDE'S GONNA BE THE DEATH OF YOU AND YOU AND ME...

HABIT

ME, I WASN'T TAUGHT TO SHARE, BUT CARE

KENNY

IN ANOTHER LIFE, I SURELY WAS THERE

HABIT

ME, I WASN'T TAUGHT TO SHARE, BUT CARE, I CARE

ALL

I CARE, I CARE.

HABIT

HELL-RAISING, WHEEL-CHASING, NEW WORLDLY POSSESSIONS
FLESH-MAKING, SPIRIT-BREAKING, WHICH ONE WOULD YOU LESSEN?
THE BETTER PART, THE HUMAN HEART
YOU LOVE 'EM OR DISSECT 'EM
HAPPINESS OR FLASHINESS? HOW DO YOU SERVE THE QUESTION?

KENNY

SEE, IN THE PERFECT WORLD, I WOULD BE PERFECT, WORLD
I DON'T TRUST PEOPLE ENOUGH BEYOND THEY SURFACE, WORLD
I DON'T LOVE PEOPLE ENOUGH TO PUT MY FAITH IN MEN
I PUT MY FAITH IN THESE LYRICS, HOPING I MAKE AMEND
I UNDERSTAND I AIN'T PERFECT
I PROBABLY WON'T COME AROUND
THIS TIME, I MIGHT PUT YOU DOWN
LAST TIME, I AIN'T GIVE A FUCK, I STILL FEEL THE SAME NOW
MY FEELINGS MIGHT GO NUMB, YOU'RE DEALING WITH COLD THUMB
I'M WILLING TO GIVE UP A LEG AND ARM AND SHOW EMPATHY FROM
PITY PARTIES AND FUNCTIONS AND YOU AND YOURS
A PERFECT WORLD, YOU PROBABLY LIVE ANOTHER 24

KENNY and HABIT

I CAN'T FAKE HUMBLE JUST 'CAUSE YOUR ASS IS INSECURE
I CAN'T FAKE HUMBLE JUST 'CAUSE YOUR ASS IS INSECURE

HABIT

ME, I WASN'T TAUGHT TO SHARE, BUT CARE

KENNY and APPARITIONS

IN ANOTHER LIFE, I SURELY WAS THERE

HABIT

ME, I WASN'T TAUGHT TO SHARE, BUT CARE, I CARE

ALL

I CARE, I CARE.

KENNY and APPARITION GROUP 1

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

HABIT and APPARITIONS

WE SAW YOU FIRST

KENNY and APPARITION GROUP 1

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

HABIT and LAURYN

I SAW YOU FIRST

KENNY

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

LAURYN

I SAW YOU FIRST

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

KENNY

NOW, IN A PERFECT WORLD, I PROBABLY WON'T BE INSENSITIVE
COLD AS DECEMBER, BUT NEVER REMEMBER WHAT WINTER DID
I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU FOR MISTAKES I MADE OR THE BED I LAID

SEEMS LIKE I POINT THE FINGER JUST TO MAKE A POINT NOWADAYS

KENNY and HABIT
SMILES AND COLD STARES, THE TEMPERATURE GOES THERE

KENNY
INDIGENOUS DISPOSITION,

KENNY and HABIT
FEEL LIKE WE BELONG HERE

KENNY
I KNOW THE WALLS, THEY CAN LISTEN, I WISH THEY COULD TALK BACK
THE HURT BECOMES REPETITION, THE LOVE ALMOST LOST THAT
SICK VENOM IN MEN AND WOMEN OVERCOME WITH PRIDE
A PERFECT WORLD IS NEVER PERFECT, ONLY FILLED WITH LIES
PROMISES ARE BROKEN AND MORE RESENTMENT COME ALIVE
RACE BARRIERS MAKE INFERIOR OF YOU AND I

KENNY and HABIT
SEE, IN A PERFECT WORLD, I'LL CHOOSE FAITH OVER RICHES
I'LL CHOOSE WORK OVER BITCHES, I'LL MAKE SCHOOLS OUT OF PRISON
I'LL TAKE ALL THE RELIGIONS AND PUT 'EM ALL IN ONE SERVICE
JUST TO TELL 'EM WE AIN'T SHIT, BUT HE'S BEEN PERFECT, WORLD

HABIT
ME, I WASN'T TAUGHT TO SHARE, BUT CARE

KENNY and APPARITIONS
IN ANOTHER LIFE, I SURELY WAS THERE

HABIT
ME, I WASN'T TAUGHT TO SHARE, BUT CARE, I CARE

ALL
I CARE, I CARE.

KENNY and APPARITION GROUP 1
MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

HABIT and APPARITIONS

WE SAW YOU FIRST

KENNY and APPARITION GROUP 1

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

HABIT and LAURYN

I SAW YOU FIRST

KENNY

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

LAURYN

I SAW YOU FIRST

MAYBE I WASN'T THERE

As everyone exits, a spotlight on LAURYN fades to dark. The only light left is on DAMIAN, who clicks his mouse, and afterwards, that light goes out, too. The display shows a loading wheel followed by a checkmark. BLACKOUT.

SCENE XII - HUMBLE.

Text reads on the display that says "One. Week. Later." Then it shows a clipshow of people listening to the album and enjoying it, crediting DAMIAN. Between the videos, a black space is present. More and more APPARITIONS enter between the spaces, until finally, DAMIAN appears there himself. A musical sting plays, the one heard at the beginning of "HUMBLE." Then, the repeated motifs ring once again, this time repeating all together in a violent cacophony.

APPARITION GROUP 1

Is it wickedness?

APPARITION GROUP 2

Is it weakness?

APPARITION GROUP 3

Somebody pray for me.

APPARITION GROUP 4

What happens on Earth stays on Earth.

APPARITION GROUP 5

I've got royalty, got loyalty inside my DNA.

“HUMBLE.”

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS

NOBODY PRAY FOR ME! IT BEEN ALL DAY FOR ME! WAAAAAY!

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS

Yeah, yeah!

DAMIAN

AYE, I REMEMBER SYRUP SANDWICHES AND CRIME ALLOWANCES
 FINESSIN' ON 'EM WITH SOME COUNTERFEITS
 BUT NOW I'M COUNTING THIS
 PARMESAN WHERE MY ACCOUNTANT LIVES IN FACT I'M DOWN AT THIS
 D'USSE WITH MY BOO BAE, TASTES LIKE KOOL AID FOR THE ANALYSTS
 GIRL, I CAN BUY YOUR ASS THE WORLD WITH MY PAYSTUB
 I KNOW THAT IT'S GOOD, WON'T YOU SIT IT ON MY TASTE BLOODS
 I GET WAY TOO PETTY ONCE YOU LET ME DO THE EXTRAS
 PULL UP ON YOUR BLOCK, THEN BREAK IT DOWN WE PLAYING TETRIS
 A.M. TO THE P.M., P.M. TO THE A.M. FUNK
 PISS OUT YOUR PER DIEM YOU JUST GOTTA HATE EM, FUNK
 IF I QUIT YOUR B-M I STILL RIDE MERCEDES, FUNK
 IF I QUIT THIS SEASON I STILL BE THE GREATEST, FUNK
 MY LEFT STROKE JUST WENT VIRAL
 RIGHT STROKE PUT LIL BABY IN A SPIRAL
 SOPRANO C, WE LIKE TO KEEP IT ON A HIGH NOTE
 IT'S LEVELS TO IT, YOU AND I KNOW, BITCH
 BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, BITCH, SIT DOWN,
 BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN,
 BE HUMBLE

*HABIT enters, shoving DAMIAN out
 of the throne and onto the floor.*

HABIT

BITCH, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN
 WHO THE FUCK YOU THINK YOU IS, FRONTIN' ON MAN-MAN?

GET THE FUCK OFF MY STAGE, I'M THE SANDMAN
 GET THE FUCK OFF MY DICK, THAT AIN'T RIGHT
 I MAKE A PLAY FUCKING UP YOUR WHOLE LIFE
 I'M SO FUCKIN' SICK AND TIRED OF THE PHOTOSHOP
 SHOW ME SOMETHIN' NATURAL LIKE AFRO ON RICHARD PRYOR
 SHOW ME SOMETHIN' NATURAL LIKE ASS WITH SOME STRETCH MARKS
 STILL WILL TAKE YOU DOWN RIGHT ON YOUR MAMA'S COUCH IN POLO SOCKS
 AYY, THIS SHIT WAY TOO CRAZY, AYY, YOU DO NOT AMAZE ME, AYY
 I BLEW COOL FROM AC, AYY, OBAMA JUST PAGED ME, AYY
 I DON'T FABRICATE IT, AYY, MOST OF Y'ALL BE FAKIN', AYY
 I STAY MODEST 'BOUT IT, AYY, SHE ELABORATE IT, AYY
 THIS THAT GREY POUAPON, THAT EVIAN, THAT TED TALK, AYY
 I LET MY SOUL WHILE YOU, YOU LET YA MEDS TALK, AYY
 IF I KILL THIS BROTHER, IT'S NOT DADDY'S ALCOHOL, AYY
 I'M JUST THE REALEST ONE HERE AFTER ALL, BITCH
 BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, BITCH, SIT DOWN,
 BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE, SIT DOWN, BE
 HUMBLE, BITCH, SIT DOWN, BE HUMBLE
 SIT DOWN

*HABIT walks up to DAMIAN, who is
 on his hands and knees. HABIT
 holds his head by the chin, forcing
 him to look at HABIT.*

HABIT (cont'd)

I warned you, didn't I? You wanted unhinged? Well, consider your wish granted.

*HABIT snaps his fingers again.
 BLACKOUT.*

HABIT (cont'd)

Let's see how many people are praying for you now.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I - LUST.

LIGHTS UP. The display reads "One. Week. Later." Empty bottles of alcohol cover the room. DAMIAN, HABIT and three APPARITIONS are in DAMIAN's bed. The APPARITIONS get up and off of the bed, and a moment later, DAMIAN sits up and holds his head in his hands.

DAMIAN

(groaning) Urgh... what the fuck happened last night?

HABIT

I've got no fucking idea... But we need more of it!

DAMIAN

What?

HABIT laughs maniacally.

HABIT

Your newfound fame is getting you everything you ever wanted, just like I said.

DAMIAN

Wha- no no no no, wait.

HABIT stands up.

HABIT

We gotta take this shit global, man. Everywhere, and I mean everywhere.

DAMIAN

But- but you told me that I shouldn't release the album at all.

HABIT

Yeah, I did. But look at you now... happier than you've ever been.

DAMIAN

Am I?

HABIT

Yeeees, yes. Look at you. Aren't you happy?

DAMIAN

I dunno, man. I have a headache, my leg is weirdly sore...

DAMIAN looks under his pillow and pulls out a bag of some white substance.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Is this cocaine?

HABIT quickly leaps at the bag, snatching it away from DAMIAN.

HABIT

Hey hey, gimme that!

DAMIAN

Okay, okay, sorry dude! *(a beat)* Are you sure you're not like... projecting here or anything?

A beat. HABIT looks out to the audience.

HABIT

In 5 seconds, you're going to stand up, turn to the left and stand next to me.

DAMIAN

Habit, what the hell are you-

DAMIAN follows HABIT's commands as he stated them, moving as if he was forced to.

HABIT

Listen to me: what you want - what you NEED - is water.

DAMIAN

Water? Sure we can get some more water.

HABIT

No, *water*, Damian. *Water* to quench your life's thirst.

A beat.

DAMIAN

Dude, are you okay?

HABIT

BOONE!

BOONE enters, petrified. HABIT tries to speak, but strange noises come out instead. BOONE worriedly flips the vinyl over and drops the needle onto it and starts to exit.

HABIT (cont'd)

Thank you, Boone, 'preciate you bro.

“LUST.”

The instrumental begins. HABIT perks up.

HABIT (cont'd)

AHHH, THERE WE GO... That's the ticket. Now, Damian, do you want water?

DAMIAN

Uhh...

APPARITIONS begin to enter.

HABIT

Do you want to die of your thirst? Or die your thirst? What is it, Damian? What is it that you-

HABIT and APPARITIONS

LUST?

DAMIAN is pulled aside by lustful APPARITIONS.

HABIT and APPARITIONS

I NEED SOME WATER
 SOMETHIN' CAME OVER ME
 WAY TOO HOT TO SIMMER DOWN
 MIGHT AS WELL OVERHEAT
 TOO CLOSE TO COMFORT
 AS BLOOD RUSH MY FAVORITE VEIN
 HEARTBEAT RACIN' LIKE A JUNKIE'S
 I JUST NEED YOU TO WANT ME
 AM I ASKIN' TOO MUCH?
 LET ME PUT THE HEAD IN
 OOH, I DON'T WANT MORE THAN THAT
 GIRL, I RESPECT THE CAT
 I PROMISE JUST A TOUCH
 LET ME PUT THE HEAD IN
 IF IT'S OKAY
 SHE SAID, "IT'S OKAY."

HABIT

(spoken)

Yeah, I need everybody's motherfuckin' hands up right now, I need everybody's motherfuckin'-

KENNY

(voiceover)

Door and his Nike Air Rattles, rush the fire exit, no time for battles. Well I, I never expected-

HABIT

This that new shit. This that new, new shit.

(sung) WAKE UP IN THE MORNIN'
 THINKIN' 'BOUT MONEY, KICK YOUR FEET UP
 WATCH YOU A COMEDY, TAKE A SHIT, THEN ROLL SOME WEED UP
 GO HIT YOU A LICK, GO FUCK ON A BITCH
 DON'T GO TO WORK TODAY, COP YOU A FIT
 OR MAYBE SOME KICKS AND MAKE YOU-

KENNY

(voiceover)

Door and his Nike Air Rattles, rush the fire exit, no time for battles. Well I, I never expected-

HABIT

WAKE UP IN THE MORNIN'
 THINKIN' 'BOUT MONEY, KICK YOUR FEET UP
 WATCH YOU A COMEDY- hol' up!

HABIT and APPARITION GROUP 1

WAKE UP IN THE MORNIN'
 THINKIN' 'BOUT MONEY, KICK YOUR FEET UP
 WATCH YOU A COMEDY, TAKE A SHIT, THEN ROLL SOME WEED UP
 GO HIT YOU A LICK, GO FUCK ON A BITCH, DON'T GO TO WORK TODAY
 COP YOU A FIT OR MAYBE SOME KICKS AND MAKE IT WORK TODAY
 HANG WITH YOUR HOMIES, STUNT ON YOUR BABY MAMA
 SIP SOME LEAN, GO GET A PISTOL, SHOOT OUT THE WINDOW
 BET YOUR FAVORITE TEAM, PLAY YOU SOME MADDEN
 GO TO THE CLUB OR YOUR MAMA HOUSE
 WHATEVER YOU DOIN', JUST MAKE IT COUNT

HABIT and APPARITIONS

WAKE UP IN THE MORNIN'
 THINKIN' 'BOUT MONEY, KICK YOUR FEET UP
 HOP IN THE SHOWER, PUT ON YOUR MAKEUP, LACE YOUR WEAVE UP
 TOUCH ON YOURSELF, CALL UP YOUR MAN AND TELL HIM HE AIN'T SHIT
 CREDIT CARD SCAM, GET YOU A VISA, MAKE HIM PAY YOUR RENT
 HOP ON THE 'GRAM, FLEX ON THE BITCHES THAT BE HATIN' ON YOU
 POP YOU A PILL, CALL UP YOUR BITCHES, HAVE 'EM WAITIN' ON YOU
 GO TO THE CLUB, HAVE YOU SOME FUN, MAKE THAT ASS BOUNCE
 IT'S WHATEVER, JUST MAKE IT COUNT

I NEED SOME WATER
 SOMETHIN' CAME OVER ME
 WAY TOO HOT TO SIMMER DOWN
 MIGHT AS WELL OVERHEAT
 TOO CLOSE TO COMFORT
 AS BLOOD RUSH MY FAVORITE VEIN
 HEARTBEAT RACIN' LIKE A JUNKIE'S
 I JUST NEED YOU TO WANT ME
 AM I ASKIN' TOO MUCH?
 LET ME PUT THE HEAD IN
 OOH, I DON'T WANT MORE THAN THAT
 GIRL, I RESPECT THE CAT

I PROMISE JUST A TOUCH
 LET ME PUT THE HEAD IN
 IF IT'S OKAY
 SHE SAID, "IT'S OKAY."

DAMIAN

I WAKE IN THE MORNIN', MY HEAD SPINNIN' FROM THE LAST NIGHT
 BOTH IN THE TRANCE, FEELINGS I DID-WHAT A FAST LIFE!
 MANAGER CALLED, THE LOBBY CALLED, IT'S 11: 30
 DID THIS BEFORE, PROMISED MYSELF I'D BE A HOUR EARLY
 ROOM FULL OF CLOTHES, BAG FULL OF MONEY: CALL IT LOOSE CHANGE
 FUMBLED MY JEWELRY, 100K, I LOST A NEW CHAIN
 HOP ON THE BIRD, HIT THE NEXT CITY FOR ANOTHER M
 TAKE ME A NAP AND DO IT AGAIN

HABIT

WE ALL WOKE UP, TRYNA TUNE TO THE DAILY NEWS
 LOOKIN' FOR CONFIRMATION, HOPIN' ELECTION WASN'T TRUE
 ALL OF US WORRIED, ALL OF US BURIED, AND OUR FEELING'S DEEP
 NONE OF US MARRIED TO HIS PROPOSAL, MAKE US FEEL CHEAP
 STILL AND SAD, DISTRAUGHT AND MAD, TELL THE NEIGHBOR 'BOUT IT
 BET THEY AGREE, PARADE THE STREETS WITH YOUR VOICE PROUDLY
 TIME PASSIN', THINGS CHANGE
 REVERTIN' BACK TO OUR DAILY PROGRAMS, STUCK IN OUR WAYS;

ALL

LUST.

HABIT and APPARITIONS

Lately, I feel like I been lustin' over the fame
 Lately, we lust on the same routine of shame
 Lately, lately, lately, my lust been hidin' (Lately)
 Lately, it's all contradiction
 Lately, I'm not here
 Lately, I lust over self
 Lust turn into fear
 Lately, in James 4: 4 says
 Friend of the world is enemy of the Lord
 Brace yourself, lust is all yours

HABIT and APPARITIONS

I NEED SOME WATER
 SOMETHIN' CAME OVER ME
 WAY TOO HIGH TO SIMMER DOWN
 MIGHT AS WELL OVERHEAT
 TOO CLOSE TO COMFORT
 AS BLOOD RUSH MY FAVORITE VEIN
 HEARTBEAT RACIN' LIKE A JUNKIE'S
 I JUST NEED YOU TO WANT ME
 AM I ASKIN' TOO MUCH?
 LET ME PUT THE HEAD IN
 OOH, I DON'T WANT MORE THAN THAT
 GIRL, I RESPECT THE CAT
 I PROMISE JUST A TOUCH
 LET ME PUT THE HEAD IN
 IF IT'S OKAY
 SHE SAID, "IT'S OKAY."

The song ends. BLACKOUT. After a beat, the lights come back up, and DAMIAN is left alone on the stage.

DAMIAN

Dad... wherever you are, I need help. I need you to come help me. I don't know what I'm doing. How did you do this? Were you as afraid as I am? What do I do now?

A beat. He notices his nightstand, then goes to it and opens the drawer. He pulls out a medicine bottle and studies it in his hands. It's empty.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Shit. I gotta call for a refill.

DAMIAN pulls out his phone and puts in a phone number. He puts it to his ear.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Hi, I'm calling for a refill for a... for a few prescriptions. *(a beat)* Duckworth, Damian. *(a beat)* 06/03/1997. *(a beat, rising in anger)* A shortage? Shit. How could there be a shortage? What do I do then? I need my meds. *(a beat)* Okay. Yeah, yeah... okay. Thank you. Bye.

SCENE II - LOVE.

A knock on the door is heard. DAMIAN puts his phone back in his pocket and the bottle back in the drawer.

DAMIAN

Come in!

JAYLA enters.

JAYLA

Heyyy... *(noticing the condition of the room)* oh my god.

DAMIAN

Jay, it's so good to see you!

JAYLA

You too... hey what's happening in this room right now?

DAMIAN

What do you mean?

JAYLA

Damian, look around, bro, this room looks like shit!

DAMIAN

I dunno, I've just been hanging out.

JAYLA notices the many bottles strewn about the room.

JAYLA

"Hanging out"? Yeah, it really seems like it. What's been happening to you over the last couple weeks?

DAMIAN

Jay, I don't see the problem. What are you talking about?

JAYLA

Ever since you showed me this album, you've just been... different. You're so focused on it and finding your dad that it almost feels like I'm... like I'm not even here.

DAMIAN

You know how much I love you. I guess maybe I have been a little... preoccupied lately, but this is important to me.

JAYLA

I know, and honestly it's starting to worry me.

DAMIAN

(offended)

What? Why would that worry you? What's so wrong with my caring about this? Caring about my father?

JAYLA

Because this is not your father! He's not here, and he's not in that goddamn disc.

DAMIAN

Uhh, it's a vinyl-

JAYLA

Oh, shut the fuck up! You know what I'm saying, you're not gonna find him in there. He's not gonna come out of one of the songs and pop back into your life again.

DAMIAN

I see him in the songs.

JAYLA

I know, I was there for one of them, but he's not real in there!

DAMIAN

But how do you know that? I mean, here, listen to this one-

DAMIAN runs to the record player and tries to fidget with it. The song

“DNA.” starts to play again, but is cut short.

JAYLA

No, Damian, stop, I don't need to hear it again. I already hear it all over town.

A beat. DAMIAN feels his heart sink into his stomach.

JAYLA (cont'd)

Everyone loves it, they all do. At work, the one song we listened to together plays on the radio. On the drive home, people blast some of the songs from their cars. And it's great. They love this thing you made/ and they celebrate-

DAMIAN

/I didn't make it.

A beat.

JAYLA

This thing that you put out into the world. But then at work, when that one song does come on, I see those... things. On that drive home, when I hear people blare their speakers, I start to feel like they sit in the backseat. I come here, and your eyes just seem to glaze over me sometimes as you just... go into another world. A world I can't understand. A world I can't tell anyone about because I know they won't understand either. I always want to support you in this, you know that. But I can't have it get in the way of *us* anymore. I just can't.

DAMIAN

You can still see them?

JAYLA nods.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

How? I made it so you could only see them once?

JAYLA

I don't know. Maybe something like that can't be seen just once.

DAMIAN

In that case, I need to show you something. *(calling out)* Boone!

JAYLA

Who's Boone?

DAMIAN

Oh, he's a doll, you'll see.

BOONE enters. DAMIAN walks up to him.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Hey, you maybe wanna help me out with this one?

BOONE excitedly nods and rushes over the vinyl.

JAYLA

Dame, I really don't need you to-

DAMIAN

I know, I know, but I think you'll like this one, I really do.

JAYLA

But I- I just don't /know if-

DAMIAN

My dad wrote this song for my mom way back when. Apparently they had similar problems back then. So when I recorded this, I knew who to have in mind. Also, I changed some words around.

JAYLA

Why's that?

DAMIAN

They were very very VERY in love back in the day and I didn't wanna think about that so I decided why not make it more about you and I. *(to BOONE)* Hit it!

The instrumental begins almost immediately. The title "LOVE." appears on the display.

“LOVE.”

DAMIAN

Damn, love or lust. Damn, all of us.

BOONE

GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY
THERE IS NOBODY, NO ONE TO OUTFRAN ME

DAMIAN

(imitating BOONE's announcer voice)

Another woooooorld premiere!

BOONE

SHE GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY
SIPPIN' BUBBLY, FEELIN' LOVELY, LIVIN' LOVELY

BOONE and APPARITIONS

JUST LOVE ME

BOONE

JUST LOVE ME, JUST LOVE ME, JUST
LOVE ME
LOVE ME
LOVE ME, JUST LOVE ME

DAMIAN

I WANNA BE WITH YOU, AY, I WANNA
BE WITH
I WANNA BE WITH YOU, AY, I WANNA
BE WITH
I WANNA BE WITH YOU

DAMIAN

IF I DIDN'T RIDE BLADE ON CURB, WOULD YOU STILL

BOONE

LOVE ME?

DAMIAN

IF I MINIMIZED MY NET WORTH, WOULD YOU STILL

BOONE

LOVE ME?

DAMIAN

KEEP IT A HUNDRED, I'D RATHER YOU TRUST ME THAN TO

BOONE

LOVE ME

DAMIAN

KEEP IT A WHOLE ONE HUND': DON'T GOT YOU, I GOT NOTHIN'

AY, I GOT SOMETHIN'

HOL' UP, WE GON' FUNCTION, NO ASSUMPTIONS

FEELIN' LIKE TYSON WITH IT

KNOCK IT OUT TWICE, I'M WITH IT

ONLY FOR THE NIGHT, I'M KIDDIN'

ONLY FOR LIFE, YEAH, ONLY FOR LIFE, YEAH

ONLY FOR LIFE, LET'S GET IT

HIT THAT SHOULDER LEAN

I KNOW WHAT COMIN' OVER ME

BACKSTROKE OVERSEA

I KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

ALREADY ON TEN, ALL MONEY COME IN

ALL FEELING GO OUT, THIS FEELING DON'T DROUGHT

THIS PARTY WON'T END

IF I DIDN'T RIDE BLADE ON CURB, WOULD YOU STILL

BOONE

LOVE ME?

DAMIAN

IF I MINIMIZED MY NET WORTH, WOULD YOU STILL

BOONE

LOVE ME?

DAMIAN

KEEP IT A HUNDRED, I'D RATHER YOU TRUST ME THAN TO

BOONE

LOVE ME

DAMIAN

KEEP IT A WHOLE ONE HUND': DON'T GOT YOU, I GOT NOTHIN'

BOONE

SHE GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY
THERE IS NOBODY, NO ONE TO OUTFUN ME
SO GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY
SIPPIN' BUBBLY, FEELIN' LOVELY, LIVIN' LOVELY
JUST LOVE ME

BOONE

JUST LOVE ME, JUST LOVE ME, JUST
LOVE ME
LOVE ME
LOVE ME, JUST LOVE ME

DAMIAN

I WANNA BE WITH YOU, AY, I WANNA
BE WITH
I WANNA BE WITH YOU, AY, I WANNA
BE WITH
I WANNA BE WITH YOU

DAMIAN

I'M ON THE WAY
WE AIN'T GOT NO TIME TO WASTE
POPPIN' YOUR GUM ON THE WAY

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS

AM I IN THE WAY?
I DON'T WAN' PRESSURE YOU NONE
I WANT YOUR BLESSING TODAY
OH, BY THE WAY, OPEN THE DOOR BY THE WAY
TOLD YOU THAT I'M ON THE WAY
I'M ON THE WAY, I KNOW CONNECTION IS VAGUE
PICK UP THE PHONE FOR ME, BABE
DAMN IT, WE JAMMIN'
BAD ATTITUDE FROM YOUR NANNY
CURVES AND YOUR HIPS FROM YOUR MAMMY
REMEMBER THE THEATRE, I TOOK THE STUDIO CAMERA
I KNOW MA GON' BE MAD AT ME
I HAD TO DO IT, I WANT YOUR BODY, YOUR MUSIC
I'LL BUY THE BIG ONE TO PROVE IT
LOOK WHAT YOU MADE
TOLD YOU THAT I'M ON THE WAY
I'M LIKE AN EXIT AWAY, YEAH

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS
IF I DIDN'T RIDE BLADE ON CURB, WOULD YOU STILL

BOONE
LOVE ME?

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS
IF I MINIMIZED MY NET WORTH, WOULD YOU STILL

BOONE
LOVE ME?

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS
KEEP IT A HUNDRED, I'D RATHER YOU TRUST ME THAN TO

BOONE
LOVE ME

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS
KEEP IT A WHOLE ONE HUND': DON'T GOT YOU, I GOT NOTHIN'

BOONE
SHE GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY
THERE IS NOBODY, NO ONE TO OUTFRAN ME
SO GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY
SIPPIN' BUBBLY, FEELIN' LOVELY, LIVIN' LOVELY
JUST LOVE ME

BOONE
JUST LOVE ME, JUST LOVE ME, JUST
LOVE ME
LOVE ME
LOVE ME, JUST LOVE ME

DAMIAN
I WANNA BE WITH YOU, AY, I WANNA
BE WITH
I WANNA BE WITH YOU, AY, I WANNA
BE WITH
I WANNA BE WITH YOU

*The song comes to a soft conclusion.
The APPARITIONS exit.*

DAMIAN

This thing is weird, I know. It's crazy and weird and kinda terrifying... but it's important to me. I wanna see where this rabbit hole leads. I wanna see what this insane wonderland looks like.

JAYLA

That's just what I'm afraid of, Damian. What if it isn't a wonderland at all?

DAMIAN and JAYLA look at each other for a beat. BLACKOUT.

SCENE III - Reunion.

LIGHTS UP on the living room.. LAURYN enters, holding the vinyl in her hands. She sits on the couch and stares at it. HABIT enters, unseen.

HABIT

Did you hear about the rose that grew from concrete?
Proving nature's law wrong, it learned to walk without feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams it learned to breathe fresh air.

A knock is heard. Both HABIT and LAURYN's heads perk up at this.

HABIT and LAURYN

Who's there?

HABIT exits. LAURYN stands up, but before she can open the door, RENEE (27) enters.

RENEE

Hey, Auntie.

LAURYN

Oh. My. God. RENEE!!! How long has it been since I last saw you! How are you doing? Is everything okay?

RENEE

I'm good, just finding my purpose in whatever I can, wherever I can.

LAURYN

And where's that taken you?

RENEE

Oh, everywhere. I was in France last week after being in Mozambique the week before that and Tokyo the week before that.

LAURYN

Oh woowoow, that sounds so fascinating! And expensive!

RENEE

I find my way. Dad left me a lot of money before he passed, so I've been making do.

LAURYN

That's great to hear! Hold on, let me get your cousin. *(calling offstage)* DAMIAN!

*DAMIAN enters, locking eyes with
RENEE.*

LAURYN (cont'd)

Damian, this is your cousin, Renee. You never really got to meet her since all the... family drama happened, but she's finally back in town after all this time!

DAMIAN

(to himself) The niece. *(to RENEE, wearily)* Nice to meet you, Renee.

RENEE

Good to see you, Damian. Last time I saw you, I could probably hold you in one hand.

DAMIAN

Well, y'know, time...

LAURYN

Actually, what are you doing here after so long, Renee?

RENEE

Well, actually, you, Damian. I heard your little cover album, and wanted to talk to you about it.

*At the mention of the album,
LAURYN becomes much less excited.*

LAURYN

I see...

DAMIAN

Is there a problem with it? I'm not sure what it would possibly be, but-

RENEE

Oh, it's not me that needs to speak with you.

A beat.

DAMIAN

Then... who?

KENNY enters. LAURYN immediately catches his attention.

KENNY

Hey Lil' Miss.

He takes a step towards her, but she backs away. KENNY nods, understanding, then looks at DAMIAN.

KENNY (cont'd)

It's good to see you, Damian. Look at how much you've grown. Better than I did at your age. *(seeing no response, he speaks to both DAMIAN and LAURYN)* Why are you two looking at me like you've just seen a ghost?

LAURYN

Cause we're lookin' at one right now, jackass.

KENNY

Okay, maybe you're right, I probably came in a bit too jovial, I'm sorry. It's just that I haven't seen y'all in such a long time.

LAURYN

15 years. It's been 15 years.

KENNY

Listen, there's a lot we have to talk about, and we will talk about all of it, but first just let me apologize to you, to both of you-

LAURYN

Like I could give a fuck about your apologies.

KENNY

Laury, I-

LAURYN

No. You wanna talk? You're gonna gimme the time I need to process the fact that you're just tryna stroll in here callin' me "Laury" and "Lil' Miss" like you ain't been outta my life for 15 years. After that, if I feel like talking to you, and that's a REAL BIG "if", THEN you can tell me where the fuck you've been. Until then, you can keep your goddamn mouth SHUT.

A beat. The room is frozen.

LAURYN (cont'd)

I'm going for a drive.

LAURYN picks up her purse and exits, storming past KENNY and RENEE.

RENEE

Auntie's a badass.

KENNY

Yeah, that's one of the reasons I love her so much. *(turning to DAMIAN)* What about you? Do you hate me too?

DAMIAN

I...

KENNY

It's okay, you can say it, I probably deserve to hear it anyway.

DAMIAN

Where have you been?

A beat. KENNY sighs.

KENNY

That's a really hard question. But I think I can answer it.

HABIT enters. A look is shared between him and RENEE.

HABIT

I got a better one: What are you doing here?

KENNY

How did I know I'd find you here?

HABIT

I dunno, you probably read the script.

KENNY

What does that even mean?

HABIT

(pointing to the audience) Can you seriously not see them?

KENNY

No, dude, nobody knows what you're talking about.

RENEE

Okay, if we keep this up, we're never getting anywhere. Damian, it's time for your history lesson. I'll try to keep it brief, so long as you try to keep up, got it?

DAMIAN

(to HABIT)

She's real intense, huh?

RENEE

DAMIAN. I don't have time for this. Do you understand or not?

DAMIAN

(a little taken aback)

Y- yeah. Yes, I understand.

RENEE

Great. Let's get started then.

HABIT

(to the audience)

Alrighty, strap in y'all cause we got a lot of shit to cover!

HABIT snaps his fingers.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE IV - XXX.

LIGHTS UP. We are now in a cabin somewhere in Europe, as text on the projector shows. There is now a table where DAMIAN's record player was, and a couch where DAMIAN's bed was. The room is still in a similar state to DAMIAN's, though: littered with empty alcohol bottles in every direction. KENNY is on the couch, drinking the only bottle that has anything left in it. RENEE enters carrying two grocery bags.

RENEE

(sing-songy)

I'm back!

She places the bags on the table.

KENNY scans it over.

KENNY

No Meibeck.

RENEE rolls her eyes and sighs.

RENEE

No, Uncle, I didn't get you any Meibeck. I told you I wasn't going to.

KENNY's attention returns to the TV.

RENEE (cont'd)

But I *did* get you a couple things that I think you'll love.

She exits quickly, and returns carrying a record player and a crate of vinyls. She presents it to KENNY with excitement.

RENEE (cont'd)

Ahh! Isn't this great? All the classics are here: Withers, Coltrane, Davis, Fitzgerald... All of them! *(she picks up one of the records)* This one's all of Nina Simone's live stuff. I remember when Dad would show me stuff from her.

KENNY freezes. RENEE picks a record to place on the player. When Nina Simone's "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free" starts to play, she offers her hand out to KENNY.

KENNY

(chuckles) Nah, thanks though. I'm not gonna-

RENEE

I'm not asking, Uncle.

KENNY

I don't know if I can.

RENEE

Oh you definitely can, c'mon. You've always loved to dance to these old man jazz tunes.

KENNY

Maybe, but I know *you* don't. You might paint to this stuff, but you've never-

RENEE

Today's different, Kenny. Let's have a little bit of fun for once, huh?

A beat. RENEE does some cute dances to try and get KENNY's spirits up. It slowly works. They dance together for a few minutes. HABIT enters at one point and

watches the two of them. He smiles warmly. All is well until RENEE notices him. She quickly stops.

RENEE (cont'd)

What are you doing here?

HABIT

I just wanted to see what you guys were up to.

RENEE

I thought I told you to leave the two of us alone.

HABIT

Oh, calm down, Renee. Every time I so much as breathe around you, you talk down to me.

RENEE

'Cause you're nothing but a fucking/ parasite!

KENNY

/Hey, c'mon, don't talk to him that way-

RENEE

-No, Kenny. Why are you defending him?

KENNY

Why aren't *you*?

A beat. RENEE collects her things and begins to leave.

KENNY (cont'd)

Wait, wait wait, Renee, please don't leave.

RENEE

No, Uncle Kenny, I can't. I have to be done. (*pointing to HABIT*) that monster isn't doing a goddamn thing for you, yet all you can do is stand up for him.

KENNY

How can you say that about him? I need him in my life, I can't lose him again.

RENEE

Well clearly you don't need me. And y'know what, I don't need this bullshit either.

RENEE pulls out a phone and starts to type in a phone number.

HABIT

I don't think you fully understand the situation here, Renee. I've been tryna keep your Uncle afloat here so he doesn't go down like your father did.

RENEE

Don't you dare say his name like you know a single goddamn thing about him!

There's an intense stare-down between HABIT and RENEE. HABIT takes a firm, intimidating step towards RENEE, but she doesn't flinch. HABIT breaks eye contact first, looking at RENEE's lit phone.

HABIT

You should check your phone, Ren.

RENEE looks down at her phone first, then KENNY and HABIT huddle around it. A video of DAMIAN and two APPARITIONS appears on the projector.

“XXX.”

DAMIAN and APPARITIONS

AMERICA, GOD BLESS YOU IF IT'S GOOD TO YOU
AMERICA PLEASE TAKE MY HAND
CAN YOU HELP ME UNDERST-

The video snaps off, the display instead now reads words like “liar, fake, pretender, imposter, figment.”

HABIT

(spoken) Like he knows what that song is about anyway, he's just a kid.

(sung) THROW A STEAK OFF THE ARK
 TO A POOL FULL OF SHARKS, HE'LL TAKE IT
 LEAVE HIM IN THE WILDERNESS
 WITH A SWORN NEMESIS, HE'LL MAKE IT
 TAKE THE GRATITUDE FROM HIM
 I BET HE'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHIN', WHOA
 I'LL CHIP HIM WITH A LITTLE BIT OF NOTHIN'
 I'LL CHIP HIM WITH A LITTLE BIT OF NOTHIN'
 I'LL CHIP HIM WITH A LITTLE BIT OF NOTHIN'
 I'LL CHIP HIM, THEN THROW THE BLOWER IN HIS LAP
 WALK MYSELF TO THE COURT LIKE, "BITCH, I DID THAT!"
 X-RATED

The display reads "XXX."

HABIT (cont'd)

JOHNNY DON'T WANNA GO TO SCHOOL NO MO', NO MO'
 JOHNNY SAID BOOKS AIN'T COOL NO MO'
 JOHNNY WANNA BE A RAPPER LIKE HIS BIG COUSIN
 JOHNNY CAUGHT A BODY YESTERDAY OUT HUSTLIN'
 GOD BLESS AMERICA, YOU KNOW WE ALL LOVE HIM

KENNY

YESTERDAY I GOT A CALL LIKE FROM MY DOG LIKE 101
 SAID THEY KILLED HIS ONLY SON BECAUSE OF INSUFFICIENT FUNDS
 HE WAS SOBBIN', HE WAS MOBBIN', WAY BELLIGERENT AND DRUNK
 TALKIN' OUT HIS HEAD, PHILOSPHIN' ON WHAT THE LORD HAD DONE
 HE SAID:

HABIT

"K-DOT, CAN YOU PRAY FOR ME?
 IT'S BEEN A FUCKED UP DAY FOR ME
 I KNOW THAT YOU ANOINTED, SHOW ME HOW TO OVERCOME."

KENNY

HE WAS LOOKIN' FOR SOME CLOSURE

HOPIN' I COULD BRING HIM CLOSER
 TO THE SPIRITUAL, MY SPIRIT DO NO BETTER, BUT I TOLD HIM
 "I CAN'T SUGARCOAT THE ANSWER FOR YOU, THIS IS HOW I FEEL:
 IF SOMEBODY KILL MY SON, THAT MEAN SOMEBODY GETTIN' KILLED."

KENNY and HABIT

TELL ME WHAT YOU DO FOR LOVE, LOYALTY, AND PASSION OF
 ALL THE MEMORIES COLLECTED, MOMENTS YOU COULD NEVER TOUCH

KENNY

I'LL WAIT IN FRONT A FUCKER'S SPOT AND WATCH HIM HIT HIS BLOCK
 I'LL CATCH THAT FUCKER LEAVIN' SERVICE IF THAT'S ALL I GOT
 I'LL CHIP A BITCH, AND THEN THROW THE BLOWER IN HIS LAP
 WALK MYSELF TO THE COURT LIKE, "BITCH, I DID THAT!"
 AIN'T NO BLACK POWER WHEN YOUR BABY KILLED BY A COWARD
 I CAN'T EVEN KEEP THE PEACE, DON'T YOU FUCK WITH ONE OF OURS
 IT BE MURDER IN THE STREET, IT BE BODIES IN THE HOUR
 GHETTO BIRD BE ON THE STREET, PARAMEDICS ON THE DIAL

KENNY and HABIT

LET SOMEBODY TOUCH MY MAMA
 TOUCH MY SISTER, TOUCH MY WOMAN
 TOUCH MY DADDY, TOUCH MY NIECE
 TOUCH MY SON OR TOUCH MY BROTHER

KENNY

YOU SHOULD CHIP THE FUCKER, THEN THROW THE BLOWER IN HIS LAP
 MATTER FACT, I'M 'BOUT TO SPEAK AT THIS CONVENTION
 CALL YOU BACK-

HABIT

Alright, kids, we're gonna talk about gun control!

KENNY

Pray for me.

RENEE

IT'S NOT A PLACE
 THIS COUNTRY IS TO BE A SOUND OF DRUM AND BASS
 YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES TO LOOK AROUND

KENNY

HAIL MARY, JESUS AND JOSEPH
 THE GREAT AMERICAN FLAG
 IS WRAPPED AND DRAGGED WITH EXPLOSIVES
 COMPULSIVE DISORDER, SONS AND DAUGHTERS
 BARRICADED BLOCKS AND BORDERS
 LOOK WHAT YOU TAUGHT US!
 IT'S MURDER ON MY STREET, YOUR STREET, BACK STREETS
 WALL STREET, CORPORATE OFFICES
 BANKS, EMPLOYEES, AND BOSSES WITH
 HOMICIDAL THOUGHTS; DONALD TRUMP'S IN OFFICE
 WE LOST BARACK AND PROMISED TO NEVER DOUBT HIM AGAIN
 BUT IS AMERICA HONEST, OR DO WE BASK IN SIN?
 PASS THE GIN, I MIX IT WITH AMERICAN BLOOD
 THEN BASH HIM IN, YOU CRIPPIN' OR YOU MARRIED TO BLOOD?
 I'LL ASK AGAIN-OOPS-ACCIDENT
 IT'S NASTY WHEN YOU SET US UP
 THEN ROLL THE DICE, THEN BET US UP
 YOU OVERNIGHT THE BIG RIFLES, THEN TELL FOX TO BE SCARED OF US
 GANG MEMBERS OR TERRORISTS, ET CETERA, ET CETERA
 AMERICA'S REFLECTIONS OF-

*The video of DAMIAN on the display
 comes back.*

KENNY and DAMIAN

-ME, THAT'S WHAT A MIRROR DOES.

DAMIAN

IT'S NOT A PLACE
 THIS COUNTRY IS TO BE A SOUND OF DRUM AND BASS
 YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES TO LOOK AR-

*The song ends. If he hasn't already,
 HABIT will exit now.*

RENEE

So what do we do about this?

A beat.

KENNY
I mean, I don't know.

RENEE
Is this not your material?

KENNY
How do you know about that?

RENEE
I can just tell.

KENNY
... You want me to be mad about this?

RENEE
I am.

KENNY
But why?

RENEE
Because it's YOURS. Why aren't you mad about it?

KENNY
It's just... I haven't seen my son's face in so long.

A beat.

RENEE
Let's go then.

KENNY
Go? Go where?

RENEE
Out of here. Back home. To your family.

KENNY

No, no no no no, that is the one place I should not go.

RENEE

Why not?

KENNY

It's been so long, they probably all think I'm dead.

RENEE

They do, so what? It's time to go home.

KENNY

I- I don't know, what if I can't do it?-

RENEE

Kenny, you've been like a father to me since I was 10. You can do it. Now let's go home, so you can be a father to your own kid.

A long silence.

KENNY

Alright. Fine. I'll go home.

A beat.

KENNY (cont'd)

I'll go home.

*There is a long silence between
KENNY and RENEE. BLACKOUT.*

SCENE V - Wickedness.

The display reads "Present. Day." LIGHTS UP. The stage is set back to the living room set. KENNY and DAMIAN sit on the couch, RENEE is either standing or sitting on the arm of the couch, and HABIT is sitting on the floor.

RENEE

So yeah... that's what's happened.

DAMIAN

So... you came all this way just to lecture me about this album I released.

RENEE

Heh, real careful choice of words there, huh?

DAMIAN

Like you know why I did it.

RENEE

Okay, well why did you do it, then?

DAMIAN

I dunno, it just... felt right to do.

RENEE

Yeah, well, it wasn't.

DAMIAN

Hey, what's your problem, man?

RENEE

My problem? My "problem" is that I'm tired of people throwing around my family's name. Their history. My father and uncle wrote these songs together.

DAMIAN

No they didn't, Uncle 'Maru was long gone before he wrote these songs.

RENEE

No he wasn't. He was right by his side the whole time.

A beat.

DAMIAN

What? (*to KENNY*) What's she saying? I thought you did make these songs alone.

No response. DAMIAN steps closer to KENNY.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Why did you leave, anyway?

A beat. KENNY begins to speak, but RENEE stops him.

RENEE

Look, you need to take this album down, right now!

DAMIAN

That's not exactly how it works, Renee. I can't just press a button and it all magically goes away.

RENEE

Well, find a way, then. I'm done with my father's name getting pulled through the mud.

DAMIAN

I don't understand why you're so angry about this! It's not even about your dad, it's about mine!

RENEE

Oh really? Are you so sure? Do you even know how he died? *(a beat waiting for a response, none is found)* He was shot. Those two went on and on about gang violence in Compton, trying to end those premature deaths that caused them so much pain when they were kids, and one of them died because they were shot. The one person in my life who wanted me to be something left. And unlike your dad, mine was not coming back.

DAMIAN

But I just put the music out there. It's not like I shot him.

RENEE

No. You just put more dirt on the damn grave.

RENEE exits, fuming.

KENNY

It's so good to see you again, son.

DAMIAN

Why aren't you angrier at me?

KENNY

I don't want any more yelling, or fighting over music. Just want my family, Damian. I know I have to work to even get a word in edgewise with you or your mother, but I'm willing to try.

DAMIAN

But the *music*, Dad, do you care about the music?

KENNY

Not more than my family. Can you say the same?

LAURYN enters, still pissed off. Without saying a word to either DAMIAN or KENNY, she stomps across stage, exiting to her room.

KENNY (cont'd)

Speaking of family, I think I need to go repair a long lost bridge. We do have more to talk about with this music thing, though. Can you promise me you'll fix things with Renee?

DAMIAN

Uh, sure. I can try.

A beat.

KENNY

Y'know, that's the first thing you've said to me that isn't a question.

A look and a warm smile is shared between KENNY and DAMIAN.

KENNY

Can I get a hug yet/?

DAMIAN

/Nope/.

KENNY

/Okay.

*KENNY exits. HABIT enters.
DAMIAN and HABIT both sit on the
couch.*

HABIT

(sung) BUT THE ONE IN FRONT OF THE GUN LIVES FOREVER

DAMIAN

No, go away.

HABIT

Oh come on, Damian, we're partners in crime now. Besides, you've got more family than ever, what's one more member?

DAMIAN

We are NOT family.

HABIT

That's what you think.

DAMIAN

Where do you go when you're not bothering me or making me drink my body weight?

HABIT

That's not... *(sigh)* I'm still with you. I'm always with you. I'm just quieter.

DAMIAN

Great. Good to know I'm stuck with you forever.

HABIT

I don't see why you hate me so much. What have I done to deserve it?

DAMIAN

I lost my girlfriend because of you, y'know that?

HABIT

Not *because* of me, Dame, your actions are /still your own.

DAMIAN

/Don't call me Dame like you give a fuck.

HABIT

You think I don't?

DAMIAN

When did you ever?

A beat.

HABIT

I don't need to be here, yknow. It's not like some God tells me to go from your dad to you just cause he's getting a little gray now. That was my choice. And the advice I choose to give you? That's my choice to give, too. And your choice to follow. Or not to follow. I only control as much as you let me control.

DAMIAN

So you're some fucked up "genie in a bottle" type thing?

HABIT

Heh, no I'm no- well actually when you put it like that...

DAMIAN shakes his head and stands up, beginning to exit.

HABIT (cont'd)

My point is that you could just as easily do something else with your life. The music we made isn't all your life has to consist of.

DAMIAN

Who's "we"? (*A beat*) You've been flip flopping ever since I met you. First you want me to follow my father's footsteps, then you don't want me to release his music. Then when I release it you're happy I did, more than happy, actually, but then you want me to take a step back? Which is it? Do you want me to spread my father's message through music, like he did? Or do you want me to be this family man who wouldn't think of leaving home?

HABIT

It's not as simple as you think-

DAMIAN

-Well enlighten me then, just how fucking complicated could it be? You don't have any morals, you don't have any values, you don't want anything for me. You just want stuff, and you want it for you, and what you want changes on a dime! You're just chaotic, and I'm done with it.

HABIT

You have no idea who I am.

DAMIAN

Yeah, then who are you?

HABIT faces DAMIAN.

HABIT

I am the least chaotic person that you will ever meet.

A beat.

DAMIAN

Fuck you, Habit.

DAMIAN exits.

HABIT

I pray for you Damian. I do.

HABIT exits. BLACKOUT.

SCENE VI - Weakness.

LIGHTS UP. DAMIAN's bedroom. It's insanely messy. LAURYN sits on the bed. KENNY enters.

KENNY

Is it alright if I join you?

A beat.

LAURYN

You can't say a word until I say so.

KENNY

Alright-

LAURYN glares at KENNY. He nods, understanding. KENNY sits next to LAURYN on the bed. There is a long silence between the two, with KENNY looking around the room.

LAURYN

You have no idea what I had to do to get by all these years. Do you know how much it costs to raise a kid right now? As a mom? On my own? And look at me now. Look at everything I have to show for it: still just getting by. Still fighting for every inch of this house. Still wondering where I would be if you just hadn't left, or even if you showed up sooner. Where the hell even were you? Where could you have been that you felt like you had to stay there for 15 years?

KENNY

There wasn't one place. I just couldn't be with my family after... well, you know.

LAURYN

How could you not have realized that that was when we all needed you the most?

KENNY

I did, I just didn't think I could do it.

LAURYN

Do what, Kenny? What possibly could you not have done? You couldn't even come to the funeral? Was it that god damn hard?

KENNY

I don't have an excuse.

LAURYN

I don't know if I'd care if you did, honestly.

KENNY

Yeah, I can understand that.

A beat. The air is tense again.

LAURYN

You have no idea how much of his life you missed. The man that he's become. The fact that even after all these years, without any real dad in his life, he's still a good kid who doesn't get in a lot of trouble and works as hard as he can, well sometimes, is a miracle.

KENNY

Yeah, that's...

LAURYN

I am so proud of him. I never tell him that enough, but I am so so proud of him. His hopes, his dreams, the people in his life, and what he's doing now. He never ceases to amaze me.

KENNY

How do you feel about this whole music thing he's doing now?

LAURYN

He idolized you, yknow that? He loved your music and would listen to it every single day, and I'd have to tell him to turn it off cause I just couldn't bear to hear it. Sometimes it feels like he loved you more than he ever loved me, and you were off in God knows where.

KENNY

You know he loves you; he wouldn't have stayed at home with you if he hadn't.

LAURYN

That doesn't help how it feels. He is becoming a local star by the day, and it's because of his father. His father who wasn't there for any of it. And I'm so happy he's succeeding, and I'm so excited to see where this might take him... but I'm so... *(tries to find the words, but fails, sighing)* It just hurts. I thought I was numb to it, but no. It still just hurts.

A beat.

KENNY

In all that time that I was gone, I never stopped thinking about either of you. I always wondered what he'd be doing now, or if you continued doing music at all, or if Dame found a nice girl that he fell in love with... or if you'd moved on. The whole time, I regretted every second of it. Every step away from home felt like the wrong one, and every day I couldn't talk to you felt like torture. And I was so excited to be a father. To have a son who I could introduce to the world. To my world. A little mini-me that was the best of the both of us.

LAURYN

And yet, you never showed up. Right when we needed you the most, you were just... gone.

KENNY

Amaru needed me, and I failed him. If I couldn't be there for my own brother, there's no way I could be there for my own wife and son.

LAURYN

But there was a way, Kenny! Bad times don't need to create worse times, and yet you chose to make the worst times possible for everyone but yourself.

KENNY

They were my worst times, too.

LAURYN

You have no right to say that. None.

KENNY lowers his head shamefully.

KENNY

I know. I know. I'm sorry.

KENNY turns to face LAURYN.

KENNY (cont'd)

Do you think there still might be a way? Even after all this time?

LAURYN

Should there be?

KENNY

If I can help it, yeah. I want to be here. I can't get all that time that I lost back, but I can make the best of being here now. I just wanna have my family back, Lauryn. That's all I've ever wanted.

A long silence. KENNY extends a hand towards LAURYN, and she takes in her own, placing it on her cheek. She begins to tear up, as does KENNY.

LAURYN

I do too. I've wanted our family back for 15 years.

KENNY starts to try and embrace LAURYN, but holds back, waiting for her to decide what she wants. After a moment, LAURYN starts to embrace KENNY, and KENNY holds her tightly, before she pulls away.

LAURYN (cont'd)

But I can't have that yet. I can't trust that you won't leave again. Not right now.

KENNY

I can show you. I'll show you every day, and earn it. Just tell me what I need to do and I promise you, it's done.

LAURYN looks at the bottles strewn about the room.

LAURYN

If I need to tell you what needs to change, then you're never gonna figure it out.

As LAURYN exits, HABIT enters.

HABIT

Does the people's rose retain the modesty of the dawn?
Does she make her vulnerable hopes known, a child's cry in the cradle?
Maybe most would just hear a serenade, who knows.
But there is a finer ear that hears, an artist's chest that swells, and a rose opens, a secret communicates, the poet announced. The poet, in the darkness...

KENNY

... announced.

HABIT

I'm glad you came home. I think, in time, if you really do get your shit together, she'll understand.

KENNY

(to himself)

Real man's condition...

HABIT

What?

KENNY charges HABIT and throws him to the ground.

HABIT (cont'd)

What the fuck is your problem, man?

KENNY

It's you! You're the reason I left, you made me leave! I'd have never been gone for as long as I was if you hadn't kept me away.

HABIT

Kenny, what are you talking about? I can't make you do something that drastic, I only control/ what you let-

KENNY

/"...What you let me control?" Yeah I know the whole thing, and it's bullshit! You've always been doing this shit, from the beginning! You made me this way. Why are you still here? Why are you haunting me still?

Stung, HABIT stands up.

HABIT

Because you never abandon your family, brother.

He lifts his shirt, revealing bullet holes in his chest and abdomen.

HABIT (cont'd)

No matter what befalls them.

KENNY looks away from HABIT - AMARU's ghostly form - afraid to confront the painful past.

HABIT (cont'd)

You didn't leave because of me. You left because you truly believed you weren't good enough. That since you couldn't be there for the one person who had your back from the beginning, other people were better off without you. That your family was better off without you.

KENNY starts to break.

KENNY

When you died, I- I- I didn't know what to do.

HABIT

So you ran away, and I joined you as an Apparition. Then we made this. *(picks up the record)* A symbol of everything you believed yourself to be. A culmination of your suffering.

He places the record on the bed.

KENNY

And it doesn't seem to be getting better.

HABIT

Why don't you make it better, then? Why not get off your ass and do something about it?

KENNY

Because I can't, Amaru. I can't. Not anymore.

HABIT

You're one of the most impactful artists of your era, yet you can't even fathom trying to make your own situation better.

KENNY

You were the impactful one. I was just... Well, I don't even know what I was.

A beat of silence.

HABIT

How come you never released the album to everyone?

KENNY

My family is right about you.

HABIT

Kenny-

KENNY

No, I'm serious. I'm done with you. I really am.

HABIT

You can't be "done with me", Kenny.

KENNY

Well, I'd like to be.

HABIT

What is so wrong with me that even you can't understand me? You're my brother.

KENNY

Wrong. I WAS your brother. When you were Amaru. *Amaru* would support me in everything I do. Tell me to go back home. Tell me that I was better than how I thought of myself. Tell me that everything was okay.

HABIT

But everything wasn't okay!

KENNY

But he'd tell me what I'd need to hear to at least help me get the fuck out of bed every morning. All you do is make me want to run away and hide. You're breaking me.

HABIT

You need breaking.

KENNY

I've never needed breaking, and I don't need you!

HABIT

Y'know what you need? You need help. Serious fucking help, and you need it now. You want your self-perception fixed? Then go fix it yourself.

HABIT exits. KENNY picks up the record and studies it. BLACKOUT.

SCENE VII - Flowers.

Outside, in front of JAYLA's house. DAMIAN and RENEE enter, him holding a bouquet of flowers.

DAMIAN

Thank you for driving me here, you didn't have to do that.

RENEE

I sure didn't. But y'know, family or whatever.

DAMIAN

I'm just gonna go talk to her and then come right back.

RENEE

Just don't steal anything from her and go ahead and say it's yours. You seem to have a thing for that.

RENEE exits. DAMIAN takes a deep breath, knocks on the door, and begins to prepare himself.

DAMIAN

Okay, okay. Keep it cool, Dame, keep it cool. It's just your girlfriend- Ex-girlfriend. Don't go too crazy. You know her. She knows you. It's cool. It's all cool.

JAYLA opens the door.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

Hey Jayla... You, uh... uh... got milk?

DAMIAN's eyes go wide.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

No, no, wait, I'm sorry, I'm just really nervous. I'd love to talk to you for a little while, if that's okay.

A beat.

JAYLA

Yeah, sure.

DAMIAN goes to take a step inside, but walks into JAYLA, who's closing

*the door and walking further outside.
He backs up, allowing her to pass.
The two sit on the stoop. He offers
the flowers to her.*

DAMIAN

I got you these.

JAYLA

Oh, thank you! They're honeysuckles.

DAMIAN

Your favorite.

JAYLA

You've been reading up on the language of flowers.

DAMIAN

Yeah, I have been, heh... *(an awkward beat)* So, um... how are you?

JAYLA

Good, good. I mean, as good as you can be when you have ghosts following you around.

DAMIAN

Yeah... that makes sense.

JAYLA

So... what brought you here?

DAMIAN

I just um... I wanted to talk about everything that happened, and everything that's happened since... y'know...

JAYLA

Is there a lot more to talk about?

DAMIAN

... My father came home.

JAYLA

Wh... what? He did?

DAMIAN

Yeah, about a week ago.

JAYLA

Well... that's great! It's really great to hear that.

DAMIAN

Yeah, I... I'm really happy to see him... I think.

JAYLA

So... it worked, then? Releasing the album helped bring him back?

DAMIAN

I guess so. I don't know, though, something feels odd about it... like-

JAYLA

-like he wanted you to release it?

DAMIAN

Yeah. But why would he want me to do that?

JAYLA

Well for me, when we ended things, I felt this weight come off of my shoulders. And it's not because of you or anything, I just... needed to do that for myself. And I'm still in a pretty bad place, and these things are just... everywhere...

DAMIAN

I thought that you were mad at me.

JAYLA

No, of course not. I'd always open the door if I knew you were knocking. *(a beat)* Whenever I'm in real pain, pain that locks me with my thoughts and makes me feel like I've given up, I always find that, whether I realize it or not, a part of me hasn't. It refuses to. It silently calls for help, and I secretly hope against hope that someone answers.

A thoughtful beat (change this later)

DAMIAN

Is there a world where you take me back?

JAYLA ponders for a beat.

JAYLA

Yes... but not right now.

DAMIAN

But... why? I tried to show you the beauty of this music, and everything it can give, you've seen what it can give.

JAYLA

I know, but I just-

DAMIAN

I can show you again, Jay, you know the magic that it holds.

JAYLA

But Dame-

DAMIAN

Where are the Apparitions? Are they nearby? I'm sure they can help. *(calling out)* BOONE!
BOONE, WHERE ARE-

JAYLA

DAMIAN, I'M SERIOUS.

DAMIAN stops and looks at JAYLA, then down at himself, then back at her.

JAYLA (cont'd)

The music, the ghosts, none of it matters. All I care about is us. I saw who you were with this, and who I was becoming and... I just can't do it, not as we are, not right now.

DAMIAN

But I don't understand. What's stopping us?

JAYLA

Us, Damian. Us. Do you know how long it's been since I've really gotten to live for myself? I can't keep juggling anymore. Right now, I just need time with myself. And then after a while, we can talk about us.

DAMIAN

Oh... okay then.

JAYLA

I want this, I really do. I just can't trust us to not head down the same road we just did. I'm sorry.

A beat.

DAMIAN

You don't need to be sorry. You're right. I'm sorry for pushing back on that. I didn't realize.

JAYLA

I know, I know, I'm not mad. I'll talk to you later, okay?

DAMIAN

Okay.

The two stand. JAYLA gives DAMIAN one of the flowers and goes back inside her house. DAMIAN is then given a beat to himself before RENEE enters.

RENEE

Y'know, speaking as someone who's been a woman for like, I don't know, 26 years: if you wanna get your Jayla back, you probably don't wanna start raising your voice and talking fast.

DAMIAN

You got a point. I messed that up, bad. If I wasn't so mentally fucked, maybe I could actually do something right for once. You shouldn't have brought me here Renee, it wasn't worth it.

RENEE

Damian, stop. Look, you're not a bad person, okay, even I know that, just a flawed one. And at the end of the day, aren't we all flawed in our own ways?

DAMIAN

I can't fix my flaws on my own.

RENEE

Says who?

DAMIAN

Me. I always stop myself. It feels like everything inside of me stops me from being able to do anything right. Like my head is split into pieces and some of the pieces just wanna put me down and some just worry about every little thing. I can't get rid of these things on my own.

RENEE

Who said you needed to do it on your own? In fact, who said you needed to get rid of them?

DAMIAN

I'm just so tired of fighting my own mind.

RENEE

Then stop fighting it. You're only fighting yourself, anyway.

RENEE exits. DAMIAN takes another beat to himself.

RENEE (cont'd)
(calling from offstage)

Can we go home now?

*DAMIAN quickly gets up and exits.
BLACKOUT.*

SCENE VIII - FEAR.

LIGHTS UP. KENNY and AA MEMBERS sit in a circle.

AA MEMBER

And so I'm just trying to find myself and my footing while I still can, yknow? It's a long road, but I think I can get there. I just gotta 'hold the line', as we say, right?

DEAN

That's 100% right. 'Hold the line.' *(to KENNY)* Would you like to speak now, sir. They probably know who you are already, but it'd still be good to introduce yourself.

KENNY

Oh, okay, sure. *(turns to AA MEMBERS)* I'm Kenny, and um... can someone else go before me, actually?

DEAN

Of course, of course. Wyatt, would you like to have the floor after as well, if that's alright.

WYATT nods.

WYATT

Hey, y'all, I'm Wyatt, and I'm an alcoholic.

AA MEMBERS

Hi, Wyatt.

WYATT

So, as some of you may know, in a few weeks, I'll have been sober for five years. Five long years. And it's been enlightening in a lot of ways. I've gotten closer with my wife than we ever were, and we've been married for about 40 years. I've been able to keep my job, and make some real friends that I was never able to before. But... It's been a hard five years, too. A family friend of mine had a surprise birthday party for his wife. Invited myself, my wife, and my daughter, Tammy. I didn't think she would come, I mean I hadn't seen her in years, but when we showed up, there she was. We all enjoyed ourselves at first, but... and I-I couldn't explain exactly why, but for the first time in a long time I had a hard time not drinking anything. Maybe it was just how happy everyone looked, and how casually they could do it and still be fine, but I just... I felt that little tug I used to feel. And it felt lonely, too, quiet. I haven't felt that alone in... I don't even know how long. That's when Tammy came over to me. When all seemed forgotten, came over to me and put a hand over my own, telling me it'd be alright. I tried to tell her to go enjoy herself and not worry about it, but she... *(miming her movements, putting a hand on his belly)* she let me know that she was serious. And we stayed together the rest of the night. She saved me, my little girl. Just like she's done her whole life. Sometimes I wonder where I'd be without my kids, but honestly I'm just glad that I'll never have to find out.

DEAN

Thank you, Wyatt. That's beautiful. *(turning to the rest of the group)* Y'know, we often tell people that are new to the chapter that "it gets easier", and we expect that to mean that it'll keep getting easier and easier until you're free. But the truth is, growth isn't like that. It will get harder at times, no matter how far in your journey you are. Eventually, though, the skies do get brighter, like a cherry blossom in spring, you will bloom. *(to KENNY)* Would you like to go next now, sir?

Silence. KENNY takes a deep breath.

KENNY

I... I think I have to go.

DEAN

Oh... is everything alright?

KENNY

Yes, yes, more than, I need to come back, I just... I need to see my family.

DEAN

I understand completely, sir.

KENNY begins to leave, but looks back to everyone before doing so.

KENNY

Thank you. I'll make sure I stay for the full meeting next week, I promise!

DEAN

We'll see you next week, sir!

The lights change, now revealing DAMIAN and HABIT in DAMIAN's bedroom. They sit on the edge of the stage.

DAMIAN
(in disbelief)

Wait, so the whole time...

HABIT

Yeah. The whole time.

DAMIAN

So, what's the deal with you and Renee?

HABIT

I've loved her every day since the first day she entered this world. But I don't know if she feels the same for me. My own daughter hates me in this form. She curses me to my face whenever she sees me.

DAMIAN

Does she know?

HABIT

(shakes his head) No.

DAMIAN

Then... you should tell her.

HABIT hangs his head low. DAMIAN begins to speak, but hesitates, deciding not to. KENNY enters.

KENNY

What are you two doing here?

No response is spoken, but HABIT's look to KENNY says everything. He joins HABIT and DAMIAN on the edge of the stage.

HABIT

Dame, did you ever finish listening to the album?

DAMIAN

No, why?

HABIT stands up, and walks over to the record player. He holds the needle in his hand.

KENNY
(to HABIT)

Are you sure he needs to hear this?

A beat.

HABIT

I've never been more sure of anything in my life.

*HABIT places the needle on the vinyl
and returns to DAMIAN and KENNY.
The instrumental for "FEAR."
begins to play.*

"FEAR."

AMARU

(voiceover)

Hey, Kenny, it's Amaru, I just wanted to call you and see if you were there, you haven't been picking up the phone, I hope everything's alright, man. Listen, you know I love you, but we gotta have a conversation about when and where we call when I get outta here, y'know what I'm saying? I don't want you to think we can't really talk anymore just because I'm home in Compton and you're in Oakland. It's only a couple hours anyway. And in case... in case I don't make it outta here... just please come down.// Please. I miss you, Kenny. I miss you.

KENNY

//WHY GOD, WHY GOD DO I GOTTA SUFFER?
PAIN IN MY HEART CARRY BURDENS FULL OF STRUGGLE
WHY GOD, WHY GOD DO I GOTTA BLEED?
EVERY STONE THROWN AT YOU RESTIN' AT MY FEET
WHY GOD, WHY GOD DO I GOTTA SUFFER?
EARTH IS NO MORE, WON'T YOU BURN THIS MUH'FUCCA?

HABIT

I BEAT YO ASS, KEEP TALKIN' BACK
I BEAT YO ASS, WHO BOUGHT YOU THAT?
YOU STOLE IT, I BEAT YO ASS IF YOU SAY THAT GAME IS BROKEN
I BEAT YO ASS IF YOU JUMP ON MY COUCH
I BEAT YO ASS IF YOU WALK IN THIS HOUSE
WITH TEARS IN YOUR EYES, RUNNIN' FROM POO POO AND PRENTICE
GO BACK OUTSIDE, I BEAT YO ASS, LIL' BITCH
THAT HOMEWORK BETTER BE FINISHED, I BEAT YO ASS
YOUR TEACHERS BETTER NOT BE BITCHIN' 'BOUT YOU IN CLASS
THAT PIZZA BETTER NOT BE WASTED, YOU EAT IT ALL
THAT TV BETTER NOT BE LOUD IF YOU GOT IT ON

THEM JORDANS BETTER NOT GET DIRTY WHEN I JUST BOUGHT 'EM
 BETTER NOT HEAR 'BOUT YOU HUMPIN' ON KEISHA'S DAUGHTER
 BETTER NOT HEAR YOU GOT CAUGHT UP
 I BEAT YO ASS, YOU BETTER NOT RUN TO YOUR FATHER
 I BEAT YO ASS, YOU KNOW MY PATIENCE RUNNIN' THIN
 I GOT BEAUCOUP PAYMENTS TO MAKE
 COUNTY BUILDING'S ON MY ASS
 TRYNA TAKE MY FOOD STAMPS AWAY
 I BEAT YO ASS IF YOU TELL THEM SOCIAL WORKERS HE LIVE HERE
 I BEAT YO ASS IF I BEAT YO ASS TWICE AND YOU STILL HERE
 SEVEN YEARS OLD, THINK YOU RUN THIS HOUSE BY YOURSELF?
 MAN, YOU GON' FEAR ME IF YOU DON'T FEAR NO ONE ELSE

IF I COULD SMOKE FEAR AWAY, I'D ROLL THAT MOTHAFUCKA UP
 AND THEN I'D TAKE TWO PUFFS
 I'M HIGH NOW, I'M HIGH NOW
 I'M HIGH NOW, I'M HIGH NOW
 LIFE'S A BITCH, PULL THEM PANTIES TO THE SIDE NOW

DAMIAN

I'LL PROLLY DIE ANONYMOUS
 I'LL PROLLY DIE WITH PROMISES
 I'LL PROLLY DIE WALKIN' BACK HOME FROM THE CANDY HOUSE
 I'LL PROLLY DIE BECAUSE THESE COLORS ARE STANDIN' OUT
 I'LL PROLLY DIE BECAUSE I AIN'T KNOW DEMARCUS WAS SNITCHIN'
 I'LL PROLLY DIE AT THESE HOUSE PARTIES, FUCKIN' WITH BITCHES
 I'LL PROLLY DIE FROM WITNESSES LEAVIN' ME FALSED ACCUSED
 I'LL PROLLY DIE FROM THINKIN' THAT ME AND YOUR HOOD WAS COOL
 OR MAYBE DIE FROM PRESSIN' THE LINE, ACTIN' TOO EXTRA
 OR MAYBE DIE BECAUSE THESE SMOKERS ARE MORE THAN DESPERATE
 I'LL PROLLY DIE FROM ONE OF THESE BATS AND BLUE BADGES
 BODY SLAMMED ON BLACK AND WHITE PAINT, MY BONES SNAPPIN'
 OR MAYBE DIE FROM PANIC OR DIE FROM BEIN' TOO LAX
 OR DIE FROM WAITIN' ON IT, DIE 'CAUSE I'M MOVIN' TOO FAST
 I'LL PROLLY DIE TRYNA BUY WEED AT THE APARTMENTS
 I'LL PROLLY DIE TRYNA DIFFUSE TWO HOMIES ARGUIN'
 I'LL PROLLY DIE 'CAUSE THAT'S WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE 17
 ALL WORRIES IN A HURRY, I WISH I CONTROLLED THINGS

IF I COULD SMOKE FEAR AWAY, I'D ROLL THAT MOTHAFUCKA UP

AND THEN I'D TAKE TWO PUFFS
 I'M HIGH NOW, I'M HIGH NOW
 I'M HIGH NOW, I'M HIGH NOW
 LIFE'S A BITCH, PULL THEM PANTIES TO THE SIDE NOW

KENNY

WHEN I WAS 27, I GREW ACCUSTOMED TO MORE FEAR
 ACCUMULATED 10 TIMES OVER THROUGHOUT THE YEARS
 MY NEWFOUND LIFE MADE ALL OF ME MAGNIFIED
 HOW MANY ACCOLADES DO I NEED TO BLOCK DENIAL?
 THE SHOCK VALUE OF MY SUCCESS PUT BOLTS IN ME
 ALL THIS MONEY, IS GOD PLAYIN' A JOKE ON ME?
 IS IT FOR THE MOMENT, AND WILL HE SEE ME AS JOB?
 TAKE IT FROM ME AND LEAVE ME WORSE THAN I WAS BEFORE?
 AT 27, MY BIGGEST FEAR WAS LOSIN' IT ALL
 SCARED TO SPEND MONEY, HAD ME SLEEPIN' FROM HALL TO HALL
 SCARED TO GO BACK TO SECTION 8 WITH MY MAMA STRESSIN'
 30 SHOWS A MONTH AND I STILL WON'T BUY ME NO LEXUS
 WHAT IS AN ADVISOR? SOMEBODY THAT'S HOLDIN' MY CHECKS
 JUST TO FUCK ME OVER AND PUT MY FINANCES IN DEBT?
 I READ A CASE ABOUT YOYO'S ACCOUNTANT AND WONDERED
 HOW DID THE BIG MAN FEEL WHEN HE LOOKED AT THEM NUMBERS?
 THE TYPE OF SHIT'LL MAKE ME FLIP OUT
 AND JUST KILL SOMETHIN', DRILL SOMETHIN'
 GET ILL AND FILL RATCHETS WITH A LIL' SOMETHIN'
 I PRACTICED RUNNIN' FROM FEAR, GUESS I HAD SOME GOOD LUCK
 AT 27 YEARS OLD, MY BIGGEST FEAR WAS BEIN' JUDGED
 HOW THEY LOOK AT ME REFLECT ON MYSELF, MY FAMILY, MY CITY
 WHAT THEY SAY 'BOUT ME REVEAL
 IF MY REPUTATION WOULD MISS ME
 WHAT THEY SEE FROM ME
 WOULD TRICKLE DOWN GENERATIONS IN TIME
 WHAT THEY HEAR FROM ME
 WOULD MAKE 'EM HIGHLIGHT MY SIMPLEST LINES
 I'M TALKIN' FEAR, FEAR OF LOSIN' CREATIVITY
 I'M TALKIN' FEAR, FEAR OF MISSIN' OUT ON YOU AND ME
 I'M TALKIN' FEAR, FEAR OF LOSIN' LOYALTY FROM PRIDE
 'CAUSE MY DNA WON'T LET ME INVOLVE IN THE LIGHT OF GOD
 I'M TALKIN' FEAR, FEAR THAT MY HUMBLENESS IS GONE
 I'M TALKIN' FEAR, FEAR THAT LOVE AIN'T LIVIN' HERE NO MORE

I'M TALKIN' FEAR, FEAR THAT IT'S WICKEDNESS OR WEAKNESS
 FEAR, WHATEVER IT IS, BOTH IS DISTINCTIVE
 FEAR, WHAT HAPPENS ON EARTH STAYS ON EARTH
 AND I CAN'T TAKE THESE FEELINGS WITH ME
 SO HOPEFULLY THEY DISPERSE
 WITHIN FOURTEEN TRACKS, CARRIED OUT OVER WAX
 SEARCHIN' FOR RESOLUTIONS UNTIL SOMEBODY GET BACK
 FEAR, WHAT HAPPENS ON EARTH STAYS ON EARTH
 AND I CAN'T TAKE THESE FEELINGS WITH ME
 SO HOPEFULLY THEY DISPERSE
 WITHIN FOURTEEN TRACKS, CARRIED OUT OVER WAX
 WONDERIN' IF I'M LIVIN' THROUGH FEAR OR LIVIN' THROUGH RAP

AMARU

Damn.

HABIT, DAMIAN, KENNY, and APPARITIONS

GODDAMN YOU, GODDAMN ME
 GODDAMN US, GODDAMN WE
 GODDAMN US ALL

HABIT exits.

AMARU

(voiceover)

If I'm being honest with you, I think we've both seen this movie enough times to know how it's gonna end. Listen, I don't know why you never showed up, but I need you to know that it's okay. We'll see each other again. I know we will. I'm more grateful for the time we had together than anything else. I hold no grudges, and have no regrets. When your family took me in, I thought I'd be an outsider who'd want nothing more than to run away, but I've never felt more accepted. You made me feel like I was your brother by blood. I will always love you for that. *(a beat)* I hope I see him. My father. I hope I get to talk to him, and tell him that I love him. I never got to tell him that enough. *(a beat)* The next time you see Renee, I need you to tell her how proud I am, if I'm not able to do it myself. I can already see that she's gonna be such a smart and strong woman, and I am so happy I got to be her father. And while I have you, whenever you're listening to this, be there for you and yours. Really, really try. You always were so... hard on yourself. You never thought you could do the right thing for your family, but you can. I've seen you do incredible things in this life. You can. For what it's worth, they're still here. They're still praying for you, we all are, and will continue to, no matter what happens. *(a beat)* I love you, Kenny. God bless you. Shalom.

KENNY, shaken, stands up and pulls out his cell phone. KENNY pushes a button and the voicemail begins to play again, this time the sound only coming from his phone. He quickly pauses it and begins to cry, collapsing to the ground. DAMIAN comes over to him and takes the phone from his hands. He places it next to the two of them, and puts a hand on KENNY's back.

KENNY

I'm so sorry, Damian. I know it'll never be enough, but I'm so so sorry.

DAMIAN

I know, Dad. I know.

The two embrace.

DAMIAN (cont'd)

I pray for you, Dad. I've always prayed for you.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE IX - GOD.

LIGHTS UP on the living room. LAURYN is on the couch. HABIT enters. He sits on the opposite side of the couch from LAURYN. A beat of silence.

HABIT

Did you hear about the rose that grew from concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong, it learned to walk without feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete-

HABIT & LAURYN

-When no one else cared.

The two finally make eye contact.

HABIT

So... how are you doing?

LAURYN

(ignoring)

What are you doing here?

HABIT

Laury... Why do you hate me so much?

LAURYN

You've always represented everything I hated about him. He was impulsive, immature, way too preachy. You had that same energy, but none of the actual wisdom. None of that humility, none of that guilt that you carried back before... everything.

HABIT

You knew...

LAURYN

Of course I knew, 'Maru. We were friends for decades.

HABIT

But you think I don't still carry all the guilt?

LAURYN

You sure don't act like it.

HABIT

I ruined Kenny. His family saved my life by taking me in and in return I made their son an alcoholic. I tried to tell him later "I only control as much as you let me control."

LAURYN

And now you're telling the same shit to Damian as if it worked so damn well the first time.

HABIT

Ah, don't worry, he never listened to me. That kid hates me too much to listen.

LAURYN

Why did you ever start saying that, anyway?

HABIT

Cause when I was a kid, I would always do the same thing myself. Other people would make my decisions for me, and I started to get comfortable with that. A bad habit, if you will. But when Kenny and I became brothers, I started to become more of my own person, I started to feel free, and that freedom made me feel more fulfilled than I've ever been. I never wanted anybody to feel like they had to be controlled by anyone, so I kinda just kept telling people that whenever I felt like they weren't being true to themselves.

LAURYN

Has that ever worked?

HABIT

Maybe like, in the gym with my friends, y'know, back in the day, you gotta hype them up while they go for their new PB or whatever.

LAURYN

(cracks up) God, men are strange.

HABIT

I hear that. *(a beat)* Ever since I met Damian, the only thing on my mind has been Renee. I don't know why I was able to be so good for her back then but for everything before and everything after I just... can't help for shit.

LAURYN

It feels lonely, doesn't it?

HABIT

But Damian loves you. I've seen it, that kid believes from the bottom of his heart that he'd be nowhere without his mom. You mean everything to him.

LAURYN

Now that Kenny's back, I'm not so sure.

HABIT

Honestly, I think you should talk to Damian about that. The best way to get your point across is to state it plain. At the very least, trust me when I tell you the opposite doesn't work.

LAURYN

That's probably the best piece of advice you've given yet. Alright, maybe I will.

The two share a smile between them.

HABIT

Speaking of, I wanted to talk to you about Kenny. How have you been feeling about everything with him?

A beat.

LAURYN

I swear, I cannot get used to seeing him. Everytime I do, it feels like every emotion comes up at once.

HABIT

Do you wanna take him back?

LAURYN

I think so, but I... it's been 15 years, 'Maru. You want me to just take him back like nothing happened? You want me to act like we can just go back to before everything happened? Before our entire family was ripped apart? I can't do that and you know.

HABIT

You're right, I'm sorry, that's that impulsiveness again. What I mean to say is that... our family has been incomplete for a very long time. And every single one of us has felt its effects in one way or another, it's inescapable. Even interacting with our family puts you in the blast radius, I mean, look at Jayla. But this is our chance to end that suffering. This is the moment we've been waiting for for 15 years.

LAURYN

I don't know if I'm ready for it.

HABIT

And you don't have to be. And Kenny isn't either, but he's still making the effort.

LAURYN

He is?

HABIT nods.

HABIT

I saw him at an AA meeting earlier today. Plus, I watched him book an appointment with a therapist on the way back. He wants this just as badly as we do.

A beat. HABIT watches LAURYN consider this.

HABIT (cont'd)

Look, parenting has never come naturally to the men of the Duckworth household, but even death didn't stop me from trying, and I swear on my daughter that it's not stopping Kenny anymore either.

A beat.

LAURYN

What *are* you doing here, 'Maru?

RENEE enters.

RENEE
(*to HABIT*)

You. What are you doing here?

HABIT

It's funny, (*pointing to LAURYN*) she actually just asked me that-

RENEE

Can you stop with the jokes, I'm so fucking tired of them.

HABIT

Okay, you got a point, that's my bad, but we need to talk.

RENEE

What in the world could we possibly need to talk about, Dad?

HABIT

"Da"- wait wha-

RENEE

There is absolutely no reason for you to be here anymore. You got what you wanted. Kenny's back home, the whole family is back together, and I'm about to leave right now. Why can't you just go the fuck away!

A beat. HABIT is stunned.

HABIT

R... Renee... you knew too?

RENEE

Of course I knew, I'm not stupid. How could I not recognize my own father?

HABIT

But I... I don't understand.

RENEE

Well now you know how I felt when you showed up and coddled Uncle Kenny but couldn't even work up the nerve to acknowledge your own daughter.

HABIT

Renee...

RENEE

You didn't say a word. I thought you died, I was there when you died. And the first time I saw you in a year, and you didn't say a single word to me.

HABIT

(voice shaking)

What could I have even said?

RENEE

Anything would've done the trick. Even when we ended up speaking you treated me like you didn't know me. Why did you do that?

HABIT

I... I don't know.

RENEE

How could you not know, Dad? How could you not know?

HABIT begins to shed tears. RENEE tries to hold strong, but begins to tear up as well.

HABIT
(*through tears*)

I don't know, // I don't know, I don't know.

RENEE

//Dad, please, just tell me.

HABIT

I hated every moment of being back on this plane until I found you. I didn't want to ruin you. Like I did Kenny. I didn't think I... I didn't think I could get through to you, and by the time I did you already saw me as a parasite. What was I supposed to do? How could I have known?

RENEE

I never saw you as a parasite. I just wanted you to be my dad again. You avoided me for years. Why would you do that when you know how much I cared about you?

HABIT

I'm not a good man, I never have been, and I never will be, cause I never got the chance. I realized that I don't think I'm supposed to have that chance anymore. The privilege of being your family.

DAMIAN (holding the vinyl) and KENNY enter. DAMIAN runs to LAURYN and hugs her. KENNY gives LAURYN a warm welcoming smile, and after a moment, she returns it.

KENNY

How are you feeling?

LAURYN

For the first time in a long time, like I'm heading in the right direction.

KENNY

That's good, that's good.

LAURYN

We can never go back to what we were, you know that, right?

KENNY

I wouldn't want to. I just wanna go somewhere new. Do you?

LAURYN

It's gonna take a very long time, but yes, I do.

KENNY

We'll get there, and I'll be with you every step of the way.

RENEE

Where have you two been?

DAMIAN

Turn on the TV, you'll find out. I think you'll approve.

*RENEE grabs the TV remote and
points it towards the audience
(where the TV would be).*

NEWSCASTER

(voiceover)

Little bit of a PR mess today for the Duckworth duo, as Damian Duckworth reveals that the beloved hip-hop album "*DAMNED.*", which was released a little over two weeks ago, was not his own work at all, but was actually written by his father, famous rapper and pants-sagger Kenny "K-Dot" Duckworth. //He said as such in a tweet of a picture of a note on his phone, which, as far as apologies go, will no doubt plunge his bright future into eternal darkness and death, so says Wolf News hip-hop analyst Dustin Carlton, still looking for a quote on that, by the way.

KENNY

(to LAURYN)

//You still have the TV set to Wolf News?

LAURYN

Honestly, I didn't even know that thing could turn on until now.

NEWSCASTER

After posting the tweet, the album was then changed on every streaming platform to credit Kenny and Amaru Duckworth as the sole two artists behind it, removing Damian's name from it entirely. This is a shocking decision and we at Wolf News wonder exactly what this will mean for these rappers' careers and the good of the white race as a whole. This is Jimmy Cawthorne with your ethnostate update.

RENEE turns off the TV with the remote and puts it back on the table.

KENNY

Good to see nothing has changed after all this time.

RENEE

Damian, you didn't have to do that.

DAMIAN

But that's just it, Renee, I really did. I acted selfishly because I thought it'd bring me the happiness I'd been wanting for so long, but it didn't. You showed me that I need to learn to love myself if I wanna truly be happy, and this, (*motioning to KENNY*) well I can't say it didn't help me start down that path, but it isn't everything. I'm sorry I didn't understand sooner.

RENEE

Thank you, Dame. I'm glad I could help.

LAURYN

It'd be nice to have a creative person around the house who isn't all pretentious like these two eggheads.

RENEE

(chuckles)

What? I don't understand.

KENNY

You once told me that I've been a father to you. Come home, Renee. Let us be the family to you. The family you've always wanted.

RENEE

The... the family?

HABIT

The moment I saw you, I realized that the reason I came back was because when I died, I left you without anyone to call your own. I realized that before I could say goodbye, I needed to give you a family, a family like the one I was given. And what family would be better than the one that I was given. A loving father who supports you and your dreams, a mother who will go to war for you and listen to your words, and a brother who will be at your side, who will complete your soul.

RENEE

Dad, I... I just wish we could go home.

HABIT

I know, dear. But home means something different for both of us, now.

RENEE

Does it have to? There has to be another way.

HABIT shakes his head. He takes a deep breath for a beat.

HABIT

The Duckworth's, do they feel like home to you?

RENEE looks at KENNY, LAURYN, and DAMIAN, then back to HABIT.

RENEE

More and more every day.

HABIT

Then let them be home.

RENEE looks back to the DUCKWORTH's. HABIT puts a hand on RENEE's shoulder. The lights go down, with only a spotlight on RENEE remaining.

HABIT (cont'd)

I'm so proud of the woman you've become and so lucky that I got to call myself your father. I love you, Renee. I pray for you.

RENEE takes HABIT's hand.

RENEE

I love you, Dad.

HABIT's hand slips away, with none of him seen in the light anymore.

RENEE (cont'd)

I pray for you too.

RENEE turns around, hoping to see HABIT, but when the lights come back on, he's not there. The space he occupied is now entirely empty. HABIT is gone.

RENEE (cont'd)

I pray for you too.

The lights change to blue, the needle is placed on the vinyl, and the instrumental for "GOD." begins. HABIT enters with the APPARITIONS at his side. (He is now unable to be seen by anyone but the other APPARITIONS.)

"GOD."

HABIT

THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE, HUH, YEAH
 LAUGHIN' TO THE BANK LIKE, "A-HA!", HUH, YEAH
 FLEX ON SWOLE LIKE, "A-HA!", HUH, YEAH
 YOU FEEL SOME TYPE OF WAY, THEN A-HA! HUH, YEAH

EVER SINCE A YOUNG MAN

ALL I WANTED TO BE WAS A GUNMAN
 SHOOTIN' UP THE CHARTS, BETTER RUN, MAN
 Y'ALL GOTTA SEE THAT I WON, MAN
 SLICK AS EL DEBARGE WITH THE FINGER WAVES, WORK IT, JT
 HANDLEBARS LIKE A FADE, WATCH ME WORK IT, JT
 I'M AT LARGE, RUNNIN' PLAYS LIKE A CIRCUIT, JT
 I'M SELLIN' VERSES, JT, WATCH ME WORK IT, JT
 LOOK, LOOK... HOL' UP!
 DON'T JUDGE ME, MY MAMA CAUGHT ME WITH A STRAP
 DON'T JUDGE ME, I WAS YOUNG, FUCKIN' ALL THE BRATS
 DON'T JUDGE ME, AIMIN' AT YOUR HEAD FOR A STACK
 DON'T JUDGE! DON'T JUDGE ME!
 NOW MY HOME GOT A VALLEY PEAK
 DON'T JUDGE ME, IF I PRESS YOUR LINE, COME WITH ME
 DON'T JUDGE ME, WON'T YOU TELL A FRIEND Y'ALL GON' SEE

THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE, HUH, YEAH
 LAUGHIN' TO THE BANK LIKE, "A-HA!", HUH, YEAH
 FLEX ON SWOLE LIKE, "A-HA!", HUH, YEAH
 YOU FEEL SOME TYPE OF WAY, THEN A-HA! HUH, YEAH

FUCK IS YOU TALKIN' TO?
 AYE, DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU TALKIN' TO?
 SLIDE ON YOU LIKE FALLEN DRAPES, GOD TOSS FULL OF CARNIVALS
 I KILL 'EM WITH KINDNESS, OR I KILL 'EM WITH DIAMONDS
 OR I PUT UP LIKE FIFTEEN HUNDRED, GET YO' ASS KILLED BY THE FINEST
 EVERYTHING IN LIFE IS A GAMBLE, NOTHIN' IN LIFE I CAN'T HANDLE
 SEEN IT ALL, DONE IT ALL, FELT PAIN MORE
 FOR THE CAUSE, I DONE PUT BLOOD ON SWORD
 EVERYTHING I DO IS TO EMBRACE Y'ALL
 EVERYTHING I WRITE IS A DAMN EIGHT BALL
 EVERYTHING I TOUCH IS A DAMN GOLD MINE
 EVERYTHING I SAY IS FROM AN ANGEL

I DON'T RUSH SHIT, FUCK SHIT
 ALWAYS YOUR SHIT, MY SHIT
 CANNONBALLS TO IGNITE SHIT
 MORNING TO THE NIGHT SHIFT
 I'M ON, I AIN'T SORRY FOR IT
 ASK FOR A PIECE OF MINE, YOU CHARGED ME FOR IT

I WANNA SEE SOMETIMES IF YOU IGNORE IT
 I'M IN THE STREETS SOMETIMES AND CAN'T AFFORD IT
 I GOT A BAD HABIT
 LEVITATE, DUCKIN' HATERS
 OH MY! MY HEART IS RICH, MY HEART IS FAMOUS

HABIT

THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE!
 HUH, YEAH
 LAUGHIN' TO THE BANK LIKE,
 "A-HA!" HUH, YEAH
 FLEX ON SWOLE LIKE,
 "A-HA!" HUH, YEAH
 YOU FEEL SOME TYPE OF WAY, THEN
 A-HA! HUH, YEAH

APPARITIONS

THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE
 THIS WHAT GOD FEEL LIKE

BLACKOUT.

SCENE X - DUCKWORTH.

The stage is empty. Spotlight on APPARITIONS.

“DUCKWORTH.”

APPARITION CHORUS

IT WAS ALWAYS ME VS THE WORLD
 UNTIL I FOUND IT'S ME VS ME
 WHY, WHY, WHY, WHY?
 WHY, WHY, WHY, WHY?

BOONE

Just remember, what happens on Earth stays on Earth! We gon' put it in reverse!

*A spotlight reveals DAMIAN,
 KENNY and HABIT sitting on the
 edge of the stage one final time.*

HABIT

OH LAMAR,

HAIL MARY AND MARIJUANA, TIMES IS HARD
 PRAY WITH THE HOOLIGANS, SHADOWS ALL IN THE DARK
 FELLOWSHIP WITH DEMONS AND RELATIVES, I'M A STAR

DAMIAN

LIFE IS ONE FUNNY MOTHAFUCKA
 A TRUE COMEDIAN, YOU GOTTA LOVE HIM, YOU GOTTA TRUST HIM
 I MIGHT BE BUGGIN', INFOMERCIALS AND NO SLEEP
 INTROVERTED BY MY THOUGHTS; CHILDREN, LISTEN, IT GETS DEEP

KENNY

SEE, ONCE UPON A TIME INSIDE THE NICKERSON GARDEN PROJECTS
 THE OBJECT WAS TO PROCESS AND DIGEST POVERTY'S DIALECT
 ADAPTATION INEVITABLE: GUN VIOLENCE, CRACK SPOT
 FEDERAL POLICIES RAID BUILDINGS AND DRUG PROFESSIONALS

HABIT

ANTHONY WAS THE OLDEST OF SEVEN
 WELL-RESPECTED, CALM AND COLLECTED
 LAUGHIN' AND JOKIN' MADE LIFE EASIER; HARD TIMES, MOMMA ON CRACK
 A FOUR-YEAR-OLD TELLIN' HIS NANNY HE NEEDED HER

DAMIAN

HIS FAMILY HISTORY: PIMPIN' AND BANGIN'
 HE WAS MEANT TO BE DANGEROUS
 CLOCKED HIM A GRIP AND START SLANGIN'
 FIFTEEN, SCRAPIN' UP HIS JEANS WITH QUARTER PIECES

KENNY

EVEN GOT SOME HEAD FROM A SMOKER LAST WEEKEND

HABIT

DODGED A POLICEMAN, WORKIN' FOR HIS BIG HOMIE
 SMALL-TIME HUSTLER, GRADUATED TO A BRICK ON HIM
 10,000 DOLLARS OUT OF A PROJECT HOUSING, THAT'S ON THE DAILY

HABIT & DAMIAN

SEEN HIS FIRST MIL TWENTY YEARS OLD, HAD A COUPLE OF BABIES

DAMIAN

HAD A COUPLE OF SHOOTERS
CAUGHT A MURDER CASE, FINGERPRINTS ON THE GUN

KENNY

THEY ASSUMIN'

HABIT

BUT WITNESSES COULDN'T PROVE IT
THAT WAS BACK WHEN HE TURNED HIS BACK AND THEY KILLED HIS COUSIN
HE BEAT THE CASE AND WENT BACK TO HUSTLIN'
BIRD-SHUFFLIN'

DAMIAN

ANTHONY RANG
THE FIRST IN THE PROJECTS WITH THE TWO-TONE MUSTANG
THAT 5.0 THING, THEY SAY 5-0 CAME
CIRCLIN' PARKING LOTS AND PARKING SPOTS
AND HOPPIN' OUT WHILE HARRASSIN' THE CORNER BLOCKS

KENNY

CROOKED COPS TOLD ANTHONY HE SHOULD KICK IT
HE BRUSHED 'EM OFF AND WALKED BACK TO THE KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN
SEE, AT THIS CHICKEN SPOT
THERE WAS A LIGHT-SKINNED FELLA THAT TALKED A LOT
WITH A CURLY TOP AND A GAP IN HIS TEETH
HE WORKED THE WINDOW, HIS NAME WAS DUCKY
HE CAME FROM THE STREETS, THE ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES
SOUTHSIDE PROJECTS, CHIRAQ, THE TERROR DOME
DROVE TO CALIFORNIA WITH A WOMAN ON HIM AND 500 DOLLARS

KENNY & DAMIAN

THEY HAD A SON, HOPIN' THAT HE'D SEE COLLEGE

DAMIAN

HUSTLIN' ON THE SIDE WITH A NINE-TO-FIVE TO FREAK IT

KENNY, DAMIAN, & HABIT

CADILLAC SEVILLE, HE'D RIDE HIS SON AROUND ON WEEKENDS

KENNY

THREE-PIECE SPECIAL WITH HIS NAME ON THE SHIRT POCKET
'CROSS THE STREET FROM THE PROJECTS

KENNY & HABIT

ANTHONY PLANNED TO ROB IT

HABIT

STUCK UP THE PLACE BEFORE, BACK IN '84
THAT'S WHEN AFFILIATION WAS REALLY EIGHT GEARS OF WAR
SO MANY RELATIVES

DAMIAN

TELLIN' US,

KENNY

SELLIN' US

HABIT

DEVILISH WORKS, KILLIN' US,

DAMIAN

CRIME, INTELLIGENT,

KENNY

FELONIOUS,

HABIT

PREVALENT PROPOSITION

DAMIAN & HABIT

WITH 9'S.

KENNY

DUCKY WAS WELL-AWARE
THEY ROBBED THE MANAGER AND SHOT A CUSTOMER LAST YEAR
HE FIGURED HE'D GET ON ANTHONY'S GOOD SIDES, FREE CHICKEN

HABIT

EVERY TIME ANTHONY POSTED IN LINE
TWO EXTRA BISCUITS, ANTHONY LIKED HIM AND THEN LET HIM SLIDE
THEY DIDN'T KILL HIM;

DAMIAN

IN FACT, IT LOOK LIKE THEY'RE THE LAST TO SURVIVE
PAY ATTENTION, THAT ONE DECISION CHANGED BOTH OF THEY LIVES

ONE CURSE AT A TIME
 REVERSE THE MANIFEST AND GOOD KARMA, AND I'LL TELL YOU WHY

KENNY
 YOU TAKE TWO STRANGERS AND PUT 'EM IN RANDOM PREDICAMENTS

HABIT
 GIVE 'EM A SOUL SO THEY CAN MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES AND LIVE WITH IT

DAMIAN
 TWENTY YEARS LATER, THEM SAME STRANGERS, YOU MAKE 'EM MEET AGAIN

HABIT
 INSIDE RECORDING STUDIOS WHERE THEY REAPIN' THEIR BENEFITS

KENNY
 THEN YOU START REMINDIN' THEM ABOUT THAT CHICKEN INCIDENT

HABIT
 WHOEVER THOUGHT THE GREATEST RAPPER WOULD BE FROM COINCIDENCE?
 BECAUSE IF ANTHONY

KENNY
 KILLED DUCKY,

HABIT
 MY POPS WOULD BE SERVIN' LIFE,

KENNY
 WHILE I

KENNY & HABIT
 GREW UP WITHOUT A FATHER AND DIE IN A GUNFIGHT.

*A gunshot is heard, and following it,
 a long segment of reversed audio,
 pulling back from every song in the
 album, until it returns all the way to
 "DNA." ALL enter. Every character
 methodically moves around the*

stage, re-telling where our story had started, where it had gone, where it had ended, and where it may go.

- *RENEE will enter, HABIT will hug her before being taken away by APPARITIONS, leaving RENEE crying.*
- *KENNY will dance with LAURYN before spinning her away. When he tries to get back to her, she will at first reject him, until he tries again with his hand on his heart.*
- *JAYLA will enter and kiss DAMIAN. The two will hold hands until a pain appears in JAYLA's heart, causing her to back away from DAMIAN in unbelievably pain and ultimately exit.*
- *YOYO and HABIT will drink and give KENNY a drink, who drinks way more than either of them. DAMIAN, without JAYLA, will see this from afar and begin to drink too.*
- *LAURYN will go to RENEE and help her up until she ultimately exits.*
- *HABIT will go to DAMIAN and push him. DAMIAN will push back. KENNY will get in between them and hold their hands, calming them.*
- *BOONE will bring JAYLA back in. DAMIAN will notice her and reach his hand out to her. She'll reach back, but refuse to close the gap between the two.*
- *RENEE and LAURYN enter, stronger together than apart.*
- *HABIT is given a microphone, which he gives to KENNY, which he gives to DAMIAN.*

KENNY, LAURYN, JAYLA & APPARITION GROUP ONE

I GOT,

HABIT, RENEE, YOYO, BOONE & APPARITION GROUP TWO

I GOT,

KENNY & HABIT

I GOT,

ALL BUT DAMIAN

I GOT,

A single spotlight lands on DAMIAN.

DAMIAN

So I was takin' a walk the other day...

BLACKOUT.
THE END.