THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

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MASTER OF ARTS
IN
LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES

THESIS TITLE ____________________________ Tear of Rage ____________________________

AUTHOR: ____________________________ Jason Diamond Lee Arnold ____________________________

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THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL
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LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES.

Dr. Lance Newman
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dr. Dawn M. Formo
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

Dr. Mark Wallace
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

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Tear of Rage Thesis Introduction
J. Diamond Arnold
To: Thesis Committee
Date: November 2005

“Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend.” —Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness

The life and lyrics of rap artist Tupac Shakur continue to garner media attention long after his death, for his story is both extraordinary and meaningful in ways unbound by time. While Shakur’s lyrics are often marginalized as part of a violent gangsta rap music genre, they remain an intense and powerful commentary on contemporary American culture. His popularity remains as intense today as nearly a decade ago when he fell victim to a violent death at the age of 25.

In approaching the voice created through Tupac Shakur’s lyrics, we need to reach beyond the articles, commentaries, and literary theories analyzing his music. We need to engage the imagination through the world of fiction in order to make better sense of this profoundly important artist’s work. The purpose of Tear of Rage, a 120-page screenplay that combines an original story, based on the life and lyrics of Tupac Shakur, and the general plot of the Greek classic, The Iliad by Homer, is to engage the imagination through a feature-length creative narrative.

In creating Tear of Rage I took two main approaches to accessing the often marginalized works of Tupac Shakur. I first laid a foundation of knowledge through extensive research into articles, commentaries, literary theory and documented interviews with the popular rap artist. In addition to my lengthy
research into Shakur’s lyrics, I accessed the screenplays of *Apocalypse Now* (Based on Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*), *Donnie Brasco*, and *Traffic*. Through a comparative study of these relevant popular narratives, I was able to shape many of the ideas represented in Tupac’s body of work, creating a fresh understanding of the essence of his message through the creative work of an original screenplay.

**Critical Access to the Life and Lyrics of Tupac Shakur**

Often, Tupac’s sharpest social and political critics have failed to address his lyrics through constructive literary or intellectual analysis, tending to focus only on sensationalized media-driven issues of violence and rebellion against authority. Their narrow emphasis on sound bites leads to incomplete assumptions about the rapper’s overall message. In 1991, then Vice President Dan Quayle infamously proclaimed to the nation that, “Tupac Shukur’s lyrics have no place in our society,” instigating a public discourse of symbolic exclusion and creating a perception that Tupac’s lyrics are a menace to society. A swarm of negative controversy began to grow around the lyrics of Tupac and other so-called gangsta rap artists.

While his personal life became riddled with legal issues, the political rhetoric against gangsta rap also intensified. In 1995, while Tupac’s *Me Against the World* topped the popular music charts, conservative commentator William Bennett and social activist C. Delores Tucker, head of the national *Political Congress of Black Women Inc.*, distributed a letter to some 150 business, entertainment, sports, political and religious leaders, asking them to join the campaign against rap-music
lyrics. “Our concern is not limited to rap-music, it goes to the larger issue of our popular culture, and music which is poisoning the minds of our children and destroying our moral sense,” (Wall Street Journal, August 24, 1995). Senator Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut joined the fight against gangsta rap by calling for extreme measures. In a June 1995 NY Times article, Lieberman said, “I think the company (Time Warner, who owned Interscope Records, Shakur’s record label at the time) should conclude that some of this stuff is just bad for our society, and they should simply stop (producing) it,” (Landler, New York Times, June 30, 1995).

**Demotic Language**

Tupac Shakur’s image was grossly misrepresented to the public through misleading mass media interpretations of his life and lyrics. Through the mass media, politicians, moral leaders, and parents expressed their outrage over Tupac’s lyrics. In an attempt to analyze the effects of his music on young people throughout the country, the media tended to grossly overlook important details about the rapper’s multi-dimensional lyrics—failing to view Tupac’s lyrics through the paradox of ideas addressed in them. Instead of intellectual assessments, and healthy debate about the larger social issues addressed in his lyrics, the mass media marginalized his voice and misrepresented his overall message. Tupac’s lyrics were not simply another angry black man’s expression of rage, it was a voice crying out for understanding from the urban America wilderness.
One of the greatest dilemmas America faces today when addressing important social issues is the lack of sufficient social and political dialogue, particularly when it comes to the representation of minority voices. Communication has been a timeless human challenge, and today’s modern media has increased this dilemma through the expansion of information in shorter amounts of presentation time, without the discipline of intellectual interpretation and diagnosis of that information. The rapid advancement of technology-based information mediums, and demand for 24x7 news resources, has added to the marginalization of Tupac’s voice. With dramatic visual images, and short information segments that do not lend to a thorough investigation into issues, information is quickly consumed by our minds and shape our perceptions without completely processing the information in the most intellectually healthy manner.

Northrope Frye, in his book, *The Great Code*, describes this type of image-driven language as **demotic language**. Demotic language uses highly descriptive words [and images] to describe a subject, yet its meaning is allusive due to the void of keynote facts (Fye, 3). Frye introduces a variant of this analysis of stylistic levels in literature. He makes a primary differentiation between the demotic style, which is modeled on the language, rhythms, and association of ordinary speech, and the hieratic style of language, which employs a variety of formal elaborations that separate literary language from ordinary speech.

Through this demotic language, the mass-media driven social-political rhetoric is not obligated to a formal elaboration of the issues addressed in literature.

Therefore, literature like Tupac’s lyrics is reduced to a narrow form of dialogue
through the simplistic and quickly dismissed acts of simplistic social violence.

As a result of only certain images are portrayed in relation to the lyrics of gangsta rap lyrics like Tupac Shakur's, marginalizing the larger message of his body of work. The use of this base form of rhetoric through the mass-media has not only marginalized the entirety of Tupac’s body of work, but has also marginalized the voice of millions with whom Tupac’s ideas resonate with. Tupac pleaded in one of his later songs, *Only God Can Judge Me* “Dear Mr. Police, Please try and see that there’s a million mutha-fuckas stressin’ just like me,” (Shakur, Only God Can Judge Me).
Hope and Horror

These representational expressions, as in the song *Only God Can Judge Me*, transcended his lyrics and his critics; shaping a loyal audience of followers who embraced Tupac Shakur’s passion for authentic portrayals of the world he (they) grew up in—a world not dramatically separate from the larger paradox of American liberty, life, and the pursuit of property on which the nation was founded. In *Rolling Stone* magazine, hip-hop journalist, and perhaps Shakur’s most intimate biographer, Kevin Powell said, “to me, Shakur was the most important solo artist in the history of rap, not because he was the most talented, but because he, more than any other rapper, personified and articulated what it was to be a young black man in America,” (Scott, 180)

Tupac Shakur’s body of work, the issues he questioned and spoke about through his lyrics, are a paradox to be managed and wrestled with, not discarded simply as “without place in our society.” In fact, they are an honest reflection of an American ideology and the continual struggle for freedom that have led to many wars since its conception, and has lead to the defense and preservation of its vision through many other conflicts in the pursuit of peace. “Gangsta rap does not appear in a cultural vacuum, it is not a product created in isolation within a segregated black world but is rather expressive of the cultural crossing, mixings, and engagement of black youth culture with the values, attitudes, and concerns of the white majority,” said feminist and theorist bell hooks (hooks, 116). Therefore, Tupac’s struggle is not an isolated dilemma, but rather an American struggle that reflects on us all—one way or another.
Like most issues that challenge our preconceived notions of the world or push us beyond our physical and mental comfort zones, it is much easier to rest on simple ideas and demotic information. It is too easy to separate ourselves from the everyday horror that resides just up the freeway from us or on the other side of the bushes behind our home. It easier to look through the mirror in the morning rather than at the reflection in the mirror, intellectually engaging ourselves in an authentic investigation and apologetic defense of our opinions regarding the social and personal issues that make us feel so uncomfortable or insecure.

The use of literary paradox to analyze such socially charged issues, like the ones found in Tupac’s lyrics, is a quest for knowledge and understanding that seeks positive and lasting solutions to inconsistencies of American liberty that continue to plague urban America. Ignoring or marginalizing issues like the ones expressed through the lyrics of Tupac Shakur, will lead to the failure of what Lincoln referred to the great test of the American civil war, “whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated (to liberty), can long endure,” (Lincoln, Gettysburg Address).

Creative Access to the Life and Lyrics of Tupac Shakur

In addition to a critical analysis of Tupac’s lyrics, it would be constructive to creatively analyze his life and lyrics through popular modern artistic expressions that address many similar issues as expressed in Shakur’s overall body of work. This approach affords several years of research to be more colorfully expressed in a meaningful way for the purpose of better understanding this contemporary pop icon. A comparative study of Tupac’s life and lyrics through the classic character
of Achilles, as told by Homer in *The Iliad*, has inspired a modern fictional story that integrates several classic and modern literary and film narratives into one fresh body of creative work.

For the purposes of creating the *Tear of Rage* screenplay, I watched and analyzed the screenplays of three critically related films, *Apocalypse Now*, *Donnie Brasco*, and *Traffic*. I investigated how these works relate to novel or historical narrative adaptations which they represented; much in the same way my screenplay represented Tupac’s lyrics and Homer’s *Iliad*. I then produced a brief analysis of each of the screenplays and how they influenced the development of *Tear of Rage*.

**Apocalypse Now**

Based loosely on Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*, Francis Ford Coppola’s film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is an expressionist masterpiece, not simply about the Vietnam War, but rather an exploration of the surreal absurdities and horrors of one man’s experience with the cruel and inhumane consequences of war. The screenplay transcends the horrors of war by becoming a story of personal redemption.

A young American, Captain Willard (Martin Sheen) is given the assignment to hunt down and kill one of his own colleagues, AWOL Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando), who has allegedly gone insane. The deranged colonel is said to have murdered hundreds of innocent people and has constructed a strange cult deep in the jungle of Cambodia, beyond American military jurisdiction.
The film's story is a type of epic *Odyssey*, full of insane and eccentric characters. Willard is commissioned to travel up river to reach his destination, so he commandeers a boat with a young crew. The four men slowly unravel as the journey continues through trials and tribulations. Along the way Willard encounters Colonel Kilgore (Robert Duvall), a napalm-loving officer who preps troops for battle by playing Wagner. Kilgores men appear to be a community of draftees who prefer to surf and do drugs rather than fight. Willard’s journey also leads him to a USO Playboy Bunny show turned into a riot by sexually primal soldiers, to an abandoned post at the edge of American military jurisdiction; and finally to a schizophrenic photographer (Dennis Hopper) who tells wild and reverent tales about Kurtz. This is all before Willard meets the character he sets out to find during the first act of the screenplay.

Inspired by Conrad's 1902 novella about a steamer’s journey up river into the Congo jungle, the film captures the essence of a mad descent into the darkest reaches of the human psyche where war is only a backdrop to an inner personal struggle that rages in the heart of mankind—good versus evil.

“In this war, things get confused out there, power, ideals, the old morality, and practical military necessity,” says General Corman, while giving Willard his mission early in the screenplay. “Out there with these natives it must be a temptation to be a god. Because there’s a conflict in every human heart, between the rational and the irrational, between good and evil. And good does not always triumph.”
In a larger sense, like the novella, the screenplay is a morality play about the soul and our own "heart of darkness," rather than a story about war or third world oppression. Captain Willard’s character represents a common characteristic in mankind—a complex human being on an impossible mission, full of paradox and contradiction.

For a generation of Americans, John Milius and Coppola’s war story became a metaphorical backdrop to the corruptive madness and folly of war itself. Coppola described his motivation in making the film, as a quest, with elements borrowed from the horror, adventure, and thriller genres: "to create a film experience that would give its audience a sense of the horror, the madness, the sensuousness, and the moral dilemma of the Vietnam War."

In the same way that Coppola and Milius attempted to speak to a generation of Americans seeking a greater understanding of the Vietnam War, Tear of Rage attempts to address the untold horrors of urban America. My motivation for telling this story, similar to Apocalypse Now, using The Iliad as my primary comparative piece, is to expose the internal contradictions of American ideology; particularly in regards to its own internal conflicts, in a way that is mysterious and entertaining. Apocalypse Now tells a story stripped of political bias and serves as a great lesson in objectivity—letting the experience of the story speak for itself, while tugging on the hearts of the audience.

**Donnie Brasco**

*Donnie Brasco* is an academy award nominated screenplay that is based on

*Donnie Brasco, My Undercover Life in the Mafia*, the autobiography of former
undercover federal agent Joseph D. Pistone. This raw look into the underworld of the mafia is not a prototypical gangster or mafia film. The script depicts the externally simple character of Lefty Ruggiero (Al Pacino), who turns out to be internally complex.

Joe Pistone (Johnny Depp) is an FBI mole who integrates himself into the Mafia pecking order by posing as "jewel man" Donnie Brasco. He finds his loyalties divided when Lefty Ruggiero, a jaded hit man, takes him on as a protégé and places real trust in him. The two men form a friendship—and a criminal partnership—that jeopardizes Brasco's mission and obscures the boundaries between the law and the underworld.

The trust that is formed between Donnie and Lefty, with the knowledge of his undercover operation, creates a tension in the narrative between the service of justice and the criminal activity that is taking place around them. The more the audience gets to know Lefty, through Donnie, the more the audience begins to sympathize with this aging gangster who is seeking out a meaningful identity through this "corrupt" organization. "I wanted to tell the story of this relationship between these two guys who, but for one little secret, would want to kill each other, and instead grow to love and respect each other," says the screenplay's author, Paul Attanasio.

This sympathy, played out through Brasco's character, gives the audience a chance to get to know this "menace to society" in a way that otherwise would go unknown without the intimacy of the friendship that develops between the two main characters. This is a powerful narrative and yet an immensely difficult story
to develope. Brasco and Ruggiero’s relationship gives the audience access to a character that is usually stereotyped and marginalized by society as merely a violent thug.

What adds more tension to the narrative is Pistone’s relationship with his family. While Donnie Brasco trys to keep society safe from mob thugs, privately the real Brasco, Joe Pistone begins to lose control over his life outside of work. The closer he gets to Lefty, the further he gets from his own wife, who berates him for his absence in the home and even at one point accuses him of becoming like the thugs he is supposed to be taking down. All of this conflict creates continuous rising tension in the film, a narrative that peaks in one climatic scene, at the end of the story during which Lefty confronts Brasco about being an undercover agent.

“Two hours of film are the foundation for that one scene [near the end], and that one scene is supposed to really hit you,” explains Attansio. In a melodramatic, yet subtly intense manner, Attansio hits the audience with a sense of ultimate betrayal—but with an unconventional twist. Sympathy is generated for Lefty, while Joe, the federal agent and the traditional good guy, is the betrayer. All at once the audience realizes that it has been sucked into this relationship with Lefty and the result is a deep emotional sense of compassion for an unlikely character—a member of the underworld.

Like the Brasco screenplay, *Tear of Rage*, develops a strong relationship between the two main characters who would ordinarily be opposed to each other. Each of the main characters will be more intuitively aware each other’s motives because
of the kindred nature of their hearts. By the end of the story, you really are left to wonder about the difference between the law and the criminal.

Traffic

Traffic (2000) is a remarkably complex screenplay that weaves three interrelated stories into one dynamic plot. Without allowing one central character to dominate the story, screenwriter Stephen Gaghan drives the plot through a series of separate events, which all converge at the climax of the story. In the end, it is the subject matter, drug trafficking that emerges as the central character in the screenplay and eventually the film.

In addressing the highly sensitive social-political issue of drug trafficking, Gaghan moved the story forward through important and heavy dialogue, but remarkably without the subject matter coming across as too heavy handed, thus maintaining the balance between good entertainment and the underlying intended message. “We wanted to show all sides of the issue,” Gaghan said during Inside Traffic, a documentary on the making of the motion picture. “Whatever my political view is, it is not rendered in this film. All I wanted to do is create the same emotion in the viewer as when I was encountering this stuff firsthand in real life.”

One of the most convincing examples of this challenging dialogue is during an interrogation scene, during which one of the chief suspects who has been caught trafficking smaller amounts of drugs, explains why he is in the business. The Feds need his testimony in order to bust one of the key players on the American side of the drug traffic network. The suspect attempts to justify
himself, “This has worked for years and it will continue to work for years,” says Ruiz to the federal agents. “NAFTA makes everything more difficult for you. The border (Mexico-United States) is disappearing. Let me be the first to tell you, your government surrendered this war a long time ago.” He concludes, “I got greedy. I decided to bring a little in on my own, and somebody tipped you off. That was my mistake. Carl (the key player whom the Feds are trying to bust) would never be so stupid.”

Loaded with fragile political and social commentary, this monologue works well within the context of the interrogation scene and the overall context of the story. In screenwriting, as in another types of fiction, it is a challenge to introduce controversial dialogue and social commentary without turning off the audience to the actual story itself.

To demonstrate the breadth of the social crisis, Gaghan moves beyond stereotypes related to drug trafficking by diversifying the characters that buy, sell, and move the drugs into the United States. He also shows the disillusionment and naivety of the establishment trying to win the so-called war on drugs without being condescending toward the characters committed to fighting this battle. The movie’s marketing motto was, “No one gets away clean,” suggesting that everyone in America has a role in this potentially destructive problem. The screenplay methodically and objectively weaves together a riddle, a story full of contradictions and paradox, which play off each other in order to paint a portrait of the entirety and complexity of the main narrative. Gaghan simply sets the dialogue out there for the viewer to digest through the different characters,
juxtaposing them with other characters through tension-laced dialogue scenes, while the plot relentlessly moves toward its dramatic conclusion.

Traffic is an extraordinary screenplay. The complexity and plot sequence, as well as the character development, are potential sources of creativity for Tear of Rage. The two most important lessons I learned from the Traffic screenplay, in relationship to my project, are the crafting of heavy social/politically charged dialogue without bias and the use of inside federal agents to unfold the story. Both of these elements were done extremely well by screenwriter Stephen Gaghan and are central to the overall narrative of Tear of Rage.

Tear of Rage

Tear of Rage is a fresh new narrative that explores the heart of some of America’s most glaring ideological contradictions. These issues are primarily accessed through the eyes of its main character and narrator, Baruch Friedman, a 33 year old federal agent who is called in to covertly investigate the whereabouts and activities of a notorious gang leader and growingly radical political leader, Jermaine Amaru (based on the literary characters of Achilles and Shakur). Amaru is accused of becoming a cult-like leader and has cultivated a dangerous socio-political following on the West Coast of the United States.

Baruch’s assignment is to create a report on the controversial gang leader, and send it back to the nation’s capital in order to determine a course of action with this individual. As the operation unfolds, loosely following the plot of Homer’s Iliad, the young agent is both horrified and enchanted by what he finds when searching for Amaru. In the process, Baruch is forced to look into his own heart,
while remaining faithful to his duties, setting up a dramatic paradoxical struggle between justice and compassion.

By weaving together a fictional story with literary paradox, *Tear of Rage* will analyze socially charged issues of urban America, similar to those expressed in Tupac’s lyrics. Beyond theoretical issues and personal commentaries, the parable’s social critique attempts to raise questions about the internal issues that threaten the foundations of America’s vision for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
Works Cited


Lincoln, Abraham *Gettysburg Address*. November 19, 1863


TEAR OF RAGE

Written by J. Diamond Arnold

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California State University, San Marcos

Master of Arts
In
Literature and Writing Studies

Thesis
SEQUENCE ONE: THE BAPTISM OF JERMAINE AMARU

TITLES AND CREDITS—White letters over images of a city burning. Images representing the Watts riots in 1968 are shown while a song from the late sixties plays (Purple Haze).

PLACE
Los Angeles, California

YEAR
1968

EXT: WATTS, LA

BARUCH (V.O.)
Most men are born into this world simply to live. They pursue things like love, peace, and happiness.

A few men are born to die. They crave justice.

EXT: INNER CITY LA

A young black mother walks through the burning streets of a city in the midst of a riot. She is holding an infant in her arms, carrying him through the burning streets of the city. She is concerned but calm, seeking refuge from the fire storm surrounding her. As people run by her smashing store windows and pushing over cars, the mother goes virtually unnoticed.

EXT: The mother spots a potential sanctuary. Shiloh Church of God sits across a street filled with chaos. She looks around, makes her way to the church, and enters through a side door.

INT: Once safely inside, she moves toward the front of the empty sanctuary. She looks to see if there is anyone else inside. She is alone. She walks to the front of the sanctuary where there is a basin of water.

MOTHER
Lord!!

She raises her hands toward the ceiling.

Please, God, forgive me. Have mercy on my baby boy.
She unwraps her son from a cloth and then cradles his naked body in her arms as he squirms. She looks around again, and then lifts him up above her head.

MOTHER
Looking upward.

Be His vision. He, your true son. You, his true Father.

She lowers the baby, kisses him on the forehead, and places one hand over his heart. The other hand pinches his nose as she dips the baby in the large bowl.

MOTHER
Oh, Lord, please make Jermaine Amaru a great man. Protect him and keep him safe until he fulfills his destiny in this lifetime.

INT: CHURCH

Through the stained glass windows of the church, the city can be seen flickering in a bright orange light.

CHAPTER TWO: THE NATIONAL PEACE CONVENTION

EXT: Establishing shot—Washington DC (The Capitol Building)

TITLE: PRESENT DAY

EXT: DC HOTEL

TITLE: NATIONAL GANG PEACE CONVENTION

BARUCH (V.O.)
The suits on the hill had been planning this peace convention for over a year. Allegedly a peaceful gesture to pull the major gang leaders in the United States together for a little holiday “good will.” It looked more like arm chair generals jockeying for position. The beginning of an election year was only two weeks away but the race was already heating up with heavy criticism over the president’s foreign policy. The White House wanted to do a little Christmas cleaning before officially kicking off the real fight come spring time.

INT: CONVENTION HALL
BARUCH (V.O. Cont.)
We were there just to make sure all the pieces were moving to all the right squares on the board.

Loud cheers are heard as gang members toast one another.

SENATOR THURMAN
This marks the end of an outstanding conference. For nearly nine years the division between the East and West Coast gangs have burdened our nation. The bloodshed has been grievous not only to the families that have lost loved ones in this senseless violence but also to our nation. This is not a true reflection of what we stand for!

Light Applause.

We are pleased to honor the great strides toward peace made by the Achaean Gang Organization and the TROY coalition. Let their efforts be a beacon of hope and a shining example for all gangs around the nation that want their voices to be heard. This is not only a commitment to peace, it is a commitment to achieve the American Dream.

More light applause.

The Senator then welcomes another speaker to the podium.

MANILA PRATT
I am honored to be part of this historic occasion. We’ve had our differences in the past. We’ve fought many battles. But now peace is within our reach!

Cheers from the convention hall. A close up of Baruch sitting and listening to the proceedings without expression.

There comes a time to set aside our differences, and to focus on our similarities, for the sake of our families ...

Looking at his wife Helen who is staring at Perry Hernandez on the other side of the table.

Our people, and our nation.
Acknowledging the group of politicians at the head table. Less enthusiastic cheers from the convention floor. Baruch smirks with pleasure at the less than warm reception for the politicians.

Hector and Perry Hernandez.

He addresses them to his right on the panel that is assembled on stage.

I have always respected your father. Ole’ Pacifico is a good man and has done many great things for the people of Los Angeles and his fellow Mexican-Americans. It is time we work with each other rather than against each other. Here’s to a future filled with peace and prosperity for the gangs of America.

Raises his class and toasts the crowd. They raises their glasses.

HECTOR

Salud!!!!

PERRY

Salud!!!!

Looking across the table staring at Helen, Manila’s wife.

INT: BALLROOM DANCE FLOOR

Post convention celebration is taking place.

MANILA
I have wanted this day to come true for a long time.

HECTOR
We are pleased that it has arrived.

MANILA
A fifth to the Lord, so that He may bless this commitment.

Tilting his bottle of Hennessey to the side.

HECTOR
A fifth to the Lord!

They pour out the wine and alcohol on to the floor.
HECTOR
And a fifth to all of our brothers who have fallen.

MANILA
To our fallen brothers!

They tilt the bottles and pour out some more liquor on to the floor.

MANILA
Now we had better start drinking before there is none left.

HECTOR
To the pursuit of happiness!

They drink straight from the bottle.

Hector begins to look around for his brother Perry who has slipped away during the celebration.

INT: HOTEL PENTHOUSE SUITE

Perry swipes his key card through the lock and enters the hotel room. Helen, Manila’s wife, is sitting by a window. Paris slowly approaches her. Helen senses his presence.

HELEN
We can’t keep doing this anymore.

PERRY
You shouldn’t have given me the key.

HELEN
There are a lot of things that I shouldn’t have done.

She looks at her wedding ring.

PERRY
Live and learn.

He begins stroking her hair while looking at her lovely face in the mirror, then he leans down and kisses her neck.
HELEN
Learning by dying is what I'm afraid of.

She sighs and gently pushes Paris away.

PERRY
You think he cares for you? I watched him at this conference. He doesn’t care about peace unless it benefits him. And you are just an ornament on his chest.

HELEN
Stop!!!

PERRY
I'm sorry, Helen. You deserve so much more.

HELEN
You're talking like a school boy.

PERRY
For wanting you?

HELEN
For not knowing the difference between a want and a need.

Looking back into his eyes.

I wish you weren’t so damn good-looking!

She smiles softly.

INT: CONVENTION HALL

The celebration for the peace treaty continues as Hector calmly tries to find his brother Perry. There is a look of concern and frustration on his face as he searches the convention hall, checking at his watch.

INT: HOTEL SUITE

PERRY
Come with me to LA. You will be safe with my family.

He pulls out a beautiful diamond necklace and places it around Helen’s neck.
HELEN
Oh, P. You know I can’t take this. I can’t wear this.

PERRY
Sometimes in life we make bad choices. It doesn’t make us bad; it just means we can make better choices in the future.

HELEN
Fate chooses for us. I can’t go with you to LA.

PERRY
Then come to Mexico with me. They won’t find us there.

HELEN
You have a fool’s imagination, Perry. That’s why I love you.

She looks at her necklace in the mirror.

And it’s why I am afraid of you too.

He leans over her and touches her lips to keep her from talking. They passionately kiss.

CHAPTER THREE: BARUCH AT HOME

EXT: BRIDGE OVER POTOMAC RIVER (DC IN BACKGROUND)

Baruch is driving around the beltway almost in a trance.

BARUCH (V.O.)
The fat cats on the hill thought they had really made progress this time. Tugging at their jackets and fixing their ties in the mirror. Shit, the convention was like inviting Israel and Palestine over to your place for Christmas dinner.

EXT: SUBURBS, RURAL MARYLAND.

BARUCH (V.O.)
The convention gave me the opportunity to be back home just in time for the holidays—a blessing and a curse.
Baruch glares out the windows of his car, driving around nearby neighborhoods. He sees identical houses on the block, yuppie fathers putting up Christmas lights and decorations in their front yards trying to out do their neighbors.

INT: CAR

BARUCH (V.O. Cont.)
Every time I was undercover, running the streets with drug dealers and criminals, all I could think about was getting back home. But every time I came home, I kept wishing I was back on the streets with the thugs.

EXT: BARUCH’S HOME

INT: LIVING ROOM

Baruch walks into his house and sees his six-year-old daughter slouched down into the couch watching television. A plate of food sits nearly untouched on a dinner tray in front of her.

BARUCH
Hi, baby. Daddy’s home!

DAUGHTER
Hi, daddy.

Without looking away from the TV. Baruch is only mildly deflated by her apathetic reaction.

BARUCH
Where’s your mama?

DAUGHTER
She’s talking on the phone.

BARUCH
In the bedroom?

She doesn’t answer because she’s locked into the TV.

Baruch goes over to the couch and strokes her hair tenderly and kisses her on the forehead.
BARUCH
Missed you!

DAUGHTER
Missed you too.

She is still looking at the television totally focused on the Disney programming and numb to the fact that her father has just returned after a long absence. Baruch hears his wife down the hallway still talking on the phone loudly.

INT: BEDROOM

Baruch walks into the bedroom and opens his closet. His wife acts indifferent to his presence and is emotionally cold.

HEATHER
Yeah, I gotta go. Baruch just got home.

She hangs the phone up and says nothing to him.

BARUCH
How’s your mom doing?

HEATHER
Oh, don’t come in here and start with your shit. She’s better company a thousand miles away than you are.

BARUCH
For this reason a man will leave his mother and father.

HEATHER
Come off it. I don’t need you to start spewing chapter and verse! You disappear for a couple of weeks without a word and you expect me to run over and start kissing your feet?

BARUCH
What you see is what you get.
HEATHER
Exactly! And I haven’t seen a goddam man for the past two years. I’m married to a fucking ghost. You said that it would be six months. Six months, Baruch! It’s going on four God-forsaken years. Your daughter doesn’t even give a damn that you show up anymore.

BARUCH
Oh, now you’re her spokeswoman too?

HEATHER
I know her. But if that’s not good enough for you, I’ll speak for myself. Listen closely. I want out!

Baruch is not surprised but he has nothing to say. He keeps going through his stuff, loading up a gym bag.

HEATHER
That’s right, nothing. As usual! In your own world. It’s all about you. You’re chasing an illusion, Baruch. Grow up!

BARUCH
Oh, how sexy. A free therapy session from my own wife. We don’t need the shrink anymore. You got it all figured out.

HEATHER
You’re such a little boy, a lost little boy, staring out the window, still waiting for your daddy to come home. You’ll never be your dad.

Baruch swings the closet door open so that she is behind it talking.

HEATHER
You need to stop playing cops and robbers and start being a husband and a father.

She pulls the door the whole way back so that she can see him again, nearly in his face.

BARUCH
You need to stop wagging your tongue and be grateful for what you got.

HEATHER
Exactly. I got NOTHING! She has NOTHING!
Pointing to the living room where the daughter is watching TV.

Your daughter doesn’t even know who you are.

BARUCH
So you want one of the mice on this street? They tie their fancy knots around their necks everyday and sell a bunch of meaningless shit to people who are trying to fill up their meaningless lives?

HEATHER
This is meaningful?

Baruch walks out of the bedroom.

That’s right. Keep on walking! Don’t bother coming back.

INT: LIVING ROOM

Baruch kisses his daughter on the forehead.

BARUCH
You doing good, baby?

DAUGHTER
Yeah.

Giggling at a Disney cartoon on the TV. Still not even looking up at her father.

BARUCH
Want to go read a book with me in your room?

Heather walks out and leans in the doorway watching Baruch interact with his daughter.

DAUGHTER
No thanks.

Baruch is a bit disappointed. He turns and walks into the kitchen.

INT: KITCHEN
Baruch is rummaging through the refrigerator looking for food. The refrigerator is barely stocked, and nothing looks at all appealing.

BARUCH
Why is there no food in this house?

His wife appears in the doorway of the kitchen.

HEATHER
It’s not like you’d be here to eat it anyway.

He rummages through the cupboards, getting frustrated.

BARUCH
I’ll be back later.

HEATHER
Oh for crying out loud! I’ll make you something to eat.

BARUCH
Don’t worry about it. I’ll go get something myself.

HEATHER
Fine. Don’t expect us to wait up for you.

Baruch turns and looks at her with frustration, shakes his head walks out into the garage, and gets in his car.

INT: LIVING ROOM

The house is dark and everyone is sleeping. Baruch slowly makes his way down the hallway to the bedroom.

INT: BEDROOM

Baruch lies on his bed awake. His wife is a dark lump on the far side of the king-sized bed.

BARUCH (V.O.)
The more I laid awake at night waiting for the morning to come, the darker it seemed to get—until I felt like it couldn’t get any darker. And then it did!
CHAPTER FOUR: THE ASSIGNMENT

INT: MORNING

The phone rings.

Baruch wakes up in his bed with his wife turned the other way, still far on the other side of the bed.

BAUCH

Picking up the phone.

Yeah.

Pause.

Yeah. What? Get on with it!

Pause as he listens to the phone

Yeah, I had it turned off on purpose.

Pause.

Headquarters?

Long sigh and a pause.


Hangs up the phone and walks into the bathroom. His wife glances over groggy eyed and hears the shower turn on, then rolls back over and goes to sleep.

EXT: FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION HEADQUARTERS

INT: ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND FIREARMS DIVISION

INT: MEETING ROOM

Small dark room set up like a lounge with sofas and a coffee table. A couple of men, including Odell, an agent who had just attended the peace convention with Baruch, are sitting on chairs. Another man stands against the counter in a far corner.
LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE
Agent Friedman. Glad you could make it in here on such short notice. Can I get you something to drink?

BARUCH
No, thank you. I'm fine.

Baruch looks around the room at the stoic men.

L.C. GEORGE
Agent Friedman, you’ve met Agent Odell Stephens before?

BARUCH
Yes, sir.

Nodding at Odell as he would an old buddy.

COCKBURN
We need to complete the peace treaty.

BARUCH
We? Did I miss something?

Looking around the room uncertainly.

L.C. GEORGE
We need to make sure we are closing all the gaps that the suits can’t to close.

BARUCH
Gaps?

COCKBURN
Open wounds—potential infection or virus.

L.C. GEORGE
Agent Friedman, have you ever heard the name Jermaine Amaru?

BARUCH
I’ve heard of him. High school prep basketball star. Grew up just down the road. Busted a couple of times for pushing after an underachieving career at U of M.
COCKBURN
Cut a couple of rap albums and started a small record label with Agemem Knightly.

BARUCH
Yeah. I know the story. Can we move past the foreplay?

COCKBURN
Lucas. Play the DVD, please.

On the television appears a young black male, bald headed and wearing a simple white short sleeved t-shirt.

AMARU (on video)
When I say Thug Nation, that’s exactly what I mean! We Thugs. That’s how they see us! I don’t give a fuck what you all think. I don’t give a fuck if you a lawyer, a doctor, ah...ah...school teacher, a preacher or a mutha-fuckin senator. We still just thugs to those who already have themselves established in this mutha fucka. Until we start owning up, getting our own shit, having our own business, our own political agendas, to match up, this is how it’s gonna be. I ain’t gonna bullshit you, like the rest of these mutha fuckas up here. Telling you that we makin’ progress. That we makin’ inroads. Progress? Progress? Fuck the inroads. We need to be makin our own mutha-fuckin super highways!!! We our own nation. And it is a nation! It’s a nation within a nation! Thug Nation!

A few enthusiastic claps amidst the awkward silence on the DVD. Lucas pauses the DVD with an image of the intense face of Amaru on the screen.

L.C. GEORGE
This was videotaped at a black expo in Chicago about a year ago.

Points to Lucas.

COCKBURN
Go ahead. Keep playing it.

Lucas starts the DVD again. On video (off camera) Amaru is on the street outside of his record label offices being interviewed by reporters later that year.
REPORTER
Mr. Amaru, can we get a comment on why you will not be attending the upcoming peace conference in Washington DC

AMARU (on video)

Chuckles.

REPORTER
What exactly does that mean? Thug Nation?

AMARU (on video)

Laughing sarcastically.

That’s my dream. That’s my nightmare. That’s my “I have a nightmare” speech.

GEORGE
Jermaine Amaru, was one of the rising figures of the Achaean Gang Organization, the organization you and agent Stephens have been embedded in over the past several months. While Manila Pratt represented the AGO at the recent peace convention, we’re not so sure his word will stick, or if it represents of the heart of the AGO.

COCKBURN
Agamem Knightly is the one who pulls the strings. He’s got the numbers internally. He was not at the convention of course and we have concerns about the stability of this...loose alliance...out west.

GEORGE
Amaru is Knightly’s right-hand man. But, ah, we believe that Amaru’s aspirations have ahh...His ideas...have become...dangerous.

COCKBURN
Amaru has been spotted in the LA area over the past several months and he has taken his group of loyalists that he calls Thug Nation with him.

BARUCH
Yeah, I heard he had a falling out with Knightly. That’s the word.
GEORGE
More than a falling out. Amaru is on his own. And allegedly, the people that went with him, they worship Amaru, like some sort of prophet.

George lights a cigar.

COCKBURN
LAPD has recently picked up several dozen military assault rifles in a series of busts. There is major concern that Amaru is connected to the weapons.

BARUCH
Military? How?

COCKBURN
That’s one of the gaps we need to close immediately. God knows we don’t need the press getting a hold of this one. He’s already taken heat for letting the AW ban expire. This one is coming straight down from the top.

Leaning forward.

Peace is fragile by nature. Sometimes, it can be shattered with simply a whisper.

George pauses to contemplate his own words.

Listen, Baruch, you’re a good agent. Things get crazy out there. We understand this.

GEORGE
The lines on the field of play are constantly moving—power, ideas, issues. It must a great temptation for someone like Amaru to have so much power, given his upbringing. We all have our temptations, I’m sure. Believing that we are in control of things—especially our own will...But the sun does not always rise on every soul. And none of us is very far from that darkness. But Jermaine Amaru has fallen into it completely.

BARUCH
What are you asking me to do?
GEORGE
Your assignment is to head out to Vegas and meet up with an agent...

Searching for a paper.

...where the hell...what the hell...

Cockburn points to a spot on the paper.

...Agent Camden. He’s a local undercover agent who’s got eyes and ears up and down the strip. He’s been in Vegas for years. You’ll meet this guy...

Cockburn hands Baruch another folder.

COCKBURN
This is highly classified. Everything you need to know about the mission is in here.

BARUCH
And when I find this agent?

Looking down at the file.

Camden?

COCKBURN
He’ll get you into Amaru’s inner circle. You will gather info on the whereabouts of Amaru. Learn what you can about this Thug Nation...the prevailing rhetoric, etc. Find his group and provide us as much intel as you can. I want a report—assault weapons, how many people are in his compound, what he is professing, and plans for future actions.

BARUCH
Sounds like another Texas mission?

COCKBURN
Just file a report and get it back to us.

George leans over, nearly in Baruch’s face.
GEORGE
The man is dangerous! He is a nut job. I do NOT want him to be the whisper that shatters this peace.

In a far corner of the room a person who has not been part of the conversation speaks up.

CIVILIAN
Whatever it takes!

GEORGE
You’ll be back home before Easter.

Realizing his intense posture, George leans back in his chair.

COCKBURN
Do you understand your orders, Agent Friedman?

BARUCH

In a near whisper.

Perfectly.

EXT: FLAG FLYING OVER THE FEDERAL BUILDING

CHAPTER FIVE: VEGAS NIGHTS

EXT: WASHINGTON DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

EXT: PLANE TAKING OFF

INT: PLANE

Baruch opens a file and begins to comb through pictures of Amaru in the dossier.

BARUCH (V.O.)
Every time some backwoods Tom, Dick, or Harry decides he wanted to start a boys club, they’d send us in to pluck the hoary hair from the head of the beast. Only problem is, every time you pull out one grey hair, three more grow back in its place.

Baruch opens a file.
INT: CLOSE UP OF THE DOSSIER

CONFIDENTIAL

FOR INTENDED RECIPIENT ONLY:

INTENDED RECIPIENT: Baruch Freidman, Lieutenant
Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: Jermaine Amaru

BARUCH (V.O. as he reads the file.)
This guy was no pushover. Not your everyday thug gangsta wanna be. Sharp mind. Prep-star all-American type of athlete. How the hell did he end up as a major gang leader?

History:

90 Graduated High School; (3.57 out of a possible 4.0), Recruited to play basketball on a partial scholarship at the University of Maryland.

90-91 Averaged 9.2 PPG, 11 APG; Ruptured Achilles tendon in winter of 91; Fall of 91 put on Academic probation for low GPA; Christmas of 91 put on probation from the University pending an investigation into his involvement in an alleged riot at a local pool hall.

Baruch pauses, looking out the window of the plane, contemplating the contents of the file.

EXT: VEGAS STRIP (NIGHT)

Baruch and Odell are being driven in a convertible Cadillac down the Vegas strip by a friend of Agent Camden’s.

DRIVER
Welcome to sin city. Camden said he was sorry he couldn’t pick you up at the airport. He had a big poker game he couldn’t get away from. Said he’d meet you at the casino.
Baruch looks at all of the people flocking the streets of Vegas. A reality TV show is being shot on the strip. High class hookers are trolling. Redneck white trash smoking cigarettes. A group of college frat boys. A couple of brothers. He sees a little girl walking behind her parents at a distance. He looks away with some sadness.

Baruch pulls the file out of his bag and begins to read more of the dossier.

BARUCH (V.O.)
After rupturing his Achilles tendon he started to get into trouble. And while he wasn’t getting into trouble, he apparently began exploring his artistic side.

Viewing on paper while the voice over continues.

92-93 Played local clubs and events as a rap artist.

93 Signed with a small label, Achaean Records, owned and operated by Agemen Knightly.

94 Released first record to solid East Coast acclaim.

95 Released a book of poetry; unreleased rap lyrics.

BARUCH (V.O.)
Apparently the creative side of things wasn’t enough. The business end of things lit a spark in him. He became a junior partner with Knightly’s record label and started acting more like a VP than an artist.

INT: CASINO

They come to a table with four people sitting, playing poker.

DRIVER
Sir! Your guest is here.

He points at Baruch.

CAMDEN
Have a seat. I’ve got them on the run. It won’t be long now.

BARUCH
I don’t have time for games.
CAMDEN
I said have a seat.

Raises his hand at the cocktail waitress.

Get him a drink. What do you want to drink man?

Slaps down a $100 bill on her plate.

A few moments of poker ensues. Camden folds and is out of the game.

CAMDEN
That’s enough punishment for me today, boys.

He grabs his jacket and remaining chips and motions for his visitors to come with him.

CAMDEN
To a cocktail waitress.

Hey, Brenda! How you doing, baby?

Kisses her on the cheek.

Damn girl, you looking fine. What time do you get off?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS
Four.

CAMDEN
You hanging out in the lounge for awhile after that?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS
Nahh. I gotta get some rest. School just started back up last week.

CAMDEN
Ahhhh. All right. All right. Good for you! I catch you later, hun.

Continues to walk and wave at a few waitresses, nodding at a few pit bosses along the way to the bar.
CAMDEN
What’s the urgent business that you come storming in here like fucking SWAT?

Both men shake their heads no.

BARUCH
CenTel sent me out here to hook up with you.

CAMDEN
Oh, fuck. Here we go again.

Looking irritated.

Do me a favor and lower your voice. This is my fucking office.

Still walking through the casino.

Now what the hell do they want from me? Did they fucking send you down to keep an eye on me? What’d they say?

BARUCH
You didn’t get the papers?

CAMDEN
Papers?

Laughing. Pointing at the bar.

You sure you don’t want anything? Nothing to eat? It’s on me. I don’t work by papers. And I suggest you lose that shit in the bag within the next hour.

BARUCH
George sent me.

CAMDEN
Fuck.

Turns to the bartender unconcerned about Baruch’s needs.

I’ll have a Crown and Coke with the New York strip, well done. And get this guy whatever he wants.
BARUCH
I need to get to Amaru!

Camden’s smile disappears from his face. Starts shaking his headpulling out a cigarette and lighting it.

CAMDEN
You’re shitting me? Mutha fuck! They sent you here to me. Holy fuck.

He puts his head down.

You’re in over your head. Amaru? Fuck!

BARUCH
Can you get me close to him?

CAMDEN
Fucking A... You’re right up his asshole. This is his domain. That’s Amaru over there.

Pointing to a pit boss.

That’s Amaru over there.

Pointing to the cameras.

That’s Amaru up there.

Pointing to a box seat overseeing the casino floor.

Are you fucking nuts? Who agrees to an assignment like that? Who did you piss off back at CenTel? Who’s wife did you fuck?

Getting close to Baruch and speaking directly into his ear.

Amaru is not even on the fucking map.

Bartender brings his drink, and he tilts it back and drinks it quickly

You don’t just walk in here and say, “Hey how’s it going? How’s the weather? Where’s Jermaine Fucking Amaru?” You don’t even say his name around here.
Nodding at the casino.

Don’t be saying that name…at least not around me.

Lowering his head and rubbing his eyes in disgust.

BARUCH
Have you seen him lately?

CAMDEN
I told you. I see him every day. Right here. Ain’t shit goes down without his knowledge. But as for him in the flesh, hell, he may not even be in the country. He could be dead for all we know and he’s running this place from Hades.

He gets up and leaves the bar before he even gets his meal and starts walking toward the elevators, talking as Baruch follows him.

You don’t just get close to Amaru. He’s an enigma, man! You breath him like you breathe toxic fumes. He gets in your blood. Outside of that, you’ll never see him.

They step into the elevator and the doors close. As soon as the doors close Baruch slams Camden up against the side of the elevator, to the surprise of Odell.

BARUCH
Save your fucking folk tales for your cocktail waitress. You better start giving me some real shit or you’ll be back in some basement back in DC filing papers for the rest of your god forsaken life. Now I don’t care how it happens, get me to Amaru.

Baruch eases up on Camden.

CAMDEN
Fucking cowboy.

Looking a bit embarrassed. He adjusts himself by looking into the mirror of the elevator, fixing his hair.

The suits don’t know what the fuck is going on out here. You might catch his scent through Knightly. You’re on your own after that.
Elevator door opens. The men look at each other, and Camden walks out and turns back looking at Baruch.

Tell me something. How much does a man have to hate his life to take an assignment like this?

CHAPTER SIX: KNIGHTLY REVIEW

EXT: OUTSIDE OF CLUB MAC ONE ONE

INT: INSIDE THE CLUB

A diverse crowd of minorities and college students listen to live artists on stage. This night’s featured artist is a DJ out of NYC and is playing Tupac’s *How Do You Want?*

Camden leads Baruch over to an elevated section of the club where Knightly is sitting at a table with strippers and assorted businessmen. He is puffing on a cigar sitting back and taking in the scenery.

CAMDEN

Sup, Knight. Wanted to introduce you to a couple of my boys from back East.

KNIGHTLY

Yeah, yeah.

Looking at Baruch, reaching out to shake his hand.

Nice to meet you? You solo?

BARUCH

I ain’t much at keeping company.

KNIGHTLY

Or you ain’t much company to be kept.

Knightly looks him over once.

Arrrright…arrright.

Slurring his speech a little with a healthy buzz, motioning for him to sit down.
CAMDEN
Baruch and I broke into the AC going back to the Baltimore days.

KNIGHTLY
Nilla send you out here to keep an eye on me? Making sure we keepin’
the peace?

He laughs mockingly, rubbing a stripper’s back.

BARUCH
Just seeing how it’s done in the desert. We all looking for a piece.

Baruch reaches across the table to shake his hand.

KNIGHTLY
Well, there are plenty of pieces to go around.

Smacking a girl in the ass as she excuses herself from the table to make way for
Baruch and Camden to have a conversation.

Take your pick.

Laughing and pointing to all the hootchies in the joint.

This is how we do it.

Baruch looks around.

BARUCH
I’m entertained!

KNIGHTLY

To Camden.

You vouch for this guy? He looks like a thinker.

CAMDEN
Yeah, I vouch for him.

Looking at Baruch.
KNIGHTLY

Good.

Pause as he relights his cigar.

So, did you make the big convention?

BARUCH

I did.

KNIGHTLY

Laughing.

You look like a peacekeeper.

ANTHONY JACKSON (A. JACKS)

Look like a UN inspector and shit. Comin up in here looking for WMDs and shit.

Laughs at himself.

BARUCH

Peace can be good for business.

KNIGHTLY

Is that right? Where’d you learn that? Or is dat your own theory?

BARUCH

Common sense.

KNIGHTLY

Sometimes, the common things that make the most sense here...

Pointing to his head and then reaching into his pocket.

Don’t make cents here.

Throwing a wad of cash onto the table tapping the stack of cards with his finger. Leans forward.

Make no mistake. War is GOOD for business.
He begins dividing the wad of cash into four piles and starts passing to each of the men sitting at the table while his business associate excitedly begins shuffling the cards.

Capitalism, just like cards, is all about the art of illusion.

The associate begins to deal.

The black man who invented playing cards. It was a means of determining Allah’s will. A form of meditation. Sacred geometry! Long before old man Moses carved out his laws into stones.

Looking over his cards.

You play the game ultimately to get love.

Knightly discards a six and a nine of hearts.

But sometime the bitches don’t love you back.

Picks up another two cards. A. Jacks is getting excited as Knight talks.

A. JACKS
A mutha fucking art!

KNIGHTLY
You goddamn right it is AJacks. It is an art, and you need to know how to play the game or the game will play you.

Baruch antes up.

Sometimes there ain’t no need for the hand your holding, you create the illusion of need for it.

Looking intently at his cards and pausing.

BARUCH
What’s the need today?

KNIGHTLY
Laughing.

I like you dawg.
Looking at Odell.

I like this cat. Where'd you find him? Got to be East Coast. These west coast mutha fuckas got no edge to them.

Knightly looks his hand over and discards two more cards.

KNIGHTLY
The five needs in life, timeless, universal. Poetry, power, paper, pussy, and pistols! And that’s how we do it out here in the desert!

BARUCH
So what's your need?

Camden is getting uncomfortable with Baruch’s pressing. Knightly discards and picks up two more cards. Baruch holds.

KNIGHTLY
Leaning back in his seat.

I need blood!

BUSINESS ASSOCIATE
Tonight, baby! Right here at the MGM. Tiger Thompson, representing NYC, boy!

Slapping Knightly a high five.

KNIGHTLY
You got a good enough hand to fund your need?

Looking at Baruch.

Baruch looks over at Camden and then back at Knightly.

BARUCH
I got no need.

Knightly laughs out loud.
KNIGHTLY
Shit. The only man I know with no need is a dead one. You in Vegas now, boy.

Leaning forward.

You walk these streets, and you’ll find a need right quick.

A. JACKS
Or a need will find yo ass.

Baruch holds.

KNIGHTLY
And when all else fails, you break out the weapons of war and take what choo need.

Lays down a straight of spades, capped off by an ace of spades.

Spades! Weapons of war make this art possible.

Takes his money back from Baruch and Camden. Knightly says to Camden.

See you at the fight tonight?

CAMDEN
Hell yeah, we’ll be there. We got a need for blood too!

Looking over at Baruch.

CHAPTER SEVEN: A BROKEN TRUCE

INT: HERNANDEZ MANSION, BEVERLY HILLS, CA

Hector is on the phone with his wife and newborn child in the background

HECTOR
Yes, that’ll be fine. We can go have some dinner after the fight.

Listening.

No, I’m meeting my brother there.
Look of concern on Hector’s face. His wife plays with the baby while listening closely to her husband.

Yes. Of course, he’ll be joining us. He is part of the family business.

Hangs up, hangs his head, and begins to rub his eyes.

That boy is gonna be the death of me.

MAGDALENA (MAGGY)
What is it, mi amor?

HECTOR
These guys are playing hard ball. Nothing to be worried about.

MAGGY
Must you go to Vegas tonight?

HECTOR
Yes, this is an important meeting. Now that we’ve got the peace agreement locked up, we can close on some of the major deals that were disrupted by the war.

Walks over to her, touches her hair, and looks at the baby.

MAGGY
Haven’t you made enough deals to last a life time?

HECTOR
Baby, it never ends. You get to a point where you can delegate to others, and find some space on your own, but it never ends.

MAGGY
Well, please be careful.

Chuckling.

HECTOR
Careful?

MAGGY
You know what kind of crowds those fights bring in. I’ve seen the thugs they attract.
HECTOR
Relax, baby, we are at peace now.

MAGGY
Well, like you said, “It never ends.”

HECTOR
Business! Business never ends.

MAGGY
It is what I love about you.

Hector holds his baby.

HECTOR
What’s that?

MAGGY
Your optimism.

She smiles warmly.

But it is also what scares me most about you.

HECTOR
I will be fine, woman. Things are getting brighter. I feel it in my bones.

They kiss, and Hector leaves for the airport.

EXT: CASINO PLAZA

Perry gets out of a limo with Helen and they walk inside. At a distance, two black men in a car staking the entrance out. They appear to be surprised. One pulls out a cell phone and makes a call.

INT: PENTHOUSE SUITE

Overlooking the Vegas skyline.

Perry prepares for the prizefight by putting on his tuxedo with Helen seductively watching him in the background.
PERRY
I wish you could go with me. I love the thought of you sitting by my side. My woman!

HELEN
I couldn’t stomach watching two men beat each other senseless.

PERRY
Well, it’s not exactly my thing either. It’s just the spectacle of it all. Celebrities, politicians, mingling with workers, Mexicans, Blacks, and white trash—all worshipping the same event.

HELEN
I’ve seen enough violence to last me a lifetime.

PERRY
This is true. You’ve seen too much of their world.

HELEN
It’s your world too, lest you forget!

PERRY
Not true! I’ve only inherited it. I could leave this in a heart beat. Take you with me.

Helen stands up and helps Perry adjust his tie.

HELEN
You’re a true romantic, Perry.

PERRY
It is my mother’s blood in me, I guess.

He looks her in the eyes and caresses her cheeks.

I will have you one day, soon, all to myself.

They kiss.

EXT: KNIGHTLY’S CLUB, LAS VEGAS, EVENING

INT: CONFERENCE ROOM
Manila storms through the front door of the club. Knightly and a host of men at a pre-fight party are having a good time. Camden is part of the party group.

MANILA
This means war! I want this little bastard’s head on a plate.

KNIGHTLY
What is it, my brutha?

MANILA
That little bitch. I knew she was up to something. Ignorant cold little hussy!

KNIGHTLY
What now? Helen? What are you fighting about this time?

MANILA
That mutha fucka had the balls to seduce her when they were back in DC. I’m sure of it! Right under my fucking nose!

KNIGHTLY
Who?

MANILA
The fucking Hernandez boy!!! I just got word from one of her bitches. She is here, in Vegas, rendezvousing with that little fuck!

KNIGHTLY
Are you certain?

MANILA
I just talked to her bitch friend back east to find out where she was. And I just got a call from the guys I had watching the hotel where the fight is tonight. He just arrived with her.

KNIGHTLY
I’ll be damned.

MANILA
I suspected it when we were at the peace convention. I saw how that fuck was looking at her. Licking his little boyish lips.
KNIGHTLY

I am sorry.

With a look of pride in his eyes, as if it were to his advantage to hear this news.

I told you. You don’t achieve peace through dialogue. Chit chat is for bitches.

MANILA

Son of a bitch!!

He is pacing the room, hardly listening to Knightly ramble on.

KNIGHTLY

How you wanna do this? You want me to get someone to take care of it?

A. JACKS

Say the word. We can have a hit on that mutha fucka by the end of the night.

MANILA

Are you fucking crazy? I want to personally piss down his throat myself.

KNIGHTLY

Damn, boy. Look at the peacemaker himself. All eager for blood now.

Laughing loudly and acknowledging the rest of the crew gathered around them.

MANILA

You’re dammed right I want blood. He fucked my wife right under my goddamn nose! How the fuck do you think I’m gonna react?

KNIGHTLY

Well, shit. You don’t have to beg me. You know how we do it out here in Vegas.

A. JACKS

We gotta plan this shit. You don’t just waltz up to this mutha fucka and take his ass out. There are gonna be ramifications. From TROY and from the locals and feds. We need to unite all factions of the AGO first before we take this fucker down.
MANILA
Have you worked your shit out with Amaru yet?

KNIGHTLY
Oh, shit! We gonna go there again?

A. JACKS
True dat! You need to mend shit up with Amaru before we get into this. We are going to need him long term. We gonna need his band of thugs if we going head to head with TROY.

KNIGHTLY
Amaru is out. He’s off playing in Neverland with the lost boys.

A. JACKS
We need that mutha fucka if we gonna do it right, and he took some hard ass warriors with him down to the reservation. No disrespect to you, Mem. We should at least run this shit by him.

KNIGHTLY
Why people always want to suck this guy’s dick? Amaru is a Lone fucking Ranger. Why we making him out to be some mythological Adonis? He does not exist without the protection of the AGO. He needs us; we do not need him.

MANILA
True, we don’t need him to care about this specific issue, but having Amaru with us gives us a hell of a lot more to work with. Just sign off with him. That’s all I ask.

KNIGHTLY
Fucking A... Shit! Send out envoys to Amaru tonight. He’s having a big “Concert in the Park” tomorrow in Compton. Alright, we’ll hit him up, but I don’t want word out on the streets.

They break the meeting, and Knightly pulls Manila aside for one last word.

MANILA
I want her back gaddam it!
KNIGHTLY
Relax. Let it come to you. Let it come right in.

INT: HOTEL ROOM

Baruch stands in the bathroom and slaps some water on his face, looking deep into the mirror, staring at his eyes. He intensely searches his soul. A 24-hour news channel can be heard in the background.

ANCHORWOMAN (V.O. off screen)
In the President’s State of the Union Speech tonight, he outlined several critical issues that will likely be hot topics over the course of a tight campaign this coming year. In the speech he addressed foreign and domestic policies, emphasizing the need for compassion on all levels.

TELEVISION (V.O. off screen)
One of America’s preeminent values is kindness, love of one’s neighbor. We must never walk by the stranger lying along the side of the highways of American society. We must never turn a cold shoulder to any citizen who feels isolated from the American dream.

Baruch walks into the room and sits on the edge of the bed, watching the replay of the President’s State of the Union Address earlier.

We will continue to encourage community organizations that shine light on dark places, giving purpose to young people that have no goals or plans for success, particularly our urban youth. We will offer them better options than indifference, rage, bitterness, gangs, or time served in a penitentiary.

Baruch watches this portion intently. Then he flips the channel with a sarcastic smirk at what the president is saying.

ANCHORWOMAN
And on an encouraging note, we leave you with this story.

A picture of Amaru appears on the side of the screen.

East Coast rap artist, businessman, and rising community leader Jermaine Amaru will hold a free music and food festival in downtown Compton in Los Angeles tomorrow.
Images of past concerts are shown on the screen. Baruch only sees distant images of Amaru surrounded by kids.

Amaru and his non-profit group, One Thug Up, are putting on a series of concerts that are scheduled through the summer in an attempt to put a positive spin on gang affiliation while decreasing violence among gangs on a national level.

Baruch scribbles something down on a piece of paper.

ANCHORWOMAN
Nice to see someone taking a more positive approach these days. That’s our news for this half hour. More of the latest news and notes from today’s top stories when we return.

Baruch clicks off the television and heads out the door, dressed for the fight.

INT: INSIDE CASINO LOBBY

Camden walks in and meets Baruch in the lobby. They are meeting to go to the fight together.

CAMDEN
You want your boy?

BARUCH
I heard about it. Compton, California, tomorrow.

CAMDEN
I contacted one of my inside guys for you out there. You can hook up with him when you get there.

BARUCH
What makes you think I want company?
CAMDEN
Oh yeah, that’s right, you’re the Lone Ranger. Well, you don’t go trollin around South Central by yourself. Not looking for who you’re looking for. This guy I’m hookin’ you up with is a local undercover local police officer there. He is LAPD but been inside for 13 years. Name is Kilmore. He’ll show your ass round.

Pause a beat.

Then you can get off my ass.

INT: HOTEL ROOM

Hector arrives at Perry’s room. Perry is dressed and ready, and seems to be nervous around his brother.

HECTOR
You look good, brother. I’m sorry I’m running late. We need to get down to the fight.

PERRY
I need to talk with you before we go.

HECTOR
Can it wait until after the fight? We are really up against it, man.

PERRY
It is very important.

Hector, looking irritated.

HECTOR
I’d rather do this after the fight. We’ll go out to dinner, have some cigars, and we’ll have a heart to heart.

Perry looks over his shoulder, trying to determine whether or not he should come out about his affair.

PERRY
Fair enough. But I need to know, that no matter what we talk about, you will not disown me as your brother.

Hector looks at Perry with some concern.
HECTOR
Oh, brother, it must be serious. The last time you said that to me was when you crashed Pop’s Rolls Royce.

Hector grabs his brother’s face compassionately and looks him in the eye.

HECTOR
You are my brother. You will always be my brother. You are my brother now, and you will be my brother after the fight. (Chuckling) Now let’s go enjoy ourselves.

They leave, and Helen comes out of the bathroom, watching the door close, a look of grave concern on her face.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DEATH OF A. JACKSON

INT: BASEMENT

Tupac Shakur’s Heart of Men plays over a montage of shots where members of the AGO are cleaning and preparing their guns for battle.

Several gang members organize guns on the table while smoking cigarettes. Clips are loaded as the music plays on in the background.

EXT: VEGAS STRIP

Knightly is driving to the prizefight, talking on his cell phone.

INT: CASINO

Crewmembers prepare the ring for the big fight.

INT: LONG UNDERGROUND TUNNEL

The men that were cleaning and loading guns earlier are walking down a long hallway that appears to be an underground tunnel of some sort. A. Jackson leads the men. He is talking on a cell phone.

EXT: VEGAS STRIP

Knightly is rollin’ in the Humvee on his way to the fight.
EXT: SMALL WAREHOUSE

The men who were preparing the weapons all come out of a large garage door and jump down off the loading docks and into a caravan of black BMW and Mercedes-Benz cars.

EXT: VEGAS STRIP

The caravan cruises around the MGM Grand several times, but never stops.

EXT: MGM GRAND CASINO (NIGHT)

Perry and Hector arrive at the casino together, stepping out of a limo and walking into the casino. They are both dressed in tuxedoes, and there is a red carpet leading into the casino.

INT: CASINO ARENA

The crowd is packing in as Hector and Perry sit close to the ring, next to several celebrities and a few state politicians.

EXT: MGM GRAND CASINO (NIGHT)

A black Humvee pulls up. Knightly and three other members of his entourage get out and enter the casino, having the car valet-parked.

INT: MGM GRAND CASINO

Baruch meets Odell in the lobby and walks into the fight arena where fans are going crazy. They arrive just in time for the playing of the National Anthem. Baruch surveys the crowd of celebrities and politicians. He sees Hector and Perry, as well as Knightly and his crew, several rows back and to the side.

BARUCH (V.O.)
Only in America. The pomp and circumstance of two men gathering in an arena to bash each other’s brains out. Money for blood.

INT: CASINO BOXING ARENA

RING ANNOUNCER
Wearing the white trunks with red and green stripes, the challenger from East Los Angeles, California. Randy Moraleszzzzzzzzz!
The challenger is a handsome Latino dressed in white trunks with red and green stripes. He has a Mariachi band playing for him as he enters the ring.

Hector and Perry give him a standing ovation. He is clearly the underdog and the crowd favorite.

RING ANNOUNCER
And the Middle Weight Champion of the World, wearing the black trunks, hailing from the Bronx, New York. Michael “Tiger” Thompsonnnnnnnn.

The champ is dressed in black shorts, black socks, and black shoes. He comes into the ring to the music of Tupac Shakur’s *Can’t See Me*.

Knightly and his pals are going crazy with excitement, cheering their hero on into the ring.

INT: CASINO BOXING RING

The fight begins at a blistering pace. The champ comes out with vicious swings while the challenger dances trying to finesse his opponent.

The AGO members go crazy with excitement.

Shouting.

A. JACKS
That mutha fucka is a warrior. A warrior. That’s what I’m talking about. That’s how we do it. East Coast style.

KNIGHTLY
Yeah!!! Yeahh!!

Spilling his beer.

Hector and Perry sit and watch the fight cordially, as if they were at an awards show.

A JACKS
Ruthless!!

Manila sits fixated on one man in the arena. While all of his colleagues are excited and shouting, Manila will not take his eyes off of Perry Hernandez.
Perry continues to watch the fight, unaware that he is being watched by Manila.

Knightly notices that Manila isn’t watching the fight.

**KNIGHTLY**

Easy, my brother. Patience. Keep your enemies close.

Moments into the third round, the champion is stunned by a series of quick blows. Hector and Perry break their stoic look with a burst of excitement, yet very controlled. Knightly looks concerned.

In the fourth the champ comes out with a flurry, punishing his opponent to the delight of Knightly and his crew. As the referee steps in to call the fight off, Knightly turns to Manila and moves his index finger in a circle, signaling the crew that it’s time to go.

Odell spots the motions and alerts Baruch.

**KNIGHTLY**

Now! Now! We gotta roll.

Awkwardly they lumber through the crowd that is going crazy as the ring announcer calls the decision.

**RING ANNOUNCER**

Ladies and gentleman. The winner by way of technical knockout, and still the undisputed Middleweight Champion of the World, Michael “Tiger” Thompsonnnnnnnn.

Everyone is cheering as the Knightly crew quickly clears the arena and filters into the casino looking to set up for the mass exodus of fans, particularly Perry Hernandez.

Baruch and Odell move toward the exit sensing some tension.

**INT: CASINO GAMING FLOOR**

**KNIGHTLY**

Wait for my signal. Don’t jump the gun. And the goal is to confront him, nothing more. Let’s do this right.

Knightly pulls out his cell phone and points to his eyes, looking up to the cameras.
A. JACKS
Eyes are on, brother.

KNIGHTLY
On the phone.

Bring the black Hummer to the front.

MANILA
Time to reap the whirlwind, mutha fucka.

KNIGHTLY
Covering the phone.

Chill. Nill. Wait till they clear the casino.

People are starting to pour out of the casino rapidly. Knightly is trying to keep an eye out for Hector and Perry, while trying to keep an eye on Manila to make sure he stays put.

KNIGHTLY
Shit, where the fuck did he go?

A. JACKS
He right there.

Pointing to the entrance back into the arena.

Knightly turns to see Hector and Perry exiting the arena area and entering the casino. He desperately tries to look for Manila.

KNIGHTLY
He gonna fuck this thing up.

A. JACKS
We need to roll. They about to leave.

Just then, near the exit, Manila appears and walks directly toward Perry.

MANILA
I want your heart, boy!!
Perry turns to see Manila rushing toward him. Hector is confused at first. Perry is shocked and begins to cower.

MANILA
Did you mistake me for a fool?

PERRY
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

Hector steps in front of Perry to shield his brother from Manila’s aggressive charge. He stiff-arms Manila in the face.

HECTOR
Chill out!! Chill out!!!

MANILA
Get the fuck outta my way. Let the bitch defend himself.

The two begin to wrestle. Women begin to scream. Security begins to move. Knightly spots the struggle and dashes across the room. Baruch hears the screams and moves toward the commotion.

HECTOR
What is your problem?

MANILA
Your bitch brother knows what I’m talking about.

Manila lunges across Hector’s body and try to grab Perry. Hector wrestles him to the ground. A. Jacks comes running over and begins to pull Hector off of Manila. Perry grabs A. Jacks only to get a backhand slap. As A. Jacks turns to get back into the fight, he sees Manila pull a gun from behind his back.

MANILA
Fight your own battles.

HECTOR
This is blood. This is my battle.

A. Jacks tackles Hector, and people are now panicking. Women are screaming. Security guards are closing in when a shot rings out from among the pile of people. Baruch is caught in the chaos. Nobody knows exactly where shot came from, but people scatter. The casino clears, and A. Jacks is lying on the floor bleeding.
EXT: MGM GRAND CASINO

People are flooding out of the casino screaming. Hector and Perry wave down their small sedan limo that has been waiting for them just outside.

HECTOR
Get in the car. Now!!!

MANILA
You fucked my wife, you mutha fucka!!!

The sedan limo squeals out amid the chaos. Police cars are pulling up, and people are running into the car.

INT: LIMO

HECTOR
Damn it, Perry!!! What the hell is going on?

PERRY
I need to go back.

HECTOR
Are you crazy? We ain’t going anywhere near that hotel.

PERRY
But Helen is waiting for me.

HECTOR
Oh, no. You didn’t? You did not bring her here?

PERRY
That’s what I needed to talk about. I am not going to hide my love for her any longer.

HECTOR
Damn it! What the hell are you thinking?

Staring out the window.

PERRY
We have to go back.
HECTOR
We are not going back. We can not go back.

They are silent as the limo races toward the Vegas airport for a private jet.

You have just started an all-out war! For what?

PERRY
For love!

HECTOR
Laughing sarcastically.

You don’t know shit about love.

They jump out of the limo and get on a private jet. As Hector closes the door, he looks back at the Vegas skyline.

HECTOR
God have mercy!

He closes the plane door.

EXT: MGM CASINO

Ambulances and police cars have lined the entrance to the casino.

INT: MGM CASINO GAME FLOOR

A. Jackson’s face is covered up. He has bled to death after being shot in the stomach. Knightly talks with police. He is visibly upset. Manila is nowhere around.

CHAPTER NINE: HIGHWAY TO ANGELS

INT: HOTEL ROOM

Baruch gets back to his hotel room to get information on what went down.

TV ANCHORWOMAN
Breaking news out of Las Vegas. Reports are that a small riot broke out in the lobby of the MGM Grand Casino and Hotel resort tonight after the championship prizefight between Tiger Thompson and Juan Morales ended in a fourth round TKO.
Surveillance camera footage plays and we hear the occasional Anchorwoman voiceover.

Video surveillance cameras picked up several skirmishes in the lobby directly after the fight as fans had just begun leaving the boxing arena. One man, Anthony Jackson, was fatally wounded. Reports are that he was a member of the major East Coast gang, the AGO.

Vegas Chief of Police, Terry Whitefield, had these comments just a few moments ago at a press briefing.

CHIEF WHITEFIELD
We can not confirm that the young man shot tonight in the casino was a member of any gang. We suspect that the event is gang related. We are looking at every possible angle and cannot comment on it in detail as of yet.

TV ANCHORWOMAN
The concern in Washington is that if this is related to the AGO, that two rival gangs that came to agreements at the National Peace Convention for Gangs last month may have violated the agreement with this incident, thus breaking a cease fire that lasted a little less than one month.

WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
Of course we are concerned about the nature of this incident. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Anthony Jackson. We are cooperating with federal, state, and local officials to try and piece together what exactly happened and who is responsible for this.

Baruch packs his stuff quickly, ready to leave the hotel room.

EXT: VEGAS SKYLINE (NIGHT)

INT: BARUCH'S RENTAL CAR

Baruch leaves Las Vegas in a rental car and heads down Interstate 15 toward LA.
BARUCH (V.O.)
The highway out of Vegas looked like a vein full of red and white blood cells flowing through the middle of the desert. All night a steady stream of lights glowed in the middle of deep darkness—winding its way west toward the unknown, pulling deeper into uncertainty. All the reports, all the reading material, all the video footage in the world couldn’t prepare me for actually coming face to face with him.

EXT: COMPTON, CA (DAY)

INT: BARUCH’S CAR (DAY)

Baruch is snacking on fast food in his car when he sees a man approaching.

Cell phone rings.

BARUCH
This is Baruch.

KILMORE (V.O.)
Baruch Friedman?

BARUCH
Yeah, that’s right.

KILMORE (V.O.)
You on your way to the park?

Baruch realizes that it is the local contact. He lightens up.

BARUCH
Yessir, I’m sitting right across the street now.

KILMORE (V.O.)
Friedman.

BARUCH
What?

KILMORE (V.O.)
Jackasses stake out parks. We don’t meet at the park. Unless you’re a jackass!
Baruch laughs awkwardly.

BARUCH
Where you want me to meet you?

KILMORE (V.O.)
There's a little coffee place down on South Alameda.

BARUCH
All right. What time?

KILMORE (V.O.)
Half hour.

BARUCH
See you there.

KILMORE (V.O.)
Friedman!

BARUCH
Somewhat annoyed
Yeah?

KILMORE (V.O.)
You in your civvies?

BARUCH
I'm always in my civvies.

KILMORE (V.O.)
It don't have any alligators or guys riding horses on'em?

Baruch just scoffs at that question.

See you there. Bring shoes you'll be able to run in. And your piece, preferably a nine if you got one. But conceal that shit. Camden said you were a bit of a cowboy. We ain't meeting at a goddamn saloon. Anything else I'm forgetting?

BARUCH
Yeah, don't call me Friedman. See you in a few.
INT: COFFEE SHOP (DAY)

Baruch walks into the coffee shop cautiously. He observes the run down coffee shop with a couple of old timers set up at a bar-like counter shooting the breeze. A man sits in the back corner of the place reading a paper. Baruch walks up to him.

KILMORE

From behind the paper.

Federal Agent Baruch Friedman!

Baruch looks around the shop to make sure nobody heard him say his name.

What’s the angle dawg?

Kilmore is still reading the paper.

BARUCH

My angle?

Dropping the paper and starring at him from above his reading glasses.

KILMORE

Not your personal angle! I don’t give a fuck where you’re coming from personally.

BARUCH

I’m following orders.

KILMORE

Kilmore throws the paper down on to a coffee stand.

Bullshit! Just like all the other bullshit I’ve been reading about for the past 30 minutes in this fish fucking wrap. I don’t need the political spin, I just wanna know who, what, where, when, and why.

Baruch stares at him.

So, let’s try it again. What’s your angle?
BARUCH
I'm looking for Jermaine Amaru. They said he was out this way. They want me to report back to them with my findings.

KILMORE
Good. That's much better, but you left out the what and the why.

BARUCH
Well, capin', you can learn right quick I don't have the answer to all your questions. And I ain't here to write articles

Nodding at the newspaper.

I'm just here to do my job. Either you can help or you can't.

KILMORE
Fair enough. That's all I needed to know. Let's ride.

INT: UNDERCOVER POLICE CAR

EXT: COMPTON, LOS ANGELES, CA

INT: KILMORE'S CAR
Kilmore and Baruch are rollin' through the streets of Watts and Compton. The windows are down, and Kilmore is smoking a cigarette.

BARUCH
It's hot as hell. You mind putting the AC on?

KILMORE
Oh, hell no!

Flicking his cigarette butt out the window and reaching for another.

Let me tell you something. First of all, this is hell.

He nods at the neighborhood while lighting another cigarette.

Secondly, you see that soupy dark shit floatin' in the air. That smog is adding to the hell that already exists. So I ain't making no Gadamned contribution by turning on my AC when I don't have to.

Toking on his cigarette.
And, thirdly, you got to keep these windows down at all times. You gotta smell that shit. You gotta smell the street. You gotta hear shit. No music bumpin’ in the damn car. You don’t even use the rover cause the streets got ears everywhere. Tracking everything. You gotta hear that shit speaking to you.

Baruch cautiously listens, suspiciously watching him drag on his cigarettes while complaining about the air.

Yeah. All this shit. All this is talking. Rhythms flowin’. Thousands of little stories inside the big story.

He pulls down an alley near a warehouse with graffiti all over it.

Tell me what you see there.

Baruch looks around somewhat disgusted.

BARUCH
I see a godforsaken scene from the Third World.

Kilmore laughs loudly.

KILMORE
You got that right. goddamn third world right in the heart of every major American city.

He draws a deep breath of the hot smoggy air.

But it’s my world!!! Their world.

Nodding at a couple of thug-looking gangstas who flash some signs at Kilmore.

BARUCH
I don’t recognize those signs?

KILMORE
Yeap.
BARUCH
What’s it mean?

KIMORE
Just letting me know everything’s cool. Nothing big going down. They transporting some fake ids and Soc cards.

BARUCH
And you just let it slide?

KILMORE
Goddamn feds! You guys are so far from the real story here. You read this little shit to understand the big shit. You don’t bust a fucking chicken for crossing the road. You wait till they all come home to roost then you bring’em all into the coop at once.

Points to the graffiti laced walls.

There’s your other narratives. Graffiti. That’s the fucking *USA Today* of urban America. They send out their messages, make their posts on the bulletin boards, warnings, pronouncements of deeds accomplished. Whole other language. Got to be able to read that shit to know what’s going on.

BARUCH
Latin, Greek, Hebrew, graffiti. Who knew?

Kilmore smirks at Baruch’s comment.

KILMORE
DC oughtta know. That’s who oughtta know. They fucking allegedly gathering intel on terrorists all around the world and shit, around this country, and they don’t even know a goddamn thing about what’s happening under their own goddamn noses. We off fighting wars against other empires and we got a goddamn civil war right here.
BARUCH
So you’re saying America’s having another civil war?

KILMORE
No, I’m saying the goddamn American Civil war never ended.

Kilmore stares down Baruch as if he is part of the problem, an out-of-touch fed. He shakes his head and starts the car back up and drives away.

EXT: COMPTON, CA (PARK)

Kilmore and Baruch arrive at a park in Compton. A large gathering is taking place with kids, families, games, and bbqs going. It looks like the Fourth of July in January. Hundreds of men, women, and children are hanging out having a good time. Several envoys from Knightly’s group are on hand to get a word with Amaru.

PATSY AMARU
My cousin, Jermaine Amaru, wanted to apologize for not being here today. An urgent matter came up last night that he had to tend to today. But he wanted me to tell you all that we can’t have no drama up in this mutha. I ain’t doin this for no money. This stuff is free to you. And if you all behave, we’ll be getting some serious artists in here this summer. We need to raise awareness bout this game and how it’s gonna be played from here on out.

Since Jermiane couldn’t be here today, he has offered a scholarship for 10 kids between the ages of 12 and 15 to come down to our artist community down near San Diego. Thug Nation is presenting artists’ workshops at our own private university for inner city kids to learn how to develop their creative side in a positive and upbeat manner. So don’t forget to stop by the Thug Nation booth right beside the Z90 DJ station and fill out an application.

Let’s eat some food!!

Kilmore and Baruch mingle with the crowd.

KILMORE
Wait here for a few minutes. Try not to stir anything up. I’m gonna see if I can get you down to the compound.
Kilmore walks away and heads over to a large group of male gang members. He appears to be tight with them, giving out gang-like hand shakes and hugs. Kilmore starts talking to Patsy Amaru, Jermaine Amaru’s cousin. They are smiling and laughing, apparently close. Several minutes later Kilmore comes back to Baruch.

**KILMORE**

You’re in, man. We’ll meet my boys here tonight at 6 PM. Wear this blue wrist band on your left arm. We’ll be escorted down to the Thug Nation compound. Do everything they say and keep your fucking mouth shut, and you’ll get your little inside look at how the thing looks.

**INT: KNIGHTLY’S CLUB**

They are intently watching TV news updates.

**TV ANCHORWOMAN**

The vice president weighed in on the issue at a press conference earlier today.

**VICE PRESIDENT JOHNSON**

There is absolutely no place in our society for this type of senseless violence. We will enforce peace at any cost and hold these gangs accountable to their commitments. We have made great progress in bringing peace to our great cities and urban areas. We plan to continue to make sure that these thugs and domestic terrorists do not threaten our God-granted liberties.

**INT: HERNANDEZ MANSION (LA) Day**

**HECTOR**

Pop, I’m sorry for what went down in Vegas last night. It was my fault.

**PACIFICO**

Come on, son. You don’t need to cover for your little brother. I don’t question your judgment. It’s your brother I’m worried about. He is not focused. He lacks discipline. His poor judgment has left us exposed.

**HECTOR**

Knightly is looking for every reason to break that treaty. He never wanted it in the first place. He did not even bother to show up at the Peace Convention.
PACIFICO
Don’t worry about Knightly. He is arrogant, but he is no fool. His people were seen instigating the fight. He still has no ground to move on, even in light of A. Jacks passing.

HECTOR
I’m afraid it could have been worse. They will not sit back as long as Perry continues to court Helen.

PACIFICO
What are our options?

HECTOR
Send her back east and tell her to stay there. I will keep closer tabs on Perry. Which I should have done in the first place.

PACIFICO
What is done is done. We need to look forward and be prepared to counter their next move. Let Perry and the others know about the meeting.

HECTOR
Don’t you think Perry should sit this one out, Pop? His judgment is cloudy right now with all that is going on. For his sake and ours.

PACIFICO
It’s too late. He must be involved. He is at the center of this storm.

HECTOR
This is my exact point. He nearly got us killed.

PACIFICO
He needs the experience. It is his lack of experience that put him in this situation to begin with. I feel as if I didn’t give him enough responsibility lately.

HECTOR
What ever you say, Pop.

The two men embrace and head off to different parts of the mansion.

INT: HECTOR’S BEDROOM
Hector stands on the balcony just outside of his bedroom. The view overlooks LA. He leans against the rail, contemplating all that is going on.

MAGGY
Have you solved the world’s problems yet?

She speaks softly and comes up to warmly embrace him from behind.

HECTOR
I used to pray every night before bed, when I was a teenager, that God would make me a leader. I always admired my father from a distance, even though I had no idea what he did. Now that he has given me the responsibility I asked for, now that I see what leadership really is I pray every night that he will take it away from me.

MAGGY
Oh, come on now. You were made to serve, mi amor.

HECTOR
I don’t know anymore, baby.

MAGGY
Well, just remember, you no longer live for only yourself.

Looking back into the bedroom where their baby boy is sleeping.

HECTOR
Believe me woman, I am well aware of what’s at stake.

He kisses her softly on the ear. He holds her in front of him, and they both look off into the valley.

HECTOR
To think, angels once dared to tread here.

MAGGY
Where have they all gone then?

HECTOR
I’m sure there are still a few hanging around.
MAGGY
Yes, well, Satan was an angel too.

Hector pauses to reflect on her statement.

Why are we here? I know a place where the angels still play. A place where the beaches are whiter, the air not so thick. There is no peace here. Why should we expose our son to this darkness? Let’s move to Mexico, start a vineyard, live off the land. Be at peace with this life again.

HECTOR
Oh my wife. You read too many books. We can’t leave everything my father has built here. He came here in search of the very liberties you’re talking about. Our hopes and dreams are here. Our name is here.

MAGGY
Yes, and so are our fears and worst nightmares. I don’t just read books. I hear the news.

Hector smiles and lowers his head shaking it.

I do! They say Amaru is in SoCal now. Do you think he is here to promote the peace?

HECTOR
What do you know of another man’s heart? Who am I to judge what another man does or doesn’t do?

MAGGY
He is no man. He is a monster.

HECTOR
That’s the rumor, isn’t it? (Sarcastically)

Pause.

What is it, woman? Why are you pushing me so hard right now?

MAGGY
I’m sorry. I’ve just been feeling a little insecure lately. I feel tension in the air, like a great army is gathering.
They look out at the valley.

I respect what your father has done, the legacy he has left you and Perry, though I wish Perry had more respect for it. But you have your own legacy to think about now.

HECTOR

If I do not defend this family name, our son will grow up with something far worse than the absence of a father, he will grow up without a good name.

He turns and looks into her big brown eyes.

I need you to trust me. I can have no doubts, despite the uncertainty of my own mind. We are so close to achieving the peace my father has worked so hard for. Then we can buy a vineyard in Mexico and go there for the summers.

MAGGY

Promise?

HECTOR

As God wills it!

They embrace and kiss.

CHAPTER TEN: ENVOY TO AMARU

EXT: CLUB MAC ONE ONE (VEGAS, DAY)

Knightly and Manila sit around a table with a group of men to discuss their next move after the death of A. Jacks.

MANILA

The time has come for you to swallow your pride! I want Amaru back in this fight.

KNIGHTLY

You’re telling me to swallow my pride? You nearly choked to death on yours last night. You are the one who sold your soul to the politicians to get this peace agreement done before the assault weapons ban was lifted. This was your baby and now you have to live by it.
MANILA
Circumstances change.

KNIGHTLY
We lost a brother. This is true.

MANILA
Just get Amaru into the fight!!!!

KNIGHTLY
I went to him before A. Jacks was killed. But he is only about himself. I will get him to join us, but let me tell you this, you undermine your own authority by bringing Amaru into the mix.

He opens his cigar case and sifts through several cigars.

KNIGHTLY
Hand pick a group of envoys and go to his place. Offer him an apology for the whole thing that went down with Brea. Invite him back here for a meeting this Sunday.

Lights a cigar.

You want him, you’ll get him.

EXT: COMPTON, CA (TWILIGHT)

Kilmore sits in his ride with Baruch at the park waiting for the escort to arrive. A convoy of black SUVs pulls up in the parking lot. They get out and motion for the two of them to get in one of the vehicles.

KILMORE
Not a fucking word!

EXT: FREEWAY (OUT OF LA) NIGHT

INT: SUV DRIVING

EXT: REST STOP

A man is talking to Kilmore. Baruch watches and observes. Tired from the long trip, Kilmore returns to the SUV.
KILMORE
We are being separated into different vehicles. There is no funny stuff going on, just their way of business. I'll see you when we get there.

Baruch just rolls with it.

Baruch, you'll be riding with the gentleman in the black hat over there. It's all good.

BARUCH
Whatever it takes!

Baruch walks over to the man and he is escorted into the back of a large black Suburban.

INT: BLACK SUBURBAN

The man says nothing. There is another man in the passenger’s seat who just looks back at Baruch, checking him out. He says nothing. They pull out and join the caravan that gets back on the freeway, passing all exits that lead to LA, and heads toward San Diego/Mexico.

About an hour and half into the ride, the man in the black hat throws a blue bandanna into the back seat on Baruch’s lap.

DRIVER
For your safety and the interests of Thug Nation you will be voluntarily blindfolded on the final leg to our headquarters.

Baruch does not react. He doesn’t put the bandana on.

DRIVER
Should you choose not to wear the blindfold, then you are free to get the fuck out of the car now! But we ain’t stoppin’ till we get there. Any objections?

Baruch begins to put the blindfold on. The passenger reaches back and checks to see if the bandanna is snug, and checking to see if Baruch has vision, waving his hand in front of his face.

About an hour has passed by when the driver speaks up again.
DRIVER
You may remove your blindfold. We are approaching the Thug Nation Headquarters.

EXT: LARGE WAREHOUSE (DESERT SETTING)

The caravan approaches a massive run-down rustic warehouse where a large garage door begins to open. The compound appears to be out in the desert. The caravan drives through the open garage door.

INT: WAREHOUSE GARAGE

The caravan comes to a stop and each van unloads. Thug Nation members approach the car. It is unlike anything Baruch has ever seen before. Hundreds of members, of all races, including many Native Americans, surround the vehicles looking at the men with fascinated. It is a surreal feeling.

PATSY
Gentlemen, welcome to Thug Nation! We wish you a fruitful and SAFE visit.

Baruch walks with an escort some distance from Kilmore though this eerie scene. A giant old American flag hangs, tattered and torn, from the rafters above. The hundreds of other members part to the side to let the envoys pass, led by Patsy. The thugs stare at Baruch and the others as they walk by.

INT: INNER WAREHOUSE

Baruch and the other envoys pass through a series of rooms, each one more surreal than the other. Rays of light break through high windows that are peeling from age. The warehouse has a rustic feel to it. In one room there is a group of thugs playing poker, smoke rising and circling the room as the envoy passes.

INT: INNER WAREHOUSE LOUNGE

There are several people smoking bongs, coughing, and mattresses are strewn across the floor. There are some men in the middle of the room lifting weights. Several women are walking around nearly nude, wearing different costumes. Many have paint on their bodies. One woman is in a bikini, her body painted green with a Statue of Liberty crown. She carries a torch in one hand and a book in the other. She flirts with Baruch and then wiggles her tongue at him.
Baruch is escorted over to an isolated table. Smoke fills the room giving it a foggy, blazed out look. Several men are rolling joints and scowling at the visitors. Baruch observes the room on a more intimate level while sitting at the table. Large banners of famed artists hang from the walls. John Coltrane, Bob Marley, Billie Holiday, Miles Davis, coupled with famous Harlem Renaissance art.

PATSY
Make yourself at home.

Patsy walks off into the shadows.

A man begins to laugh madly in the corner. He is sitting at a coffee table on the couch with a laptop computer. He gets up and limps over toward Baruch. He is pale and looks like walking death.

DENNIS POWELL
Up in here! Up in here now, boy! Ain't no way out of this place.

He laughs and hacks.

You're here for him? Of course you are. They all come here looking for him. I came here looking for him.

Baruch looks on without saying a word.

Oh, how rude. I'm Powell, Dennis Powell.

BARUCH
LA Times?

POWELL
You got it! Ain't I the celebrity??!!

He laughs madly.

BARUCH
What are you doing here?
POWELL
I asked myself that every day. I wondered about it too much. That is until, I met him.

BARUCH
Amaru?

POWELL
J. Amaru. Not to be confused with his cousin Patsy, who you just met.

BARUCH
Yes, they are big on social graces around here.

POWELL
It’s about time you guys showed up. You want to win a war, you find a warrior. Not just a warrior. A poet warrior. ‘Bout damned time you showed up.

Baruch looks around with one eye on the mad man and one eye on the bizarre happenings in the warehouse.

POWELL
Yeah, you’re nervous. I can tell. This! (Pointing to the warehouse). Yeah, well. This has a life of its own. It’s not totally his fault. He tends to empower them a little too much. He lets them get away with murder sometimes.

Baruch looks over at a group of men and women rolling around and laughing on one of the large beds.

They are focused when they need to be. “Work hard, play hard,” like he always says. (Coughing hard again) What do you think?

BARUCH
Think?

POWELL
Of this!

Nodding at the compound.

Baruch says nothing.
POWELL (CONT.)
It's the end of the freeway, my man. One way in. One way out.
(Laughing) If you're lucky, one way out. Anything can happen at the end of the freeway and not a goddamn soul will know about it.

BARUCH (V.O.)
We were at the end of the freeway all right. We were at the end of the goddamned world.

POWELL
Listen. Don't doubt. Doubt will kill you here. Don't judge the man. Just listen to him. Promise me, you'll just listen. The blind fold thing. Yeah a bit unnerving. But you know. They gotta protect this shit. Get it off the ground. Besides, we're all blind, you know. I used to drive home from work every night blind. Eyes wide open. Unconscious. Blind. Shit, there's no difference.

A severe coughing attack.

Sorry, I'm working through it.

Looking Baruch over.

You don't say much, man.

BARUCH
Not much for words.

POWELL
Ahhhhh. He'll like you. You'll get on his good side. He is a man of few words too. You absorb him. He gets into your blood. I mean the man is...well...he is a prophet. He sees things before they happen. And they come true. No shit, man.

Scribbling something on a paper.

Like A. Jacks. Well. You know. He just has a sense about this stuff. Well, just listen to him. That's all. Listen to him and do not doubt.

BARUCH
Do I have a choice?
POWELL

True. True.

Laughing madly again.

No. You don’t. You don’t have a choice, man.

Getting up from the table

Just relax. Chill out. Take it all in. It’s all good.

BARUCH
So, when do I get to meet this “prophet?”

POWELL
Awww, man. DON’T. Don’t use that tone, man. You’re doubting already. See that’s exactly what I’m talking about. Sarcasm don’t fly here. He’ll smell it. And if he smells it... well... he’ll kill you. I’m not kidding.

Powell tries to remember Baruch’s question.


BARUCH
What is his story?

POWELL
Oh, man. You can’t. I can’t just sit here and tell you what the inside of King Tut’s tomb smells like. You gotta be there. You gotta taste that shit through your nostrils, melting on the back of your tongue.

Pauses. Coughs hard.

I journal. I don’t think I’ll have time to tell the whole story later.

BARUCH
What’s your poison? What’s with all the coughing?

POWELL
My time will soon come. ‘Less you got an extra pair of lungs I can borrow.
He gets up and starts walking away.

Do NOT doubt!

He disappears into the shadows.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: A MYTH REVEALED

INT: WAREHOUSE LOUNGE

Baruch is resting on a grungy mattress that is sprawled across the floor up against the corner wall. He has all of his clothes on and is curled in a fetal position on his side, watching all the activity in the warehouse’s epicenter.

BARUCH (V.O.)
No wonder the suits back in DC thought this guy was a cult leader. Hell couldn’t have been more fucked up than the Thug Nation compound. Yet, there was a strange mystique flowing through the place. Something different was happening here. People were safe. They were inspired. Toward what exactly, I wasn’t sure yet. But the vibe was intoxicating.

A door suddenly opens, and several large thugs approach his bed. They grab him and violently drag him from the room.

INT: EMPTY WAREHOUSE ROOM

Baruch is dragged into a room with dirt floors. Although he is not beaten severely, he is roughed up, kicked, and punched. His face is pushed into the dirt. A garden hose is jammed into his mouth and held in place. Baruch gasps for air. He is now muddy and dusty.

INT: THE INNER SANCTUARY

The thugs drag Baruch into a very dark room with long rays of light. Patsy now stands over him.

PATSY
Welcome to hell, bitch. You should be more careful about what you wish for.
Amaru is peeling an orange.

AMARU
Are you? A... free man Baruch David Friedman?

BARUCH
Free?

AMARU
Are you free?

Baruch is uncertain about the question.

Baruch
Yes. I'm free.

AMARU
Really? Free from what? From who?

BARUCH
I'm free to do as I wish.
AMARU
You don’t work for anyone?

Baruch is a little nervous, assuming that he is referring to the Feds.

BARUCH
I do.

AMARU
Eating the orange.

You don’t take orders? You don’t have goals? Key areas of responsibility?

Laughs sarcastically.

BARUCH
No, I pretty much do as I see fit.

AMARU
Everybody takes orders from someone. Either we serve an idea or we are slaves to somebody else’s.

Baruch just watches and listens to the deep husky voice. Amaru’s face is still in the shadows, but Baruch can see his tight black body covered with tattoos.

AMARU
The only free man is the one liberated from the perceptions of others.

He begins eating some beef jerky.

Which side of the bay are you from, Baruch?

BARUCH
The bay?

AMARU
Leaning forward into the light, his handsome, yet stern face, with bald head, comes into full view.

Don’t fuck with me.
BARUCH
The Chesapeake Bay. The east side.

AMARU
Where about?

BARUCH
Annapolis.

AMARU
A Navy orphan?

BARUCH
I can't complain.

AMARU
I remember... when I was a little boy, we'd drive from Baltimore through Annapolis on the way to my Grandmother's house down in Richmond. And we'd drive through this place, a short cut to the expressway. Sherwood Forrest. You hear of that place?

BARUCH
I know where it's at.

AMARU
My mama would always stop at this little store and buy some snacks for the trip. She'd get out of the car and look around and stare at all the big houses across the street. She'd look down at my sister and me and tell us that we was gonna come up like that one day.

Pause.

Shit, it might have been your house for all I know. Fuck dat. Give me a screwdriver and a hammer and I'll go hit that whole block up. Clean that shit out and bring it back to my hood and just pass all them high class toys out to all the kids. Dat's how I'd come up.

Amaru leans forward.

You could really smell the bay deep through that area. And I'd think about what was out there, what the bay might really lead to.
Pause.

Did they say what they wanted here?

BARUCH

They?

AMARU

Chuckling

Yeah you seem like you got more than one angle, jack. You a complicated mutha fucka. I feel it. But damn, boy. I ain’t gonna tell you again. Be straight with me or it ain’t going to be no happy ending.

BARUCH

Because they think you’ve gone mad. They think you’ve started a cult. That you’re a growing threat.

AMARU

Do you feel threatened?

BARUCH

I don’t feel anything.

AMARU

Good! That’s the first step to true freedom—going numb.

CHAPTER TWELVE: HECTOR’S REIGN

EXT: HECTOR’S MANSION

INT: LARGE MEETING ROOM

The Hernandez family council meets to discuss how they will deal with the recent death of A. Jacks, and the potential response in retaliation for his death.

ADVISOR ONE

They lost one of their most promising young men. Do you think they will simply walk away from this? We must be prepared for retaliation.
ADVISOR TWO
I say that we strike them now! Push them out of Vegas.

HECTOR
Out of Vegas? That is totally unreasonable.

ADVISOR TWO
They instigated this incident. They are on the bad side of the press right now.

HECTOR
Yes, and it would be wise to keep them on that side. Vegas is wide open to anyone. It is close to our interests, but I do not see them intruding on our established networks.

ADVISOR TWO
Then we should stipulate that they stay out of the greater Los Angeles area.

PACIFICO
There is one man in Southern California that I am very uncomfortable with.

HECTOR
Not you too? Jermaine Amaru is just one man.

PACIFICO
This may be true, but the last thing we need is him getting involved. He commands crowds. He will win support for the AGO.

Looking at a family picture on the wall.

He even has the loyalty of Brea—your own cousin.

HECTOR
She is a distant cousin, Pops. She is young and naive. She has nothing more than a school girl crush on him.

PACIFICO
And she said that to you personally?
HECTOR
All I am saying is that I do not think we evaluate our next move based on the notion of a school girl’s crush, nor on the single man she has a crush on.

PACIFICO
He is not one man. He is many men. They worship him like a god. They are like a bunch of Amarus, doing anything he says. His Thug Nation is perhaps the most ruthless and unpredictable group in the whole AGO. His presence in this area makes me very nervous.

ADVISOR ONE
All the more reason to press on the AGO now. They are divided and they lack a common direction. They can be broken now.

HECTOR
And then what? Papa, you’ve been doing this long enough to know, there will always be another group running up against us, challenging us.

He looks out the window for a moment, thinking.

ADVISOR THREE
Perhaps there is a way to meet with him.

HECTOR
He would never betray his own roots, no matter how bad he has wounded them. Manila is the one who is raging against us. We need to deal with him first.

PACIFICO
What do you think, Plexico, old trusted friend?

PLEXICO
I had a dream two nights ago. I followed a soaring hawk down an empty freeway, the whole way to the border, until the freeway came to a dead end. The hawk circled and circled then made a dive toward the ground capturing a small rabbit in its talons. It flew into the mountains beyond the border. This is a sign that the territory from here to the border is ours.
HECTOR
With all due respect, Plexico, we cannot afford to make decisions based on one restless night. Let us be practical.

PACIFICO
Do not mock a servant of the Lord. His testimony has always been trustworthy.

HECTOR
Pop, you know my heart. My faith is genuine, and I have the utmost respect for Father Plexico. But I also believe that God imparts wisdom to us that is rooted in common sense and experience. We must balance these things out with our faith as well as our visions.

Pacifico motions for Hector to walk with him. They walk toward the balcony.

EXT: BALCONY (DAY)

Overlooking LA skyline and valley.

PACIFICO
My son, I have struggled and toiled all my life. I left Mexico and found freedom and opportunity in America. It has never been an easy task, and there have been many difficult decisions I have had to make along the way. I regret some of the things that I have done. I miss your mother and her wisdom, the wisdom that I see in your own bride now.

But this decision is yours now. I trust your judgment, my son. I’ve worked toward this moment my whole life. I am convinced this is the time. I see great wisdom in you, beyond my own. We will not call the family council to vote on this decision. It is in your hands.

HECTOR
Thank you, Pop. I respect you. I will always honor your work and do my best.

PACIFICO
I know you will, son.

They walk back inside.
HECTOR
The AGO will not be able to hold back from taking revenge for Anthony Jackson's death. I know these men and their minds. We sit back. Be vigilant. Let them make the first mistake if they are foolish enough to do so. In the mean time, Perry must end the relationship for good!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: A BLIND GODDESS

EXT: VEGAS STRIP

INT: MAC ONE ONE

Envoys return with Amaru's decision.

KNIGHTLY
What's the word?

ENVOY
There is no word at all.

KNIGHTLY
Looking at Manila.

See, what did I tell you? You can't reason with that stubborn mutha fucka.

MANILA
He said nothing? Did you speak with him?

ENVOY
Yes, I met with him. And when I offered an apology and requested his presence at the meeting this Sunday, he spoke nothing of it. He began reading poetry.

KNIGHTLY
I will not fucking wait on this arrogant bastard. Three days. Three fucking days you were there, and he does nothing but to read some faggot poetry.

Pause.
What the fuck is he up to now? What the fuck does he have up his sleeve?

**ENVOY**
I don’t know. He gave us nothing. Just kept us there for a day. And then we were told to leave.

Knightly slams the table with his fist.

**KNIGHTLY**
Mutha fucka! That self-centered, egotistical bastard. Son of a bitch!

He stands up and looks out over the dance floor, watching all the honeys dancing.

Fuck him! Fuck that mutha fucka. We will not be dictated to by some rebel without a cause. He is still bitter about Brea. He can’t get over it. That’s on him; NOT me. I’ll squeeze out his little Gandhi-lovin’ ass too when I’m done with the Hernandez clan.

**MANILA**
No! I’ve waited this long. We cannot do it without him.

**KNIGHTLY**
I don’t want to hear another goddamned suggestion from you. You done fucked up the other night. We would have sent a clear message and A. Jacks would still be with us. We fucking doing this thing my way now. I’ve been too patient.

Looking at Manila

You want your man? You want your wife back?

**MANILA**
Only so I can choke her with my own two hands!
KNIGHTLY
We go to LA and smoke his ass out. That skinny little punk mutha fucka. I’ll drag his ass back here by his panties. Dead or alive.

MANILA
Not before I have my way with him.

KNIGHTLY
Yelling across the dance floor.

We in the mutha fuckin Wild, Wild West now!

INT: THUG NATION COMPOUND

Amaru sits on a couch with a room full of attentive listeners. He is reading poetry. An exhausted Baruch sits on a chair across from Amaru. Powell is on the couch beside Amaru.

AMARU
That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise:
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes.

(Langston Hughes, *Justice*)

POWELL
Yeah, boy!

Amaru looks at Powell as if irritated, then turns a page and continues to read poetry.

AMARU
What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun
Or fester like a sore—

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

(Langston Hughes, *A Dream Deferred*)

POWELL
He’s feelin’ it! That’s what I’m talking about...does it explode?
Rhetorical! Not a question. The answers are in the questions! Riot not rally!!!

AMARU
Shut the FUCK up!

The group is chilled. Powell just bows his head. Amaru looks back down at the book, scans the page for a moment. He is pissed. Patsy enters the room anxious.

AMARU
What is the city over the mountains?
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria Vienna London...

Smirking.

NYC, DC, Lost Angels, Lost & Vague 4 Us...

A few in the group chuckle.

...Unreal...

Looking up at them, staring at them all.

This is the wasteland.

(T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*)

The group is hushed and in awe of Amaru’s words.

Patsy can no longer contain himself.

PATSY
It’s happening!
Amaru throws the book across the room in frustration.

AMARU
That’s why you don’t fucking read this shit...here...in front of people. You have to let it ferment. Grapes in barrels of wood. For years! Fuck!

He pauses, regaining his self-control.

What the fuck is so goddamn important that you couldn’t let that shit just ferment?

PATSY
It’s on the news, man. The truce is broken.

AMARU
That’s all you got?

PATSY
We need to be in there, in the arena!

AMARU
Let me tell you somein’, boy. There will always be rumors of war. You itching to die? You keep thinking like that and you’ll get that itch scratched sooner than you expect.

PATSY
We ain’t gonna just sit back and do nothing?

AMARU
We doing something right now, goddamn it!

Pointing at the room full of young people.

But you come bustin in here with your nonsense. What the fuck is it to you, Patsy? What’s at stake in it for you?

PATSY
I’m gonna get mine. It’s time to come up. This my moment!

AMARU
“My moment?” Who the fuck told you that you have a moment?
Amaru shakes his head and laughs in frustration.

PATSY
You’ve seen your glory. I’m a soljah! A mutha fuckin outlaw. We all soljahs up in here. We ain’t here to sit on our asses and read goddamned poetry and shit.

POWELL
You don’t get it. You don’t get this shit right here. This is knowledge, Patsy. Insight! You need to listen to your cousin.

PATSY
Shut the fuck up, you leech.

AMARU
ENOUGH! Both of you shut the fuck up! Damn, Powell, for as weak as your lungs are, you sure do get a lot of air up through your mouth.

He stands up and graciously walks toward his cousin Patsy.

You ready to take your skinny little 19-year-old ass up to the state pen? In San Quinn you just another nigga have to start the whole damn shit over. I can’t protect your ass there. You been to the state pen before?

PATSY
To visit your ass.

Amaru laughs.

AMARU
But you ain’t been on the other side of that glass, boy. Worse then death. Mutha fuckas so hard they ain’t even human no more. RAW animals. You can’t eat, you can’t sleep, you can’t think. Exile. Darkness. Grown men weeping and gnashing their teeth all night long cause they got to be on the alert when they sleepin’. I been through that valley of death. I swear to God, that place is purgatory. You ain’t never wanna go through that. So you best sober the fuck up, brother.

PATSY
It’s like that?

Amaru standing eye to eye now.
AMARU
It is like that!

PATSY
Why now? Why you wanna turn over now? We ready to fight. All of them here. It's our time. We soljahs ready for war.

Several members in the group shake their heads in approval.

AMARU
I ain't teaching you all to fight. Some ya'll ain't listening. Drop you bullshit conspiracy theories. Get your shit together.

Pointing to his head. He pauses and looks over at Baruch.

You wanna give the feds a case for conspiracy? You want to put all this in jeopardy?

PATSY
But we can't do it alone!!!

AMARU
Boy, let me tell you something.

Amaru walks straight toward Patsy.

You are on your own. We all on our own. The sooner you realize that, the sooner you will be truly free.

Many of them shake their heads yes. A murmured “Amen.”

PATSY
You always be callin me boy. Ain’t I a man too?

Amaru reaches out and embraces him. Kisses him on the forehead.

AMARU
Patsy, my cuz, my brother. I love you. I love you as a man. You got your whole life in front of you. I need you to help me build this.

Patsy’s eyes well up with tears.
You feel me?

PATSY
I want it so bad!

AMARU
I know you do. I know you do. God bless you for it.

Amaru looks Patsy directly into his eyes.
But are you with me?

PATSY
Yeah, I’m with you.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS TIME

INT: THUG NATION COMPOUND

Patsy is restless. He lies down on his bed and tries to rest to no avail. He gets up to go out and have a smoke with other Thug Nation members.

EXT: THUG NATION COMPOUND (NIGHT)

A few Thug Nation members are standing by a barrel with a fire. Powell is all bundled up in blankets sitting on a chair next to the fire, staring at the flames.

HODGEY
What up, Patsy? How you feeling, dawg?

PATSY
What the fuck do you think?

HODGEY
I feel you, dawg.

TICKETS
What choo thinking, man?

PATSY
I’m thinking this is fucked up. Mutha fuckas took out A. Jacks and we just sittin’ around, doing nothing.

TICKETS
I heard Manila might have accidentally shot him.

**HODGEY**
That ain’t true, man. You don’t know that.

**PATSY**
Honestly, I don’t give a fuck who did it. He would have never been there if the Hernandez kid wasn’t fucking Manila’s wife.

**HODGEY**
True dat. True dat.

Patsy warms his hands by the fire.

**PATSY**
Fuck this shit. Let’s go for a ride. You game, Hodgey?

**HODGEY**
Sure, where the fuck we going?

**PATSY**
LA.

**TICKETS**
LA?

**HODGEY**
Shit, that’s two and half hours away and it’s already 8:30.

**PATSY**
Fuck it then. I’ll roll alone.

**HODGEY**
I didn’t say I ain’t coming. But we gonna be spending the night up there and shit?

**PATSY**
Hell, yeah. Go hit some clubs. Get some lap dances.

**TICKETS**
That’s what I’m talking about...right deerrrrre!

**HODGEY**
Let's make some memories!

INT: VEHICLE

Patsy, Hodgey, and Tickets are rollin' up the freeway to LA.

    HODGEY
    Let's roll to the Hustla Casino.

    PATSY
    Hell, no, we ain't hittin' no strip club. MOB, baby. Money of Bitches!
    We on a business trip.

    TICKETS
    But I thought you said…

    PATSY
    Yeah, I know what the fuck I said.

    HODGEY
    Feelin you.

    TICKETS
    Where we going then?

    HODGEY
    Sunset?

    PATSY
    That's what I'm talking about.

    HODGEY
    You think your cousin is cool with you coming up here?

    PATSY
    He ain't gonna know. We going up and spyin' out the land. Just
    checking out what's moving and shakin'.

EXT: THUG NATION COMPOUND

INT: INNER SANCTUARY

A woman walks into Amaru's room.
BREA
J, don’t be mad I came here.

AMARU
Mad? That takes courage.

BREA
You’re not that bad.

AMARU
Not me, them.

He nods toward the other rooms.

BREA
I needed to talk to you.

AMARU
Knightly already sent his bitches.

BREA
Stop it. I had no control over the situation. You should have trusted my heart. It has always belonged to you.

AMARU
My name ain’t tatted on your ass. Furthermore, it wasn’t about you.

BREA
Listen J. I want to move beyond all that. I got a heavy heart about you. I heard about A. Jacks.

AMARU
He was a soljah. And soljahs sometimes die.

BREA
He was a good man.

AMARU
There are plenty of good men.

BREA
Knightly is stirring shit up, Jermaine.
AMARU
Has he been talking in his sleep?

BREA
Fuck you. You were so damned consumed with building your project. See J. I’m worried about you. Your heart…it’s becoming so hard.

AMARU
Brea, you see the world through a woman’s eyes, but there are some things about this God-forsaken world that you don’t have to understand.

BREA
I don’t need to understand it. Just let me in!

AMARU
It’s not complicated, Brea. We set this shit up. We get funded. We lay out the vision. We make it happen. Day by day.

BREA
But they are looking for you, J. There are people out there that don’t want you to succeed.

Amaru
Comes with being born, babe.

BREA
They think you getting too much power here. You can’t just walk away from the AGO. They brought you up.

AMARU
I don’t owe anybody a goddamned thing. I AM MINE!

BREA
I want to make a family with you.

Amaru bows his head.

AMARU
Funny. Lately, I’ve really been wanting babies. I wanna see a part of me that ain’t so dark. Part of me that can get out from behind the shadows of tall buildings.
BREA
Yes, baby, that’s what I’m talking about. Let me have your babies. Let me give you some peace.

Pause.

AMARU
Shit! I’m all fucked up in this mutha fucka. I’m holding on to reality by my fingernails, Brea.

Brea walks over and rubs the back of his head. They are eye to eye.

My eyes are dry, baby. I’m all out of tears. I don’t know how to have no damn family. This here is my family.

Nodding toward the compound.

We got a dream here. A dream, damn it. We can make this shit right.

BREA
These ain’t your kids. They men. They need to be men on their own. You can have both. You can lead them and you can have a family of your own, J.

She stands up and begins to disrobe.

Right here. Right now, baby! Come with me now. Let’s grow wings of a dove and fly away.

AMARU
Shit.

BREA
Mmmmmmmm.

They embrace and make passionate love in Amaru’s inner sanctuary.

A montage of the two lover’s bodies entwined in different positions. Her face is full of pleasure and his face is shadowed with an aggressive passion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: DEATH OF PATSY

EXT: LA SKYLINE
EXT: LA STRIP

Black Suburban rolls down the strip with Patsy at the wheel.

HODGEY (OFF SCREEN)
Reminds me so much of Vegas. Wish we was still out there.

EXT: SUNSET STRIP CLUB

Suburban pulls up outside a club for valet parking.

Patsy and the other two Thug Nation members get out and walk into the club.

INT: THE PEARL CLUB (owned by the Hernandez Family)

HODGEY
Asian Invasion. Sweet!!!!

TICKETS
Hell, yeah. Me sooo horny!!!

PATSY
MOB, fellas. MOB. Don’t forget it. This is business.

A couple of guys from the AGO spot Patsy, thinking that it is Amaru because of the dim light and the strong resemblance of the two cousins.

AGO ONE
Pulls out a cell phone.

Yeah, let me talk to Knightly.

Tickets and Hodgey on the dance floor with a couple of Asian girls.

Yeah, man, it’s urgent or I wouldn’t be using this number.

Pause.

Sup, Ridda! I just spotted your boy.

Pause.

Yeah, Amaru himself.
Pause.

Hell, yeah, I’m sure it’s him. Yeah, we still at the Pearl.

He closes up his cell phone and turns to duck into a booth where he is sitting with another AGO member and several hootchie white girls. He leans down and conspicuously lights a bong.

AGO TWO
Damn, bro, how many hits you be taking tonight?

AGO ONE
Man, shut the fuck up, lightweight. We doing our job.

INT: MACK ONE ONE (VEGAS, NIGHT)

Knightly is sitting in his VIP owner’s box over looking the dance floor. Knightly makes several phone calls. Then he folds it up and puts it in his jacket.

KNIGHTLY
Amaru is in LA.

MANILA
No shit?

KNIGHTLY
That’s what Busta just said.

MANILA
Well, that’s good news. He’ll stir shit up.

KNIGHTLY
That’s what I’m afraid of. Mutha fucka turns down our offer, and then his ass is up there trollin’ around. What the fuck is he up to now?

INT: AMARU’S BEDROOM

Brea’s naked body is draped across Amaru. She is falling asleep in his arms.

AMARU
Making love like that gives a man visions and shit.
She giggles.

BREA
Why? What do you see?

Amaru lies back with his eyes closed searching.

AMARU
I see a bunch of skinny ass stray dogs looking for crumbs on some deserted freeway that leads to nowhere.

Brea mumbles as she dozes closer to sleep.

BREA
You crazy dreamer.

Amaru opens his eyes, cool chill in them.

AMARU
They’re bleeding. From a bear’s claw or a hawk’s talons. They’re confused and aimless. Their owner is no longer alive. He has been assassinated while watching his child’s school play about a bunch of boys, lost on some remote island.

BREA
Repressed desires?

Amaru gets a serious look on his face. Brea is nearly asleep.

AMARU
They’re whimpering and howling, trying to communicate with the coyotes in the foothills just beyond the end of the freeway. But there is nothing or no one there to hear their cry.

Brea is asleep.

AMARU
And there will be a great wailing, like nothing America has ever heard before.

Amaru’s eyes reflect the chilling revelation he has just seen.

INT: THE PEARL NIGHT CLUB
PATSY
Well, well, well. Would you look what the cat drug in now?

He looks over at the VIP section where he sees Perry walking over to the owner’s booth with Helen. He looks back around excited to tell the other two. They are nowhere to be seen. He looks back over at Perry.

Would you look at that? Right there out in the open. And they say the boy has no nuts. I’ll be damned.

Patsy drinks for a while watching Perry and Helen chat and dance on the upper floor, which is closed to the public. He looks around for Tickets and Hodgey to no avail. Eventually he pulls out his cell to call them, but he is getting no reception. He gets up and heads to the club entrance. The two AGO members are blazed out and fooling around with the girls at the table.

EXT: THE PEARL ENTRANCE

Patsy walks outside and pulls out his cell to call the other two.

INT: SUBURBAN

Tickets and Hodgey are in the suburban smoking a bong with the two Asian girls they met in the club. They have short skirts on, and Tickets is pulling up one of the girl’s skirts to reveal a thong. The phone rings.

HODGEY
Oh, shit. I’ll bet that’s Patsy. Pick it up!

TICKET
I can’t, man. My hands are full.

HODGEY
Fuck.

Hodgey fumbles through the car and finds the cell just in time.

Yeah.

EXT: THE PEARL ENTRANCE
PATSY
Where the fuck are you guys?

Just off to the side near the entrance are a couple of TROY bodyguards.

BODYGUARD ONE
Holy shit! That’s Jermaine Amaru.

BODYGUARD TWO
That ain’t him.

BODYGUARD ONE
Hell, yeah, it is. I saw that mutha fucka on TV the other day, doing some shit down in Compton.

A black car is pulling up the entrance. The two bodyguards are distracted, debating if they should go in and alert the others. Hector steps out of the car as if he is on a mission to go get his brother out of the public eye.

PATSY
Well, get your ass... Holy fuck!

Patsy sees Hector coming toward him. He can’t duck him. Hector sees him. Patsy panics and aggressively runs up against him hoping to blow by him and get to the car. Hector thinks he is rushing him.

INT: SUBURBAN

HODGEY
Oh, fuck, we gotta roll. The shit is going down.

TICKET
What shit? What the fuck are you talking about?

HODGEY
Come on! Now!

Hodgey backs the car out and jams it into drive going toward the entrance. He sees Hector and Patsy in a shoving match and jams on the brakes. He jumps from the car and pulls a gun.

BODYGUARD ONE
Get down! Get down!
People who were in line trying to get in begin to scream and panic. Hodgey fires a warning shot in the air. Patsy breaks free from Hector and runs toward the car. The bodyguard shoots at the car and the fleeing Patsy. Hector pulls his gun. Hodgey responds by giving Patsy covering fire. The girls in the Suburban are screaming. As Patsy tries to jump into the passenger seat, glass is shattering all around them. Hodgey thinks that Patsy made it into the car, but one of the girls slammed the passenger door. The sedan screams backwards and speeds down the street.

Patsy’s body lies on the ground in the parking lot where the sedan had been parked. Hector and the bodyguard slowly approach the body. There is a fatal wound to the neck. Hector looks shocked.

The crowd is pouring out of the club, thinking the shots were coming from the inside.

BODYGUARD ONE

Leaning down to check the body

He’s dead.

HECTOR
That’s not Amaru. Oh, God.

BODY GUARD TWO
That’s Patrick Amaru, Jermaine’s cousin.

Helen and Perry run up.

PERRY
What happened? Are you ok?

Police sirens can be heard in the distance. Hector looks numb.

HECTOR
No. I’m not ok, Perry. Get Helen outta here. Get the hell outta here. Go home now and do not leave the house.

He looks at the body as one of the bodyguards escorts the couple to a nearby car.

HECTOR
The sirens are getting louder.
Dear God! Have mercy on this boy’s soul. Have mercy on us all!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: A MOTHER’S COUNSEL

EXT: THUG NATION COMPOUND

The shot-up Suburban pulls up to the compound and enters the large garage.

INT: GARAGE

Several members rush over to the sedan. Hodgey and Ticket get out of the vehicle and walk right by everyone.

INT: THUG NATION LOUNGE

The compound is quiet. Everybody is sleeping. Hodgey enters very upset.

HODGEY

Somebody get him. Somebody wake him up.

INT: AMARU’S ROOM

Amaru is sleeping, holding Brea in his arms. He hears a knock at the door.

AMARU

What is it?

UNKNOWN VOICE (Off Screen)

You need to come right away.

AMARU

Now what does Patsy want to talk about?

Brea rolls over and continues to sleep. Amaru gets up and puts a pair of sweat pants and a t-shirt on.

INT: THUG NATION LOUNGE

Amaru looks around and sees a group that has followed Hodgey in from the garage. Amaru senses something bad has happened and slowly walks into the room. He sees Hodgey deeply upset.
AMARU
Get on with it!

HODGEY
They killed him.

He begins crying.

They killed Patsy.

Amaru is stoned-faced. Powell lowers his head in silence. Baruch looks on.

HODGEY
They killed Patsy, damn it!

AMARU
Where is he?

HODGEY
It was chaos. They were shooting the hell out of the car...

AMARU
WHERE IS HE!

Hodgey says nothing.

You left him behind?

HODGEY
It was too late. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!

Amaru walks up to Hodgey and looks him dead cold in the eyes. Hodgey is nervous and upset. Amaru in one motion reaches behind Hodgey and pulls a gun out of his jeans then pistol whips him. Hodgey falls unconscious to the ground.

Amaru says nothing as he walks to a distant corner of the room. There is total silence. Amaru begins to rip his clothes until he is naked. He falls to his knees near a large fire pit that had been burning wood earlier in the night. He begins to cover himself in ashes; even the hot coals do not stop him.

Brea enters the room and sees what is happening.
BREA
What happened?

To Powell.

POWELL
His cousin was murdered tonight.

Softly.

Brea is the only one brave enough to approach him.

BREA
J. J. It’s me baby. It’s Brea.

AMARU
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO0
This latest death comes on the heels of a similar incident at a Vegas hotel after a prizefight erupted into an all-out brawl in the lobby of that hotel. Another member of the AGO, Anthony Jackson, was shot and killed in that incident.

Federal investigators would not speculate on the relationship between the two killings, but government officials confirmed that they are cooperating with local and state officials in both California and Nevada to investigate if there are any links. These events clearly puts the recent national gang peace treaty signed late last year in jeopardy.

PRESIDENT (ON TV)
Well, certainly we are concerned about the recent violence in two of America’s finest cities. I don’t believe there is any reason to panic. We’re dealing with it.

TV ANCHORWOMAN
The Vice President had much harsher words for the gangs.

VICE PRESIDENT
As I’ve said before and I’ll say it again, there is no place for this type of violence in our culture. We will not tolerate domestic terrorism any more than we will tolerate it internationally.

INT: THUG NATION COMPOUND
An older woman walks through the Thug Nation lounge and into Amaru’s bedroom.

INT: AMARU’S BEDROOM
Amaru sits cross-legged on the floor, his eyes closed, covered in ash.

AMARU’S MOTHER
Jermaine? Son?

Jermaine finishes his prayers.

MOTHER
Son. It’s your mama. I heard about Patsy. I got here as soon as I could.

Jermaine opens his eyes.
AMARU
How is his Auntie Betty taking the news?

MOTHER
She is devastated of course.

AMARU
He wouldn’t listen to me, Mama.

MOTHER
He was like you, stubborn and strong willed. Set your mind to something and away you go.

Amaru bows his head.

Oh baby, I hate to see you like this. Don’t cry!

AMARU
I have no tears left, Mother. I haven’t been able to shed a single goddamn tear.

His mother picks up one of the empty mason jars on his shelf.

MOTHER
You remember when you were a boy, and we’d go to your grandmother’s house during the summer and pick blueberries down by the creek.

Amaru listens.

These jars remind me of those days, when you were young and free.

AMARU
I got them to save up my tears. And look at em’.

She looks at the empty, dusty bottle intently, reflecting on her son’s words.

MOTHER
Son, of course I’ve never told you what to do.

AMARU
It’s all right mama. The Lord is my Shepherd. He will guide me.
MOTHER
You were baptized in fire, why should I have believed you’d live any differently.

She sits down on his bed.

I’ve always tried to teach you right from wrong, son. You are a man now. You will decide. And I will trust your decision. Of course I do not want you to die.

Amaru shakes his head in disgust, but respectfully continues to listen.

If this is what God has in store for you, then I must accept it. I promised you to Him and vowed to not get in the way of His will for you.

She touches his face.

But, Jermaine. If you pursue Hector, you will not come home. You will be known among your people as a hero. Your vision will be remembered and perhaps even realized by generations. But you will not come home.

AMARU
I know, Mamma.

MOTHER
Jermaine, there is something else you must consider. I spoke with Brea on the way in. I believe in her love for you.

AMARU
Mother, I can’t...

MOTHER
Hush, boy! I didn’t teach you to use the word “can’t.” You can lead a family with just as much passion and courage as you lead a nation.

AMARU
What you say is good. But I can’t change my destiny any more than I can change the color of my skin. There is no justice. Where there is no justice, there is no peace. I can’t live with Patsy’s blood unredeemed.
MOTHER
Is that your responsibility?

Amaru looks at her softly.

There is difference between justice and revenge. I pray He will show you the difference.

She kisses him on the forehead.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: TATTED UP

INT: THUG NATION COMPOUND LOUNGE

The music of Bach plays as an old man is escorted through the compound.

INT: AMARU’S BEDROOM

Amaru stands in front of the mirror naked and pours oil over his head letting it run down over his chiseled body. A knock at his door.

AMARU
Enter.

A member peaks his head in.

MEMBER
Old man Jacobs is ready for you.

INT: THUG NATION LOUNGE

The room is dim with a few bright lights shining on a barber’s chair in the middle of the room. Amaru approaches the old white-haired man, with a white beard. He shakes his hand.

AMARU
Thanks for your flexibility.

JACOBS
End of the world, we are here.

Blue Christmas lights are hung around the room. It is extra smoky as people blaze up. Several people approach Amaru and pour out bottles of beer and liquor at his feet.
JACOBS
Why is this night so special?

AMARU
Time bends at certain moments. And sometimes it needs a little straightening out.

JACOBS
Well, your temple has been well built.

Looking at Amaru's body.

It is beautiful. Let us make it sacred. Shall we?

He raises his hands in the air.

Montage of various tattoos being inked into Amaru's body.

The first is a scale tipped heavily to one side. One plate has the word "Justice." It is the higher of the two. "Vengeance" is on the other plate and is the heavier of the two.

Old man Jacobs mumbles a Bible verse as he works on Amaru's skin.

JACOBS
"You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?"

(Jeremiah 12:1)

Close up of the "Thug Nation" tattoo across Amaru's chest. It has been upgraded with the "i" in "nation" being turned into a long rifle bullet.

Amaru begins to speak to his friends who are gathered around him. Baruch sits nearby watching the events.

The final addition is a solitary tear dripping from the right hand side of the Gothic cross on his back.

As the old man finishes his back. Amaru speaks to the small gathering watching the proceedings.
AMARU
Don’t shed a tear for me when I’m gone. I ain’t happy here. I am ready for the next adventure.

Brea closes her eyes and walks away.

CHAPTER NINETEEN: BARUCH’S CALLING

INT: THUG NATION COMPOUND

Baruch lies in a small isolated room on an old mattress.

THUG NATION MEMBER
Your presence is being requested at the inner sanctuary.

Baruch slowly rises and is escorted through the warehouse to the inner sanctuary where Amaru is waiting.

INT: THE INNER SACNTUARY

Amaru sits at a small table dipping pieces of French bread into a glass of wine. Powell is propped up in a wheelchair beside Amaru.

AMARU
Powell will not make it much longer.

BARUCH
You’re concerned about him?

AMARU
I am.

Pause.

He knows everything about Thug Nation. I brought him here for that reason.

BARUCH
Baruch remains calm and secure.

I know your side of the story.
AMARU
Words...words....words.

BARUCH
I can tell your side of the story.

AMARU
Damn straight you can. Why the fuck you think you’ve been spared?

BARUCH
You know when to hold.

AMARU
Either you getting smarter, you a damn good liar.

POWELL
Sounds like a man begging for his life.

Baruch pulls a gun from his back and turns it backwards, the barrel toward himself. Hands it to Powell. And cocks the trigger.

BARUCH
Pull the trigger. See if I’m beggin’. I got nothing to prove to anyone. Especially to you.

Amaru laughs.

AMARU
My nigga. My nigga. That’s what the fuck I’m talking about.

Drinks the rest of his wine.

POWELL
I don’t buy your bullshit. But you are right about one thing. You will tell his story.

He pulls out a stack of journals and notebooks and pushes them in front of Baruch.

Baruch looks at them.

BARUCH
Your writings!
AMARU
Nope. Your writings. Dead men have little use for words.

POWELL
Three years of interviews, thoughts, experiences, articles, and never before published lyrics and poems.

BARUCH
I’m not a writer.

AMARU
Oh, you will be.

BARUCH
Why me?

AMARU
Cause I know your sphere of influence.

He leans forward.

You are me. Mutha fucka. We come from the same place, just a highway between us.

He offers Baruch bread and wine. Baruch breaks off a piece of bread and eats it.

What great purpose are you gonna fight for? Your country club membership? Custody? You go home every night to a routine, you tolerate your illusions. And all the while, you were meant for greatness.

Powell is slumped over in his chair, very pale, looking like a dead man.

BARUCH
He needs a doctor!

AMARU
Don’t we all?

Getting up and walking to the edge of the room.

Respect a dying man’s wish. Take the journals with you.
BARUCH

I will.

AMARU

You're a free man now.

CHAPTER TWENTY: HECTOR'S FAREWELL

EXT: HERNANDEZ MANSION

INT: MANSION MEETING ROOM

Hector, his father, and his brother are watching a news report with Hector’s wife, baby, and Helen nearby.

TV ANCHORWOMAN

With mounting tensions in the Los Angeles area due to the recent death of a very prominent East Coast gang member, Patsy Amaru, the Vice President of the United States has urged the President to put the National Guard on standby throughout major US cities this weekend. There have been numerous threats of mass violence and retaliation for the shooting.

HECTOR

He is coming for me. There is no doubt in my mind.

PERRY

LAPD has assured me that they will be on the lookout for him. Our home is safe.

Perry looks out the window.

EXT: FRONT YARD OF HERNANDEZ MANSION

Police are surveying and watching the house.

INT: MANSION MEETING ROOM

HECTOR

No, I feel it in my blood. I felt it when that boy’s spirit left him. He will not stop short of complete destruction if I do not go out and face him—cut him off.
PACIFICO
Do not be foolish, son.

Hector’s baby begins to cry loudly in the background.

HECTOR
Father, the moment calls for a fool’s courage. Jermaine Amaru is who
I would have become if not for the love of you father; if not for the
love I have for my dearest Magdalena, and the love I have for my own
son.

MAGGY
And what about your own family? What about your son? Would you
deny him the very thing you just thanked your father for?

HECTOR
I know this, my love. But I will not even have a son if I do not go out
and meet Amaru face to face. Those thugs care nothing for the law.

PERRY
I will go with you!

HECTOR
You will do nothing of the sort. I killed Amaru’s cousin. He has
nothing to do with you; unless you get in his way. I will not allow that.
I have seen plenty of death lately.

PERRY
But I am responsible for all of that death. If it weren’t not for me, you
would have never been involved in any of this.

HECTOR
Have you learned nothing, brother? Don’t think of yourself so highly.
The pieces on the board were already set. A few mortal moves cannot
thwart the course of destiny.

MAGGY
You honor the law, so take them to court.

HECTOR
I killed a man.
MAGGY
It was in self-defense. They came to your club armed. The boy was staking you out. He attacked you.

HECTOR
Woman! I have all the respect in the world for you, but do not do this here and now. Trust in my words and pray that I come home safely.

Pacifico gets up out of his chair and comes over to Hector.

PACIFICO
He is right. I would have done the same as a young man. You know this enemy well. I trust your judgment, my son. You are a great man. A good husband and father. You make me proud. We must have you come back safely.

HECTOR
I can make no promise outside of defending this name, in life or in death.

They embrace. Hector turns to his brother.

HECTOR
If I do not make it…

PERRY
Don’t say such things.

HECTOR
Listen to me. Love Helen. Make it right. Take care of my wife and son.

PERRY
You know I will.

Hector embraces his brother, turns and embraces Helen.

HECTOR
Whispering to Helen.

Make him happy.
She nods and looks at him in the eyes. There is a mutual understanding without a word being spoken. He finally turns to his wife and takes their infant child in his arms. Holds him up and smiles. Kisses him on the forehead and give him back to his wife.

HECTOR
All of you! Forever!

MAGGY
Please!

HECTOR
It must be this way. Pray God’s will, be done.

He kisses her on the forehead, turns and leaves.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE: BURNING ALL ILLUSION

EXT: THUG NATION COMPOUND

A large entourage of vehicles pulls up at the Thug Nation compound. Knightly and his crew get out and walk inside.

INT: LOUNGE

Knightly walks up to Amaru and hugs him. Amaru is lukewarm about the whole meeting.

KNIGHTLY
My brother, my brother. I am sorry to hear about your cousin.

AMARU
I have little patience for words. What is the purpose of your visit?

KNIGHTLY
Now, I know you’re a little short given the circumstances. But be clear, we are here to support you, not to undermine you. We lost A. Jacks to this monster.

AMARU
Hector is no monster and you know it. You’ve always criticized me for my pride, but whose war is this really? One man’s lust for power. One man.
KNIGHTLY
He killed your cousin, didn’t he?

AMARU
Make no mistake, justice will be served. However, he was thrust into this situation.

KNIGHTLY
None the less, we will go to battle with you. Let bygones be bygones, old friend?

AMARU
Do as you feel you must do. But do NOT lay a hand on Hector. I have words for him.

EXT: THUG NATION COMPOUND
A very large caravan of cars pulls out of the Thug Nation compound.
U2’s Desire—Hollywood version begins to play underneath the images.
Montage plays out over the next several minutes, like a music video to the song.
Amaru is seen on the news giving speeches.

AMARU
Be warned, Jerusalem, Athens, Los Angeles, or I will turn away from you and make your land desolate like the desert.

EXT: FROM THE SKY
Overhead shots of the caravan rolling like a convoy on the freeway.

EXT: LA FREEWAY SIGN
INT: TELEVISION
Many different segments of Amaru giving fiery speeches via a homemade video.

AMARU (On TV)
I’m talking about burning all illusions tonight.
EXT: DOWNTOWN LA

A car slams into another car; a gang fight ensues.

Drive-bys are being perpetrated by Knightly and his crew.

EXT: ABOVE THE FREEWAY

Overhead shot of the LA freeway with this very large convoy of vehicles. Some split off into different directions.

TV ANCHORWOMAN
In LA tonight, breaking news. Police fear that there has been widespread gang-related activity throughout the city in multiple places. Not since the riots in 1992 has there been this level of violence within the same 24-hour period.

Montage of more gang-related activities being perpetrated by radical AGO members.

INT: TELEVISION

The Vice President has called a press conference.

VICE PRESIDENT JOHNSON
We have called up the National Guard just as a preliminary caution. However, we believe the problem will "correct" itself.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO: DEATH OF HECTOR

EXT: CAR ON FREEWAY

BARUCH
Yes, I got the report. I got the whole story.

INT: FED HQ

L.C. GEORGE
Well, what the hell happened to you?

INT: BARUCH'S CAR
BARUCH
There is no time. I need to know, if I bring this guy in. I want immunity for him.

INT: FED HQ

L.C. GEORGE
Are you out of your mind? You’ve become one of them? Grant this guy immunity? This guy is on the edge of becoming one of America’s Most Wanted. He isn’t getting anything. Bring him in.

INT: BARUCH’S CAR

BARUCH
Something is going down. If I don’t get him some type of protection, I can’t bring him in. The shit is about to go down.

INT: FED HQ

L.C. GEORGE
I got news for you, man! The shit is already going down. You haven’t seen the news? The President is calling in the National Guard. They’re about to burn down LA. Where the fuck are you?

INT: BARUCH’S CAR

BARUCH
Fucking Knightly!

Speaking to himself.

He reaches down to turn on the radio.

WOMAN ON THE RADIO
This was the fourth drive-by shooting in the past hour and a half. Reports of rioting and looting are coming in from all over Los Angeles. Patrick Amaru seems to be the spark that has lite this flame of violence.

L.C. GEORGE
Are you there, goddamn it?
BARUCH
He’s not behind these incidents!

INT: FED HEAD

L.C. George
I saw his little speech last night on the news. Listen, Baruch, you’re a good agent. Don’t give into temptation. Bring this guy in. Contact LAPD and let them take care of it. Get your ass on a plane now and get that report back to me. I want it by tomorrow afternoon. The president is going to need some inside info on this. I want the inside story before the fucking press spins this and creates their own version.

INT: BARUCH’S CAR

Baruch hangs the phone up. He veers off a freeway exit and heads toward West Hollywood.

He looks down at his cell phone and punches in a new number, calling Kilmore.

BARUCH
Camden, it’s Friedman.

KILMORE (OS)
What the fuck is going on? It’s all over the news!

BARUCH
I was about to ask you the same. A big caravan left the compound this morning, but they weren’t commissioned to do this.

KILMORE (OS)
Are you still in the compound?

BARUCH
No!

KILMORE (OS)
Did he let you go?

BARUCH
Listen. I need you to sit by the phone and give me updates. Do you have any Federal intel?
KILMORE
I've got my eyes and ears open.

BARUCH
Anything on Hernandez?

KILMORE
Yeah. The older brother just left their estate about 15 minutes ago.

BARUCH
Did they put a bird on him?

KILMORE
Not that I'm aware of. They usually don't do that for one guy.

BARUCH
These are unusual times.

KILMORE
I'll try to track it.

BARUCH
Ok. Stay close. I'm going to try and find Amaru. I think they are going to meet.

KILMORE
No shit! What do you need from me?

BARUCH
I need some eyes in the sky. I need to know where this is going down.

KILMORE
I'll see what I can do with my local contacts. I'll call you back in a few minutes.

EXT: FROM THE SKY

Amaru's car breaks off from his small caravan. It quickly makes its way off the freeway and down some side streets disappearing under an overpass adjacent to a dry aqueduct.

EXT: POLICE HELICOPTOR
An LAPD chopper is, in fact, tracking Hector’s car. Kilmore gets word of it and calls Baruch.

**INT: BARUCH’S VEHICLE**

Phone rings.

**BARUCH**
Damn! That was quick.

**KILMORE (OS)**
They did have an eye on him. But it sounds like it’s only to get to Amaru. They sound tight with Hernandez.

**BARUCH**
Can you get me a live feed?

**KILMORE**
I can get you a feed from a feed. About a three-second delay if you want to try.

**BARUCH**
Anything right now? I need to know where Amaru is!

**KILMORE**
What are you going to do when you find him?

**BARUCH**
I’m gonna try to bring his ass in!

**KILMORE**
Bring him in? You and what army?

**BARUCH**
Get me the sky.

Audio sounds are coming in over the cell.

**POLICE RADIO**
...Over...Yeah, suspect’s car is headed south on I-405, approaching LAX.
BARUCH
Son of a bitch. They’re going to the airport.

EXT: UNDERNEATH FREEWAY
Hector’s car comes to a slow stop. He gets out and looks around.

EXT: POLICE HELICOPTER

POLICE RADIO
We’ve lost visual contact of the suspect. Last spotted on Grand and Broadway near LAX.

INT: BARUCH’S CAR
Baruch just heard the location of the car. He makes a sharp left turn and starts heading north through neighborhood streets at high speeds.

EXT: UNDERNEATH FREEWAY
Amaru is covertly watching Hector from across the ravine. Amaru steps out from behind a pillar.

AMARU
HECTORRRRRR!!!!!!

Hector turns quickly toward the voice to see Amaru. The two stare at each other while the police helicopter searches for them overhead.

HECTOR
Here I am!

The two walk down into the dry aqueduct but stay underneath the overpass and out of sight of the choppers. The sound of large jumbo jets can be heard landing and taking off from LAX which sounds like it is right beside them.

The two approach each other slowly. Amaru removes his shirt revealing his tight body and new tattoos.

AMARU
Just so you know who you’re fighting this time.
HECTOR
I thought it was you. I was defending myself!!

AMARU
Fate is cruel. Either way, he died by your hands.

HECTOR
Fate is often guided by poor decisions. He had no business being where he was.

The two are circling each other.

AMARU
His blood will be redeemed in this life or the next. I prefer now!

HECTOR
There is a difference between redemption and revenge.

AMARU
Do not lecture me!

HECTOR
I will defend the honor of my name.

AMARU
This is why it will be an honor to kill you. I admire your loyalty.

HECTOR
As I admire yours.

The helicopter is loud above the freeway, no doubt calling in back up.

AMARU
Now, let sista fate reveal her outcome!

HECTOR
It’s on!

Amaru and Hector square up and feel each other out. Then, they attack each other with a great fury. Two men, head to head with their bare hands.

Amaru finally gains the upper hand after a series of amazing moves by both men. Amaru gives Hector a severe blow to the head.
Hector falls to his knees. Blood is coming from his mouth. He appears dazed.

**AMARU**

WHAT?! ... WHAT??!!

Hector stays on his knees with the only strength left in him, blood dripping from his nose and head as well as his mouth.

Amaru stands over him, towering like a champion, the bright sun making him appear as only a large shadow to Hector.

**AMARU**

Bleed, bitch! Pay back the blood you spilled from Patsy.

Amaru turns and whacks him across the nose with a massive blow from his fist. Hector awkwardly bends backwards, falling like a statue that bends at the base but will not go over all the way.

**AMARU**

Reap the whirlwind. The angel is riding it. Let your family weep. Let them pull out their teeth over your lifeless body.

Amaru puts his foot on Hector’s neck, bending him the whole way back to the ground. He presses in and pins him against the dry concrete. Hector’s is gagging on his blood and sucking for air.

**AMARU**

That’s right, boy. If I had the talons of a raven, I would dig into your chest and eat your heart with my teeth. You fucked with the wrong nigga.

With that, Hector breaths his last breath.

News helicopters have picked up on the radio transmissions and are searching the area. One of them illegally dips down and spots Amaru standing over Hector’s dead body. They begin transmitting video images.

The police helicopter is signaling for them to get out of there. They are performing a dangerous maneuver.

**INT: BARUCH’S CAR**
Baruch hears about the newscast through the police radio channel.

POLICE HELICOPTER (V.O.)
Get that media bird out of there!

They spot Amaru when the news helicopter pulls up.

This is LA Blue Bird One. We have two suspects under the aqueduct on Grand and Broadway. Requesting ground support immediately. It doesn’t look good.

Baruch realizes exactly where they must be. He looks out the window and sees several helicopters flying over a freeway bridge. He races toward the area less than a block away.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE: DEATH OF A PROPHET

EXT: OVER THE DRY AQUEDUCT

Helicopters begin to swarm the area with news racing over the wire. People begin to stop on the freeway and get out of their cars looking underneath. Some have heard news reports; others want to see what’s going on. A huge crowd is beginning to gather.

INT: POLICE HELICOPTER

BLUE BIRD ONE
HQ, this is LA Blue Bird One, requesting to shut down air space on West side of LAX. We got heavy air traffic with this incident down below and we are right near a runway.

HQ (V.O.)
Roger that. We’ll see what we can do.

EXT: BARUCH’S CAR

Baruch pulls up and spots Amaru standing near a body. He jumps the fence and begins descending into the Aqueduct.

EXT: FREEWAY BRIDGE

People are pointing and chatting and several see Baruch approaching the suspects. People are cheering.
The police helicopter is urging people to get back in their vehicles.

Images of a gridlocked freeway are being broadcast live on local LA stations. The 24-hour news stations pick up on it and begin to rebroadcast. People are hanging over the bridge now.

EXT: FREEWAY

A National Guard convoy has pulled into the emergency lane, but there are so many people walking to the bridge that they cannot safely proceed. They get out of their trucks and begin to make their way toward the bridge on foot, weaving in and out of cars the whole way up the bridge.

EXT: UNDER THE OVERPASS

Amaru is on his knees as Baruch slowly approaches him with a gun in one hand and a cell playing the police broadcast, in the other.

Amaru is not aware of his surroundings at all.

AMARU
CAN YOU SEE ME NOW, LADY JUSTICE??!!!

People are quiet. Only the sound of helicopters and the National Guard that is just arriving.

AMARU
YOU STILL CAN’T SEE ME BITCH??!!!

Tears of rage well up in his eyes.

Baruch spots the police helicopter. A sniper is hanging over the side. The National Guard begins clearing the bridge. There is almost complete panic and confusion.

Baruch drops the cell phone and pulls his badge. He runs towards Amaru. Waving at the police helicopter.

BARUCH
He has no gun!!

He waves his arms in the air at the helicopter.
He has no gun!!!

Amaru speaks in a calm voice mouthing the words at Baruch.

AMARU
See me now, bitch. See me now!

A single shot rings out. Everything goes silent (in Baruch’s mind). He stops dead in his tracks.

Amaru falls backwards onto Hector’s body.

The shot did not come from the bridge or the helicopter. Baruch looks up and sees a rifle leaning out of Amaru’s own car.

He approaches the bodies and waves his badge pointing at the car, not fearing for his own life.

Amaru is lying against the dead body of Hector, bleeding from a shot to the chest. Baruch knows that it is a fatal wound. He drops to his knees and comforts Amaru’s head.

BARUCH
No! No!

Looking up at the chopper. The sniper looks confused.

AMARU
Whispering gurgle.

In morituri veritas.

BARUCH
Not understanding his words.

Shhh!! Be still. Be still.

EXT: AMARU’S CAR

National Guard members approach the car, shouting for the passenger to raise his hands. There is no movement or response. They cautiously approach the car and rip open the door. Slouched in the passenger seat with a rifle on his lap is Powell; he is unconscious from his sickness.
EXT: UNDER THE OVERPASS

Baruch props Amaru’s head up as he gurgles. Knowing that Amaru is about to die, Baruch tries to comfort him.

BARUCH
I’ll tell them your side of the story.

Amaru draws one last deep long drawn breath and whispers.

AMARU
See me now!

Amaru breaths his last as one solitary tear of rage trickles down his check.

Baruch goes numb and holds his head, awkwardly wiping the tear from Amaru’s face.

Fades to black.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR: DISPLEDGED

EXT: WASHINGTON, DC (LINCOLN MEMORIAL)

It is a cold and drizzly spring (late afternoon).

EXT: FEDERAL HEADQUARTERS

INT: BARUCH’S SMALL OFFICE

Baruch is setting at a small desk typing the final words of his report. The stack of books Powell gave him sits unopened on the desk next to him.

Montage of short clips of Baruch typing away through the night creating his report.

BARUCH (V.O.)
Jermaine Amaru was caught in the cross fire between pride and a failing system. He was not an immediate threat to our society, only those liberties that we have neglected through indifference. I therefore encourage expedient legislation that seeks to build up the marginalized rather than imprison us all for our own protection.
Baruch is sleeping on a small love seat in his office. He wakes, looks at the clock and notices it’s a quarter till 8 in the morning. He gets up quickly, grabs a jacket, and heads out the door.

INT: CAPTAIN’S OFFICE


GEORGE
You did the best you could, son. Good work. Now go spend some time with your family.

Baruch turns and passively walks out the door.

EXT: SUBURBIA

Baruch is driving his car through neighborhoods and looking around at the plush beauty of the neighborhood.

BARUCH (V.O.)
Some years into the quest to “make a living,” the load becomes too heavy for any one man to carry alone. But if you stop for a moment, perhaps when you first wake in the morning, or just before drifting into sleep at night—those moments when you are on the edge of awareness, you’ll hear a spirit still whispering for life. Listen to it and swallow, for beneath the burn you’ll find a dangerous desire, something that cannot be tamed by routine or status quo. You’ll find an essence screaming for something more. I saw that in his eyes when he was living. I saw it in his tear when he was dying.

EXT: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students are gathering around the flagpole at about 8:30 AM. Baruch sits in his car with Powell’s journals on the front seat beside him. He watches a couple of little white boys raise the American flag. He sees his daughter standing in the front with her hand over her heart. The other kids don’t seem to be paying much attention, just going through the routine. Baruch looks around and sees a group of mothers, including his wife, talking to each other while the supposedly solemn ceremony takes place. They keep talking, a few of them on cell phones leaning up against one of the giant SUVs.

All the background noise dissipates as the children begin reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
KIDS (V.O.)
I pledge allegiance to the flag
Of the United States of America
And to the republic

Baruch takes it in, still looking to see if his daughter or his wife notices him.

For which it stands
One nation, under God
Indivisible
With liberty and justice for all.

Baruch watches the two boys by the flagpole intently.

The flag flaps in the wind. Baruch thinks of Amaru’s last cries for Justice.

AMARU (FAINT V.O.)
See me now.

Baruch bows his head.

See me now.

The children disassemble and begin to break into groups and head off to class. Baruch looks at his wife one more time. She is still chatting with other moms.

Baruch looks down at the journals and turns the key in the ignition of the car. You can still hear only the flag flapping softly in the breeze. The screen goes black, and the flapping fades away.

THE END