

sensational writing

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. A BROOKLYN BAR - DUSK

The setting sun creeps into an otherwise dark and crowded room packed with books, records and old photos.

JAMES LAWRENCE sits at the bar with a rum and coke, staring at the shelves in front of him filled with dark liquor. Early 30's, brown curly hair, 70's-style button-down short-sleeved shirt, cuffed trousers, American traditional tattoos scattered on his arms.

He scribbles on a rugged leather notepad. He's alone and drunk. He raises his index finger, head down.

JAMES

One more, now... please.

The BARTENDER turns around.

James puts his elbows on the counter and clumsily knocks over a glass of water.

He stares at the mess.

BARTENDER

Asshole.

The bartender fixes another rum and coke. Early 40's, buzz cut, black hair, pale, wears an apron and jeans.

He slams the drink in front of James.

BARTENDER

(mutters)

Comes in here every night... never has his goddamn shit together, Jesus.

He turns around to clean a few glasses with a white, unstained rag.

BARTENDER

Scares the fucking customers.

He turns back around and places the glasses down.

James leans slightly forward.

James and the bartender stare at each other. James' face is smug.

He cracks a half-smile, eyes just about shut.

The bartender matches James' gaze, inquisitively... expecting a conversation to commence.

BARTENDER

Hmm?

JAMES

Hmm?

James maintains his gaze.

BARTENDER

Ya know?

JAMES

Mm.

BARTENDER

I...

JAMES

(interrupting)

Hmm.

James nods his head in a demeaning fashion.

The bartender puts both of his hands on the bar, leaning forward, just as James does.

The two are face-to-face, within inches.

BARTENDER

I want you to know one thing.

JAMES

Just one thing?

BARTENDER

Just...

JAMES

(interrupting)

Wait, okay. I just wanna be on the same page here. You're going to tell me one thing. Just one thing.

James stumbles over his words, slightly.

BARTENDER

That's correct. Only if it's okay with you, though.

James inhales and then exhales slowly, preparing himself. He points both his fingers at the bartender.

JAMES

shoot.

BARTENDER

Fuck you. Whatever your name might be... don't tell me. Fuck you.

The other bar patrons peer over in their direction.

James extends his already-raised hands and lightly pats the bartender on both cheeks.

JAMES

Right.

James hops out of his chair and heads to the restroom.

He snorts one line of cocaine, immediately. He stares at the musty mirror. His eyes are half-closed. He attempts to smile, he can't.

He snorts one more line of cocaine and his eyes pop open, wide open. He looks into the mirror, nods and leaves.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

Twelve writers and editors are spread out, CLICKING away at their computers in the newsroom.

The exposed-brick walls are covered with various awards and artwork.

James leans against the wall by his desk, across from JEROME CLEMONS, the copy chief. Late 40's, short dreadlocks, circular glasses, a button-down shirt and trousers.

Jerome scans his computer.

JEROME

So.

JAMES

Yeah.

JEROME

Let's backtrack here, just a little bit.

JAMES

Alright, let's.

JEROME

I asked you to write a features profile, correct?

JAMES

Yes, yes you did. A features profile.

James looks down and scratches the back of his head.

JEROME

You chose a hip-hop artist to do the said piece.

Jerome chuckles and shakes his head disapprovingly. Another editor turns around, makes eye contact with Jerome, cracks a smile and continues working.

JAMES

And? What is it? I did, yeah. It's right in front of you.

JEROME

Seriously?

JAMES

Seriously. I...

JEROME

(interrupting)

I've gotta know, you're not fucking with me? You're not bullshitting?

JAMES

No, I'm not bullshitting. What's the actual problem here, man? I'm not following, not even close.

JEROME

I asked you to write a feat...

JAMES

(interrupting)

I know, a features story, we've been over this.

The other editor begins to laugh again.

JEROME

James, you don't know what the hell you're doing.

JAMES

What the fuck!

Jerome grazes his hand over his head and raises his voice.

JEROME

I asked you to write me a fucking profile...

JAMES

(interrupting)

Yeah, I d...

JEROME

(interrupting)

No, stop. I asked you to write me a nice, regular-ass fucking feature and you give me this... this shit?

Jerome points to his computer.

JEROME

Half these motherfuckers are anonymous. Like what? You're part of Spotlight or some shit? FUCK.

Jerome taps on his computer screen.

James' mouth opens but he doesn't say anything.

JEROME

You're seriously going to look me dead in the eye and tell me this artist's friend, quote, "took a bullet in a face-off, shot back, killed two..." shit I'm not even gonna... who even says face-off.

The editor behind Jerome starts to crack up laughing.

James stares down at the ground for a few seconds. He looks around.

The whole newsroom stares his way.

Jerome moves his body forward and throws his hands up, expecting an answer.

JAMES

That's what he said, Jerome.

JEROME

"Jerome." Yeah don't Jerome me, asshole. No way those words came out of anyone's mouth. No way.

JAMES

Yes they did, Jerome.

JEROME

Mm... is it just your shtick to be a fuck up? Who said it? What's the person's name? I mean that's just one quote. This is littered with bullshit.

A woman walks over to the two from the corner office.

James makes a gesture to greet her.

JAMES

Hello.

She disregards the gesture, swiping the air with her hand.

SARAH

Shut the fuck up and let me read this, please. Pain in my ass. Got the whole damn newsroom on edge.

SARAH grazes over the story. Mid 40's, blond hair, casual clothes, all-business.

SARAH

What's the problem here?

JEROME

Half the thing's anonymous, what do you mean?

SARAH

I'm fine with it, just... just fucking run it. You two are wasting time.

JEROME

You've gotta be...

SARAH  
 (interrupting)  
 Jerome... literally... please. Just  
 run it. It's entertaining and it's  
 just a feature.

Jerome stares at her blankly, shakes his head and puts the  
 story on the site.

SARAH  
 James, walk with me.

They walk back to her office at a quick pace.

SARAH  
 I want you to work on a series. It's  
 on a community center in Flatbush.  
 You're writing's good, just this  
 time... for Christ sake... names.

JAMES  
 I will... yeah that won't be an issue,  
 not this time.

SARAH  
 Never again.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

The streets are busy as usual. Cars HONK and people walk  
 every which way on the sidewalk.

James sits on a bench. Among the chaos of the street and  
 sidewalk, he's hunched over, leaning his elbows on his knees.

He lights a cigarette and smokes it, blowing a cloud of smoke  
 into all who pass by.

Directly across from him is a HOMELESS MAN, sitting at the  
 base of a brand new office building. He holds a coffee cup  
 filled with change. Late 50's, tattered jeans, a sweatshirt  
 and an old, falling-apart Yankees hat.

James stares blankly at the cup as the man JINGLES it. James  
 doesn't makes eye contact with the man. He just stares at the  
 cup, transfixed.

INT. APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER

A dim lamp reveals a slew of retro posters across the living  
 room walls. Eric Clapton, Morrissey, Wu-Tang, David Bowie,

Run-D.M.C... they all have a place on the wall, in slightly-tattered poster form.

James sits on the couch and holds a rugged-looking book. Its closed, he's not reading. He sits back and stares at his posters, biting his bottom lip.

There's a quick RUSTLE in the distance and the front door swings open. A WOMAN hurries toward the kitchen, groceries in hand and a YOUNG BOY by her side.

LUCY (O.S.)  
James? You're here?

JAMES  
Living room!

TOMMY  
Daddy!

TOMMY runs toward James and jumps on the couch to hug him. They embrace. Nine years old, brown hair, glasses, t-shirt and cargo pants.

JAMES  
How was your d...

TOMMY  
(interrupting)  
I hit a home run! I hit a home run!

JAMES  
You did what??

James' eyes light up with a big smile. He picks up an old Brooklyn Times front page that lays on the coffee table.

TOMMY  
Yeah! During recess, everyone cheered when I made it to home! Like Babe Ruth, Daddy!

JAMES  
This has to be in the news, it just has to be.

James flips through the pages.

TOMMY  
Stop it, stop it.

Tommy laughs and takes the paper away from his father.

JAMES

Hey!

TOMMY

It'll be there tomorrow.

Lucy walks into the living room. Late 20's, short black hair, hospital uniform, kind eyes.

She pretends to stumble and lands on the couch. She looks up at James.

LUCY

So when are you gonna write Tommy's home run story?

JAMES

Well, funny you should ask, I just about finished it.

TOMMY

I just told you!

Tommy gets up and poses with a pretend bat in a wind-up position.

James and Lucy smile.

LUCY

Ya know, we've all gotta eat at some point.

JAMES

That we do do... what might you be making on this fine evening?

LUCY

I bought the groceries and you have the ingredients to make us whatever you want. How about that?

Tommy throws his hands to the side, pretending to hold people back.

TOMMY

Ohhhhhhhhh!

The three of them laugh. James pretends to struggle to get up and jogs to the kitchen.

EXT. BALCONY - A FEW HOURS LATER

James and Lucy look down at the pedestrians on the street below.

The street is lively. People have loud conversations, street performers sing and cars rush by.

James rolls up a blunt, starts to smoke it and passes it to Lucy.

LUCY

The days are getting longer and longer, James. I'm struggling to keep up with Tommy.

JAMES

Everything's busy... we've gotta balance, we've gotta figure it out. Work's about to get more busy for me though, I think.

LUCY

Yeah?

She exhales a puff of smoke.

JAMES

They've got me on a new project, a series.

LUCY

Do they.

JAMES

They do.

LUCY

Mm.

JAMES

Mhm.

James scrunches his eyebrows and stares at Lucy.

Lucy folds her arms.

LUCY

They've been overloading me with shit at the hospital for months. They've been doing this... for months.

JAMES  
I know everything's tough right now.

LUCY  
Tough, yeah. Tough.

James takes a puff.

JAMES  
Is there a problem? Am I not seeing  
the problem?

Lucy sighs out of frustration. She lowers her head.

LUCY  
I'm too tired for this tonight, far  
too tired. You should know that.

Lucy leaves the balcony to go to sleep.

James stays, keeps smoking and looks off into the distance.  
He pays no mind to those below him on the street.

INT. ELEVATOR - MORNING

A New York Times issue is crumpled in the corner. James looks  
down at it.

He squints through his sunglasses and scans it.

The door opens, a MAN steps on the issue on his way out and  
James consequently looks up. Mid 30's, suit and tie,  
expensive watch, a corporate-type.

James snaps out of his trance and presses the button to close  
the elevator doors.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - MORNING

James arrives at his desk and directly across from him is  
fellow reporter RAMON CLARK. Mid 30's, short black hair,  
shirt and tie, a professional.

James makes a gesture with his head, greeting Ramon.

JAMES  
What's up, pussy.

Ramon abruptly looks up from his computer. He cracks a smile.

RAMON

Good morning white man. How many hate crimes did you commit on the way over here?

JAMES

You can't say that kinda shit, come on, Ramon... only a few.

RAMON

Just a few?

JAMES

As far as I'm aware, asshole.

James shifts around in his chair.

RAMON

Oh, so the white man's uncomfortable? Can't take a few jabs?

JAMES

Yo!

RAMON

Yo? Jesus.

The two laugh, James a hint uncomfortably.

RAMON

You got put on the community center story?

JAMES

I did, going there right after I print out a few things.

Ramon's face gets serious.

RAMON

A promotion of sorts, huh.

JAMES

Eh, not really.

RAMON

You know why you got that promotion, right?

James looks up at Ramon, expecting a response.

Ramon picks up a blank, white piece of paper and waves it around.

RAMON

That's why cabrón, you piece of  
shit!!!

Ramon laughs uncontrollably, leaning back in his chair,  
almost falling out of it.

James chuckles and shakes his head, amused. He leaves his  
desk and throws up a middle finger.

Ramon keeps laughing hysterically.

RAMON

Adios puta, adios.

EXT. FLATBUSH - DAY

James stands outside of the community center, smoking a  
cigarette.

He observes as kids congregate, laugh, talk and walk around  
the block.

He takes one last hit and throws his cigarette to the ground.  
The butt lands at the base of a brightly-colored mural that  
depicts children joyfully running in a field with the New  
York City Skyline as the horizon.

INT. FLATBUSH COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

The center's walls are painted vibrantly with murals of  
various historical figures, such as Malcolm X, and important  
community members, as well.

Tables are packed with kids. They're talking, joking around  
and playing board games.

James looks around with a confused and out of place gaze. He  
shuffles his feet and sways back and forth.

He makes eye contact with a MAN in the back of the room and  
they walk toward each other.

JONATHAN

How are you sir, what can I do for  
you?

JONATHAN reaches out to shake James' hand. Mid 40's, bald,

baseball hat and light blue jeans.

They shake hands. James nervously stands in place.

JAMES

Hi, I'm the journalist. You're Jonathan?

Jonathan's face glows.

JONATHAN

Ah, yes! I should've known. Let's go to my office.

They walk toward the back of the room.

JONATHAN

Packed these days.

Jonathan points to the tables.

JONATHAN

Just about the only place these kids have to go in the summer.

JAMES

I can imagine, I can imagine.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The walls are littered with photos from community events. James quickly scans the room to observe.

He points to a chair and raises his eyebrows to seek approval.

JONATHAN

Absolutely, take a seat.

Both of them sit with a brief, yet seemingly drawn out few seconds of silence.

JONATHAN

So tell me about how you want to go about your work here.

JAMES

Of course, I'll get right to it.

James takes out his notebook and for a brief moment scribbles nonsense on it.

Jonathan leans back in his chair, relaxed.

JAMES

Essentially, I'll be hanging around the center a lot, just to... get a sense of what the story is gonna be.

JONATHAN

Sounds like a good plan to me. Can I introduce you to some of the members?

James nods and they get up.

JONATHAN

Easy enough.

James takes a another look at the photos, this time more intently.

He moves his eyes around the room.

JONATHAN

Can I tell you about some of the photos?

James keeps looking around for a few seconds, not responding immediately to Jonathan.

JAMES

Maybe another time.

James softens his face.

JAMES

Let's go meet the kids.

They go table to table, talking, shaking hands and engaging with the board games.

James smiles, laughs and the kids do the same.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The walls are stylishly tattered with wallpaper delicately falling off of them. Old beer cans and wine bottles hang decoratively.

James and Lucy are escorted to a table by a hostess. Early 20's, brown hair, artsy, ripped jeans.

A chandelier hangs directly over the table. They're again,

decoratively composed from bottles and cans of alcohol.

James orders his drink first, followed by Lucy.

LUCY

We need to discuss something, which I know is your favorite thing.

JAMES

Oh?

Drinks are placed on the table.

James leans forward and takes a sip, sets the glass down and softly claps his hands together. Lucy stirs her drink.

JAMES

Let's discuss.

LUCY

You're on a path to do what you want to do.

JAMES

That's one way to put it, okay.

LUCY

You're not there yet, but you can at least see that path.

JAMES

What are you getting at here.

LUCY

I'm just working, James. Just working.

Lucy takes a sip of her drink.

James' shoulders stand up a tad.

LUCY

I go to work, I get overworked, I pick up Tommy. I repeat that process every day. Every damn day.

Lucy puts her head down and lowers her voice

LUCY

I'm fucking exhausted. I'm exhausted. You understand?

JAMES

What can I do to help?

LUCY

You could help, James. You could help.

JAMES

You know I'm working. You know what I'm trying to do... I'm making a path, you said it.

LUCY

And that's great... for you. But I don't have a path and I'm burnt out. I'm completely burnt out.

JAMES

Then make a path, Lucy.

Lucy takes another sip of her drink and stares at James with a surprised look.

James' eyebrows go up and he stares back, waiting for a response.

LUCY

Make a path? That's your response after what I just told you.

James takes a big gulp of his drink.

JAMES

Honestly, I think that's a solid piece of advice.

LUCY

Advice? I'm not asking for advice. I'm asking for your help. Your help, James.

James looks right through Lucy.

JAMES

What kind of help.

LUCY

You truly are a piece of shit.

JAMES

A piece of shit?

LUCY  
Precisely.

James takes a deep breath and bites the bottom of his lip.

JAMES  
You can't sit here and blame me for  
the fact you haven't set yourself up  
for what you want to do in life.

Lucy's face is petrified. Her chin shakes.

James casually takes another sip of his drink and places it  
down victoriously.

Lucy's watery eyes meet James'. She opens her mouth as if to  
say something but can't.

She brings her glass to her lips, hand shaking. She drops the  
glass and the liquid spills all over her lap.

James jumps out of his chair to avoid the spill.

Lucy, soaked, stays in place and stares at the now empty  
glass.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX STEPS - NIGHT

James walks up the steps behind Lucy. His face is stern. He  
takes a final hit from his cigarette and throws it to the  
ground. He stumbles a bit.

Ahead, Lucy walks confidently, skipping every other step to  
get to the top.

She opens the complex door with purpose and doesn't hold it.  
She doesn't look back.

James puts his foot in the door and pauses. He fixes his eyes  
on his worn-down suede boots.

He notices a piece of gum at on the bottom of them and scowls  
with disgust.

He uses the edge of a step to scrape it off and then casually  
walks to the elevator. He arrives just in time, having to put  
his hand between the doors so they don't close.

INT. ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

James stands in front of Lucy, head down.

Lucy's posture is firm, looking directly ahead. Her eyes are a tad red. She wipes them, attempting to not draw attention to the fact.

The day's New York Times issue rests flat in the corner. She swiftly picks it up, folds it between her arm, the elevator DINGS and they both walk out.

INT. APARTMENT BALCONY - NIGHT

James blows a large cloud of marijuana smoke out into the open air.

His eyes squint.

He looks directly into the blunt.

His NEIGHBORS are having a verbal fighting match two balconies over. Middle-aged, trendy clothes.

POLICE drag a HOMELESS MAN into their squad car down below.

A STREET PERFORMER sings "Home is Where the Hatred is" on the sidewalk. Mid 20's, dreadlocks, tight jeans, graphic t-shirt with James Baldwin on the front.

James doesn't break his stare, still maintaining a concentrated gaze that points directly at the blunt.

INT. APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

James stands just outside of Tommy's room. The door is ajar. James carefully open it further. Tommy is fast asleep.

Toys are spread across the floor in the dark room, laying in a disorganized yet intentional manner.

James eases his way in the room, light on his feet. He crouches down to pick up one of the toys. He looks at it innocently.

He slowly looks up toward Tommy, still in deep sleep. James walks toward him and crouches again. He makes a kind half-smile and carefully adjusts the sheets.

James' eyes have a paternal joy in them that look intently and proudly at his son.

INT. FLATBUSH COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

James slowly opens the front entrance and walks inside.

His eyes graze over the room. He looks beyond the children in front of him. He lowers his eyes, makes eye contact with them and manages a friendly smile.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

James knocks on the door and enters.

JONATHAN

James, how's it going?

JAMES

Doing well, doing well... look, I don't have all the time in the world. I just wanted to ask a few questions. Is that okay?

JONATHAN

Go ahead.

James takes out his notebook and flips to the page he left filled with scribbles.

JAMES

So, what's your background? How'd you start this place?

JONATHAN

Well it wasn't really my choice, the community really initiated the whole thing.

JAMES

You're being modest?

JONATHAN

Honestly.

JAMES

Te... tell me about it.

Jonathan begins to speak.

James' eyes glaze over.

He feels around his back pocket. His arms twitch uncomfortably, but he nods his head, staying conversationally engaged.

James looks around the room at the photos with his glazed eyes, continuing to nod.

JAMES

Mhm.

James straightens up in his chair and maintains composure.

JONATHAN

That makes sense?

James comes back to life.

JAMES

Yes, let me tell you what... can I talk to a few of the kids. I think that'll give me enough for the first piece.

JONATHAN

I... okay, no problem.

Jonathan makes a confused face and hesitantly gets up.

The two leave the office.

INT. FLATBUSH COMMUNITY CENTER - A MINUTE LATER

James kneels down at a table, smiling and shaking kids' hands.

He takes out his notebook and scribbles.

James paces about the room, heads to the door, waves goodbye and leaves.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

James hits send on his email and struts over to Jerome's desk.

Jerome looks up from his work.

JAMES

Alright, go ahead and take a look.

JEROME

That was quick, yeah?

JAMES

Take a look.

James points his finger to Jerome's computer.

Jerome scrolls through the piece.

JEROME

Wow, looks good. Clean, tight writing... the leader there really built this from the ground up, huh? Hmm.

JAMES

He's quite the guy, very impressive.

James steps back slowly.

JEROME

Seems like it.

JAMES

Good?

JEROME

Yeaaaah, yep... it's good?

JAMES

You're trying to be a dick or what.

JEROME

Alright.

Jerome shrugs his shoulders.

JEROME

Great, fuck off and keep handing in copy like this, makes my life easier.

James quickly nods and smiles.

INT. NIGHT CLUB BATHROOM - NIGHT

James takes a piss at a urinal, zips his trouser and walks over to the sink.

It's packed with people lined up to use the urinal. James passes by them, making slight eye contact. He makes a head gesture as if to be polite, recognizing them in some way.

James washes his hands. Two MEN are to the right and left of him doing the same. Early 20's, skinny, white, gullible-looking.

James hums a somewhat audible song that plays in the main room outside.

After washing his hands, he plays with his hair, fixing it, making it just right.

James transitions from humming and begins to softly sing, moving his head to the beat.

He fumbles around and feels his back pocket.

JAMES

Aha.

James removes a small bag of cocaine along with a mini silver platter.

He wipes the platter over his shirt and blows particles off of it.

The two men on either side stare at James though their peripherals, continuing to wash up.

James gently places two lines of cocaine on the platter. He snorts both of them in succession.

His eyes open wide, glaring into the mirror in front of him.

James reaches to his back pocket to put the cocaine and platter away.

Just before the two objects fall into the pocket, James reverses his motion.

He raises the cocaine and platter, looking over to the two men beside him. James raises his eyebrows.

The men quickly shake their heads.

James shrugs, runs a hand through his hair and leaves.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

James stumbles his way over to a table, lightly shoving people who dance to 1990's hip-hop.

He ungracefully salutes.

RAMON

Jesus, what did you do in there. You look, well, like shit... more shittier than you normally do.

JAMES  
What I had to.

RAMON  
What? No, never mind.

James quickly ducks and maneuvers behind Ramon's shoulder.

RAMON  
Yo, what the he...

James' face goes completely serious: blank, pale.

JAMES  
(interrupting)  
Shut the fuck up.

RAMON  
I...

JAMES  
Shut the fuck up and look.

James points off into the distance, his finger shaking a tad.

RAMON  
Is that... yeah the Hip-Hop dude.

Ramon chuckles.

JAMES  
(interrupting)  
Yes.

RAMON  
Yeah, let me in on your little  
tantrum.

Ramon lowers his voice to almost a whisper.

RAMON  
Why are you acting like a FUCKING meth  
head?!

JAMES  
Just... please.

Ramon gets up and looks around with exaggerated motions.

JAMES  
Ya know what the actual fuck.

RAMON

What are you worried about?

James points into the distance again, his finger shaking more rigorously.

Ramon looks in that direction.

A MAN makes eye contact with James and walks aggressively toward him.

A group of five other MEN follow closely behind the man, walking with the same energy.

James slowly backs up and grabs Ramon's shoulder. They turn their backs and push their way through the dancing crowd.

The men behind overwhelm the crowd and grab James and Ramon's collars.

RAMON

Wait what the f...

JAMES

(interrupting)

Just... just let it go.

RAMON

Let it go?

One of the men gives Ramon an angry look.

Ramon looks down to the ground. They walk to the back door and leave.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The men push James and Ramon in front of them.

The leader steps up, arms folded with a scowl. Mid 20's, designer clothes, short Afro.

JAMES

I don't know what to tell you, man.

DANTE

You had a shit ton to say the other day, didn't you?

Ramon makes a bewildered face.

JAMES

It wasn't meant to hurt anyone. How could I know?

DANTE

Y'all pussies never know shit. That's all you ever have to say. How could you know? It's your job.

James let's out a sigh.

Ramon maintains the same look.

James starts to twitch his arms, he becomes fidgety. He quickly grazes his back pocket. His face becomes paler and paler.

James looks in every which direction, chaotically examining his surroundings.

He shakes his head over and over again.

RAMON

Man...

James pushes Ramon to the side and charges at Dante. Dante calmly shakes his head and winds up his arm. He pimp slaps James with the back of his hand.

James immediately hits the deck and gets up almost just as fast.

Ramon simultaneously jumps and runs forward to help.

One of the other men steps in, punches Ramon in the face and pushes him. Ramon hits his head on the curb and lets out an agonizing scream.

James doesn't look back and swings at Dante, who seamlessly deflects the blow and delivers a clumsy kick straight to James' gut.

Dante stares down at him with a sense of pity, then looks to his crew and makes a head motion to leave. Dante and the other men leave.

James and Ramon lay on the ground and look each other's way with limp limbs and bruised faces.

INT. APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER

James and Ramon trip over themselves and fall on the couch.

Lucy jogs down the stairs, closely followed by Tommy.

Lucy looks back at Tommy, surprised.

LUCY

Upstairs! now.

Tommy looks over at his father and Ramon with a confused sadness and slowly turns around and walks back.

Lucy gets to the bottom of the stairs and folds her arms anxiously.

LUCY

What the fuck happened? Like wha...

RAMON

(interrupting)

Yeah what the fuck happened.

Ramon stares at James and Lucy does the same, staying in place.

James lowers his head, not making eye contact with Ramon or Lucy.

JAMES

Not now, please.

Lucy throws her hands up in the air.

Ramon puts his head back and closes his eyes.

LUCY

As always.

JAMES

Just...

James pauses. He lifts up his head and and looks through Lucy.

JAMES

Just please help Ramon clean up.  
Please.

James gets up and limps up the stairs. He briefly stops by

Tommy's room. The door is closed.

James gently puts his palm onto it and walks away.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

James sits in the corner, sobbing. His knees are to his chest with both his arms resting on them.

He holds the small bag of cocaine delicately in his hands, staring at it.

James' face goes stern. He carefully puts the cocaine back in his pocket and violently punches the wall three times.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

James leans over the toilet, hesitates and throws up. The puke largely splatters in the bowl but sprays elsewhere around the edges as well.

James shakes his head, his brain rattling around.

He stares into the mirror, heavily splashes his face with water and takes a few pills with a bottle of pedialyte.

He somewhat aggressively pats his face to further wake up.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

James walks over to his desk.

Ramon is at his desk with his face more or less concealed by his computer.

JEROME

Y'all look like shit.

Ramon continues to conceal his face.

James looks down.

JEROME

Ramon, did he... hit you?

Jerome chuckles.

Ramon shakes his head with a slight half-smile.

JEROME

I'd expect nothing less. James?

JAMES

Did I hit him. Hit him?

James pauses for a moment.

Jerome raises his eyebrows.

JAMES

No.

JEROME

I'm concerned you entertained the question.

Ramon shakes his head, disappointed.

Jerome lets the room sit in silence.

He looks at Ramon.

He turns his head to James.

He looks back at Ramon with a questioning gaze.

Ramon doesn't make eye contact.

JEROME

Fuck it, James go do your job. Ramon shape up, Jesus.

EXT. FLATBUSH - DAY

James quickly struts down the sidewalk, passing by people within inches of their shoulders.

One earbud is in his ear and one out. He bops his head slightly up and down to what he's listening to.

He looks up and stops in his tracks.

People bump into him, say nothing and keep walking.

James meanders over to the side and stares at a building front.

A tattered-looking Eric Clapton poster hangs in the window.

On it, writing is etched, barely noticeable: "Keep Britain White."

James slowly opens the door and enters.

INT. FLATBUSH STUDIO - DAY

The room is covered with withered posters from various artists and organizations: Marilyn Manson, Johnny Rebel, National Front, Morrissey...

There are various drums, guitars and other instruments spread throughout the dingy-looking space.

James moves his head around to observe.

He feels the walls and strokes one of the posters with his palm.

A MAN comes through a door toward the back of the room. Mid 20's, spiked hair, skinny leather pants, graphic t-shirt, heavily tattooed with a swastika across his rights hand.

PRESTON

Can I uh...

PRESTON scratches both of his eyes, adjusting to the room's light shining through the windows.

PRESTON

Help you, what the hell are you doing here?

JAMES

Hi... um, well the door's unlocked.

James points awkwardly to the door.

PRESTON

If your fucking apartment door was unlocked would you just be fine with me coming in.

JAMES

Well the building is right on the street, it uh... looks like a store kind of.

PRESTON

A store.

Preston rolls his eyes.

JAMES

A store um...

James twiddles his thumbs.

JAMES

A store yes, a st... so what is this place?

Preston stares at James for a few seconds.

PRESTON

Who the fuck are you?

JAMES

Interested.

PRESTON

Well this is a recording studio, asshole. I mean you can't just...

JAMES

(interrupting)

What's up with all these posters?

PRESTON

I don't need to explain shit, that's why this is a private studio.

JAMES

The door's unlocked.

PRESTON

Who the fu... I... the posters are our inspirations of sorts, I guess.

JAMES

Our?

PRESTON

This is a studio. I'm part of a band.

Preston articulates his words slowly in a condescending manner.

James is unfazed.

JAMES

What kind of music?

PRESTON

Punk rock, metal... stuff like that. You're not gonna ask about the posters?

JAMES  
The posters? I did.

PRESTON  
I know but like...

JAMES  
I don't judge.

James puts his hands up in an accepting fashion.

PRESTON  
You don't judge, huh.

Preston scratches his head, further revealing his swastika tattoo.

JAMES  
No I uh... I don't.

James quickly bites his fingernails.

JAMES  
Nope, I don't judge. I'm actually into this whole punk scene. Seems like there's a bit of a revival.

Preston cracks a smile.

PRESTON  
Yeah man.

Preston chuckles.

PRESTON  
We're definitely growing in numbers. I don't think you'd really be "into it" though.

JAMES  
No?

PRESTON  
Doubtful.

JAMES  
And why would you say that.

James makes a disappointed face.

Preston appears surprised.

PRESTON

Like... look around, look at me.

Preston puts his hands out.

James flinches, barely noticeable.

PRESTON

You look pretty put together and uh...  
by the book.

JAMES

By the book, huh.

PRESTON

Legitimately yeah.

JAMES

Slightly insulted.

PRESTON

I've seen you walk over to the center  
with those fuckin'... with those  
fucking... I've seen you over at the  
center.

JAMES

So.

PRESTON

This isn't the place for you.

JAMES

Do you all play a lot of shows?

PRESTON

Yeah in... but seriously you should  
leave.

James ignores Preston and continues.

JAMES

What kind of venues?

PRESTON

Basements, small concert spaces...  
but...

JAMES

(interrupting)

I'd love to see one of your shows.

PRESTON  
Actually?

JAMES  
I actually would.

PRESTON  
Don't know if you'd be able to handle  
it, honesty.

JAMES  
Well...

PRESTON  
(interrupting)  
Who are you, actually?

JAMES  
Full disclosure.

PRESTON  
Yeah just who are you?

JAMES  
I'm a journalist.

Preston points to the door.

PRESTON  
Get the fuck out. Get out.

Preston approaches James and continues to point.

PRESTON  
Out.

James backs up a tad.

JAMES  
Wait, no.

PRESTON  
No? Out!

James has a bit of panic in his eyes.

JAMES  
One second.

PRESTON  
Fuck, man, Get the fuck out!

James looks around the room, eying the posters and imagery.

JAMES

Do you...

PRESTON

(interrupting)

Stop.

JAMES

Do you know know how much shit I have to deal with in this fucking city.

Preston casts a surprised look.

JAMES

We've got Jews infesting every goddamn neighborhood and every motherfucking profession with the slightest value.

Preston stops and opens his mouth slightly.

PRESTON

excuse me

JAMES

And and... we've got immigrants flooding in every which way telling me what the fuck to do.

PRESTON

Oh.

JAMES

I have to teeter the line at work every second of the day... don't know if I'm gonna offend some pussy weirdo.

PRESTON

Pussy weirdo, huh.

James looks down and shuffles his feet.

JAMES

Shit just used to be better and I want to be that way again.

PRESTON

Better music, better people... your weird... uh... what's your name? Did you rehearse those lines?

JAMES

No, I'm... no. My name's James.

PRESTON

James, your an odd motherfucker.

Preston smiles and chuckle a bit.

JAMES

I um, thank you?

PRESTON

For some reason I uh... believe this display of your, I think. Preston takes a brief pause.

PRESTON

We've been trying to stay away from any media attention, you understand. Fuckin' leftist, trash, perverted fucks.

Preston shakes his head.

JAMES

Unfortunately that's what we're dealing with.

James maintains a straight face.

PRESTON

Maybe you're okay though. Are you?

JAMES

Only one way to find out.

James shrugs his shoulders.

PRESTON

Mmm... well why don't you come back tomorrow. You can meet the band, pitch us your story.

James shakes his head.

JAMES

Sounds g...

PRESTON

(interrupting)

Now get the fuck out of my studio.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

James walks quickly and talks on the phone.

JAMES

Man, I've got an exciting story

RAMON (V.O.)

Don't even know why I picked up, fuck you.

JAMES

Yeah yeah I'm sorry.

RAMON (V.O.)

No you're not.

JAMES

Whatever, I found this punk rock group. Racist as hell.

RAMON (V.O.)

Of course you did.

JAMES

That comment didn't have the same jingle that your passive aggression normally does.

RAMON (V.O.)

Not a story.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

James knocks on Sarah's office door.

SARAH

What.

JAMES

I have a story.

SARAH

Like one that's separate from the community center?

JAMES

Yep, another music piece, except this time more in-depth.

SARAH  
Oh okay, continue.

Sarah doesn't look up from her computer.

JAMES  
I want to um... immerse myself in the  
world of this punk rock group

SARAH  
Do you.

JAMES  
Well, I mean... they're not good  
people, incredibly intolerant... based  
in Flatbush.

SARAH  
Hmm.

JAMES  
Thoughts.

SARAH  
You want to immerse... what are you  
Hunter Thompson, Jesus.

JAMES  
Give it a shot, please?

SARAH  
This can't distract fr...

JAMES  
(interrupting)  
It won't.

SARAH  
It can't, go for it.

Sarah looks up from her computer.

SARAH  
Sounds interesting. Make it your best  
piece of copy so we can sell some  
news, will you? It's been a while for  
us over here.

EXT. BROOKLYN PARK - DUSK

James and Tommy walk along a sidewalk surrounded by greenery,

as green as the city can get.

James puts his arm around Tommy's shoulder.

JAMES

School... you're reeking havoc on the other kids?

Tommy laughs.

TOMMY

No, but work... you're reeking havoc on the other people?

James makes a surprised face.

Tommy begins to smile and they both laugh.

JAMES

I think we should both keep the havoc reeking to a minimum, especially you, yeah?

TOMMY

I guess you're right.

James and Tommy sit on a bench.

TOMMY

Are you and Mom getting divorced?

James coughs out of shock.

JAMES

Jesus.

James coughs again.

Tommy looks at him, seriously.

JAMES

You don't have to worry about any of that.

TOMMY

Of course I do, you're my parents.

James looks down to the ground.

JAMES

I...

He looks back up at Tommy with a kind half-smile.

JAMES

I think you have to be married to get a divorce, might be tough.

TOMMY

You know exactly what I mean.

JAMES

Can I be real.

James chuckles.

JAMES

Real talk.

TOMMY

You sound like a douche.

JAMES

Real t... yeah okay ouch.

TOMMY

Being real.

JAMES

I could tell you a bunch of things to make you feel better.

TOMMY

I'd like that.

JAMES

No, you wouldn't.

TOMMY

I know.

JAMES

You matter... to me and your mother. You are what's important.

Tommy blushes.

JAMES

Stop it, you are what's important and we care about you and that's all you need to know.

TOMMY

I hope your writing's better than your  
out-pour here.

The two smile.

JAMES

Shut up and enjoy the moment.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

James smokes a blunt and sips out of a cup filled with dark  
liquor.

The street: still busy.

The neighbors aggressively yell at each a few balconies over.

James stares at his drink with a frustrated, transfixed  
glance and continues to puff, not paying them any attention.

A street performer plays below on a full classic piano.

The notes are jumbled, the pianist playing them passionately  
with seeming little order.

On the street, near the performer, Homeless MEN and WOMEN  
JINGLE change in coffee cups. Late 50's, raggedy jeans and  
flannel-type shirts.

The neighbors continue to verbally assault each other.

James takes another large hit from the blunt and strongly  
exhales.

He drinks more, breaks his stare and turns to the neighbors.

JAMES

Can you please... please shut the fuck  
up.

The neighbors keep arguing.

JAMES

(mutters)  
Shut the fuck up.

He takes another sip.

JAMES  
(mutters)  
Shut the actual fuck up.

He takes a large sip.

JAMES  
Shut the fuck up!!!

The neighbors abruptly stop yelling and look in James' direction.

The commotion gets louder in the street.

They give James a look of disgust, walk inside and begin yelling again.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

James and Ramon sit across from each other at their desks.

JAMES  
What's the issue?

RAMON  
You've met my cousin Carlos, right?

JAMES  
I think so, yeah. Why.

RAMON  
He works in construction...

JAMES  
(interrupting)  
Where's this going.

RAMON  
Impatient fuck, let me talk.

JAMES  
I... whatever go ahead.

RAMON  
He goes to work every week with the same crew, every week.

JAMES  
In Queens, right?

RAMON  
Yeah and you know how they act every  
week?

JAMES  
How?

RAMON  
Like animals.

JAMES  
What do you mean, animals?

RAMON  
They call my cousin every name in the  
fucking book: beaner, illegal... all  
that.

JAMES  
I... sorry that's terrible but what  
does this have to do w...

RAMON  
(interrupting)  
You don't see me hanging around there  
every day with a fucking recorder and  
notepad.

JAMES  
This is different.

RAMON  
No it's not.

JAMES  
Yes it is.

RAMON  
You can whore yourself out for this  
little punk band but just know... it's  
the exact same fucking thing.

James gets up and walks away, shaking his head.

INT. FLATBUSH STUDIO - DAY

James stands in front of the punk band, hands behind his  
back.

PRESTON  
This is James, the um... journalist.

James awkwardly waves his hand.

LIONEL

You've gotta be kidding me, Preston.

LIONEL crosses his arms. Mid 20's, buzz cut, black American flag tattoo on the side of his head, ripped jeans, jean shirt.

PRESTON

That's Lionel.

Lionel makes an irritated face.

SCARLET

Preston, seriously?

PRESTON

Scarlet, say hello.

SCARLET throws up a middle finger. Early 20's, buzz cut, leather pants, leather jacket.

JENKINS

A fucking journalist... Preston, are you fucking kidding me?

Jenkins turns around to leave. Late 20's, white t-shirt, skinny jeans, leather boots.

PRESTON

Just... Jenkins get the fuck back here.

Jenkins turns around.

JENKINS

What the fuck do you think this is? Fuck this guy... bringing him in here.

SCARLET

Ugh let the outsider talk.

Scarlet licks her lips.

Jenkins gives Scarlet a disproving look.

She smirks.

JAMES

You know, maybe I shouldn't be here.

James turns around to leave.

JENKINS  
(mutters)  
Bitch ass journalist.

Preston grabs James' shoulder.

PRESTON  
Wait... just tell us what you want to  
do, please.

James quickly turns around.

JAMES  
I just want to... write about you  
guys. You're interesting, I wanna see  
where this takes me.

Scarlet lowers her chin, raises her eyes and stares at James.

SCARLET  
Do you now.

Scarlet makes a keen smile.

James slowly shakes his head.

JENKINS  
Where are you from, Jimmy, James...  
Jimmy James.

JAMES  
Brooklyn.

JENKINS  
Brooklyn, huh. What's your last name,  
does it end with a um... like a  
"berg..." I don't know I...

JAMES  
No.

The band stands in silence, raising their eyebrows.

JAMES  
A "berg"?

PRESTON  
"Berg."

JENKINS  
Looks like a "berg."

PRESTON  
Could be.

JAMES  
A "berg."

JENKINS  
Definitely.

SCARLET  
Maybe "berg's" aren't so bad.

JENKINS  
Shut the fuck up, bitch.

Scarlet picks up a drumstick on the table next to her and chucks it at Jenkins.

Jenkins ducks, it misses.

Jenkins shrugs.

JENKINS  
(mutters)  
Crazy bitch.

PRESTON  
So what the fuck is your last name?

Jenkins and Scarlet start yelling at each other.

PRESTON  
Both of you!

They continue yelling.

Preston picks up a guitar, lifts it over his head, and throws it as hard as he can at the wall.

They stop fighting.

Scarlet coughs.

PRESTON  
James. Name, please.

JENKINS  
Name, now.

SCARLET

Jesus Christ, just give us a fucking name.

James looks at them in bewilderment.

A few seconds of silence pass.

The band cracks up laughing.

JAMES

What.

They continue laughing.

James raises his hands.

JAMES

Actually what.

PRESTON

Just, how about you come to one of our shows... for research.

SCARLET

All the research you need.

JAMES

I... really uh... when?

JENKINS

Fuckin' hell.

PRESTON

We'll let you know, okay?

JAMES

You don't want to know my... name?

PRESTON

Get the fuck out, I know you're damn name.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

James looks forward in a spacey fashion.

His eyes wander.

JONATHAN

James.

James maintains.

JONATHAN

James!

James blinks, making a large effort to do so.

JAMES

Really sorry Jonathan, go ahead.

JONATHAN

You asked me if there's anyone you can profile.

JAMES

I did, what are your thoughts?

JONATHAN

Three people in fact, really impressive kids.

JAMES

G...great.

James packs up his things.

JAMES

Can you please send me their info, I'm sorry I've got a tight schedule today.

JONATHAN

Understood.

Jonathan stares down at the ground with frustration.

JONATHAN

Sure, I'll get them to you.

JAMES

Perfect, I'll be around in the next few days.

Jonathan nods his head.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

JAMES

I'm telling you, man. These fuckers... they're actually interesting.

RAMON  
No.

JAMES  
Yeah, they are.

RAMON  
Yeah no.

JAMES  
You've never met them.

RAMON  
I've met them a million times, just  
not them specifically.

JAMES  
What.

Jerome struts over.

He laughs.

JEROME  
Ya know, I've put up with a lot of  
bullshit from you, but this...

JAMES  
(interrupting)  
You guys have never met them, fuck!

JEROME  
I've never met Jeffrey Dahmer.

RAMON  
I've never met Stalin.

JEROME  
Ramon, have you ever met Harvey  
Weinstein?

James looks around, confused.

RAMON  
Don't believe I have, no.

JEROME  
Bill Maher? I've never met Bill Maher.

There's a brief silence.

RAMON  
Alright, you lost me there.

James maintains a confused look.

JEROME  
Fuck Bill Maher.

RAMON  
Fair enough.

Jerome points to Ramon.

JEROME  
Lunch?

RAMON  
Perfect.

Ramon gets up from his desk and walks with Jerome.

JEROME  
Hey James.

James looks up.

JEROME  
Fuck you.

Jerome and Ramon laugh and walk away.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

James and Lucy sit next to each other in the stands watching Tommy play a little league game.

Tommy's at-bat and hits the ball down the third base line.

James and Lucy stand up, smile and clap.

JAMES  
Let's go Tommy!!!

LUCY  
Whooo!!!

They sit.

JAMES  
He's good, yeah? Very good.

Lucy nods her head with a straight face.

LUCY  
He really is. He's one of our few  
successes.

JAMES  
Well I mean ya know... just enjoy the  
game.

LUCY  
But of course.

The team runs to the dugout and the coach says a few words.

James and Lucy watch in silence from a distance, still  
sitting in the stands.

Tommy runs over to them.

JAMES  
Pretty good out there... I mean I've  
seen better.

Lucy elbows James.

TOMMY  
It's fine, he's just naturally like  
that.

JAMES  
Naturally what a what?

TOMMY  
Yeah exactly.

Tommy looks up at his mother.

LUCY  
Dinner?

TOMMY  
Uh... yeah.

James puts his arm around Tommy's shoulder and the three of  
them walk away, waving to the other players and parents.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX STEPS - NIGHT

James and Lucy smoke a blunt on the steps.

LUCY  
How do you do it?

JAMES  
What.

LUCY  
You're nice when Tommy's around.

JAMES  
Of course.

LUCY  
Like now, you're being a dick. Like  
how a sociopath acts. Like y...

A bicyclist speeds past them.

The pianist is in his normal spot, performing.

A car swerves into the bike lane, the biker loses control,  
falls off his bike and lands directly on the classical piano.

LUCY  
What the fuck!

She sprints over to help.

James makes a startled look. He takes a large puff of smoke  
and slowly gets up to look at the damage.

EXT. FLATBUSH STREET - NIGHT

James stands on the sidewalk across the street from a  
decrepit-looking building.

He smokes a cigarette, nervously moving his feet about.

Seven PUNK ROCK FANS stand outside the building. early 30's,  
leather clothes, pale faces.

They point at James, quietly murmuring.

James continues to nervously stand and fidget.

He shakes his head, takes one last puff from his cigarette,  
throws it to the ground and walks away.

FAN #1  
Hey!!!

James stops in his tracks.

He points at himself.

FAN #1

Yeah, come over here will ya?

James hesitantly walks over.

FAN #1

You're uh... that journalist... what did he say your name was... James!

James nods his head.

JAMES

You know Preston?

FAN #1

Most definitely.

FAN #2

Not many groups like them anymore, eh?

FAN #3

Especially in a city like this.

JAMES

I've never seen anything quite like them... speaking of which, where are they?

FAN #1

Inside, we don't really want you here... you should know that.

FAN #2

You should.

All the other fans shake their heads.

James nervously pauses.

JAMES

Well it's part of the whole thing, maybe you'll learn to like me... you said they're inside?

FAN #2

Like you?

The fans chuckle.

FAN #1  
Not on this side.

JAMES  
Well I'd like to go inside now so...

FAN #1  
(interrupting)  
Take a sip of this first.

JAMES  
I don't...

FAN #1  
Do it.

FAN #2  
Don't be a little bitch, just do it.

FAN #4  
Little pussy won't do it.

James snatches the bottle filled with a clear-looking liquid.

JAMES  
How big of a sip?

FAN #1  
Not too big.

Fan #1 laughs.

FAN #2  
Don't waste it, not too much left.

James takes a small sip, squints, hands the cup back and walks inside.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

James walks through a small room of people smoking weed and doing lines of cocaine.

He approaches a door with muffled music attempting to break loose behind it.

He opens it.

A stage stands in the back of the room and in front of it, an

almost identical looking hoard of PEOPLE gather. Late 20's, buzz cuts, tight leather pants, baggy shirts and black boots.

One of them bumps into James

FAN #7

Watch your fucking step, fake-ass  
writer bitch.

James moves his head around and tries to say something.

Fan #7 walks away.

James looks around.

Posters with the words "power" sporadically cover the walls. Swastikas as well, James stares at them.

FAN #6

Thinks he's on to some shit.

Fan #6 walks away.

James shakes his head, surprised.

JAMES

What the fuck.

He feels around in his back pocket, walks over to a glass table covered with drinks and does a line of cocaine.

His eyes shoot open and he scrunches his nose.

FAN #2

You seem comfortable, fuck whit.

James turns around.

Fan #2 walks away.

JAMES

(mutters)

What the actual fuck.

James picks up one of the half-finished drinks on a table and chugs it.

He puts it down aggressively.

Fan #1 pushes James directly in the chest, forcing him to hit up against fan #5.

Both fans laugh hysterically.

James turns around.

JAMES' P.O.V. - FAN #5'S FACE

His face is completely white, no eyes and no ears.  
Meaningless type-font is etches across his cheeks.

BACK TO SCENE

JAMES

Fuck!!!

James turns around.

JAMES' P.O.V. - FAN #1'S FACE

His face is identical to James' but beaten, worn-down and his  
hair is spiked.

BACK TO SCENE

Fan #1 and Fan #5 continue to laugh hysterically.

FAN #5

No notes?

FAN #1

Where's that notepad.

Fan #1 holds a notepad up in the air and throws it into the  
packed crowd of people behind him.

James shakes his head with a sense of denial and backs up.

The band takes the stage.

James keeps walking backwards and turns around to look at the  
band.

JAMES' P.O.V. - THE BAND

They perform in a smokey inferno with their skeleton  
silhouettes only visible.

BACK TO SCENE

James walks into the crowd, almost gliding toward the smokey  
cloud.

Preston emerges from it

JAMES' P.O.V. - PRESTON

Preston is a skeleton violently playing his guitar, all bones. A tattered Nazi uniform covers the bones. There's just enough cloth for the skeletal frame.

Preston turn around and trips back into the smoke.

BACK TO SCENE

JAMES

Jesus fucking Christ, this is... I...

Scarlet emerges from the smoke.

JAMES' P.O.V. - SCARLET

Her skeletal body is covered by an old-fashioned dress with holes scattered throughout.

She carries a rusted retro dynamic microphone and walks toward James.

The crowd parts, allowing room for Scarlet.

BACK TO SCENE

James blinks over and over again, shaking his head.

JAMES' P.O.V. - SCARLET

Her Skeletal frame walks in a pitifully seductive manner toward James.

BACK TO SCENE

James stays in place.

Scarlet places her arms around his shoulders and they make out.

JAMES' P.O.V. - THE CROWD

It engulfs them and members of it punch and grab James, violently consuming the two of them.

INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

James lies on the floor.

A hole from where he punched the wall is above his head.

Lucy kicks him with minimal force in the gut.

LUCY  
Get the fuck up.

James looks up, eyes half-open.

JAMES  
Wha...

LUCY  
(interrupting)  
Do you have any idea. Fuck!

She begins to sob.

LUCY  
Any fucking idea!

JAMES  
What did I...

LUCY  
(interrupting)  
Don't even. You smell like pussy and alcohol.

JAMES  
I...

LUCY  
(interrupting)  
You don't remember anything, I mean look at you. But when you go downstairs... fuck!

Tommy peers in the bathroom.

James makes a concerned look, squints and scratches his eyes.

Lucy lowers and softens her voice.

LUCY  
I never want you here again. Get your shit out of here... before I'm back from work.

JAMES  
I...

LUCY  
(interrupting)

No.

Lucy turns around, she puts her arm around Tommy and they leave.

INT. APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS - MINUTES LATER

Broken furniture litters across the floor.

James' posters lay on the floor, crumpled.

Nonsensical writing covers the walls with red lipstick. James puts his palm on the wall and lowers his head.

He looks around the room blankly, mesmerized.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

James rushes over to his desk.

He rummages, picks up a few things and puts them in his bag.

Ramon sits at his desk and looks at James, concerned.

RAMON  
I'm still mad at you and all that but  
you legitimately... I mean you look  
awful, man.

JAMES  
I'm headed to the center.

RAMON  
Looking like that?

Sarah walks over to the two.

SARAH  
You remember the interview you have to  
do? Jesus, you look awful.

RAMON  
See?

JAMES  
Headed there now.

SARAH  
I want three profiles done by the end

of this week. Get cleaned up before  
you walk into that center, goddamn.

James lowers his head and walks away.

EXT. BROOKLYN SCHOOL - DAY

Lucy drops Tommy off at school. They walk to the front of the  
building.

LUCY  
Have a good day, alright?

TOMMY  
Mom.

Lucy scrunches her face.

LUCY  
Yes.

TOMMY  
Has Dad lost it?

LUCY  
Well... Your Dad... He's very close to  
losing it.

TOMMY  
Is he gonna be okay?

LUCY  
He always is, somehow. Go to school.

Tommy walks away into the building.

INT. FLATBUSH COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

James sits at a table by himself, waiting.

His eyes are completely bloodshot, painful-looking.

He doesn't blink. He just looks directly ahead with his  
scribble-filled notebook laying on the table.

A TEENAGER walks up to James. Blond hair, athletic build,  
sweatpants, sweatshirt.

JAMES  
Yes.

PHIL  
You're James?

JAMES  
Typically, yes... yep.

PHIL  
I'm Phil Daily, the track athlete. Do  
I have the wrong time?

JAMES  
Shit, oh. No no, grab a seat. I  
expected, I don't know, grab a seat.

Phil extends his hand for a handshake.

James stays seated and quickly shakes his hand.

He looks down at his notebook.

JAMES  
Phil, okay let's get right to it. What  
the fuck are you doing here?

PHIL  
Actually?

JAMES  
Oh wait, not in like a rude way. But  
man, like, I just want to address... I  
mean I can't be the only person to  
ask... you're the only fucking white  
guy here.

PHIL  
Mmm that is true, quite the  
investigator your are.

JAMES  
No need to get smart, I'm just saying.

PHIL  
Oh you're right, I look kind of out of  
place.

JAMES  
See? You do.

Phil, shakes his head and chuckles.

PHIL  
Yeah, I see.

JAMES  
Okay, well...

James' face turns pale.

PHIL  
(interrupting)  
My cousins are actually part of a rock  
band. they record down the street.

James puts his hand on his stomach.

JAMES  
Oh.

PHIL  
A bunch of... fucking despicable.  
That's why I'm here. To make up for  
their presence. I also love it here.

James puts his hand up to his mouth. His cheeks puff.

He grabs his bag.

JAMES  
I'll be right back.

James runs out the door, tripping over his strides.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

James leans over a metal trash can.

He coughs and attempts to throw up.

He can't do it.

He's dramatically hunches over and his legs are in the middle  
of the sidewalk.

People walk around him, not noticing his mess of a situation.

James loses his balance and stumbles to the ground. His back  
is to the trash can.

He rummages around in his pockets and takes out a small bag  
of coke and various paraphernalia.

People continue to walk by him as if nothing unusual occurs.

James takes a hit, and then another and then another.

He jumps up.

INT. FLATBUSH STUDIO - DAY

James walks through the entrance.

Preston and Scarlet sit on a couch. Drug paraphernalia spreads across the table in front of them.

They don't speak to each other, just stupidly look to the ground.

JAMES

Hello?

Preston snaps out of it and looks up at James.

Scarlet slowly looks up.

PRESTON

James, what the hell are you doing here?

JAMES

I...

PRESTON

(interrupting)

Oh I heard you had some fun the other night.

Scarlet smiles and licks her teeth.

James quickly looks away.

JAMES

Okay, I'm fine to come to your show tomorrow night?

PRESTON

Hmm.

JAMES

I figured we spoke about it.

PRESTON

Did we?

JAMES  
I don't know man, can I come to it?

PRESTON  
If you leave right fucking now, I  
don't see why not.

James walks toward the door to leave.

PRESTON  
Oh and James.

James turns around.

PRESTON  
You see Scarlet here?

James nods his head.

PRESTON  
She's 17.

JAMES  
Is...

James pauses.

JAMES  
Is she.

PRESTON  
We do have some kind of code here,  
maybe you don't, but we do.

JAMES  
How the f...

PRESTON  
(interrupting)  
Just keep that in mind, you know, the  
next time you want to whip your dick  
out.

JAMES  
I had no idea, Scarlet?

SCARLET  
You don't have to worry about me.

PRESTON  
No, don't worry about her. Worry about

her brothers. They'll actually be there tomorrow night.

JAMES  
They will.

PRESTON  
No.

JAMES  
What?

PRESTON  
Yes they'll fucking be there, dimwit.

JAMES  
I don't...

PRESTON  
(interrupting)  
Word spreads, it's a small community. Now just get the fuck out, please. Jesus. You wanted a story, you might actually get a good one, maybe.

Preston laughs.

SCARLET  
Bye bye James!

James walks out the door.

EXT. BROOKLYN PARK - DUSK

James walks on a path with Tommy by his side.

James puts his arm around Tommy's shoulder.

TOMMY  
Dad?

JAMES  
Yes sir.

TOMMY  
What's going on with you, I mean I basically had to beg Mom to even be here with you now.

JAMES  
I have put us in quite the

predicament.

TOMMY  
Yeah but why?

JAMES  
You need to understand that I'm not out  
to hurt you, ever.

TOMMY  
Bullshit.

JAMES  
Wha... excuse me?

TOMMY  
Yeah Dad, it's bullshit. When you hurt  
Mom, you hurt me. Simple.

JAMES  
I'm not out to hurt your Mom.

TOMMY  
Do you want me to say it again?

James raises his eyebrows.

TOMMY  
Bullsh...

JAMES  
(interrupting)  
Okay, okay. Come sit down.

They sit on a park bench.

JAMES  
Why are you so smart?

TOMMY  
So if I was stupid you'd just take  
advantage of me?

JAMES  
Shit, ah fuck... dammit... stuff like  
that, you're too smart.

TOMMY  
You can thank Mom for that trait.

JAMES  
Just listen, don't worry about your  
Mom and I. We can't control that.

TOMMY  
We? you.

JAMES  
Yeah.

TOMMY  
You can.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

Ramon and Jerome sit on their desk chairs facing each other.

Ramon awkwardly twiddles his thumbs.

JEROME  
Hey.

Ramon quickly looks up.

JEROME  
What the fuck's going on with your  
guy, man.

RAMON  
Your guess is as good as mine.

JEROME  
Yeah ya know, I doubt that.

RAMON  
He's always chasing bullshit and I...  
I don't know, he always figures it  
out.

INT. LARGE RETAIL STORE - DAY

James brushes his hand up against a glass display case.

He examines what's inside: various types of bullets and  
ammunition.

He looks up and points his attention to the wall lined with  
guns.

There's not a salesperson in sight.

James looks around, pissed off and weary.

He taps a bell, rather frantically, on the display case.

A SALESMAN jogs over. Early 30's, overweight, moderate beard, generally not tidy.

SALESMAN

How umm, how can I help you?

JAMES

I'm looking for a... a gun.

SALESMAN

Alright.

JAMES

Yeah.

SALESMAN

We have guns, wide selection actually.  
Pretty remarkable.

He points to the wall of guns.

SALESMAN

Guns man, a lot of em.

JAMES

I see, I can take that one on the  
right.

James points.

The Salesman laughs. He takes the gun off the wall.

SALESMAN

You want this?

He passes it to James.

James awkwardly holds it.

JAMES

Is that a problem.

SALESMAN

You don't want that piece, man.

The salesman takes it away from James and puts it back on the wall.

He removes another gun and passes it to James.

JAMES  
What the hell is this?

SALESMAN  
That's what I call a WCKA.

JAMES  
A what.

SALESMAN  
White collar kinda angry.

James makes an insulted look.

SALESMAN  
Look man, you look mad.

JAMES  
So the fuck what.

SALESMAN  
If you get mad and shoot that, you  
might just hurt someone. If you get  
mad and shoot that other piece...  
Jesus, turns into a tragedy.

JAMES  
I... yeah whatever just ring it up.

SALESMAN  
ID me.

James looks through his wallet.

JAMES  
Might be out of luck there.

SALESMAN  
Just pass me some card, any card.

JAMES  
What?

SALESMAN  
Any card, now.

James passed a Starbucks Rewards card.

The salesman passes it back and puts the gun in a bag.

SALESMAN  
Have a good day, sir.

James raises his eyebrows, questioningly.

The salesman nods.

James leaves.

EXT. FLATBUSH STREET - NIGHT

James tucks the gun into his pants, covered by a jacket and walk toward the concert venue entrance.

The same fans from before are outside.

FAN #1  
Back for some more?

JAMES  
Fuck yourselves.

He gently pushes the fan away and walks in the entrance.

INT. FLATBUSH CONCERT VENUE - MOMENTS LATER

A tightly-packed crowd of people waits by the stage.

People on the edges of the venue, by the wall, stare at James and murmur to each other.

James nervously stares back at them, awkwardly shifting his feet around.

He bumps into a YOUNG WOMAN. Early 20's, black hair, dressed in all black.

YOUNG WOMAN  
Watch it assho... oh.

She chuckles.

JAMES  
What!?

She shakes her head and walks away.

James turns around, shakes his head as well and walks the opposite direction.

He bumps into the chest of an incredibly TALL MAN. Early

40's, black leather vest without a shirt underneath, muscular.

James forces the tall man to spill his drink.

TALL MAN  
What the, fuck!!!

He pushes James with incredible force.

James' notebook falls out of his back pocket and he funnels into the crowd by the stage.

Fan #7 hands him a shot.

He takes it.

Fan #7 slaps him on the back.

James trips backward and falls on his back.

He looks to the wall and sees a MAN menacingly eyeing him. Early 50's, bald, tall and frightening-looking.

James scrambles to his feet,

The band comes on the stage and begins to play loudly and chaotically.

James looks around frantically.

He feels for a cigarette in his pocket, takes one out lights it. He takes a puff, throws it to the ground and stamps on it.

He slowly backs up, fixing his eyes on the menacing man by the wall.

A mosh pit forms and James is on the edge of it. He nervously touches his gun, making sure its still there.

James is violently pushed by the crowd as the mosh pit closes in.

He falls to the ground, a round shoots from his gun and hits a nearby YOUNG MAN. Early 20's, blond hair, black leather clothes.

The shot is barely noticeable amidst the chaotic music.

James makes eye contact with the young man, both sets of

their eyes wide open.

James crawls out of the crowd, clumsily gets to his feet and walks out the door.

EXT. FLATBUSH STREET - NIGHT

James throws up all over the sidewalk. No one is around.

He violently coughs up just about everything in his system.

He looks in either direction and jogs off.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Lucy flips on the T.V.

She briefly channel surfs and simultaneously prepares to go to work.

She settles on the news and a female ANCHOR speaks. Early 30's, professional-looking.

ANCHOR

Shots fired last night at a Flatbush nightclub, leaving one dead. Police are currently investigating the scene. We'll have updates throughout the day.

Lucy stops what she's doing. She looks at her phone and frantically types a message.

Her hands shake and she begins to sob.

Tommy walks in the room.

TOMMY

Mom?

Tommy looks at the T.V.

TOMMY

Mom??

Lucy turns off the T.V. and hugs Tommy.

LUCY

It's fine, everything's fine.

Tommy says nothing. His face is blank and he stares at the now-dark T.V. screen.

INT. A BROOKLYN BAR - DAY

James stares down a half-empty glass of rum and coke in the empty bar.

He leans forward in the bar stool, forcing the stool's legs to come slightly off the ground.

James takes a sip of his drink.

The chair slips and he falls, without any grace whatsoever, to the floor. He hold onto his drink, some of which spills.

The bartender shakes his head.

JAMES  
God... fuck!!!

James takes one last gulp of his drink. Some of it misses his mouth and spills down his cheeks.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

Phones ring every second and the newsroom is absolutely hectic. Reporters run around, notebook and phone in their hands.

JEROME  
Where the fuck is James?? The one time we actually need him.

RAMON  
No idea, do you wanna call him or should I?

JEROME  
What? You haven't called him??

Ramon picks up his phone, mutters to himself and dials.

RAMON  
I guess he's off the community thing at this point.

Sarah struts over.

SARAH  
No!

Jerome looks up.

SARAH  
We're writing about the shooting... we  
need that other one. We need the  
community series.

There's a brief silence.

INT. A BROOKLYN BAR - DAY

James' phone rings and he answers right away.

JAMES  
He... h...

James loudly coughs, obnoxiously clearing his throat.

JAMES  
Hello.

RAMON  
(V.O.)  
Where in the fuck have you been?

James coughs again and begins to speak, slurring his words.

JAMES  
What the hell are you even talking  
about.

RAMON  
(V.O.)  
W-w-What?? You were at the rock... the  
fucking show last night!

JAMES  
Right on.

RAMON  
(V.O.)  
Someone fucking died, they were  
murdered. What?? This is your story.

JAMES  
Well aware.

RAMON  
(V.O.)  
Get back here!

JAMES  
I will you fucking asshole, I've just

gotta do another interview for the...

RAMON

(V.O.)

Fuck the comm... I can do it. Just get back here.

JAMES

I'm doing it.

RAMON

(V.O.)

W-w... Jesus, what??

James begins to slur his words more heavily.

JAMES

It's on my way, it'll take ten minutes.

RAMON

(V.O)

I... whatever, just get back here.

INT. FLATBUSH COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

James sits, somewhat precariously, across from pianist DWAYNE NEWMAN. Late 20's, Short hair dyed light brown.

James coughs and grasps his stomach.

DWAYNE

Are you okay, man.

JAMES

I umm...

He coughs again, this time toward Dwayne, and more aggressively.

Dwayne makes a disgusted face and appears confused.

JAMES

Don't mind me. Excuse me actually, I'm just a bit under the weather.

DWAYNE

I...

JAMES  
(interrupting)

So...

James looks to his stomach and holds up one finger

He sprints to the trash can and throws up all over the place, largely missing his target.

He brushes off his shirt and calmly walks back over to Dwayne.

JAMES  
So umm... you play piano, huh.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

James clumsily walks through the front entrance.

Everyone stares at him.

JAMES  
What.

SARAH  
Where the hell have you been, I've got a million fucking people people on my ass about getting a piece of goddamn copy out and you... you y-y-you were there. You were at the...

James puts his hand up.

He reaches into his pocket, takes out some pills.

JAMES  
For my head.

SARAH  
If you weren't the only person on the face of this Earth with access right now, you'd be fired.

JEROME  
You're letting him do the story!? Look at him!

SARAH  
He's the only one who can. He's the only one with access right now.

Ramon shakes his head.

RAMON  
(mutters)  
Dios mio.

SARAH  
What did you say?

RAMON  
Jesus fucking Christ!

JEROME  
Yep.

James shrugs.

Sarah points to him.

SARAH  
Listen fuck face. If you want any  
semblance of a potential job or  
fucking career anywhere in this city,  
pull your shit together and go report.  
You understand?

JAMES  
Can I go home before I report, my  
family...

RAMON  
(interrupting)  
Like they're gonna want to see you,  
cabron. Shit.

James looks at Sarah questioningly.

SARAH  
I don't give a fuck what you do. I  
want a piece of copy on my  
motherfucking desk in 48 hours. Get  
it? Get the hell out.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

James paces by a street corner, nervously smoking a  
cigarette.

He steps close to a HOMELESS MAN who sits on the ground, back  
to a building. Late 60's, long white hair, sandals.

James continues to pace, shaking his head.

The Homeless man looks intently at him.

HOMELESS MAN

Back up just a bit, will ya?

James mutters and more or less complies.

The homeless man shakes his head.

HOMELESS MAN

Are you umm... are you alright up there?

JAMES

What? Yeah, just leave me alone, let me think.

The homeless man laughs.

HOMELESS MAN

Think, yeah okay.

James scowls.

The homeless man puts his hands up.

HOMELESS MAN

Hey, alright alright. You just remind me of who I used to be.

JAMES

Because you know all about me, don't you? Get the fuck out of here.

HOMELESS MAN

Hmm... maybe you don't remind me of who I used to be but who I am now. Regardless, we're both on the same block and we're basically doing the same thing: absolutely nothing. Someone's gotta step off and it's not about to be me.

The homeless man looks up and lowers his glasses.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX HALLWAY - DAY

James repeatedly knocks on the door.

He taps his foot.

LUCY (O.S.)  
Who's there?

JAMES  
It's me, Lucy. Can you pl...

LUCY (O.S.)  
(interrupting)  
Piece of shit.

She opens the door.

LUCY  
(whispering)  
You need to get out... now. I thought  
you could have died, how was I  
supposed to know you weren't the one  
who died.

JAMES  
I...

LUCY  
(interrupting)  
Now.

Tommy walks behind Lucy.

TOMMY  
Dad??

Tommy and James hug.

Lucy starts to cry.

She gently drags Tommy off of his father.

LUCY  
He has to leave, Tommy. He has to go.

TOMMY  
Dad.

A few tears fall down James' face.

Lucy shuts the door.

INT. FLATBUSH STUDIO - DUSK

James hurriedly walks through the front entrance.

The band members sit on a couch and slowly looks up.

Their faces are stern.

PRESTON

Oh look here.

JAMES

Sorry I haven't checked in, it's been  
incredibly busy.

LIONEL

Has it.

James nods his head.

Scarlet maintains a stern look.

Preston gets up and starts to pace.

PRESTON

You were there.

JAMES

Yes, I'm incredibly sorry. That's why  
I'm here though. I want to know what  
the hell happened.

LIONEL

We want to know what the hell  
happened.

SCARLET

The fucking police...

PRESTON

(interrupting)

The fucking police have been on our  
ass and yes, they too want to know  
what the fuck happened.

James nervously sways in place.

Preston walks toward James, stopping about a foot away from  
him.

JAMES  
That's why I'm here.

PRESTON  
You're gonna tell us what happened?

JAMES  
I was hoping you would, Preston. That  
you all would.

PRESTON  
Me?

LIONEL  
Us?

Scarlet raises her eyebrows.

Preston folds his arms.

JAMES  
That's what I was hoping. I...

PRESTON  
(interrupting)  
Hey Lionel, quick question.

LIONEL  
Shoot.

PRESTON  
I know you're not a journalist.

LIONEL  
I'm not.

PRESTON  
I know but just humor me here. Say, if  
you were covering a group of people...  
ya know, working on an investigative  
piece, kind of like James here. And  
you're at one the group's shows.

LIONEL  
Yep Yep.

PRESTON  
You're at one of their shows, and keep  
in mind, nothing of significant  
interest has occurred during this said  
coverage up until this show.

LIONEL  
Well... yeah yeah fair enough.

Scarlet nods her head.

James is pale, motionless and his mouth is slightly ajar.

PRESTON  
Okay, and at this show, a... a FUCKING  
gun goes off and kills someone.

LIONEL  
Fucking tragic.

PRESTON  
I know, but don't you think you'd try  
and, well, figure out what the fuck  
happened? Like oh, this group was kind  
enough to give me access to their  
lives. One of their own DIED, was  
murdered. Maybe you should make some  
observations at the scene, ask some  
questions. Lionel, does that seem like  
the normal thing to do?

LIONEL  
I'm no reporter but that seems about  
right, yep.

PRESTON  
Yeah I thought so too.

Preston reaches into the back of his pants and slowly removes  
a gun.

He holds it gently and puts his finger on the trigger.

PRESTON  
I'm gonna be honest, James. After that  
show, I got a little nervous. I got  
scared.

SCARLET  
Anyone would after that.

PRESTON  
Thank you, Scarlet. So I got one of  
these.

Preston looks at the gun.

PRESTON

It seemed like the right thing to do.  
It's just, it makes me feel safe. Do  
you feel safe, James?

James opens his mouth and doesn't speak.

PRESTON

I'll tell you what. I want you to  
leave. I want you to leave now and I  
don't want you back.

James starts to step back.

JAMES

Okay okay, I'll leave. I'm leaving.

PRESTON

I don't want you in this neighborhood,  
understand?

James nods his head.

Preston points his gun to the door.

James leaves.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

James walks in the middle of the bike lane, stumbling over  
his steps.

He smokes a cigarette and looks down to the ground as cars  
pass within feet of him.

EXT. BROOKLYN ALLEY - NIGHT

James sits on a crate and continues to smoke.

He pulls out a flask and drinks.

He throws the flask at the wall in front of him.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - MORNING

James sits with colleagues in a conference room.

Sarah leads the meeting.

James' eyes are are bloodshot and he stares into the  
distance.

SARAH

James.

James continues to stare.

Ramon rolls his eyes.

SARAH

James!

JAMES

Yes, yeah.

SARAH

You understand, this story has become, well... there's layers to this, like you said before. It's more about the environment that allowed for this murder than the murder itself.

James claps his hands once.

JAMES

Now y'all get it.

SARAH

Can you get me that story? This is a long-term project. Can we agree on that?

Everyone in the rooms nods their heads.

SARAH

So James, you need to keep on doing what you've been doing.

JAMES

I met with them yesterday and that's... yeah that's still the plan.

Sarah nods her head.

Ramon and Jerome look at each other.

SARAH

We still need that community series. We need to balance this shit.

JAMES

Last profile's today.

SARAH  
Beautiful. Alright, everyone get the  
fuck out, yeah?

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES BATHROOM - DAY

James looks in the mirror and splashes his face with water.

He takes a pill and drinks from the sink.

He fumbles around in his back pocket and takes out a small  
bag of cocaine.

He carefully places a line of it on the sink and snorts it.

He pats his face and leaves.

EXT. FLATBUSH STREET - DAY

James casually walks toward the community center.

He listens to music, headphones plugged in. He whistles.

He approaches the center and sees his interviewee. MARISSA  
RAMIREZ. Late teens, long black hair, jeans and a t-shirt.

On the other side of the street, there's screaming.

James can't hear any of it over his music.

Lionel and a group of FRIENDS walk, heading to their studio.  
The youngest friend, a TEEN, grabs Lionel by the shirt. Late  
teens, pale, wife beater shirt, leather pants.

He pushes Lionel and yells. Lionel falls to the ground. His  
gun falls out the back of his pants.

The TEEN picks up the gun and walks aggressively toward  
James.

James approaches Marissa and takes off his headphones.

James reaches out to shake Marissa's hand. Marissa smiles.

TEEN  
Hey!

James looks his way.

James' eyes widen.

TEEN

You piece of shit.

James takes a step back.

The teen fires four rounds, flailing his arms.

James sprints down an alley.

The inexperienced shots miss James entirely and hit Marissa.

She falls on her back and bleeds out on the street.

The teen's eye's open wide. He waits for a few seconds and runs away, following his friends.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Lucy and Tommy sit on the couch. They watch the news.

Video from outside the community center is all that plays.

In the video, a white blanket covers a body.

INT. BROOKLYN TIMES NEWSROOM - DAY

The whole newsroom watches the news on T.V. They listen to the reporters who speak outside of the center.

Jerome turns to Ramon.

JEROME

Is your guy working on this?

RAMON

I have no doubt.

Sarah looks at the T.V. and says nothing.

INT. BROOKLYN HOTEL - NIGHT

Bottles of alcohol cover the floor.

Crumpled up pieces of paper do the same.

Plates with unfinished food line one half of the bed.

James sits at a desk with multiple bottles of vodka spread across it.

He drinks from a flask and types on his computer.

His eyes are focused.

He types with passion.

He pauses, lights a cigarette and takes a big sip from his flask.

He closes his computer.

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Months pass since the shooting.

A packed crowd watches as an OLD MAN delivers remarks from the stage. Late 60's, tuxedo, heavy, grey hair.

OLD MAN

It's my pleasure to present this award for excellence in newspaper reporting. This particular story almost took a young reporter's life. After being shot at by the story's subjects. I'll say that again, the story's subjects. He continued to immerse himself in their world, one that oozes intolerance and one that is a danger to our society. This reporter risked his life to uncover a system that allows from such intolerance and, as we've seen, violence. So, without further ado, I present this prestigious award to James Lawrence.

The crowd claps and James stands up. He smiles with a sense of self-pleasure.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

James sits on his bed and takes off his shoes.

He takes a sip from his flask.

He throws his shoes to the corner and lays on his back. He stares up at the ceiling.

James sits up, shakes his head and grabs his shoes.

EXT. FLATBUSH STREET - NIGHT

James walks on the empty sidewalk.

He passes the community center and throws his cigarette to the ground.

He stops outside the now boarded-up rock studio.

James removes a blunt from behind his ear.

He lights it, takes a puff and smiles.

He continues to walk down the sidewalk, casually looking around. He puts on his headphones.

FADE OUT.

THE END