

**WORKING ON IT:
A STORY OF STRUGGLE, LOVE, AND DONUTS**

by Nick Baker
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SYNOPSIS

Jonny, a donut shop cashier perpetually stuck in place, has vivid dreams of his inner Emcee breaking out of his shell. Waking up determined to change, he finally asks out Mary-Anne, the girl from down the block. But reality is never perfect, as Jonny's journey to understanding his deep-rooted issues and who he wants to become is just beginning.

SETTINGS

Jonny's Imagination

Downtown

The Donut Shop

A Dance Club

A Shopping Mall

Job Interviews

A Factory

TIME

The very beginning of Spring in 2016.

CHARACTERS

JONNY ROBERTS: (M/Early 20s) A young guy who is still a canvas. Easily impressionable, splashed with loud colors of emotions. Doesn't know the meaning of moderate. Sensitive, a writer, and an Emcee-in-hiding. Still has a lot to learn.

MARY-ANNE: (F/Early 20s) A college student with a clear mind and sharp wits. Friendly, ambitious, but often underestimated. Plans to go to law school and can't wait to get away from her parents. Staying balanced and on point is second nature to her.

'OLD MAN' LESTER: (M/50s) The man who owns The Donut Shop. He has a soft yet powerful voice, a timeless grin, and healthy values. His warm personality and strict principles keep him going strong.

NICK: (M/Early 20s) A kid with a sly tongue and a penchant for humor. An aimless youth with a ton of swagger. Rarely has access to his emotions. Loves to front.

JOE: (M/Early 20s) Lives by taking each day as its own. Opinionated, energetic, and not afraid to speak his mind. Has worked in a factory since leaving high school. On occasions, is an Emcee.

THE ENSEMBLE (ANY/20s): Everyday people we pass by all the time but never get to know. The physical chorus of this play. They shift the world of the stage as the moods and story change. JOE is included as a part of this group.

THEE EMCEE: Jonny's ideal version of himself as an artist. He organizes the conflicting thoughts and emotions swirling in Jonny's head in the form of spoken word verses and Hip-Hop songs. Vibrant, confident, and of course: an expert emcee.

Notes for Consideration:

- When a character's line reads "... " it marks a dramatic beat. This could be a rest, a moment of reflection, connection, regret, realization, humor, awkward tension; anything really.
- The role of THEE EMCEE should be played by JONNY.
- Any roles not mentioned in the character list should be played by members of THE ENSEMBLE.
- THE ENSEMBLE should include JOE and 4 additional members.
- All of THEE EMCEE's lines are either rapping or spoken word performance. If music is not mentioned in the stage directions, THEE EMCEE is performing spoken word.
- For instrumentals and beats, use or create what you feel is right. I trust you.

PRELUDE: WAKE UP

We see a room through a dim, foggy window; it's a bedroom in a cheap apartment. The faint glow of an alarm clock tells us what time it is...7:27 AM. Anti-climatic, I know. Anyway, there is a young man in a deep sleep. Music begins to play. It's something bright and perfect for clearing up a groggy morning.

Enter THEE EMCEE and his entourage, THE ENSEMBLE. They hype up and play off of THEE EMCEE. He soaks in the spotlight and performs his song for the world to see.

THE ENSEMBLE

[Intro, singing:]

(Wake up!)

(la la, la la, la, la~, la~)

(You best think twice.)

(Wake up, wake up.)

(la la, la la, la la, la la la~)

(Wake up!)

(You best think twice.)

(You best think twice.)

(You best think twice before you get into this, tonight)/

(You best think twice before you're gone from the spotlight)/

(You keep yourself away from livin' it up)/

(But you know-)/

(Boy, you know- you got shit goin' for you)/

THEE EMCEE

[Verse:]

Yeah, I got skill when it's showtime/
Got passion for a gift that I've called mine/
Since I was young, was a, rising sun/
But I was set aside, 'cause the hard times would come/
Work replaced school, I kept my cool/
But never movin' on, made me feel like a fool/
And I know everybody's got problems/
Reality made the hole that I'm lost in/
I'm wondering, what was education worth?/
Was it time well spent? Now I'm stuck in the dirt/

Gotta get my own, see that's my one rule/
I know that sounds rough, but life can be cruel/

He goes in on the beat.

It made a challenge, see it stepped to the boy/
He in a system where money was somethin' meant to destroy/
All his innocence, livin' in a bubble, that, would POP/
And his flow changed, the day that he lost his Pops/
He alone in the city, but damn it, life don't stop/
You either work hard, get high, or soon get GOT/
So he got off his ass with a full-time job/
Gave up everything, now he 'sposed to be calm?/
What do you say to youth that never got a chance to grow?/
What do you do when hope was everything that you were told?/
Shiiiiit. I'd smile once if I could/
But it's bullshit to front like "it's all good"/

Take a breath. It's okay.

THE ENSEMBLE

(But that ain't all to life, man, you got to go and think twice)/ (wake up)
(You can't keep livin' like that, go on, and get your head right)/ (wake up!)
(And if you feel this here, then you put your hands in the air)/
(I think we've found the place to be. Look close: it's right here)/
(How the anger heal the pain? Man, you got to go and think twice)/
(You know that hard shit ain't your lane, man, take a breath and think twice)/

He builds momentum; rising up to the clouds.

(Go. Go. Go. Go!)

THEE EMCEE

Yeah, see me rise from the dark side/
Realized, with my flow, I could change lives/
Lift the world one step at a time/
Shit, I've got charm, need a moment to shine!/
Money talks, but my art, has a mind of its own/
I take a look at society, throw a rock at the throne/

This shit, never gets old, heating up with my tone/
OWN the stage, LISTEN TO ME! I'm back in my zone/
These god-damn restraints, I break away/
I'm not paid, but my bills, ain't shit today/
And you can't say that I'm done, I've just begun/
Pull the plug, I'll still live, 'cause I'm the ONE!/
Fighter to kill the giants/
Fuck if you know who I am/
See my energy's an entity, I fly through the sky/
Wonder why, I never saw the old man cry/
Think that's 'cause he knew the future's fine/
'Cause in my eyes, the fire is alive/
I burn so bright, that I become light/
I'm still broke, but not broken, I'm in one piece/
So for now, I carry on, and I wish you peace/

Deep breath. Everything will be alright.

And if you still don't fight, then you got to go and think twice/ (wake up)
And if you still ain't right, then you got to go and think twice/ (WAKE UP)
And if you ain't on beat, then you better find your right rhyme/ (WAKE UP!)
That alarm clock won't stop now, better get to work, on time/ (WAKE UP!!!)

THE ENSEMBLE

(WAKE UP! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!)

(YOU BEST THINK TWICE.)

(WAKE UP!!!)

(Wake up. Wake up. wake up.)

(You best think twice.)

(WAKE UP!!!!)

The music fades and the alarm clock goes off like a siren. It jettisons the young man, JONNY, out of his dream. He bolts off to work.

OPENING HOURS

There's a warm glow as music bursts through the air, popping with jolts of energy and enthusiasm. As JONNY dashes to work, THE ENSEMBLE rush in like the morning commute was about to make them five minutes late. They turn the space into THE DONUT SHOP. We find JONNY, alone, setting up for the day. He's performing "Wake Up" to himself.

JONNY

...Money talks, but my art, has a mind of its own. I take a look at society, throw a rock at the throne! This shit, never gets old, heating up with my tone! OWN the stage, LISTEN TO ME, I'M BACK IN MY ZONE! THESE-

LESTER walks in somewhere in the middle of this. JONNY is scared shitless.

JONNY

Old Man! Why do you gotta sneak up on me like that?

LESTER

It is my store.

JONNY

Sure but you don't walk in all silent and creep up on people.

LESTER

Didn't wanna disrupt you.

JONNY

Yeah right. You got me, okay?

LESTER

If you're so caught up in your songs then I don't understand why you never go out and perform. Lord knows there's enough cafes and hipster joints around for that.

JONNY

That's not my style.

LESTER
Sure it ain't.

JONNY
I go at my own pace.

LESTER
Don't let your gifts wither. Take too long, you'll gain rust.

JONNY
Can I live? Damn.

LESTER
What's that now?

JONNY
Sorry. Darn.

LESTER
...

JONNY
...

LESTER
So if you ain't performing what have you been up to?

JONNY
Not much. I've been staying in a lot, writing a bit. Go for walks. Feels like every day's been a whole lot of nothing.

LESTER
All the more reason for you to find a place to perform. The least you can do is go out and enjoy yourself.

JONNY
C'mon. You know why I can't.

LESTER

Oh? Why's that.

JONNY

For starters, you need money if you wanna go out.

LESTER

This again.

JONNY

Drinks don't buy themselves. Food ain't free. Being broke is just about synonymous with being bored.

LESTER

There you go, same tune different day.

JONNY

You're lucky you even have a guy like me around in the first place.

LESTER

Is that so.

JONNY

I'm just saying. Like maybe a raise would go a long way-

LESTER

Good things come to those who wait, as they say.

JONNY

Just wish I could afford an ipod though.

LESTER

Heck I still use my old CD player.

JONNY

No way! That's nuts! Why don't you buy something new and get with the times?

LESTER

There's charm in old things.

JONNY

But why not spend the extra dough and upgrade?

LESTER

Boy. That fixation you have on money is unhealthy.

JONNY

But money keeps the world moving. Seriously Old Man, don't act like you wouldn't want some more revenue. Yeah, *revenue*. That's smart.

LESTER

Things ain't bad the way they are. I figure to keep it that way.

JONNY

You realize how much better we could do, right? We got enough buzz downtown to think of expanding. Why not renovate the shop? Promote the brand. Start a chain! Why stay stuck in the same place when you could move up in the world?

LESTER disapproves.

LESTER

Jonny, that's not how I do business and you know that. Take the air out your head and stop that nonsense. Our Donut Shop is a piece of the community; it ain't some growing enterprise. It's a place for people to come together and-

JONNY

Eat donuts-

LESTER

Don't interrupt me now. But that's right: eat donuts, share conversations, and have good times. For people who need a break every now and then. Who need some moments to relax with a donut on a bad day and-

JONNY

Some growth wouldn't hurt. That's all I'm saying.

NICK enters, running late. He's wearing some really, REALLY nice sneakers.

LESTER

You're late Nick.

NICK

I'm sorry Lester won't happen again.

JONNY

Right.

NICK

Oh fuck off Jonny.

LESTER

Hey! Listen now: ain't no talking like that in here.

NICK

Oh shit. I mean- sorry sir.

LESTER

Alright. Good.

LESTER hands a broom to NICK.

LESTER

You can start by giving the place a good sweep before any customers come through. Jonny, you're on register. I'm going to call in some orders.

LESTER exits.

NICK

Hey Jonny.

JONNY

What?

NICK

You'll never guess who I saw on my way over.

JONNY

A fortune teller who told you to find a purpose in life?

NICK

Blow me. I saw Mary-Anne.

JONNY

Oh?

NICK

She was just down the block.

JONNY

Cool. I mean, that's cool. She's cool.

NICK

A word of advice: expand your vocabulary.

JONNY

Fuck you.

NICK

I'm just tryna help.

JONNY

I know how to talk to girls.

NICK

Really? 'Cause I've never seen you with one.

JONNY

You only see me at work.

NICK

So? How many times you catch Lester yelling at me coming back from breaks late as hell?
Whatcha think I'm up to?

JONNY

That doesn't prove anything-

NICK

If you need some help though I could go through my phone, scroll through my lil' chick-tionary and set you up with someone. Get you some real world experience.

JONNY

You're a fool man. Let me be.

NICK goes back to sweeping. JONNY is drawn to NICK's sneakers.

JONNY

Yo.

NICK

What?

JONNY

Where'd you get those kicks?

NICK

You like em? I took a little trip down to the mall.

JONNY

How much?

NICK

Two-Forty.

JONNY

What! How'd a nobody like you afford that?

NICK

I've got my ways. Save that money boi! Maybe then you'll get some fly shit like this.

NICK shows off his sneakers. JONNY is so jealous.

JONNY

They're cool I guess.

NICK

Bro there you go again. These probably cost more than your whole closet! Your broke ass can barely afford shoelaces. You look like you're rocking some straight cardboard-ass kicks.

JONNY

Man you keep it up I swear to god I'll-

*Interruption. A bell rings as the front door opens.
~Mary-Anne enters~*

MARY-ANNE

Hi guys.

Time stops. THEE EMCEE emerges.

THEE EMCEE

Infatuation.../

Fascination with you/

The girl from down the block/

Soon as she's in my peripheral I'm, caught in a trance/

Would you like to dance? Or are you too fly, like/

Butterfly, floating away/

And we're back.

JONNY

Hey Mary-Anne.

NICK

Yo.

MARY-ANNE

You two are hard at work huh?

JONNY

Give us a break, the day just started.

NICK

What's up?

MARY-ANNE

I was on my way to class and thought to stop by. I need something to get me through the day.

JONNY

You want the usual? Jelly donut to go?

MARY-ANNE

Well it is my favorite.

JONNY gets MARY-ANNE a glistening jelly donut.

JONNY

Here you go, free of charge.

NICK

(Oh you have got to be kidding me.)

MARY-ANNE

Hey. Thanks.

Time stops. Briefly.

THEE EMCEE

But what if I took a chance?

The following scenes are dramatic shifts and repeat themselves over from the starting point of MARY-ANNE accepting the donut.

JONNY

You're looking gorgeous today Mary-Anne.

MARY-ANNE
Just today huh?

JONNY
Don't play like that. You know what I mean.

MARY-ANNE
Really. You've got some confidence there.

JONNY
I can't help it. You've got a way of bringing out the best in me. It's like you turn rainy days into summer shine.

NICK
(Okay what the fuck is going on?)

MARY-ANNE
You always have the right things to say to cheer me up. I like that.

JONNY
Well if you like it so much maybe we should go out sometime.

MARY-ANNE
Sometime?

Stop! THEE EMCEE returns.

THEE EMCEE
She's like, butter, melting in mouth/
Her name remains, lingering/
And the sensation flutters from my lungs to my stomach/
Set me free, let me fly/
Holding tension, pressure and plumes of smoke build from the fire trapped inside/
...
Shit, what was I saying?

Oops.

MARY-ANNE

Sometime?

JONNY

This weekend. There's a spot I've been hearing about. So how about it, me and you? Friday. 9 o'clock.

NICK

(Yeah, no fucking way. This is bullshit bro.)

MARY-ANNE

It's a date.

NICK

(WHAT?! YO THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING! NOOO WAY!)

Sparks fly and the world seems like fireworks. However, everything halts and MARY-ANNE, JONNY, and NICK are reset, frozen.

THEE EMCEE

But what if she's like... No?!

MARY-ANNE is about to eat her jelly donut. JONNY word vomits.

JONNY

Hey so I was thinking uh-

MARY-ANNE

Huh?

JONNY

Oh. Uh, nothing. I mean, I wanted to ask you something-

NICK

(Okay this is way better.)

MARY-ANNE

So what is it?

JONNY

Well. You know. Uh. There's this thing. A few blocks over and-

MARY-ANNE

Right. Good to know.

NICK is thoroughly enjoying this.

JONNY

Like, I was thinking maybe we could go to the thing and um, talk and stuff. Hang out?

MARY-ANNE

Oh...oh Jonny.

JONNY

Not like a date or whatever just um do things and uh chill and maybe I sorta like you but hey we could go-

MARY-ANNE

No.

NICK is fucking dying. Ad-libs/jokes on JONNY are more than encouraged.

JONNY

...

No?

The world around JONNY collapses and swirls into depression.

It's really melodramatic.

Thankfully everything comes to a halt and again, things are reset.

THEE EMCEE

But she, could make a slum turn vibrant/
And splatter colors of joy on withered, grey space/
So if opportunity knocks/
Can we, soar like astronauts?/
A dance across planets between two stars/
That rocket like comets into a galaxy far, far away/

Where time and space are distorted/
And the only things that I see/

We are back in reality.

MARY-ANNE finally gets to start eating her jelly donut.

MARY-ANNE

Pretty good.

JONNY

Yeah. If the Old Man can be proud of anything I guess it'd be his donuts.

MARY-ANNE

That sounds kinda weird.

JONNY

Yeah. Forget I said that?

MARY-ANNE

You're such a dork! It's funny.

JONNY

...

MARY-ANNE

...

MARY-ANNE

Shit I've gotta run. If I'm not on time for this class my professor just might kill me.

JONNY

Wait. Mary-Anne.

MARY-ANNE

Yeah?

JONNY

(slight word vomit) What are you up to this weekend?

MARY-ANNE

What's it to you?

JONNY

I heard of this pretty cool spot that plays some great music. And I've been wanting to check it out with you because you're awesome and you have really good taste so I thought we could-

MARY-ANNE

Saturday. I'm free Saturday night.

JONNY

Really? I mean. Great. But it's a date, right?

MARY-ANNE

It is.

THEE EMCEE

Mary-Anne/

The girl from down the block/

To be continued.

MARY-ANNE exits.

JONNY melts.

NICK can't believe it.

Life is good, the donuts are fresh, and JONNY is feeling himself.

It's gonna be a great week.

DANCE' N' LOVE N' LIFE

During JONNY's bliss,

THE ENSEMBLE glide through and transform the space into a club. As this happens, THEE EMCEE emerges again. All eyes are on him, and nothing else.

THEE EMCEE

And so!

Pandora's box was open-what?! A date was in their plans!/
So he spent three eternities figuring out what to wear/
Re-did his deodorant, took two showers, used that strawberry shampoo in his hair/
And with 20 minutes to spare he was like, "Okay, this will go great. Yeah. You got this."/

...

Anyway!

Back to the fated date/
He thought compliments would work, but words were frozen in his chest/
So he took her to the spot, where music ruled the realm of sound/
The crowd was hype, the beats were bumpin', it was time to get down/
He smiled. The mask was barely hiding his anxiety/
Am I being too timid? Am I grinning too much?/
Is my hand hovering over her? Is she regretting coming here?/
Am I floating in awkward territory with nowhere to go?/
What if I fuck up and trip over and the world would collapse like dominoes?/
And she would call my ass lame forever/
Forever? Forever-ever? For-Eva-Eva??/
Never never could see her again if this night turned into nightmare/
Like Tetris, I could build up blocks of confidence/
Thinking I made the right move, and then they all disappear/
(WaitThatShitWasBackwardsWhatAmISayingThat'sNotHowTetrisWorks!@#@)

STOP.

...

He untangled the wound up intersections of car crashes in his mind/
All that mattered, he realized, was the moment in front of them/
Blood returned in his veins, mind blank, but his mind state/
Let his body weave with hers. Together, they finally thought/
This was a date/
In a foggy little night club, with some cool ass tunes/
Now this is where I take my leave, and *this* is how I set the mood/

THEE EMCEE snaps his fingers. MARY-ANNE appears.

*Something dreamy begins to play,
like when life lifts you above the clouds in the night sky.*

*JONNY and MARY-ANNE start to dance in the club.
THE ENSEMBLE become dancers, drunk and feelin' themselves.
Everybody's out to have a good time.*

JONNY and MARY-ANNE share a moment.

MARY-ANNE

You know, I never took you for a dancer.

JONNY

Me neither. Survival instincts I guess.

MARY-ANNE

Gotta give you credit. I didn't think you had it in you.

JONNY

I'm full of surprises.

MARY-ANNE

Don't get ahead of yourself.

*New music comes on and the club pops off again.
This music should be late 90's/early to late 00's Hip-Hop;
the soundtrack of MARY-ANNE and JONNY's lives.
Another moment.*

JONNY

It's a chill spot though right?

MARY-ANNE

Yeah. But I'm wondering. Why'd it take you so long to do this?

JONNY

I never had the nerve to ask. Finally figured to take a chance.

MARY-ANNE

My guy. I did not stop by a donut shop every day for my health.

New music from their soundtrack. More dancing!

Things are getting hot in here (Ayeeee).

Now: an intimate moment.

MARY-ANNE

You know when the first time I noticed you was?

JONNY

When?

MARY-ANNE

Remember that talent show back in junior year? Where the first few acts were so bad! One guy tried singing a love song, then forgot the words. He had this blank look in his eyes and bolted off stage. Like-

JONNY

This is shaping up great for me. I can tell.

MARY-ANNE

Oh shut up! So the whole event was a laughing stock, but out of nowhere someone stole the show. He was a rapper so everybody braced themselves like, "oh no..." but he had some style.

JONNY

Yeah?

MARY-ANNE

I knew who you were before, but after that I remembered you.

JONNY

Wow. That might be the coolest shit anyone's ever said to me.

JONNY finally makes a move.

The dancing is as close as it can get.

JONNY

Music was how I noticed you too.

MARY-ANNE

Oh? How so?

JONNY

Please. You were the biggest Hip-Hop head in our class. I found all sorts of albums off what you'd bump before school.

MARY-ANNE

Which ones! I'm curious.

JONNY

Like Water For Chocolate.

MARY-ANNE

The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill?

JONNY

Aquemini!

MARY-ANNE

Midnight Marauders.

JONNY

Stakes Is High.

MARY-ANNE

...

JONNY

...

MARY-ANNE

I'd like to see you perform again some day.

JONNY

I don't know. Compared to what everybody else from school is up to; college, internships, all of that- what can I do?

MARY-ANNE

Maybe it's all in your head mister underdog.

JONNY

Oh you've got jokes huh?

It's close.

MARY-ANNE

Jokes. Ambitions. Smarts. And some incredible humility.

JONNY

Oh yeah? Maybe when I get on your level I'll invite your independent self over for lunch.

MARY-ANNE

I'll have to check my schedule. I'm a busy woman, you know.

JONNY

We'll make it work.

MARY-ANNE

I'm moving fast. Might just leave you behind.

JONNY

I'll keep up. Just watch.

They kiss.

Something smooth and romantic that sweeps you off your feet begins to play.

MARY-ANNE and JONNY might dance a little more.

They might kiss again.

They might stay still. I'm not sure.

*No matter how this date ends though,
there's something wonderful in the air.*

JONNY, YOU STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO

MARY-ANNE bids JONNY good-bye.

THE DONUT SHOP is put back together by THE ENSEMBLE.

We're back with JONNY, LESTER, and NICK.

It's around 5 PM.

We notice a customer, JOE, buying some donuts and leaving.

JONNY is sweeping, humming a tune to himself.

NICK is like, okay, what the fuck has him so cheery at work on a Monday?

JONNY

Oh? A dance? Why of course.

JONNY dances with the broom.

NICK

Okay that's it.

NICK snatches the broom out of JONNY's hands.

NICK

What's up with you? You've been like this all day now.

JONNY

Oh nothin'. Just feeling good to be alive.

NICK

Oh yeah. It's so good to be alive right now.

Right here. At work.

On a Monday.

With nothing to do.

...

Bro that was sarcasm.

JONNY

Sometimes you've gotta wake up and smell the lemons.

NICK

What?

JONNY

When life gives you lemons, why not take a moment and smell them? Why rush things when you've got all you ever wanted in that lemon that's right in your hand. It's not going anywhere. Maybe she wants to chat. Take her out. Take her dancing. Then. Only then! You make lemonade.

NICK

Oh. So this is about Mary-Anne.

JONNY

The date went well.

NICK

You serious? Hell I didn't ask 'cause I thought-

NICK sizes JONNY up. Yep. Still wack.

NICK

Never-mind.

JONNY

What? You jealous that I went out with her?

NICK

Please unlike you I've known more than three girls in my life.

JONNY

Whatever. You know she's great.

NICK

She is. But-

Nah. Forget it.

JONNY

You think I'm lying about the date?

NICK

No no no, nothin' like that. I'm just thinking. That's all.

LESTER

It's been a long day when Nick's thought something through.

JONNY

Right?!? Facts, man.

NICK

All I'm thinking is where do you go from here?

JONNY

Who cares? We've got something. It's fly. It's wonderful-

NICK

That's cool Romeo but where's the next date gonna be?

JONNY

Haven't thought of it yet. I'll figure something out.

NICK

Oh word? So maybe you'll take her out to dinner? A fancy restaurant? Pizz-a-pies!! Or maybe the movies? Buy some popcorn and soda at like 20 bucks each? I heard the aquarium's pretty dope you can go find Nemo with the fishies- oh, but that shit's like 26 bucks a ticket.

JONNY

What are you tryna' say.

NICK

I'm just trying to look out for you man. We both know you've been crushing on this girl for years. From a vet to a rookie in the field: you gotta stay sharp if you wanna stand a chance.

LESTER

That's enough of that now.

NICK

I can't offer advice to my co-worker?

LESTER

Go down in the basement and get the mop.

NICK

Sure. Sure.

NICK exits.

LESTER

Boy doesn't know when to turn it down.

JONNY

He's got a point though.

LESTER

Come on now.

You're better than that petty mindset.

JONNY

What's gonna happen when I try to take her somewhere and I gotta ask her to float me cash for a movie ticket?

LESTER

Look. Dating is simple. You like eachother? Perfect. Don't think about the where or when or how. Just find time to spend with her. If you've got something going, the flow will lead the way.

JONNY

I hear you old man but you've been out the game a long time. No offense.

LESTER

You see this?

LESTER shows off his wedding ring.

LESTER

I know what I'm talking about. Maybe I should get Tanya on your case. She'd give you a real mouthful and you can bet your money on that.

JONNY

All I'm sayin' is things change.

LESTER

Nonsense. They ain't changed to a point where I don't remember what it's like. You wanna tell me how to run my marriage now?

JONNY

Maybe you're right.

NICK re-enters with the mop and bucket.

JONNY

I could ask her if she'd wanna see my place. We could hang out. Talk. Cook a meal or something. Something relaxed.

LESTER

That's more like it.

JONNY

Thanks.

LESTER

You oughta listen to me more often. It'd do you some good. I'm gonna take a break. If either of you need me I'll be outside.

LESTER exits.

NICK sets the mop aside.

NICK

Lester gave you a lecture again?

JONNY

Nah. Nothing serious. He's trying to help.

NICK

Lester? With dating tips? Please.

JONNY

He's been married a long time, he must be doing something right.

NICK

Be that as it may I think you're setting yourself up for some sad shit.

Like some Drake on Marvin's Room type shit.

Like some Drake on some Hotline Bling type shit.

Like.

You know, like some Drake shit.

JONNY

The fuck are you talking about?

NICK

You and Mary-Anne don't fit.

JONNY

You can say that over and over again but it doesn't mean shit.

NICK

True. So let's look at the facts right? One: she's in college. Two: You went from high school to food service. Three: She's looking at words like "Career." Four: You're looking at words like "Make Ends Meet." You don't think a girl like that doesn't have plenty of rich or ambitious looking dudes in college tryna get at her?

JONNY

But what about connection? We've got something real going on.

NICK

And bless your heart Jonny, but facts are facts. You keep going on like you are now and sooner or later the difference between your level and her level is gonna be too big to make up.

JONNY

...

NICK

...

JONNY

But. Uh. What if.

What if I could show her I mean business?

NICK

Alright but how?

JONNY

I could-

I could-

Get her a gift. Buy her something. A surprise?

JONNY

Not bad. Girls love that shit.

JONNY

You think so?

NICK

Hell yeah. Big surprises. Things that put them on notice.

JONNY

Um. Flowers? Roses!

NICK

Lame as fuck bro.

JONNY

Shit. Um.

Some music! Maybe a gift card?

NICK

Yeah I'm gonna pretend like you didn't say that.

JONNY is lost.

JONNY

I don't know.

NICK

Let's see. A girl like Mary-Anne, she's doing big things. You need to get her something flashy. Something that says, "Wow." Like some kind of jewelry. A necklace or some shit like that.

JONNY

A Necklace.

...

Yeah.

NICK

Whatever it is, it's the thought that counts.

JONNY

Yeah. That'd be.

That'd be perfect.

LESTER returns.

NICK

Well, I don't know about a whole ass necklace but you do you.

LESTER

Nick I don't see that mop in your hands.

NICK

Oh shit.

LESTER

What was that now?

NICK

Shit, I mean, sorry sir! I'll get right on it. Sorry Lester.

JONNY

A necklace.

LESTER goes back to the register as NICK goes back to the mop.

JONNY is building up a new course of action.

There's a certain uneasy feeling in the air.

MOVE FAST, SPEND CASH, BUM-RUSH YOUR WALLET

Something pulse-pounding and dripping with adrenaline begins to play.

JONNY is window-shopping at the mall.

He sees flashy things. Expensive things.

Things he really wants to buy.

A couple holding hands.

Kids begging their parents for toys.

Sports on high-def television.

JONNY is looking for a particular store.

Suddenly he's approached by HUSTLERS working the booths throughout the mall.

Someone selling calendars half-heartedly.

Someone selling lotion cause they can tell he's dry as fuck.

Someone selling lingerie cause they know he's got a special someone.

Someone selling fresh kicks cause they see what he's got on now and...yikes.

JONNY tries to tell each of them no. They persist.

He really tells them no.

They start circling around him like they'll jump him.

This is not okay. Seriously.

This becomes complete chaos.

But JONNY finally finds it- the Jewelry Store.

His eyes are on The Perfect Necklace. He has to have it.

As soon as the JEWELRY CLERK speaks, the HUSTLERS disperse.

CLERK

Hello sir! Can I help you out with anything today?

JONNY

Hi!

I was looking around and I noticed that necklace.

CLERK

Ah, that one? You have a good eye! Elegant. Just the right touch of flashy. But not too gaudy.

JONNY

That's exactly what I was thinking.

CLERK

A lovely piece.

JONNY

Yeah.

CLERK

It's practically meant for her, isn't it?

JONNY

Uh. Do I know you?

CLERK

Would you like to take a better look at it?

JONNY

Yes. Please!

The CLERK takes The Necklace out of the case.

They present it to JONNY.

JONNY

Wow. Perfect. Absolutely perfect. Shit.

Oh. Sorry. I'm excited.

CLERK

No worries sir! It's understandable.

Would you like me to ring it up for you?

JONNY

For sure. I'm gonna buy it. Thanks!

The CLERK rings up The Necklace as JONNY finds his wallet.

CLERK

That will be Four-Hundred and Fifty-Seven Dollars.

JONNY

...

CLERK

...

JONNY

Come again?

CLERK

The necklace. It's Four-Hundred and Fifty-Seven Dollars.

JONNY

Um. Okay.

CLERK

Is there a problem sir?

JONNY

You know. I think I left my card at home. Maybe another time. Bad luck you know?

CLERK

Mhm. Of course.

JONNY

What was that?

CLERK

Oh, nothing.

JONNY

I have money on me. Really. I just, you know, use my card for bigger purchases.

CLERK

I could show you some of our other selections. We have jewelry priced anywhere from One-Thousand to *ahem* 50 dollars here.

JONNY

But I don't have my card.

CLERK

Right.

JONNY

Either way I can't buy that necklace right now.

The CLERK puts The Necklace back in its case.

CLERK

I'll be sure to keep an eye on it so that it stays here. *Just for you.*

JONNY

...

CLERK

...

JONNY

Thanks. (Fucking rude)

*The CLERK gives a friendly nod to JONNY and takes the case with them.
JONNY walks back out into the mall, goes for the food court,
and approaches a FAST FOOD VENDOR.*

VENDOR

What up. Welcome to Big Shack Stacks how can I-

JONNY

I'll take a number 8 with extra cheese with a side of onion rings too. And a large coke. And some mozzarella sticks. That's to go.

VENDOR

We've got a deal going on if you want it: for two more dollars you get another burger with the number 8 combo. The Big Shack Shit Sucks Special. Real good for that take home meal you use to bury yourself into bed with.

JONNY

I'll take it.

Yikes.

There is no gift.

There is no necklace.

There is now less money than before.

JONNY eventually moves on and exits.

The stage is completely empty for a beat.

END PART 1: LOVE AND ACCESSORIES

BEGIN PART 2: STRUGGLE AND COME UPS

COMPULSIVE EATING AT THE SOUL

Something mellow, like when you've gone through crushing disappointment, begins to play. At a melancholy pace, THE ENSEMBLE sets up THE DONUT SHOP. LESTER and NICK are working the day away. JONNY keeps eating junk. He's not at work. He tries to collapse into bed. THE ENSEMBLE forces him up and pushes his dramatic ass into the shop.

LESTER

Jonny?

NICK

Bro where have you been all day?

JONNY

I'm here now. I was late for once, big deal.

JONNY goes right for a donut and eats it. No shame.

NICK

You good?

JONNY

Fantastic.

LESTER

Maybe you need the day off.

JONNY

I don't got anywhere else to be. Not like I have plans or anything.

LESTER

You don't look so good.

JONNY

So what. I can still work.

LESTER

...

NICK

What is this. You were all gassed up coming off the weekend.

JONNY

Yeah well things changed.

NICK

How?

JONNY

Cause I got reminded that I ain't shit.

LESTER

Hey now-

JONNY

It's true! I'm broke and stuck and got nothing but this. But Mary-Anne has-

NICK

Come on it's not that serious.

JONNY

You were right though. I don't have anything for her.

NICK

Wait, you were for real about that whole necklace thing?

JONNY

Yeah. Of course I was.

LESTER

Jonny.

NICK

(This dude. My god.)

JONNY

Nick was right Lester. Mary-Anne's got it all. She's going places. Smart, funny, all of that. And what do I got for her? Free donuts? My valuable future here as a manager? Please.

JONNY grabs at another donut.

LESTER

You're overthinking things Jonny.

JONNY

Or I'm finally looking at what's in front of me. What do I have that makes me so special? All I'm seeing is work and struggle day in and day out and no change in sight.

LESTER

We're doing good here. You need more patience.

JONNY

Sure, you need me. Because you need employees.

NICK

Bro listen to yourself! Lester's been looking out for you.

JONNY

What do you know.

NICK

I know a pity party when I see one.

JONNY

Fuck you.

LESTER

HEY.

NICK

It's not my fault you're so damn sensitive.

JONNY

I'm not soft.

LESTER

Settle down. Both of you!

NICK

Really? How else would it take you years to find the balls to ask a girl out?

JONNY

What do you know about being real Nick? Tell me. Is it cause you got nice gear? Cause you sell a little weed to your friends so you think you're really making plays? Oh! Maybe it's cause you think being a fucking brat with some well off parents makes you special!

NICK

What the fuck's your problem?

LESTER

ENOUGH.

ALL

...

JONNY grabs one more donut.

JONNY

Stop telling me what to do.

LESTER

Son I'm keeping you from making a mistake.

JONNY

Don't act like you know what's good for me Lester.

LESTER

I'm trying to help in spite of that thick head of yours.

JONNY

Man. I come here every day. I bust my ass for you. But all you're invested in is this small time, barely getting by, cozy little shop. All this opportunity and you're doing jack shit with it. What's your plan? What's the point of any of this?

NICK

Listen to you!

LESTER

Jonny. You're not thinking straight right now. Go home. We can sit down and talk later.

JONNY

What's there to talk about? I'm a loser. I'll die alone. It's that simple.

NICK

Man, shut up! No wonder you're worried about Mary-Anne. She'd leave your ass as soon as she knew what a psychopath you are-

JONNY throws a fastball and hits NICK right in the face with his donut. JONNY and NICK start yelling at each other for a fight, but LESTER steps in, facing JONNY.

LESTER

That's as far as this goes.

JONNY

Yeah. I figured.

LESTER

Stay out of here for the week.

JONNY

Don't worry. I won't be back.

LESTER

You need to cool off. I know hurt when I see it.

JONNY quits and exits.

THE EMPTY HOLE IN A DONUT

*While LESTER and NICK absorb JONNY's departure,
we get a brief look into what MARY-ANNE's up to.*

*We see her darting through downtown. THE ENSEMBLE plays along with her hectic
day.*

*We see her friend call her to ask about last night's assignments,
maybe she even teases her about JONNY.*

We see a professor demand more out of her as expectations fall around her like anvils.

*We see a guy cat-call her as she makes her way to The Donut Shop.
She gives him the finger and probably tells him to eat shit.*

MARY-ANNE

(You know, it's funny. I keep telling myself today will be a good day.)

And finally, she's at THE DONUT SHOP.

MARY-ANNE

Hey guys! I really don't mean to be that customer but is it cool if I get something before you close? My schedule finally finished up for the day and I couldn't fit in a lunch. I guess institutions really don't care for the healthy eating cycles of the people. (Among other things.)

LESTER

Sure. That's no problem.

MARY-ANNE

There really aren't enough hours in the day. Thank god for food on the go.

NICK

What do you want?

MARY-ANNE

Hey to you too buck-o. Let's see. How about a few of those donuts with the pink frosting?

NICK

Gotcha. One sec.

MARY-ANNE

...

LESTER

...

NICK

...

MARY-ANNE

Guys? Is everything okay?

LESTER

To be honest, no. There was a bit of an incident earlier.

MARY-ANNE

You're kidding. This place is always so relaxed. What happened?

NICK

Ask your boyfriend.

MARY-ANNE

Excuse me?

LESTER

It was Jonny. He got all wound up and stormed out of here.

MARY-ANNE

He's not here then.

NICK

Nah. He's gone. I think for good.

MARY-ANNE

No way.

LESTER

That's what I'd assume, but there's something off with the boy. I don't know.

MARY-ANNE

...

LESTER

...

NICK

I got your donuts. Anything else?

MARY-ANNE

If I see him, I'll try to talk to him.

NICK

I wouldn't if I were you.

MARY-ANNE

Is he really that bad?

NICK

He flipped! One minute he's dancing around loving life, today he just loses it over not getting you something.

LESTER

Nick.

MARY-ANNE

I don't understand.

NICK

He wanted to buy you something. You know, like a surprise. But I guess he couldn't afford it. Whatever, he's crazy.

MARY-ANNE

So he got upset over- wow. I think we do need to talk.

LESTER

He's too caught up in that dense head of his.

MARY-ANNE

This is a lot. I need some food.

NICK hands MARY-ANNE her donuts and we fade away from THE DONUT SHOP.

We now find JONNY walking along the streets near his apartment. Something urgent, like when you're running after your friend before they make a terrible mistake, begins to play. THEE EMCEE makes an emergency entrance.

THEE EMCEE

[Verse:]

Stop. Think about it.

STOP! You better think 'bout what you're doing/

And think about the Shop, where your home has always been/

You got to reconsider, man, the way you were so bitter/

It was just another day, now you're gone with the wind/

The necklace can't really be the reason that you snapped/

I think you got a problem, with the way that you react/

When the real world, forces you to reconsider/

Shit it's like you got not balance and never wanna listen/

Pistons blow and your fire's setting off/

Wishing you had more, see what you already got/

It's quite amazing how you change when in a mood/

You're so blind sometimes, you forgot what you could lose/

And I'm not hating, I'm just trying to assist/

So many insecurities I need a bigger list/

Money ain't the key to solving all of your issues/

Diamond rings ain't making Mary-Anne infatuated with you/

Stop and think about it/

Think about the outcome/

What you gonna do when Jonny needs someone to help him?/

'Cause that ship has passed/

Turn back! Before the Donut Shop's in the past/

Man, listen to me once, I swear you won't regret it/

Give me one more chance, we'll get through this together/

Stop now...

You're better than this/
You're not just some kid/
You'll end up in fits/
The worse that it gets/
...
You're forcing me to analyze ya/
You get depressed when things don't go your way, you can't deny it/
You try to hide it but subtlety isn't in your vocab/
Think you a fighter 'cause I swear that you love to throw hands/
Ready to fight anybody, but what could ignite/
The spark to wake your ass up! And see reality right/
I'm asking 'cause I'm worried 'bout you, yeah I'm worried 'bout us/
You wanna be with Mary-Anne but you don't know about love/
I'm calling you out, step up or I might disappear/
I know that ending up forgotten is our biggest fear/

Out of nowhere, MARY-ANNE appears.

MARY-ANNE

Jonny?

JONNY

What are you doing here?

MARY-ANNE

I was at The Donut Shop. I heard there was a fight.

JONNY

There was.

MARY-ANNE

What happened?

JONNY

...

MARY-ANNE

Nick mentioned you were mad because you couldn't get something for me.

JONNY

Yeah.

MARY-ANNE

Hello. That's ridiculous.

JONNY

You don't understand.

MARY-ANNE

Jonny, we went on a date. You don't owe me for a good time. We don't owe each other anything. I don't think that's right.

JONNY

It's not about you.

MARY-ANNE

Are you serious right now? You're starting to make this all feel like a mistake.

JONNY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that-

MARY-ANNE

Then what is it? Tell me and I'll listen. Really.

JONNY

...

MARY-ANNE

...

JONNY

Do you ever stop and think, "What am I doing here?" Like, for a split second, you get this out of body experience and see everything around you. And you realize there's nothing. Nothing interesting. Nothing fun. Nothing exciting. People around you; they're smiling, they got plans, they got shit to look forward to. But you? You're just some guy working to live.

MARY-ANNE

I've felt that. We all get down on ourselves sometimes.

JONNY

But for me it isn't "sometimes" anymore. It's every day. It's like I'm not even getting up in the morning. Just zone in and out of every day, every week, every month like this is what the rest of my life is gonna be. Forever.

MARY-ANNE

It doesn't have to be that way if-

JONNY

See, you can say that. You're doing well for yourself. When you've got options like school or work opportunities or connections, you have a reason to keep going. But I'm just some local dude working a little donut shop. Nobody cares about someone like that.

MARY-ANNE

I do. I care because you're you. Because you're funny and we have fun. Because you're a dork. Shit, we went on a date didn't we?

JONNY

It's easy to give all that feel good bullshit when you're not the one who has to live check to check.

MARY-ANNE

You don't know a damn thing about how I get by. Everybody hurts, believe me.

JONNY

Then when do I get to catch a break?

MARY-ANNE

There was nothing wrong in the first place!

JONNY

But I couldn't get you what I wanted to buy.

MARY-ANNE

And I'm telling you I don't care about that.

JONNY

It hurts me. It just reminds me of how broke and fucking hopeless I am okay? I wanted to do something for you and I literally couldn't. And it all comes back to me being dumb or poor or lazy and I don't know how to get out of it. It sucks. Here you are: Mary-Anne, class valedictorian. The cute girl I was jealous of with her iPods and iPhone. The girl everybody knew was going to be someone important. And I'm just some guy.

MARY-ANNE

Well, I can't help you with that. Maybe you need some help. Like some therapy.

JONNY

Therapy.

MARY-ANNE

I'm serious Jonny. This isn't healthy.

JONNY

Must be nice to know everything. You major in psychology now?

MARY-ANNE

Please tell me you woke up and wanted to see what it'd be like to be an asshole for a day/ because I can't deal with this.

JONNY

/You really can be a know it all bitch. I don't need-

A beat. Fucking yikes.

MARY-ANNE

What did you just call me?

JONNY

Wait. I didn't mean it. I'm just upset-

MARY-ANNE

That's real nice.

JONNY

No! I can explain-

MARY-ANNE

Here I was, thinking you were alright. And you go and say that.

JONNY

I'm sorry! I'd never seriously call you that.

MARY-ANNE

You just did. So.

Bye.

MARY-ANNE does not move.

JONNY goes away.

We're gonna leave him alone for a little while. MARY-ANNE gets a spotlight.

MARY-ANNE

You know, it's funny. I told myself today was gonna be a good day.

I told myself this, in spite of waking up late and missing breakfast.

I told myself this, in spite of walking out to the same cat-calls on my way to class.

Nice ass!

Damn girl, where are you going so fast??

Hey! Wait a minute! What, you're too good for me?? Stuck up bitch.

Babe! Babe!!! Smile.

Because that's how it goes, right?

But so far it's just another day, so there's still a chance.

I took tedious notes from my professors and proofread two papers.

I tamed flames in me when I read more news on the combustion of our failing systems.

I reserved rivers of tears as my first paper of the year came back with a bad grade.

But these are bumps in the road.

Blips that fail to acknowledge my upward trend.

Pretend like I'm not going to make it out my parents' house and be a lawyer.

Pretend like I'm going to let these pre-pubescent, punk ass men crawl under my skin.

When you know in actuality, I'm still here.

Holding it down.

I've gone with no lunch so I could eat books like they were snacks.

Spent my time off getting ready for next week's tests-

Don't ask me if I'm stressed. Please.

My bones might ache from marching forward through school.
My brain may collapse from the debts that destroy my wallet.
But my body burns bright because I breeze through this like it's easy.

Love can lead the way, right? Love myself.
Love the world around me.
Something's gotta give.
Right?

I told myself today was going to be a good day.
And that boy from the shop would greet me with his nice face.
And maybe we'd have a laugh and his dorky ass would ask me out.
And maybe we would kiss and I could teach him what heaven's about.

So imagine-
how the fuck I felt-
when out the blue this boy loses his mind.
And he's just like every scrub that loves to be a
Waste.
Of.
My.
Time.

He can go on and on about the world screwing him over.
But he can't see how others are getting fucked.

See, it really is funny.
I told myself today was going to be a good day.

INTERLUDE

We find THEE EMCEE, slumped over.

THE ENSEMBLE tries to poke and prod at him- they want another verse!

But no matter what they try, they can't get him to bounce back.

Eventually they give up.

Something sinister and cold plays.

THEE EMCEE loses his old demeanor and puts on a front.

Something is very off about his performance.

There are pauses and stutters.

Lines can be repeated, glitched, taken out of order.

THEE EMCEE

Let's get it. This here's light work.

Yea. I said it's light work/

This here's light work/

...

[Verse:]

I fucks with goals that'll make me gold/

Don't need nobody but my own, 'til I'm on top of a throne/

...

Maybe you'll see me on TV and even wanna be me/

Leave me out in a jungle, I make hunting look easy/

...

I got a plan. First I'll get me a job/

Progress up the ranks 'til I own my own shop/

...

Build a conglomerate. I'mma get. everything/

Nothing is free. Gotta prosper by any means/

...

I'll find the gods sitting up on Olympus/

And build a structure much bigger so they will look up and witness/

A self-made man or a self-made monster-

...

A self-

...

Ah...?

*THEE EMCEE experiences disruptions.
Technical difficulties.*

*THE ENSEMBLE step up to him.
They try to pull him back into it.
He can't do it.
They knock him over.*

THEE EMCEE gets up, trying to lash out with a verse.

But there's a problem: he has no voice anymore.

The music's stopped.

*THEE EMCEE starts vanishing,
disappearing from the world until we are left with just JONNY,
confused and dulled.
A shell.*

EVERYDAY I'M HUSTLING (PLEASE HIRE ME)

We find JONNY faced with three people waiting to interview him at three different stations.

Each of them has on their best "WE LOVE PEOPLE!" mask.

JONNY approaches one of them with a very fake performance of confidence.

JONNY

Hi! It's nice to meet you!

INTERVIEWER #1

HELLO! THE PLEASURE'S ALL MINE.

JONNY

I appreciate that. Now then, the reason why I'm here: I think I'd be a great addition to your company.

INTERVIEWER #1

YOU'RE CONFIDENT! I LIKE THAT! WE LOVE BRINGING IN NEW FACES WHO ARE READY TO HELP IMPROVE OUR TEAM!

JONNY

Thank you. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER #1

NOW THEN. LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR RESUME.

JONNY

Right!

INTERVIEWER #1

...

JONNY

...

INTERVIEWER #1

FORGIVE ME FOR ASKING BUT. WELL. IS THIS IT?

JONNY

As you can see I've had a lot of experience working in a tight-knit team. And I'm versatile! I handled multiple responsibilities at my position-

INTERVIEWER #1

RIGHT. AT A DONUT SHOP. AND YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION IS HIGH SCHOOL?

JONNY

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER #1

AH. ARE YOU PERHAPS INTERESTED IN A PART-TIME POSITION? YOU KNOW, BECAUSE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME WORK WHILE YOU TAKE CLASSES AND FILL UP CREDITS?

JONNY

Actually I'm not taking any college courses right now.

INTERVIEWER #1

AH. MY MISTAKE. NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT.

JONNY

Please, hear me out. I'm the kind of person who can bring a can-do attitude, a high energy work ethic, and a bit of levity into any work environment. I can be the complementary piece to your team that brings you to new heights! I am capable and ready to do whatever it takes to show you that I can become an essential part of your company.

INTERVIEWER #1

...

JONNY

...

INTERVIEWER #1

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!!! WE'LL CALL YOU IF WE WANT TO DO A FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW OR AN ORIENTATION. BUT DO NOT LET THAT DETER YOU FROM ANY OTHER JOBS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

JONNY

Sure?

INTERVIEWER #1

NO. REALLY. YEAH. SO SORRY! I'M IN A BIT OF A RUSH. HAVE A NICE DAY!

INTERVIEWER #1 ushers JONNY out in the most passive-aggressive manner ever.

JONNY wanders into another space.

INTERVIEWER #2 is a computer with a job application.

INTERVIEWER #2

Thank you for applying to our company! Please carefully complete the questions provided below.

JONNY

Okay. This is easy. Let's see.

INTERVIEWER #2

If a customer approaches you with a complaint that they have not received service and/or assistance in a timely manner and notes that other customers seem to be attended to before him, how would you respond? Would you: A.) Assure the customer that he will be attended to as soon as possible. B.) Personally drop your current task and assist the unhappy customer. C.) Politely inform the customer that you are trying your best and will get someone else to assist him. D.) Have the customer speak with a manager so that they can figure out why this problem happened.

JONNY

Um. What?

INTERVIEWER #2

If you notice a co-worker consistently spending more time than allowed on their break, how would you handle the situation? A.) Directly confront the co-worker in a civil manner and inform them that they should not be taking more time than allowed for their breaks. B.) Inform other co-workers on your shift so that you can all figure out how to address your rule-breaking co-worker. C.) Alert the manager because the manager should be responsible for monitoring when employees go on and off of their breaks. D.) Keep to yourself. Maybe the co-worker just made an honest mistake today.

JONNY

Is there a correct answer here?

INTERVIEWER #2

Now that you've reached the end of the questionnaire, please complete the optional essay prompts below to give us a clearer picture of you as a person and what kind of values you have. Each essay is limited to 2000 characters.

JONNY

Is this really necessary-

INTERVIEWER #2

Please tell us all of the information of your previous employer including their name, the name of the business, their phone number, their street address, whether we can call them as a reference or not, your position at their business, and a brief description of your responsibilities with the company.

JONNY

Oh for fucks sake. Anything else??

INTERVIEWER #2

Please provide at least three references, preferably with-

JONNY

LOGGING OFF NOW.

*JONNY goes off in a huff out of INTERVIEWER #2's space.
He finally collapses in front of INTERVIEWER #3.*

INTERVIEWER #3

So you want some work huh? Can you do full-time? Possibly over-time?

JONNY

Yes.

INTERVIEWER #3

Can you start right away?

JONNY

Yes.

INTERVIEWER #3

Are you able to comfortably lift up to 50 pounds if necessary?

JONNY

Yes.

INTERVIEWER #3

Are you okay with having to stand and bend over-bend down for long periods of time, up to 8 hours per shift?

JONNY

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER #3

Do you have reliable transportation to get to work every day?

JONNY

N-

INTERVIEWER #3

...

JONNY

...

JONNY

Yes.

INTERVIEWER #3

Great. You can start tomorrow. One last question.

JONNY

What is it?

INTERVIEWER #3

What made you decide to apply for a job in a factory?

JONNY

It's a good place and an opportunity for me.

INTERVIEWER #3

Sure.

And with that: a rickety, winding, repetitious instrumental begins.

AVERAGE JOE AIN'T ONE TO #S%! WITH

THE ENSEMBLE becomes FACTORY WORKERS.

*They fall into an assembly line,
going through the motions of work over and over.*

There is a constricting atmosphere here.

*JONNY slowly falls in line and begins his work.
Eventually he is a near identical cog.*

JOE, a co-worker with infectious energy, enters.

*He joins the line but he is free to weave through it without being bogged down by any
kind of restraints. He goes about his business until he sees a new face: JONNY.*

*JOE goes in for a conversation with JONNY.
The rest of the WORKERS stay static, going through the motions of another long-ass day.*

JOE

Yo!

JONNY

Huh?

JOE

Yo! I've never seen you around here before. You must be new. I'm Joe.

JONNY

Jonny.

JOE

Nice to meet you. We could use a fresh face or two.

JONNY

Yeah. I guess. Nice to meet you.

JOE

This place takes some getting used to. Time don't work right here.

JONNY

Time? Break isn't until 12:30 I thought.

JOE

...

JONNY

...

JOE

Tough day huh? Where you from?

JONNY

I live a few blocks over kind of.

JOE

Word? That's crazy 'cause I live pretty close by too. Shit we could be neighbors for all we know. Matter fact I feel like I've seen you around.

JONNY

That makes sense. Wouldn't surprise me, I grew up around here.

JOE

A local product! That's what I'm talking 'bout. Yo, you ever been to that club downtown? Fiction? You know, that real laid back place with all the dope music. Lots of Hip-Hop.

JONNY

Shit, once. It was pretty cool. Why?

JOE

I can't put my finger on it, but you look like you got good taste. Like you know what's up.

JONNY

I guess.

JOE

...

JONNY

...

JOE

C'mon man you've gotta keep the ball rolling.

JONNY

Okay. Uh. What's your favorite sport?

JOE

Tennis!

JONNY

I don't watch Tennis.

JOE

...

JONNY

...

JOE

That's fine. Sports talk can turn into some bullshit anyway. What kind of hobbies you into?

JONNY

I dunno. I'm blanking out right now man.

JOE

Who are you fooling? You're human! You've gotta have something you enjoy doing. Otherwise there'd be no point in carrying on.

JONNY

There's been a lot going on lately okay. All I really get to do is chill and watch TV. Maybe go out for a run after work.

JOE

Man I hear you, getting a run in after a long day is nice.

JONNY

What about you?

JOE

Me? I love to eat. Watch all sorts of old movies too. I love to spend my days off with good people. Catch some drinks and share stories. Most important though, I got a passion for writing.

JONNY

You're a writer?

JOE

Hell yeah. I've got so many thoughts to process any given day it's only natural I spill 'em out through a pen.

JONNY

...

JOE

...

JONNY

I used to write.

JOE

Oh word? Like poetry? Stories?

JONNY

Sorta. I used to write Hip-Hop stuff.

JOE

Man, nobody ever finishes scratching that itch once you get it.

JONNY

I don't know. My life is a mess lately. I don't have the time when there's so much to worry about.

JOE

You naive, dog.

JONNY

What?

JOE

Nobody can just work work work forever without releasing some of that tension. It builds in your joints. All work and no play makes...man, you know how it goes.

JONNY

I'm grown up now. I can't play or relax when I've gotta focus on myself. It might be dull or whatever but right now I don't got time for anything or anybody.

JOE

Man life don't work like that. What about when it's two in the morning and you can't sleep? When your mind drifts and you reflect on every single choice you've ever made? When you have one day off and all you can manage to do is sleep and forget about existing? That's no comfort.

JONNY

...

JOE

...

JONNY

Let's get back to work.

JOE

Hold up, hold up.

JONNY

I just wanna get this stuff done and go home.

JOE

Yo it's okay. Relax a little.

JONNY

Life is easier if you forget everything and stay focused.

JOE

You alright?

JONNY

I just wanna bust my ass here, go home, fall asleep, and climb back into my dreams.

JOE

Dreams are nice but they ain't reality.

JONNY

I just wanna remember a time where being happy wasn't so fucking hard.

JOE

When was the last time you were happy?

JONNY

I used to write Hip-Hop songs.

JOE

Then go back to that.

JONNY

I can't! All this struggling? I gotta tap out. It's easier to do this. I don't have to think while doing this.

JOE

Don't get lost now.

JONNY

If I find a system that keeps me safe and keeps me going then I'm taking it.

JOE

Nah! Don't let this break you down. How can you be down with Hip-Hop if you ain't a fighter?

JONNY

But what can I do? Where can I go?

JOE

Stop for a second. You still love Hip-Hop right? The beats you nod your head to? The rhymes?
The stories.

JONNY

I do man. I do! It's the fucking best.

JOE

Then listen to me.

*Something fierce and defiant with a hint of boom-bap pierces through the air.
THE WORKERS gradually gather around as JOE digs into his soul to perform.*

JONNY is shook.

JONNY

What's going on?

JOE

Listen to me...

Now...

Now...

[Verse:]

RIGHT NOW/

The moment is here/

All the players acting hard, none of y'all on my tier/

I appear like a comet, before y'all know it/

I crush ya atmosphere. I'm a militant poet/

I'm warmed up now.

...

We've been playing the same game for years/

When you born in the USA, it's like this/

Everybody tells you the world is for the taking/

Make no mistake, that shit is the basis/

They ingrained us with predetermined paths/

So you stay in line and things go as planned/

I remember growing up, the game told me/

Be a rapper or an actor, or an athlete/

Tragedy: I was stuck in tunnel vision/
I lived my life through scenes on television/
The Revolution won't be televised/
Can't dispute this. Our childhood was lies/
And I'm a statistic/

...

Listen to me now/
Believe me later on/
The brands in your life, will grip your soul/
I'm talkin' symbols, Nike and adidas/
I'm talkin' bullshit, and we all need it/
They want your soul, 'cause your life's their profit/
Got you thinkin' pip-dreams are the only option/
They put your focus on the clouds in the sky/
Then shackle up your ankles and control your life/

[Hook/Breakdown:]

YEAH. STAND UP!
PUT YOUR FUCKING HANDS UP!
KNOW THAT YOU FEEL IT.
KNOW YOU HEAR ME.

KICK IN THE DOOR AND SCUFF UP YOUR SNEAKERS-
BREAK YOUR TV AND MAKE YOU SEE ME!

YEAH. STAND UP!
PUT YOUR FUCKING HANDS UP!
KNOW THAT YOU FEEL IT.
KNOW YOU HEAR ME.

THESE WORDS OF MINE, GONNA BROADCAST CLEARLY!
FUCK YOUR DIAMONDS AND THOSE NECKLACES-
I'VE GOT SOUL, SO YOU KNOW I'LL NEVER BREAK AGAIN.

[Verse:]

Now I know what you're wondering: who is they?/
They, are everything influencing today/
Like. Product placement in all of your shows/
Or mainstream labels that big suits own/

Your favorite sports, and the fame you seek/
Or how a kiss begins because of jewelry/
Ain't no fool in me. But my time is gone/
So I write this in hopes the fight stays strong/
I make a paycheck near minimum wage/
So how the fuck you gone tell me to waste it away/
'Cause the heart is where I come from/
Fuck the income/
In comes change in my life again/
When I try to understand why I bought some shit/
Now the problem is, it's so fun to pretend/
When somebody makes it big, shit, I wanna be them/
It gets worse, I still hurt, from this work/
Media convinced kings that they wanna be pawns/
While the pawns still played in the system's palms/
Shit the storm's too calm. We trying to live/
All I hope's that this bullshit won't get the kids/

[Break it down:]

YEAH! STAND UP!
PUT YOUR FUCKING HANDS UP!
TELL ME IF YOU FEEL IT.
I KNOW YOU HEAR ME!

THESE WORDS OF MINE GONNA BROADCAST CLEARLY!

FUCK YOUR DIAMONDS AND THOSE NECKLACES-
I'VE GOT SOUL, SO YOU KNOW I'LL NEVER BREAK AGAIN!

I SAID FUCK YOUR DIAMONDS AND THOSE NECKLACES-
I'VE GOT SOUL, SO YOU KNOW I'LL NEVER BREAK AGAIN!

I SAID I'M-
PAID IN FULL, GOT HEART WITHIN.
THIS THAT LEGACY FROM KENDRICK
TO RAKIM.

I'MMA FUCK THIS SYSTEM WHEN MY RAP BEGINS
I'M PROUD TO SPIT.

RAISE POWER WITH MY FIST!

SO FUCK YOUR DIAMONDS AND THOSE NECKLACES-
I'VE GOT SOUL, SO YOU KNOW I'LL NEVER BREAK AGAIN.

I'VE GOT WHAT? (WHAT?)
I SAID I'VE GOT SOUL!
I SAID I GOT WHAT? (WHAT!)

Man, I still got soul.

BAM!
The WORKERS are live and erupt in applause. It's surreal.
But this is not a dream or imagination.
JONNY is in awe.

WORKERS
YEAAAAAHHHH! (OOOOOOH!!!)

WORKER
I love when Joe gets on his shit!

WORKER
You've gotta do that more often.

WORKER
Fuck Drake. Forget everybody else- THIS THAT SHIT RIGHT HERE!

WORKER
That was incredible! (Hey, I kind of like Drake tho.)

WORKER
Who are the top five rappers of all time?

...

Joe-seph-Joe-seph-Joseph-Joseph-AND JOSEPH!

JONNY
That was unreal. We've gotta keep it going.

JOE

What's that now?

JONNY

There's still so much more to say. You already know! We can't stop now!

JONNY is transforming.

All of the charisma and passion of THEE EMCEE finds its way into JONNY's body.

JOE can see it.

JOE

Looks like you got something in there after all. *(to a WORKER)* Ayo start a beat!

Beatboxing ensues. It's fire.

A cypher begins. (oh shit)

JONNY

Alright. Hear me out.

...

All I wanted growing up was live a normal life/
Like maybe settle down one day and get a marriage right/
But most men, they strive for profits/
Take friends and toss 'em for the chance to move on up/
From, Middle America, dreams of living immaculate/
Fantasies of me, flying on my private jet/
And I confess, I fell through depths/
But see me rise like a phoenix now I'll hold my breath/

JOE

Okay! Okay I see you! Lemme see.

...

Now we in this for the long haul, hero's journey/
I fucks with progress, never here too early/
But see: even heroes will eventually die/
I pass words like myths, my legend stays alive/
And I'd touch the sky/
Reach from earth, to heaven/
I can't die/
My flow keeps my verse irreverent/

(Uh!)

Back to the present/
I'm standing proud/
My boy Jonny shining/
watch him blast you now!/

JONNY

Now!
Kick in the door, and I'm ready to fight/
Feel reborn in my body and I'm setting my sights/
You see, I observed/
Made my way through/
Unnerved, I made all my paid dues/
I'm just a person, trying to make sense/
Of how to stay sane while there's an IRS/
Keep all my spare change, I need it for debt/
I make millions at the same time, in my head/
I lost out to that, desire made it so hard/
Living the dream was my mental, but I miss my old job/
Caught up in a system and I suffer alone/
I know where I belong, now I feel like home/
My whole, life-long, dream was to be an icon/
I was so wrong, head twisted like a cyclone/
But growing takes light, and I see sunbeams/
The boy became a man, now I'm ready to jump free!/

The cypher ends.

JOE and JONNY dap up. The WORKERS are living for this.

JOE

My man. That was dope! You had some fire in there.

JONNY

Nah you killed it! I've never seen someone go off like that.

JOE

I appreciate the love.

JONNY

(to *WORKERS*) And you guys were nice with that beat! Where'd that come from?

WORKER

I've always had a hobby for it, never got a chance to use it.

WORKER

That's crazy. We need to do this more.

WORKER

Okay but we all know who the real queen of talent is right??

JONNY

Wait. You guys never get to show this stuff off? At all?

WORKER

Not really.

WORKER

Yeah. I feel like I'm always so busy that there's never a chance to find a place to perform.

JONNY

A place to perform.

JOE

What's up?

JONNY

There's something I need to do. How would you guys feel about doing this again? I have an idea.

END PART 2: STRUGGLE AND COME UPS

BEGIN PART 3: RECONCILIATION AND DONUTS

HUMBLE PIE DID THE BOY ALRIGHT

An instrumental full of nostalgia and new beginnings plays.

THE ENSEMBLE gets us out of the factory. THE DONUT SHOP pops back up into our lives. LESTER and NICK are doing....not a whole lot.

It's a slow day.

JONNY enters after a long journey.

LESTER

...

NICK

...

JONNY

Hey guys.

NICK

Look who's back.

LESTER

Hello.

JONNY

Shop's looking good. Not that it's ever different, it's great.

NICK

Man, miss me with this bullshit.

JONNY

You're right. Straight to the point then: I fucked up.

NICK

You're a genius.

LESTER

(to NICK) Easy.

You did. So what brings you back?

JONNY

I'm here to apologize. I love this place. I miss you guys.

NICK

Lester we need to get back to work don't we?

LESTER

I understand that, but what you did wasn't so simple to brush off.

JONNY

I know. I was so caught up in my head I didn't stop and think at all. You put up with a lot, Old Man.

LESTER

You never are the type to listen the first time around. I knew you'd be back.

JONNY

Yeah. I don't know how you're so patient.

LESTER

I've dealt with enough egos and hotheads to last a lifetime. You're as easy to read as they come.

JONNY

And I really-

LESTER

Yep. You fucked up.

JONNY

...

LESTER

...

JONNY

I'm sorry Lester. You've done so much. I can't even imagine what you had to go through to build this place up. And you were good enough to bring in a kid like me, flaws and all. I wouldn't be here right now if it wasn't for you.

LESTER

Oh I know. But it is nice to hear from time to time. That respect has been a bit overdue, Jonny. You've got my attention.

JONNY

Lester, can I come back? I want to help with this foundation you've built. I want to learn from you and be someone better. Please.

LESTER

...

JONNY

...

LESTER

Maybe.

NICK

What! Lester, nah! He can't just disrespect us and waltz in like a-

LESTER

But you can't walk in here without making amends.

NICK

(Are you kidding me.)

JONNY

I understand.

LESTER

Got anything in mind?

NICK

This oughta be good.

JONNY

I do. Just yesterday, I got this idea to start something new here.

LESTER

So what is it?

JONNY

...

What if we started an open mic night?

NICK

Selfish ass-

JONNY

I could get the word out and help find people to perform. It'd be something for everybody! You, the customers, locals, artists- it could be like a communal thing.

LESTER

I like it, that's not a bad idea at all. How would you set it up?

JONNY

Let's see. We could make special donuts for the open mic. You could be the face of it as the MC! I can work with Nick handing out refreshments and setting up sound. We'd make sure everything's all set while everybody kicks back and enjoys the show-

NICK

That's real swell but what makes you think I want anything to do with that?

JONNY

Nick, look. I'm sorry. I was out of control. You were spot on- I am damn sensitive.

NICK

That doesn't change that you're still full of it if you think this open mic idea is for anyone but yourself.

JONNY

Let me prove it to you.

LESTER

I'm willing to give it a chance.

NICK

He's been all talk Lester. Why should we believe him? He couldn't find anything good to do once he left and now he's desperate.

JONNY

I said some messed up things. It all came from a bad place. I was jealous of everybody and got pissed off. Let me handle putting this together and you can judge if I'm for real or not.

NICK

...

JONNY

...

NICK

Fine. But this is on you.

JONNY

Thanks Nick. Just wait and you'll see.

NICK

Whatever.

JONNY

And Old Man, again, I'm sorry for-

LESTER

That's enough now. I heard you the first time. The more you go off apologizing over and over when you know you messed up, the less it matters. Let's see what you've got. Forget all this talking.

JONNY

That's some good advice.

LESTER

...

JONNY

...

LESTER

Looks like you've got some labor ahead of you.

JONNY

Yeah. No better time to start than now.

*JONNY, NICK, and LESTER share a beat.
An instrumental sails through the air-
it sounds like the soundtrack of come ups and brighter days.*

JONNY launches into action.

He finds JOE and the WORKERS. He spreads word of the open mic night.

We see him running around putting flyers everywhere.

He's making sure EVERYBODY knows what's going down.

As JONNY flies around, MARY-ANNE happens to see a flyer.

Or maybe someone mentions the open mic to her in passing.

~To be continued~

DONUTS BY THE DOZEN: OPEN MIC NIGHT

JONNY sets THE DONUT SHOP up for the open mic night.

The space opens up towards the audience, who are now part of the shop.

As LESTER tidies up the stage, JONNY gets donuts and bottles of water.

He begins handing them out to the audience.

NICK gives in and helps out too.

JOE and THE ENSEMBLE take a seat with the audience up front.

MARY-ANNE enters and comes across JONNY as he hands out refreshments.

The world freezes. A collective breath.

Of course we take a beat for this!

MARY-ANNE

This all looks pretty fun.

JONNY

Hey. Yeah. I'm sorry for everything.

MARY-ANNE

Oh I know. Doesn't change much.

JONNY

If you don't wanna talk anymore I understand.

MARY-ANNE

I have to think on it. You've got a lot going on.

JONNY

Yeah. I'm working on it.

MARY-ANNE

...

JONNY

...

MARY-ANNE moves on and finds a seat. LESTER begins the event.

LESTER

Hello everybody. How are you all doing tonight?

Come on now, I said how y'all doing?!

I'd like to thank each of you for coming out.

Never thought I'd be hosting one of these things, but here I am.

Feels like I need a beret.

We've got a whole lot of performers lined up for you.

I think you're in for something special.

So sit back, grab a donut, have a drink, and enjoy the show.

And now we kick off open mic night!

Slots of time should be given to every member of THE ENSEMBLE to perform.

LESTER handles introducing each member as they come on stage.

Actors in THE ENSEMBLE can devise their performances based on skills or talents they have and give their characters unique names and personalities on stage, giving us little windows into the community of this world that we've only had a very limited look at.

The actor playing MARY-ANNE can decide to perform something as well, if she'd like.

JONNY is firmly in the background.

He's helping run sound.

He's handing out more refreshments.

He's doing the work behind the scenes to make this go as smoothly as possible.

When all of the performers have finished, LESTER is surprised to see NICK step up.

LESTER

Looks like Jonny's idea won you over.

NICK

Yeah yeah. Look lemme do something before I change my mind.

LESTER

Alright alright.

Everybody, we've got a surprise performance tonight.

Give it up for The Donut Shop's very own: Nick!*

**Like the other performers, the actor playing NICK can work with the company to devise his performance, along with a last name, if they want to add one. Even LESTER could do something if he's really feeling it. Once all of these characters have had their moments, JOE steps up as the final performer.*

LESTER

Let's see now. Looks like we're coming to a close everybody. We've got one last performer for you all. For our final performance of the night let's give it up for our man Joe Robinson. Give it up for Joe!

LESTER gives JOE the floor.

JOE

Thank you, thank you. What up y'all, thanks for the love. I'm gonna perform something I wrote last night off a little spark of inspiration. Hope y'all enjoy. Shoutout to my boy Jonny! I see you! Keep up the good work.

JONNY

(Shhhh, shhhh, he's gonna kill it just watch.)

JOE

[Verse:]

Now. Now, Now!

The moment is clear/

It's like the galaxy's aligned and I'm finally here/

I appear like a prophet as my voice rings out/

Like it was folklore, I spread by word of mouth/

Talking in tongues, my target is the youth of the slums/

They all got my love. I know it's getting harder for them/

The world can be so cold, but see if you got soul/

Keep it intact, the demons say their pockets are fat/

They old tricks, don't let them impede your path/

The path to make America, building needs to be done/

Call me a heretic, this country never been good/

From red lines in sand, to crows overhead/

There's a history of schemes, wanted black man dead/

But I ain't fret/

I'm here to give the rhythm a check/
What's the pulse? One-two, do you still got breath?/
Hip-Hop, still here, asking "where will it go?"/
Mainstream, world-wide, and we still want mo'/
Ever expanding, boom-bap universe, fuck a planet/
From turntables to hall of fame, we everlasting/

This the spirit I'm in, I'm still going strong/
Hip-Hop's in all of us, the culture carries on/
And I never feel down or alone/
'Cause the beat stays with me/
And this is a love poem.

JOE lets the final lines ring out.

JOE
Thank you. Much love y'all. Much love.

LESTER comes back up.

LESTER
Whooh! My goodness. Give it up one more time for Joe Robinson! That was some poetry in motion right there. Now unfortunately all good things do come to an end but we cannot begin to thank you enough for joining us tonight. Let's hear it for everybody that got up to perform, c'mon! Look forward to more of these in the future. For now though: You are all welcome to stick around.

We've got music. We've got food. We've got each other.
I think that's more than enough reason to be here.
Enjoy the night!

LESTER steps off the stage and Open Mic Night comes to a close. The party could just be beginning. The night could be ending. People might sit and chat for a while. It doesn't matter.

All that matters is that we all came together, here and now.

END OF PLAY