

SAY UNCLE
PILOT: "Purple Reign"

Written by

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INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: "POISON" by Bell Biv DeVoe

A man in his late 50's - dressed sharp as fuck in his Barney-purple suit - steps onto the dance floor. Not Barneys New York - we're talking that big ass purple dinosaur. Our guy looks like a barrel-chested grape soda can.

NINO (V.O.)
Everybody's got that one uncle. You usually call him just "Unc."

We meet stylin' and profilin' CHARLES "UNC" CRAIG (late 50's, Black and proud) - he points to the DJ.

UNC
That's my mutha fuckin' jam.

NINO (V.O.)
You can't tell him he isn't the Baron of the ball. Out there struttin' his outdated frat step show routine across the dance floor - all by his damn self.

Unc strikes a pose like an Egyptian god before stomping the floor three good times.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is the West Bank of New Orleans. The BEST Bank. We call it the 'Wank.' Yeah, so this banquet hall used to be a grocery store. Like everything else, it's changed.

Unc dances past a discolored wall where we can still make out where the word "PRODUCE" used to be in big block letters. The ghost of the letters, like the past, are faded into the paint.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's how we livin' down here.
(beat)
That's my Unc. He's Uncle Charles to you - better yet, Mr. Charles.

Unc's shiny eggplant-purple, alligator shoes glide over the yellowing linoleum tile.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Go ahead and laugh. I know we do.

All the "youngsters" vacate the dance floor and make way for the dinosaur of the family - in all his old man, big dick energy.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
At least we used to laugh at him.

Unc hits a perfect spin on the dance floor that would make Bell, Biv and DeVoe jealous.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You see that suit he's wearing --

INT. CHURCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

NINO (V.O.)
He wore that bad boy to my baptism.

Unc, in his purple suit, has both his hands raised in praise. His eyes are closed.

UNC
Thank ya, Jesus!

He slightly opens one eye.

We see a CHURCH WOMAN (50s, Black) shaking and gyrating with the spirit.

UNC (CONT'D)
Sista Sophia always doin' the most.
Can't nobody out-praise me.

Unc hits his famous Egyptian pose - in church. He even stomps three good times - this time, one for the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD BLEACHERS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

NINO (V.O.)
He wore it to my graduation.

Everyone claps politely. Everyone except --

UNC
(screaming and dancing)
Go 'head Neph-eeeeeeew!

He quickly looks over to his right - reacting to something we don't see.

UNC (CONT'D)
 Nah Nigga! You shut up.
 (beat)
 Come say that to my face.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Unc STOMPS us back into the party.

NINO (V.O.)
 He'll even wear that thing to my
funeral.

MUSIC UP: *"It's driving me outta my mind..."*

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But I've gotten way ahead of
 myself. We'll get there soon
 enough.

Unc dances over to a YOUNG LADY wearing an impossibly tight dress and winks.

UNC
 (signing loudly)
*"Never trust a big butt and a
 smile. That girl is poison."*

Unc dances past his nephew NINO EDMONDS (30, Biracial) who stands on the edge of the dance floor. Unc grabs the hand of NINO'S DATE and drags her onto the sad little makeshift disco.

Nino looks directly into camera and talks to us.

NINO
 (to us)
 Me? I'm Nino. I'm the biracial,
 bisexual, favorite nephew. By the
 way - not a lot of people know
 about that second part. Let's just
 keep that between us. Cool?

Unc takes off his purple jacket to reveal a lavender dress shirt - armpits moist as hell. The dark sweat rings tell the tale.

He tosses his suit jacket to Nino - who grabs it without breaking eye contact with us.

NINO (CONT'D)

(to us)

The places I've seen that loud ass purple suit will tell you everything you need to know about Unc.

(beat)

He'll set you straight, loan you money, hit on your girlfriend and lead the prayer - all in that same shitty suit - all on the same shitty day.

Unc returns Nino's date before pulling his other nephew onto the floor.

BRYSON EDMONDS (25, Black) resists until Unc yanks harder.

Bryson, a book-smart, sometimes-by-the-book social activist geek, adjusts his glasses as he reluctantly dances with Unc.

Nino walks next to them - again talking straight to us.

NINO (CONT'D)

(to us)

He's the only one who can get my brother, Bryson, to loosen up - at all. It's the magic of the purple suit.

(beat)

But damn. You need to see his other super powers.

MUSIC UP: *"Bell Biv DeVoe. Now ya know. Yo slick, blow."*

MUSIC HARD CUT

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Unc stands at an old, metal oil barrel that has been transformed into a Louisiana barbecue pit.

The pit is rusted and well seasoned - a mixture of tetanus and meat tenderizer. We can still see the welding marks of melted and re-fused metal.

Unc's in his too-long shorts and too-tight polo this time. He raises the lid with a SQUEAK and smoke billows out - filling the frame.

NINO (V.O.)

He'll be out here burning the burgers - chicken still raw as hell, drinking a beer, talking you through fixin' your car - all while shooin' mosquitoes away from his ashy ass ankles.

As the smoke clears we see Nino standing next to Unc and the barbecue pit.

Nino fans smoke with a paper plate and coughs before he talks to us again --

NINO

(to us)

But he's always ready with some advice - almost always something he picked up from an old song.

Unc puts a charcoal-black burger on Nino's plate - followed by two slices of white bread.

UNC

Look, lil' mutha fucka. Don't turn your nose up to good ol' white bread. Me and your momma grew up on that.

NINO

(to us)

Here it comes.

UNC

"I give to the needy and not the greedy."

NINO

Unc, isn't that from an En Vogue song?

UNC

I said what the hell I said.

He plops a burger on Bryson's plate.

BRYSON

You know I'm vegetarian now.

Unc takes the burger back before gently and mockingly placing just the plain white bread on Bryson's lonely paper plate.

UNC

There. Vegetarian.

MUSIC CUE: "My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It) by En Vogue

MUSIC UP: "And now it's time for a breakdown. Never gonna get it, never gonna get it, never gonna get it, never gonna get it, never gonna get it, never gonna get it, never gonna get it, never gonna get it. Woo woo woo woo.

MUSIC HARD CUT

CUT TO:

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Nino sits on a sofa in a suit and tie - a regular black suit. He stares out into nothingness. He hasn't even noticed us yet.

Bryson sits on the other side of him - through his glasses we can see tears.

Unc stands in front of the brothers in his purple suit.

NINO (V.O.)

We're kinda his boys now. He has a daughter that doesn't talk to him and a son that we don't talk about. So, it's just us.

Unc takes off the jacket and throws it over his arm as he sits between Nino and Bryson - making them slide over as he forces his large frame into the empty space.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yeah, just us. Especially after Momma died.

Bryson begins to sob. Unc doesn't say a word and simply puts an arm around Bryson's neck pulling him in close.

Nino finally notices us.

NINO

(to us)

That's our guy.

Unc finally throws his arm around Nino and pulls him into the embrace - Nino begins crying too.

UNC

Boys, you've just gotta take with you the memories. To be your sunshine after the rain.

Nino and Bryson burst out laughing. Unc doesn't budge - he said what the hell he said.

BRYSON
What else you got?

NINO
Yeah, something better than the
most overplayed Boyz II Men song
ever.

UNC
She loved you boys more than life
itself. Her poor little body just
couldn't take this horrible ol'
world anymore. But, goddamn it -
you know she's up there buggin' the
shit outta the Big Guy - making
sure you two get all the blessings.

Bryson nods through tears.

NINO
(to us)
He's at his best when he's just
himself - even though he doesn't
think he's worth much.
(beat)
I think he just wants things to go
back to the way they used to be -
or at least slow down.

MUSIC CUE: *"It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday"* - by
Boyz II Men

MUSIC UP: *"It's so hard to say goodbye to..."*

Nino looks at us with utter annoyance.

NINO (CONT'D)
(to us)
No!

MUSIC HARD STOP MID-SENTENCE.

NINO (CONT'D)
Seriously, play something else.

CUT TO TITLE CARD:

TITLE CARD: "SAY UNCLE"

Pre-lap the BUZZ of hair clippers and then...

UNC
 (under title card)
 Carly ain't music.

CUT TO:

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

A pair of clippers barely touch the top of Unc's modern day low fro - they do little to no work at all. Unc is there out of habit - not necessity.

JT (O.S.)
 Who is Carly?

UNC
 Carly B. You know - That's some wet ass pussy.

JT (O.S.)
 Mr. Charles, whatcha know about that?

UNC
 What? You don't think I know about that WAP? I was 'bout that WAP before you were thought of.

JT (O.S.)
 Anyway - It's Cardi B. Like Bacardi. I know you know Bacardi.

Unc wrinkles his nose as his brow folds in thought.

UNC
 Look Young Blood, you just worry about getting my head shaped up.

The barber, JT (late 20s, Black), continues giving the imaginary haircut. He's street preppy, thug love coated in sweet milk chocolate.

JT
 (under his breath)
 Clippers have barely touched that hair in 20 years.

UNC
 What's that?

BERNARD (O.S.)

He said you've had the same haircut
since Bobby Brown was in New
Edition.

BERNARD (50s, Black), the owner of the barbershop, is busy cutting Nino's hair right next to JT and Unc. He and Unc exchange glances - a stare down.

Bernard's as portly as Unc - that old man weight. Someone left out the pepper in what he thinks is his salt and pepper hair.

The silent battle of wills, between Bernard and Unc, is quickly broken up with the JINGLE of a bell - signaling someone walking through the front door.

The foursome quickly look to the door as a little boy, MIKAH (8, biracial) runs into the barbershop as the door slams shut in a man's face behind him.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Mikah! Hold the door.

MIKAH

Sorry, Unc.

NINO

(to us)

Don't look at me like that. I told
ya'll we all got an "Unc."

Mikah runs back to the door and opens it to reveal, JASON NEAL (30, white), who has EVIE (1-ish, biracial) on his hip.

Jason's a full-blown pretty boy - real pretty - model pretty.

NINO (CONT'D)

(to us)

Hold on to your hairpiece. It's
'bout to get heavy.

JASON

Mr. Charles.

(beat)

We should have called first.

MIKAH

Nino!

Mikah runs over and pounds fists with Nino.

NINO
 What's up lil' man? Look how big
 you're gettin'.

Mikah notices Unc and the smile melts from his face.

MIKAH
 Hi, Mr. Charles.

UNC
 Michael.
 (beat)
 Hello.

MIKAH
 (sheepishly)
 Mikah. With a K and an H. No L.

Mikah tests the waters with a smile.

UNC
 (to JT)
 You 'bout done? Got places to be.
 People to see.

Mikah's smile transforms as he bites his bottom lip - his
 feelings clearly hurt.

JASON
 Bud, do you want me to stay with
 you?

MIKAH
 I'm good. I'm 8 - almost a
 teenager.

JASON
 Nino, are you going to be here a
 while?

NINO
 I can stick around. It's not
 everyday that I get to talk to an
 almost-teenager. I need some advice
 on my love life.

At the words "love life," JT runs his clippers up on Unc's
 ear - a spot of blood appears.

JT
 Shit. I'm sorry.

UNC
 I need a new barbershop.

JT takes the smock off Unc, shaking the loose hair to the floor - there's none. Unc looks exactly the same way he did when he sat down - minus a little flesh from his ear.

UNC (CONT'D)

You cut the shit outta me. I'll be damned if I'm payin'.

JT looks over to Bernard who just shrugs.

JT

Ya'll fight like Ike and Tina, but ya'll 'bout what-n-what with that stinginess.

UNC

I'm doing you a favor. "Mo' money, mo' problems."

Nino looks at us, shaking his head, before --

NINO

(whispering to us)
Don't play the song. This is serious.

Unc dusts himself off and walks toward the door where he and Jason stand next to each other awkwardly.

UNC

I'm tellin' ya'll. I'm not coming back.

BERNARD

Nigga, you know we're the last barbershop in the neighborhood.

Unc locks eyes with Jason - staring straight into his crystal blues.

UNC

Yeah. Everything's been gentrified. They take over everything.

Jason swallows hard as little Evie reaches for Unc.

JASON

No, Evie. Don't do that.

UNC

Evie, huh?

JASON
Short for Evelyn. We named her
after Miss Evelyn.

UNC
Take everything.

The bell on the door JINGLES again as Unc opens it and disappears onto the street.

JASON
Mikah, call me when you're ready.
(beat)
Thanks, Nino.

More JINGLING as Jason leaves the barbershop.

EXT. BARBERSHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jason stands outside the door - shaken from his unexpected encounter.

JASON
Hey Siri - call Neeley

Jason watches Unc walk down the sidewalk as he perches the phone precariously between his shoulder and his ear.

Unc rubs his lower back as he rounds the corner.

NEELEY
(from phone)
I'm about to jump into a
presentation. Everything good?

JASON
Don't get mad.

NEELEY
(from phone - mad anyways)
What did you do?

JASON
Forgot to call ahead before coming
to your uncle's barbershop. To make
sure it was clear.

NEELEY
(on phone)
Fuck. Jason, come on.

JASON
 I know. I know.
 (beat)
 Your dad was here.

INT. NEELEY'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

NEELEY CRAIG-NEAL (30s, Black) stands staring at her cellphone on her desk like its a viper ready to strike.

She's a beast in the boardroom, the gym and in marriage.

JASON
 (from phone speaker)
 Baby?

NEELEY
 I'm here. What did he say?

JASON
 (from speaker)
 He called Mikah, "Michael."
 (beat)
 Met Evie.

NEELEY
 Shit. He didn't even know we had another kid.

EXT. BARBERSHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

JASON
 Maybe it's for the best - divine intervention?

NEELEY
 (from phone)
 That's ridiculous. That's why you're the stay-at-home dick. Dad. Stay-at-home Dad.

Jason flinches.

NINO (V.O.)
 That joke hit a little too close to home for the stay-at-home dick.

JASON
 Nino's staying with Mikah. I'm taking Evie to a play date and I'm off to the gym.

NEELEY
 (from phone)
 Fine. Just call ahead next time.
 (beat)
 I really got to run to this
 meeting.

JASON
 Love you.

The phone clicks.

MUSIC CUE: "MO' MONEY MO' PROBLEMS" - by Notorious B.I.G,
 Mase & Diddy

MUSIC UP: "I don't know what they want from me. It's like the
 more money we come across, the more problems we see."

The song plays as we head back into--

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Nino hands Bernard money before making his way over to JT -
 extending a few bills.

JT
 You don't need to do that.

NINO
 I want to. Unc shouldn't be like
 that.

As JT takes the money, the tips of his finger and Nino's
 fingers brush gently. It's end-of-the-night-at-the-bar levels
 of sensual.

JT
 Thank you.

MUSIC UP: "I'm... coming... out. I'm coming."

NINO
 (to us)
 Mind ya business.

MUSIC HARD CUT

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Neeley stands in front of a giant flat screen with a pie
 chart showing annual sales.

The eyes of one junior executive, CARTER (late 20s, Black dark chocolate god), drift from the pie chart to Neeley's cake - framed perfectly in her business suit. She doesn't notice. She actually doesn't notice much in this moment.

SENIOR EXEC

Neeley?

(beat)

Neeley - you with us?

NEELEY

I'm sorry. I just had a brilliant idea for the campaign. Let me run to my office and make a quick call to set something up.

Carter smiles and Neeley finally notices him noticing her - she doesn't mind at all.

Heels CLICK on the floor as Neeley quickly runs from the room - pausing just a second to see if Carter is watching her leave. He is. She's still got it.

SENIOR EXEC

That's why I like her. Always with fresh new ideas. One of the best.

CARTER

The best.

INT. NEELEY'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Neeley darts into the office and dives for her phone. She scrolls to DEVIN and presses CALL.

She puts the phone on speaker as she reaches for a folder that says "THROWAWAY IDEAS."

The phone goes to voicemail after only one ring. Neely tenses in frustration - denied.

BLAZE

(outgoing voicemail message)

Greetings my beautiful souls. This is Blaze and I'm never too busy for you. May the Mother Spirit bless you until we speak again.

BEEP

NEELEY

Nigga - I know you didn't send me to voicemail. Devin, pick up the goddamn phone. Jason ran into Dad and he clearly disrespected Mikah - his only grandson.

Neeley takes a deep breath.

NEELEY (CONT'D)

Look, I could really use my big brother right now. I'll even call you Blaze. Call me.

(beat)

Mother Spirit or whatever blessings -- herbs -- sage -- all that. Call me.

(beat)

Please.

(beat)

Bye.

EXT. UNC'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Unc is mowing the grass in the savage Louisiana sun - sweat makes his low fro glisten like a Jheri curl.

He rubs his lower back and twists from the waist to stretch it out.

He almost doesn't notice the front door open as a woman, AMBER (21, super-white) bee bops onto the front porch with Bryson right behind her.

AMBER

Hieeee

UNC

(mocking)

Hieeee

Amber smiles an impossibly-big smile as she sashays over to Bryson's car. She has white-girl dreads and is wearing a Black Lives Matter t-shirt - that barely covers her midriff.

Bryson is right behind her.

BRYSON

(to Unc)

I told you I would cut the grass tomorrow.

UNC
 Never you mind that. Who is that
 white woman?

BRYSON
 Amber. My girlfriend. I told you
 about her.

UNC
 You didn't tell me she was one of
them.

BRYSON
 Times are changing, Unc.

UNC
 I done seen enough of the white
 devil to know things haven't
 changed that much.

BRYSON
 We'll talk about it when I get
 back. Amber has to get to work.

UNC
 At least she works.

BRYSON
 She's really smart - like Momma.
 You'd like her.

Nino's car pulls up just as Unc and Bryson are really getting
 going.

UNC
 Don't you dare compare that dry-
 ass, unseasoned chicken breast to
 my sister.

BRYSON
 Come on, Unc.

UNC
 God bless her soul.

NINO (O.S.)
 Yes, God bless her soul. What's
 going on? You two look way too
 fuckin' serious.

Bryson turns to see Nino.

BRYSON

Minister Farrakhan here is just plotting to save the world from the wicked white woman.

NINO

(to us)

Quick history lesson. Some of the most racist people in the world are old, Black men. But, they kinda earned it. They been gettin' shit on for a long fuckin' time and it hasn't let up. Don't let the Obama years fool ya.

Nino opens his mouth to say something else to us, but --

BRYSON

You get more and more racist the older you get.

UNC

I'm Black. I can't be racist.

BRYSON

You're senile now?

UNC

Like the good brother, Kevin Powell said, "Racism equals race plus power." I've got zero power. So, I can't be racist.

NINO

(to us)

That's Kevin from the first season of "The Real World" if you're keeping score.

BRYSON

Nino's Dad was white.

NINO

(to us)

Why did he bring that up?

(to Bryson)

Don't bring me into this.

UNC

The worst of the white devils. Where that mutha fucka at now?

NINO
 (to us or Unc or the
 Mother Spirit)
 Ouch

Nino turns to Unc - puts his I'm-about-to-make-a-point finger up in protest, but thinks better of it and turns right back to us.

NINO (CONT'D)
 (to us)
 I used to ask about my Dad all the time - white devil or not. Until Unc told me it made Mama sad - so, I quit.
 (beat)
 Then I just felt sad - really sad - all the time. But, better me than Momma. Right?

Bryson looks to Nino - concerned.

BRYSON
 You good?

UNC
 Nino's lil' high yella ass ain't never really had to feel the full weight of the world. Not like me and you, nigga.

BRYSON
 (to Nino)
 You just going to sit here and let him say that shit?

UNC
 He knows he's "Halfrican" American.
 (beat)
 I begged your Momma to let me name you. To give you the Blackest name at the time.

BRYSON
 Nino Brown. You named him after the villain from "New Jack City."

MUSIC CUE: "NEW JACK HUSTLER" by Ice-T

MUSIC UP: "I'd rather be a New Jack Hustler..."

UNC
 Man, Nino Brown was the real deal.
 (beat)
 "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Nino and Bryson just stare at each other in utter disbelief.

BRYSON
 I got to get Amber to work.
 (beat)
 Love ya, Unc.

They watch Bryson step into the driver's side of the car and Amber waves goodbye. Nino waves back - Unc doesn't budge.

UNC
 I lost my daughter to them and almost my sister.

NINO
 But, you wouldn't have me without them.

UNC
That, I can't argue.

Unc offers a smile - finally. He rubs his lower back again.

Nino notices blood on Unc's ear.

NINO
 That little love tap from the clippers the other day still hasn't healed?

UNC
 Musta opened it up again. Ain't nothin'.
 (beat)
 What brings you over anyway?

NINO
 Mikah was asking about you at the shop. He asked me why you hate him. I wanted to talk to you about maybe making some time to--

UNC
 Go get the weed eater and give me a hand.

NINO
 (to us)
 It was worth a try.
 (MORE)

NINO (CONT'D)

We lil' high yella folks got to stick together. Wasn't that long ago I was just as confused with my identity as Mikah.

Unc SNAPS his finger next to Nino's ear.

UNC

Wake up and go get the damn weed eater.

NINO

No can do. Got a date tonight.

MUSIC UP: *"I'd rather be a New Jack Hustler."*

MUSIC HARD CUT

CUT TO:

EXT. ALGIERS FERRY - NIGHT

Nino stands at the front of the ferry. He's dressed for his date. He cleans up nicely.

He looks out at the approaching New Orleans skyline wistfully.

The Mighty Mississippi GURGLES and SPLASHES below him.

NINO (V.O.)

I have a love/hate relationship with this place. With myself, too.

A LITTLE KID (5) runs past Nino.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When I was growing up, I couldn't wait to get away from The Wank. Move to the city. But, I stayed. My family needs me.

Water SPLASHES again.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now, I take the ferry as much as possible - especially when I need to calm down. Like tonight. First date anxiety on 100.

(beat)

This is my happy place - out here on the water.

(MORE)

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Somewhere between the safety of the
West Bank and the grit of the city.

A mist of Mississippi sprays Nino in his face. He smiles.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Like Unc, there's a song that I
like to quote, too.

NINO
"Down here, we're washed by the
water. Water can't wash us away."

FERRY MAN (O.S.)
I love that song.

Nino keeps looking out at the city.

NINO
Sorry, sir. I was just thinking out
loud.

FERRY MAN (50's, white) stands next to Nino at the railing.

FERRY MAN
With all the floods and change and
time - we don't drown, we rise.

NINO
(still looking forward)
Renewed - better than ever.

Nino turns his head to see the man - surprised to find him
standing there in all his whiteness. Nino's not having it.

NINO (CONT'D)
(to us)
What's he know about rising? This
man's Cristal. I'm Krystal Burger.
He's the problem.

FERRY MAN
I love it out here on the ferry.
Right here in the middle of the
Mississippi. Listening to stories
hiding in the current.
(beat)
These old waters have seen so much.
The debauchery of the Quarter. The
blood, tears and sweat of
generations. All of it washed into
here - and washed away.

NINO

(to us)

While he's right, what's this dude know about pain and blood? Talking to me like that? White people get super comfortable because I'm light skinned. I dress up a little and they think I'm one of them.

FERRY MAN

I just can't get over how much everything has changed.

NINO

I'd say. Used to be, you could enjoy the ferry in peace.

The Ferry Man looks a little hurt.

NINO (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to be rude, man. Just trying to enjoy the ride.

FERRY MAN

I understand. Have a good night. Hope you keep on rising.

As the Ferry Man walks away from Nino, there's another splash of water - the song of Old Man River punctuating the conversation.

The waters churn in the muddy river just like...

INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

The straw now stirring a Jack and Coke.

We find Nino in a sea of sharply dressed young professionals at a French Quarter speakeasy.

Nino sits quietly at a tiny round table sipping on his drink. There's another drink with melting ice sitting next to him.

Nino looks at the time on his phone: 9:50.

JT (O.S.)

Sorry I'm late. I had hell finding parking in the Quarter.

Nino looks up with a smile.

NINO

Tourist.

JT

Always tourist season. We're losing
the city.

JT pulls up a seat - his knee nestles right up to Nino's. It
takes everything for Nino not to lean over and kiss him.

JT (CONT'D)

I mean - who shows up late for a
first date?

NINO

(to us)

Can we have a little privacy? Watch
the performers.

A man walks up to the single microphone stand on the stage.

STAGE ANNOUNCER

My little angels. We've got a treat
for you tonight. One of our own
Crescent City mystic gurus - back
from Seattle. He's here to
enlighten and inspire and welcome
us to open our third eye.

NINO (O.S.)

Jesus - what is this bullshit?

JT (O.S.)

I don't know - sounds interesting.

STAGE ANNOUNCER

Please welcome... Blaze.

The crowd snaps their fingers as a Black man with long
dreads, who is dressed in a dashiki and army fatigue pants,
walks slowly on stage. He has a stool in his hands. It's
DEVIN "BLAZE" CRAIG (late 30s, Black).

BLAZE

Thank you.

Blaze sits down and stares out into the audience.

BLAZE (CONT'D)

May the Spirit Mother bless us
tonight.

JT leans over to Nino.

JT

What's a Spirit Mother?

NINO
Hell if I know.

Nino's eyes narrow. Something looks familiar about Blaze.

BLAZE
I'd like to start tonight with a
poem called "Purple."

Nino's third eye is opening up - quickly.

NINO
I think that's my cousin, Devin.
Unc's son.

JT
Mr. Charles has a son? I've never
heard him talk about him.

NINO
He doesn't.
(beat)
He kinda disowned him.

JT
Why? He marry a white woman?

JT chuckles - Nino doesn't budge.

NINO
Devin didn't do anything with
women.

JT
Oh
(beat)
Ohhhhh. Shit.

NINO
(to us)
Ya'll keeping up?

JT
Wanna get outta here?

NINO
Yeah.

JT takes out a bunch of bills and leaves them on the table under his glass. He and Nino rise to leave. Nino hides his face from his cousin.

BLAZE

Purple - royal and regal. A suit of armor, but not of honor. Purple - the color of a father's shame.

More snaps from the crowd.

MUSIC CUE: *"BACK TO LIFE" by Soul II Soul*

MUSIC UP: *"Back to life. Back to reality. Back to life. Back to reality."*

As the BEAT kicks in...

INTERCUT: We see Unc in his purple suit again - on the dance floor - with Bryson and Nino on the couch as they cry - and finally we see him wearing his classic Barney-purple suit through a window as Devin sadly looks on from the outside.

FADE TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

MUSIC CONTINUES AS...

Unc and his DOCTOR talk across the desk. They are as serious as a heart attack - serious as...

DOCTOR

Your kidneys are functioning at 12%. I think it's time we start dialysis. We can get you on a donor list, but at your age - it's gonna be tough.

(beat)

What about a family donor? Close family that we can test?

UNC

What about a friend? My late wife's brother? I see him all the time. I go to his barbershop. I don't want to burden someone young.

DOCTOR

We can test him, but a blood relative would more likely be a match. Anyone else?

UNC

Two nephews. My sister's kids. Strong young men.

DOCTOR
That's a start. Do you have any
kids?

MUSIC UP: *"Back to life. Back to reality."*

MUSIC HARD CUT

Unc sits in silence for a while.

NINO (V.O.)
He's lost in thought. Lost in
regret. So lost, until he finds a
lie.

UNC
No. No kids.

DOCTOR
I'm going to grab some brochures
about dialysis and send in a
prescription for you.

FADE TO:

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

A PHARMACIST hands Unc a white bag.

Unc doesn't say much as he opens the bag - hands shaking. He fishes out a brown pill bottle. He swallows hard as he unscrews the top and looks in. We see a pile of little purple pills.

UNC
At least they're my favorite color.

BLAZE (V.O.)
Purple Haze. Purple Daze. We live
in a land of Purple Blaze. May the
Mother Spirit love you - as the
father has forgotten you.

Unc puts the cap back on the bottle.

We hear more SNAPS of approval for Blaze's words.

The snaps fade into the BUZZ of clippers - which takes us
back to...

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Nino sits in JT's barbershop chair getting his haircut. He looks next to him as Bernard runs the clippers over Unc's low fro.

NINO

(to us)

Yeah, he can't find out about me and JT - about me at all. I mean shit, I'm still not sure what's going on with me.

JT slightly caresses Nino's earlobe - Nino smiles - Bernard notices.

INT. NEELEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Neeley works away at her computer.

NINO (V.O.)

Remember what Unc said about race plus power. Well, for a man who claims to be powerless - he's found the fortitude to alienate two children and two grandchildren.

Carter walks by Neeley's office door. She watches his ass in those slacks as he disappears into the heart of the office cubicles. Her attention then returns to a photo of her, Jason, Mikah and Evie on her desk.

NINO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All because one of his kids had the audacity to marry a white man and the other...

CUT TO:

INT. BLAZE'S APARTMENT - DAY

NINO (V.O.)

Had the balls to like... balls.

Blaze is on his bed shirtless while smoking weed.

Blaze swipes away on Tinder until he comes across JT's profile and swipes right. They fuckin' MATCH.

INT. BRYSON'S CAR - DAY

Bryson and Amber are fucking hard in his car. That vegetarian diet is the truth.

NINO (V.O.)

He rules the family with an iron will, but we still do what the fuck and who the fuck we want. At least they do - even my square ass little brother.

Bryson cums hard and collapses on Amber. He reaches over and grabs his glasses only to look down.

BRYSON

Shit - the rubber broke.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Close on Jason's face as he too cums.

JASON

Shit - the rubber broke.

Just as he says that, his phone vibrates.

NINO (V.O.)

Maybe Unc's right about some things. The stay-at-home dick wasn't staying at home anymore.

On the phone we see the caller's name: NEELEY.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Bernard dabs blood from Unc's ear - it still hasn't healed.

BERNARD

Is this the same cut from last week?

UNC

Mind ya business.

JT looks at his phone and notices a new match from Tinder. We know who it is.

Nino looks at us again.

NINO

(to us)

Look, I don't care what you have to say. Uncles are one of the mightiest strongholds of the traditional Black family. Tradition is important. I think.

(beat)

They are as American as the corner barbershop, momma's creamy grits and granddaddy's stories of how life used to be. I feel safe around my Uncle Charles.

Unc takes out money and actually pays this time. He even walks over and tries to pay JT for the last haircut.

NINO (CONT'D)

(to us)

Is he perfect? No, but he's ours and we love him.

UNC

Nino, where do you go when you zone out like that? I swear you're having a conversation with someone else. You must get that from your Daddy's side.

Nino winks at us.

UNC (CONT'D)

That must be...

NINO

A white thing.

JT

A white thing.

UNC

Go ahead and laugh at me. Ya'll gonna miss me when I'm gone.

BERNARD

Nigga, yo rusty dusty ass ain't going nowhere.

NINO

You're gonna out-live me.

UNC

You know what they say...

(beat)

"As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."

BERNARD
The Bible this time?

Nino shakes his head with a grin.

NINO
(to us)
Wait for it.

UNC
"I take a look at my life and
realize there's nothing left."

JT
Nope. The prophet, Coolio.

They all laugh -- even Unc.

NINO
(to us)
Welcome to the family. Things are
about the get... complicated.

MUSIC CUE: "GANGSTA'S PARADISE" by Coolio

MUSIC UP: "Tell me, why are we so blind to see that the ones
we hurt are you and me?"

MUSIC CONTINUES OVER CREDITS

FADE TO:

(POST CREDITS SCENE) EXT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

An older man, HEATH (50s, white) stands outside the
barbershop watching Nino, Unc, JT and Bernard inside.

We've met him before - it's the Ferry Man. The random man on
the ferry wasn't all that random.

He has an old Polaroid picture of a younger version of
himself and a little "Halfrican" American kid standing at the
front of the Algiers ferry.

On the bottom of the photo is written "Nino, age 4."

NINO (V.O.)
Like I said-
(beat)
Complicated.

CUT TO BLACK