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36 Hours

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36 HOURS

Were you even outside when Bishop shot Raheem to get the Juice? You probably don't even know what I'm talking about. I'm rapping to you about history, real hip hop roots from the source, the motherland... I'm talking New York City, baby. Like real New York before Giuliani and Disney cleaned up Time Square, or Spike Lee bought all the Harlem brownstones. Before Brooklyn was some place you moved to because you had arrived, instead of a place you survived or escaped from if you got real lucky. Blocks where you walked hard or didn't come home. Yeah, those streets... I mean really outside.

And the music, it breathed through an open mouth and had a heartbeat. You knew when you heard it that it was made of flesh, and when it was dead and gone it would meet Jesus, because it had a soul. I don't mean the craft beer and lifestyle shit y'all listen to now. But killing your enemy with 16 bars, because it was him or you, in a park or on a playground, with a boombox backing track and what felt like the whole world or at least all of 121st street watching. We heard the call all the way home, on our block in Chicago, but we knew that some shit you had to see for yourself. How else you know it's true.

Good and bad things always come in threes, and at the time it was me, JoJo, and Dana. Knuckleheads who read the paper one day, when no one thought we could read, let alone did. And it was JoJo who was talking about how they were having airfare wars and we could get round trip tickets to New York on a red-eye flight, if we left at 2 in the morning. And because we had ends... no need to ask where from, all you need to know is it was real and green and enough to get us there. We figured we could eat good, and wild out before anyone would even know we were gone. 36 hours with little to no sleep was anticipated, we were young and reckless enough not to care about that. We would sleep when we were dead, and with the way we were living that might be soon enough.

I fancied myself a Renaissance man, an artist and a poet. I read Interview magazine at the library, and stole the Village voice whenever I passed the big newsstand that used to be on Clybourn... I was always on the north-side. So I wanted to tag a subway car, maybe get me a piece of immortality on a brick wall. I knew that by the time we would get there Andy would have been long gone, from complications of a gallbladder surgery, and Basquiat followed shortly after because he couldn't kick that needle without his momma and Andy. It was a loss I wanted to feel, I needed to see where they had walked, and lay my hands on the masterpieces that would soon be taken from the street and auctioned off for numbers that still don't seem real.

Dana didn't want to admit he was scared to fly. He was old school hard, older than us by a couple of years and the only dude we knew who went to jail and got fat. In his time, he had walked through the craziest projects and never got touched. I mean he frequently got drunk and slept through unknown westside territory on the subway, with fresh J's and a leather

starter jacket and kept all his gear. He claimed he never tucked a chain in his life, and he always wore a stupid fat one. And me and Jojo had seen enough with him to know the truth of the legend, but even if it was a lie we wouldn't clown him about it cause we was boys with our own lies to tell. But Dana said he felt like flying was something unnatural because he couldn't hit it, or make it bleed, but that's just how he was back then. Jojo said it was because he was a crack baby, as Kendrick would say we all was, but we didn't talk about mommas like that back then, so we just kinda changed the subject if it ever came up.

If we had had any sense, good or otherwise we would have stayed home. But we had heard that New York smoke was fire, and the honeys were fine, and we weren't gonna leave sober and without stories, so everyone had to sack up and fly. We drank through the flight, maybe slept some, but not much, we didn't have no checked luggage, or anything but the clothes on our backs, the plan was to buy and bring back authentic fresh ass Brooklyn gear, new fitteds and jerseys. We wanted to look like natives, to blend. And by the time we landed, and our feet touched the ground that Dana was gonna kiss, until he saw a grown man pee on it right out in the open. We stepped out into the daylight, ready to get something started, and hailed a cab with no destination in mind, maybe just ask the driver to take us somewhere to get a room. But the driver saw the three of us, and wouldn't stop, and it was just like home.

36 hours left, so we just walked, nowhere in particular.

RONDA CRAWFORD



The Interception. Edward Karl Fresa, Acrylic on Canvas