Off the Realness

by Nick Gandiello
Off the Realness (Sample Script)

SCENE THREE

Street lamp light grows around a stereo on cement, blasting a dark beat. Headlights pass over the stage, revealing Ty, writing in a notebook on the ground. Cars sigh and whisper nearby as Addy paces, swinging a forty-ounce.

ADDY
Okay, so we open by setting up the scene. Headlights, like, like little baby eyes far away, they come up on you like some big scary dude's face. On the off-ramp, off the off-ramp, twisting around the woods. Driving in loops. Where you think they driving to? Where do people go to on Long Island? It's one big road.

Addy looks at Ty.

ADDY
Is that - Is that why you barely come back?

TY
Why don't you go over what we have so far.

ADDY
Huh? Oh, nah, you spit it.

Me?

TY
Yeah you spit it so I can get the flow down.

ADDY
Okay, uh... The Train - shit, uh - The train passes by the highway, I'm in the left lane, doing eightyfive, / mad high in the rain.

ADDY
Mad high in the rain. Yeah, yeah, but yo should I shout out a specific location?

TY
Like what?

ADDY
Like, like Freeport - or Hempstead -
TY

No, no you should not.

ADDY

Why not.

TY

'Cause who the fuck cares about towns on Long Island - Car dealerships and McDonalds and -

ADDY

Yo this is my story, I represent this shit, so -

TY

Fine, you represent it, right. Uh - doing eightyfive, mad high in the rain. I pass the turnpike -

ADDY

Yeah yeah yeah -

(Gesturing around them: )
Hempstead Turnpike!

TY

Right - I pass the turnpike... and lights in houses in Hempstead -

ADDY

Then, then like: instead. Say, say something with instead.

TY

Obvious. They'll hear it in their heads before you say it.

ADDY

Nah nah nah like I gotta make a choice, a decision. I could, I could - do this, or do something instead, like - Shit's all anticipation and suspense, and -

TY

Suspense. It's a thriller rap, great.

ADDY

Shut up man. Just -

TY

Uh - I could turn right, just go home instead.

ADDY

Word that's hot, word. 'Cause you can't just go home instead. Not a lotta dudes like us on this Island looking to go home. Or can go home. Hey you know mom falls asleep with her work clothes on most nights?

TY

What?
Addy is abruptly focused in on the lyrics in his head, as if he hadn't said anything. Ty nods.

TY
Dad still stay up all night, walking the beach?

ADDY
I could turn right, just go home instead, but -

TY
Does. Dad. Still -

ADDY
But - uh, but - But you can't let beef sit for too long, it goes rotten. Write that. Yeah, yeah write that.

Ty just looks at him.

ADDY
Why not?

TY
It's a stupid metaphor.

ADDY
People like metaphors, and images and shit. It adds color.

TY
You can't let beef sit for too long -?

ADDY
It goes rotten!

TY
Is this for the Food Network, or -?

ADDY
Nah, shut up, nah, it, ya know, like sets up the fact that this is like, it's like a revenge story, like I'm gonna handle some beef son. Some beef motherfucka, whatchu know about it!

TY
It's your song.

ADDY
It's your song too though, right?

TY
It's your stupid gangsta bullshit song.

ADDY
Since when is it bullshit, since when is it bullshit to you?
Pause.

TY
How do you think people are gonna look at you? When they look at you, saying this?

ADDY
Like they jealous. 'Cause I got someone like you on my team. So yo. Bring it back to Long Island -

TY
I am on your team, Adam.

ADDY
Like back to the scene, some shit that's Long Island. Empty playgrounds. Streetlamps on the dead ends...

TY
The beaches. There's the beaches. Remember Dad used to take us to Jones Beach?

ADDY
Fuck a beach, sand and shit. Sea shells - You wanna rap about jellyfish? Oh! People chill by the train station! Long Island Rail Road. Put some shit about the train station in there. You could see that shit from here, too. Look, train's coming in...

Addy stares off into the distance as Ty looks at him. He notices.

ADDY
Will you stop judging me with your eyeballs?

TY
The Long Island Rail Road. Gangster, Adam, real gangster.

ADDY
It's real, man, it's real. Mikey Pryce and his brother chill in the parking lot there.

TY
This is about Michael Pryce?

ADDY
I mean. It's a story.

TY
Uh-huh, a story about Michael Pryce? About what happened to your face?

ADDY
It's a story and you're helping me tell it.
TY
You know... Michael Pryce could barely get through detention without crying.

ADDY
What, man?

TY
He used to duck into the bathroom if I walked down the hall too fast.

ADDY
Yeah well people change when you disappear.

TY
I didn't disappear.

ADDY
You fucking disappeared. Now can you help me figure out how to say this?

TY
I went to college.

ADDY
Ty, man. We were planning shows together. You're sneaking six packs into the basement for me and Kwasi. Then I go into your room and you got suitcases packed. You never told me you got accepted. Then you were just...

ADDy gestures into the distance.

ADDY
How come you split like that?

Pause. Cars pass.

TY
You can't let beef sit for too long, it goes rotten. I pull up under the train tracks so I can spot'im.

ADDY
(Softly)
Word - yeah.

TY
What was he doing there. So you can describe it.

ADDY
Um. Yeah, Mikey, and his brother, they got chicks leaning up against that Nissan he has. Them and their friends, they, they like bag chicks together, like, like a team.
TY

Got'im, this dude is leaning on his car, cheesin all hard 'cause bitches squeezin' on his arm...

ADDY

I don't really got a crew like that. I mean I got Kwasi, Kwasi's my man. I never had a lot of friends.

Addy stares toward the station again.

TY

I have a good group of friends upstate. They're - sane. Make dinner for each other. They've been asking to meet you.

ADDY

Uh-huh, yo write this down, write this down: I waited 'til the train was passing -

TY

I thought you said they did that.

ADDY

What?

TY

You said they waited for the train and then they jumped you.

ADDY

This is how I wanna tell it.

TY

Maybe you should rap about something true.

ADDY

This is how I'm gonna tell it! So rhyme some shit about me... About me getting them real close, so I could see them smiling, thinking shit's sweet... Ty writes as Adam goes on.

ADDY

Everybody watching me... And then, and then the train goes by overhead, right, the train to New York... And I go for the reach. I fuckin' unload a clip on 'em.

Ty slams the notebook down. He turns the music off.

ADDY

Yo don't fuck with the beat, man, I was zoning.

TY

You're not saying that shit.
ADDY

Why not?

TY

'Cause you don't have any guns.

ADDY

Yeah I do.

Blinking pause.

TY

No you don't!

ADDY

Aight fine I don't. But in the music I do.

TY

No, no, rap doesn't work like that.

ADDY

How you gonna tell me about rap -

TY

I'm telling you: Rap. Does not. Work like that. People assume, people, people take for granted: you rap about shit you've actually experienced, shit you're actually capable of -

ADDY

I'm capable of having a gun.

TY

Shut the fuck up. You're lying here, that's not - that's not what Hip-Hop does.

ADDY

Art is a lie that tells the truth.

TY

What?

ADDY

Picasso, bitch!

TY

Oh my god...

ADDY

You know Celine Dion doesn't write her own shit, right?

TY

Did you just say Celine Dion?
ADDY
Them songs about endless love and reaching out to the past - she's singing shit other people wrote about other things she ain't even / go through.

TY
Celine Dion, Adam, really?

ADDY
And like Brian McKnight? That song about wandering down the halls, looking at pictures of somebody that's gone and shit. He totally 'fessed up: He made it up!

TY
Adam. Adam. They're singing about stuff that's - universal - Stuff that everyone goes through, loving someone, needing someone, that's something everyone goes through -

ADDY
No it isn't.

TY
Okay fine, but it's - primal, it's - basic. So they can imagine, and invent, because everyone's gonna relate -

ADDY
It's not primal and basic to wanna kill someone that hurt you?

TY
Okay then. So this is my shit. For me. And if you frontin' like you didn't come home from ninth period English and listen to dudes talking the same shit, then you're lying here, not me. Motherfuckers talkin' murder always made more sense to us than anything else. Now write it.

ADDY
It shouldn't make more sense to us! If I'm gonna do this I want you to rap about something real.

TY
Really real. You're just a kid, Adam.

ADDY
What, man?
TY
Who kept his little league trophy 'til he was fourteen. Who gets sad for months when a pet dies -

ADDY
The fuck, man -

TY
I know you like nobody knows you, and if I'm gonna do this, it's gonna be something that's actually you. Then maybe I could figure out why you're so on edge now, all these nervous ticks you / got now, this

ADDY
Who's nervous?

TY
Anger in everything you say. Where did that shit come from?

ADDY
Maybe you would know if you existed in my life instead of your stupid fuckin college boy fantasy.

Pause.

TY
You got some shit to say, say it.

ADDY
Addy raises his hands, shaking his head, trying to take the words back.

ADDY
I'm sorry, I just.

TY
Nah, nah don't step off. I'm right here, man, what.

ADDY
I can't...

TY
You never had shit to rap about. You rap about shit I did.

ADDY
Could you - could you listen?

TY
You don't have anything to say. You got little boy problems.

ADDY
Listen.

TY
Little live-at-home pansy-ass nonsense... Whatever.
ADDY

Yo! Yo listen! Yo -
I'm in front of my father's house, a word sits in my mouth
But my tongue's gonna bleed 'cause it'll never spit it out
He opens the door and memories arise
A childhood I never had is livin in his eyes

Addy breaks away. Pause.

TY

Shit, Adam - that -

ADDY

Nah, nah...

TY

No, Adam, that - Did you freestyle that, just now, or - ?

ADDY

Nah.

Pause.

TY

What, um, what's the rest?

ADDY

I don't like letting people hear that.

TY

That's the kind of stuff, man, you bring it to my station... people will listen. I can see about getting you a position.

ADDY

Oh like anybody gives a shit, like you give a shit, out of nowhere you / give a shit, fuck you, man.

TY

Whoa, dude - Whoa - what the hell?

ADDY

I'm sorry, I just. I get into that stuff and it's like I don't want nobody lookin' at me. Like I wanna be - out there.

(He gestures to the dark. Pause. Grabbing the notebook: ) Could we finish this?

TY

He in that little apartment? Above the funeral home?

ADDY

He doesn't have a lot of options.

TY

You still go there? On the weekends?
ADDY
I ain't stop going just 'cause you weren't there. Write rhymes on the train there. He doesn't walk the beach anymore.
(Thrusting the notebook:)
Here, we gotta focus.

TY
Do you. Do you want. You need me to come there with you? Tomorrow. You need me go see him?

ADDY
You. You wanna come with me?

TY
Early morning. We can be there and back before the show.

ADDY
Kay. Yeah. Early morning, back before the show.

Addy smiles. He holds the forty out to Ty. Ty accepts and swigs.

TY
Remember pretending to be ninjas, so we could disappear from there?
(Beat.)
You were a better ninja.
(Beat.)
Lemme hear the rest.

ADDY
Ty, man, I can't, I can't.

TY
It sounded real. I won't look at you, okay?

ADDY
Ty swigs. He nods. Ty positions himself away. Addy stands to deliver this to the highway:

ADDY
Yo...
I'm in front of my father's house, a word sits in my mouth
But my tongue's gonna bleed 'cause it'll never spit it out
He opens the door and memories arise
A childhood I never had is livin in his eyes
Inside, nothing on the walls, no picture frames
Nothing to recall, no trips, no games
He sippin' Jameson, driftin' aimlessly through rooms
Reminiscin' on some dames left too soon
And I'm left to a tune as I scribble on pads
Asking who this man is and what he did with my Dad...
Addy folds in on himself, pulling his hat down over his eyes. Ty stares out over the passing cars, drinking from the forty. Addy breathes, and looks at him.

**ADDY**

You um. You like it?

Ty nods.

**ADDY**

Fa real? K-Raise said bring something Real, and I... I can't. Without you.

Addy sits next to his brother on the concrete. He opens the notebook in front of them.

**ADDY**

You gonna do it with me? At the show?

Pause. Ty hands him the red pen. Addy smiles.

Addy turns the stereo back on and begins writing. Ty watches him.