

BLACK

We HEAR "Waltzing Matilde," by Tom Waits.

INT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - DAY (DREAM SEQUENCE IN GRAINY BLACK AND WHITE)

Fade out music.

Silence.

A well-dressed black BOY and his MOTHER walk through several galleries.

They stand before Picasso's "Guernica," holding hands.

The mother is disturbed. Crying.

The boy looks up, confused and frightened, concerned to see his mother crying in public. She looks at him tenderly.

Her brow furrows. She stops crying. She stares just above his eyes.

Something's happening: she looks with wonder at the top of his head... his eyes roll upward, trying to see - it's a crown!

He raises his hands. He touches it.

A beam of light illuminates the crown, casting its glow on his mother's face.

The beam gets whiter, the rest of the screen gets black.

INT. CARDBOARD BOX

Silence. In darkness, we hear a VOICE - imbued with a sense of its own history:

VOICE (O.S.)

Everybody wants to get on the Van Gogh boat. There's no trip so horrible that someone won't take it. The idea of the unrecognized genius slaving away in a garret is a deliciously foolish one. We must credit the life of Vincent Van Gogh for really sending this myth into orbit. How many pictures did he sell? One? He couldn't give them away. We are so ashamed of his life that the rest of art history

will be retribution for Van Gogh's neglect.
No one wants to be part of a generation
that ignores another Van Gogh.

The beam of light shines through a small hole. It falls upon a sleeping, dreaming, delighted face. It belongs to JEAN MICHEL **BASQUIAT**.

OUTDOOR, DAYTIME SOUNDS filter in.

Hearing the voice, Jean frowns at being woken up.

EXT. TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK - DAY

A long, rectangular cardboard box.

SUPER: "NEW YORK CITY"

ANGLE ON:

RENE RICARD (early 30's), seated at a park bench, hunched over a notebook. He's a raggedy dandy: A poet in a hooded sweatshirt and white hightops.

As he writes, he reads aloud, as if addressing Posterity.

RENE (CONT'D)

(sighing theatrically)

In this town one is at the mercy of the
recognition factor. One's public
appearance is absolute.

Beyond him, a HAND gropes its way out of the box. It tosses a can of YOOHOO chocolate drink.

RENE (CONT'D)

I consider myself a metaphor of the public.
I am a public eye. I am a witness.

A HEAD appears from the box. It's Jean's.

Jean sees the start of a crisp, colorful autumn day. The urban park around him is alive with a typically full range of the good and bad in life. He eases himself out of the oversize box in which he has spent the night. There's something about the way that he stands while waking up that suggests he's almost surprised at his own body, the adulthood of his limbs - just a subtle hint of him coming out of a dream.

He squints in the sunlight. He has a soft, gentle, Haitian face.

His hair is pulled tight to his head. He wears two pairs of blue jeans (one cut like chaps over the other) a paint-covered Wesleyan University T-shirt, and the inside lining of an overcoat. His appearance is unruly, but it's deliberate. He's stylish.

He shakes himself off and collects his stuff, which includes: a small book of Pontormo drawings, a can of black spray paint. and a cigar box made into a loudspeaker with pencil holes and masking tape.

Jean walks out of the park and looks up past the buildings at the sky:

SUPERIMPOSED IN THE SKY - STOCK FOOTAGE OF A HAWAIIAN SURFER

Jean sees the surfer, 'riding the nose' in glistening, shimmering sunlight.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK - DAY

Rene grabs the box for use as a desk and continues to speak out loud as he writes.

RENE (CONT'D, O.S.)

Part of the artist's job is to get the work where I will see it.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE ST. - DAY

As he speaks, we see Jean pass the wall of a funeral parlor. He spraypaints: "SAMO AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO GOD"

RENE (CONT'D, O.S.)

When you first see a new picture, you don't want to miss the boat. You have to be very careful because you may be staring at Van Gogh's ear.

Jean signs his words with his 'logo', a triple pointed crown.

As he presses the spray can, we HEAR the roar of a breaker.

CUT TO:

INSERT: CLOSEUP OF SIDEWALK

Pressed into the concrete is a pair of EYEGLASSES. A light-colored piece of rock completes the picture to make a face.

EXT. LESHKO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

JEAN'S POV: His shoes pause next to the face in the concrete.

CUT TO:

IN FRONT OF THE RESTAURANT

Is a METAL BILLBOARD with red plastic magnetized LETTERS that reads: "TODAY'S SPECIAL: CLAM CHOWDER \$1.50. TRY IT!!!"

CUT TO:

INT. LESHKO'S - DAY

Jean enters.

CUT TO:

EXT. LESHKO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The sign. It now reads: "SAMO'S DAY OLD TEETH \$5.00"

CUT TO:

INT. LESHKO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Bending over a countertop, we see GINA CARDINALE, 22. He fixates on her.

She looks up and notices his stare. She continues to work.

Still staring at her, he sits down at a table. He pours maple syrup onto the table. He draws in the syrup with his fingers.

CLOSE ON SYRUP ON TABLE

ANOTHER WAITRESS arrives at his table. She's put off by the syrup.

WAITRESS

What'll it be?

Jean thinks about it, eyes still following Gina.

BASQUIAT

Ummm. It'll be great. We'll live together
in peace. What's her name?
(indicates Gina)

He looks up at the waitress.

WAITRESS

Gina. What'll it be?

BASQUIAT

Pancakes.

She leaves and whispers something to Gina. Gina turns and glances over at Jean.

Jean pours more syrup and starts writing his name.

At the grill, LESHKO, the burly Owner/Cook, has his watchful eye on Jean. He doesn't like what he sees.

Jean smears the syrup thinly, so it doesn't erase itself. He draws a picture of Gina, using his fingers and the silverware, rendering her last expression strikingly with a few quick lines.

A GAUNT YOUNG MAN saunters up to Jean's table. He's sort of a tall Puerto Rican Alain Delon with sleepy eyes. He is BENNY.

BENNY

Hey - Willie Mays.

BASQUIAT

Willie Mays.

Suddenly, Rene Ricard enters - a one-man parade. He beckons to Gina, snapping his fingers.

RENE

Nurse!!! Oh!!! Nurse!!! Carrot juice. Tofu
burger. Rapido!

GINA

We don't serve that - amigo.

RENE

Fine... A greasy cheeseburger. Fries - and
a vodka.

BASQUIAT

(under his breath)
Who's that?

BENNY

The Devil, man. Rene Ricard. Art critic -
writes for Artforum. People read him. Tell
him who you are..

BASQUIAT

Who am I?

BENNY

SAMO.

BASQUIAT

Oh yeah..

Rene lands at the counter.

Jean's gaze is still on Gina.

She waits on a MAN at a nearby table.

CUSTOMER

How's the special today?

GINA

It's your stomach.

She hurries past Jean.

BASQUIAT

Hey.

She slows down, not wanting to.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

What do you think?

She looks at her portrait in the syrup... She can't resist
smiling.

GINA

It's me. I've never been done in maple
syrup. Here's a rag.

Gina smiles. She offers him one. As she holds it out, their eyes
lock. She tries to resist his smile.

BASQUIAT

(gently)

Gina?

She puts her finger in the syrup and licks it off.

Benny takes it all in.

Leshko is upon them.

LESHKO

Alright. Look at you, staring at this girl,
making a mess.

He waves Jean toward the door.

Jean takes Gina's rag and begins cleaning his mess, seemingly
compliant.

BASQUIAT

How about those pancakes?

He brings out a roll of dimes to the tabletop and splits it open.
Dimes roll all over the table and stick in the syrupy parts. The
manager explodes.

LESHKO

OK! Goodbye!

GINA

Pipe down, Lech. Let him order.

LESHKO

You nuts? Let him order? You on his side?
You're not such a good waitress. You get
out, too.

GINA

I just don't think you're being fair.

LESHKO

I need this?

GINA

I need this?

Gina quietly removes her apron in disbelief.

Benny gets up to leave very casually.

BENNY

(waving g'bye to Jean)
Willie Mays.

LESHKO

(to Gina)
That's right. You go with them. Make babies
the government has to pay for.

CUT TO:

GINA AND JEAN

Leave the restaurant.

Behind them, we see Rene, absorbed in his writing.

EXT. AVE. A - DAY

They stand outside, not knowing quite what comes next.

Jean gives Benny a look (i.e. 'scram').

BENNY

Catch you later.

Benny leaves.

A CHILLY WIND picks up.

Jean's mood is suddenly downcast.

They button up their overcoats, about to leave.

GINA

What's a job, anyway?

(pause)

What's wrong with you?

The truth is, he feels awful for causing Gina's trouble, but shows it by moping like a child.

GINA (CONT'D)

No, don't tell me - you just got fired by
your crazy boss.

BASQUIAT

I guess you did.

GINA

Guess I just got sick of him.

BASQUIAT

Can I walk you home?

GINA

I think I could do that alone.

Gina walks away.

He runs after her.

BASQUIAT

Wait, I'm in a band....We're at the Mudd Club on Halloween. I'll put you on the list.

Gina turns and looks back at Jean.

GINA

I hate the Mudd Club.

He catches up to her.

Gina notices a dead leaf in his hair and picks it out.

GINA (CONT'D)

Have you been camping? You could use a scrub.

BASQUIAT

I'm clean. Smell me. I always smell good. I don't know why, I just do!

He leans forward, offering his neck.

GINA

(smelling)

You do! You definitely do.

BASQUIAT

Just come to the Mudd Club on Friday.

GINA

I don't go there. Too many party girls.

BASQUIAT

Party girls? Can I call you?

GINA

(teasing him)

Yeah, if you have any dimes left. 477-0496.

He writes her number on his pant cuff with a big fat magic marker.

BASQUIAT

Here, this is for you. I made this.

He hands her the small speaker.

She takes it.

GINA

Thanks.

She admires the speaker watches him walk off.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL (OUTSIDE THE CITY)

We see Jean crossing a lawn outside a mental hospital.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - RECREATION / VISITING ROOM - DAY

PSYCH. PATIENTS fill a cavernous day-room engaged in arts and crafts. Some of the sadder patients stare off into space as Jean crosses the room. He carries a plate of cookies and a full glass of milk.

He approaches a sad, nice-looking, middle-aged black woman - the same one from the dream, earlier. She sits alone fondling a pillow in her lap. It's his mother, MATILDE. She doesn't see him coming.

As he sets the plate in front of her, she notices him. She recognizes him and seems pleased, even in her isolation. He kisses her on the cheek.

BASQUIAT

Hey, mom.

She smiles slightly.

Jean takes a cookie. She does likewise.

They eat in silence, looking at each other, communicating what they can.

Time passes. In between cookies her fingers find and break the stems of the pillow feathers.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

I met the girl I'm gonna marry.

His mother brightens. She drinks the milk. They finish the

cookies.

MATILDE

Do you like it here?

BASQUIAT

I'd like it better in Hawaii.

INT. CARDBOARD BOX - NIGHT

Jean tries to sleep in the box. RAIN falls heavily onto it.

Drops of water hit his face.

He wills it to stop. It doesn't.

Finally, he can't stand it. Rain forces his blinking eyes open.

INT. BENNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A door opens to reveal Jean's wet face.

Benny lets him in.

Jean enters a rundown railroad flat crammed with musical instruments, beer cans, and homemade art. There's a couch with a sheet over it.

Junk is piled in a corner - mostly art books and drawings.

Benny sits down at an electric piano, which he's evidently playing. He sings along, softly, working out the words, concentrating, absorbed.

Jean sets his belongings on the couch, walks to a mic stand and starts making up his own words.

BASQUIAT

"She loves me.
Oh yeah she loves me!
She looooooves me,
Oh yeah she loves me!"
Bring me some chicken, baby!

BENNY

Would you shut the fuck up? You hear what
I'm doing?

BASQUIAT

Yeah man. I'm jealous. You're always great,

Benny.
 (goes back into 'act')
"Her name is G-I-N-A Gina
And she lo-oooves me."
I did say chicken!

Benny turns off the piano and lights a roach, angry at Jean's self-centeredness.

Jean digs through a pile of garbage. Finally, he finds what he's looking for - a pile of "SAMO baseball cards" - color Xeroxes of his favorite images and words. He pockets them.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

I knew I left these somewhere. One of these'll send your kids to college someday.
 (hands it to Benny solemnly)
Here - I made this for you.

BENNY

Thanks.
 (beat)
Your dad called again - something about a job.

He hands Jean a slip of paper. He notices the number on Jean's pants.

BENNY (CONT'D)

You got a date already?

BASQUIAT

 (exhaling)
We're getting married. She said she could tell I was a great artist - she could see it in my eyes. She said she wanted to be by my side and have inter-racial babies with me.

Benny grins. He grabs a basketball and spins it expertly on his index finger.

BENNY

G'night... See you in court tomorrow.

Jean turns on the TV. He notices the roach. He picks up the paper Benny gave him with the message from his father and sets it on fire.

He lights the roach with it.

He looks up; on television, we see a BUM being interviewed. Jean turns up the volume.

The bum's on the ground, looking beat up. Jean picks up a pocket recorder and turns it on:

BUM

The guy just hit me and I was on the ground!!!! Boom, for real.

Jean mutes the sound on the TV. He rewinds and proudly plays back the words "Boom, for real."

He picks up the phone and dials. He turns on the speakerphone.

Jean holds the recorder to the speaker as someone answers the phone. (Jean walks in and out of frame throughout the following.)

VOICE

Hello?

BASQUIAT

(deadpan)

I-Is this the s-s-suicide h-h-hotline?

VOICE

Yes. My name is Chris. What's yours?

BASQUIAT

Jean Michel.

CHRIS

That's a beautiful name. French?

BASQUIAT

Haitian. I'm going to kill myself. I'm taking pills. Reds, blues, greens.

Jean opens his notepad and looks down a long list of seemingly random words. He comes to the words (in order) "liquid, hijack," and "Marlboros."

CHRIS

What? Wait a minute... talk to me.

BASQUIAT

(about to sob)

Life doesn't... make... sense. This city's k-killing me. I want my liquid hijack Marlboros!

CHRIS

What? Life's beautiful. Depression isn't permanent. Don't you believe that?

(pause)

What is it - did your girlfriend leave you?

BASQUIAT

No! I have a boyfriend. He loves me.

Jean spies an electric pencil sharpener and plugs it in.

CHRIS

You see? You have someone to live for.

BASQUIAT

No, I don't. I'm alone. We all are. Especially here. The world's unjust. The respect fools get. The disrespect I get.

CHRIS

What is it you want? Respect? I have
respect for you, just for making this call.
One philosopher said "Sadness is a sin
against the richness of the world." Think
about it. Feel it.

BASQUIAT

You don't even know me. I want real respect.

He jams a pencil into the electric sharpener and holds the receiver right next to it, giving the guy an earful:

RRRRKKKKKKK!!!

ANGLE ON

CLOSE UP - A speaker. It fills the screen.

We continue to hear:

CHRIS (O.S.)

(beat)

What? What do you want?

BASQUIAT

(breaking loose)

Fame. My liquid hijack Marlboros and the moon and the cow that jumped over it.

CAMERA PULLS BACK FROM SPEAKER TO REVEAL:

INT. MUDD CLUB - HALLOWEEN NIGHT

Jean and Benny are on stage with two other GUYS, members of the band Gray. Everyone but Jean is dressed in some sort of Halloween costume.

We HEAR the words "Boom, for real" blasting from the P.A. system.

What follows is a continuation, a collage of words from Jean's "suicide hotline" call -

P.A.

One philosopher said "Give me my liquid
hijack Marlboros. Life's beautiful. You
have someone to live for. What do you want?
RKKKK! That's a beautiful name... French?

Jean sits in a chair onstage with his band members. Benny plays the organ. The other band members play percussion and guitar.

It works. The crowd loves it.

The song ends abruptly.

We begin to hear James Brown's "Sex Machine."

Jean looks out into the crowd and notices Gina. She's looking right back at him from the bar. Pleased to see her face, he says to himself -

BASQUIAT

Boom, for real.

We see him walk offstage into the crowd. They meet.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

I thought you hated this place?

GINA

I do.

(beat)

I just said that. I was never here before.
I actually like it.

MUSIC segues into PIL's "Public Image".

BASQUIAT

Let's get out of here.

He leads her towards the exit. They step out of the club.

EXT. MUDD CLUB - NIGHT

HIGH, WIDE ANGLE

It's raining heavily. Jean motions for Gina to wait under the entrance. He tries to hail a cab... And another. And another.

A parade of them passes, but each time they slow down, they get a glimpse of Jean and drive off.

Finally, Gina steps out of the entrance. She raises her hand, and a car pulls over instantly.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

They scurry into the backseat.

The cab pulls off.

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Through a steamy, rain-wet window, we see Jean and Gina seated at a table, dining.

They seem to be having a nice time.

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Gina lays in bed. Daylight streams into the apartment. Jackhammers RATTLE outside. (Music: REGGAE SONG - Errol Scorchers "Cockroach in de Corner.")

EXTREME CLOSEUP

A cockroach crawls from Gina's bedroom across the floor and into the kitchen where Jean sits naked on the floor, working on a drawing. It crawls over his drawing towards a cardboard box.

Jean rummages through a cabinet. He finds a can of bugspray. Jean tears off a side of the box. With cardboard in one hand and bugspray in the other, he forgets the cockroach.

He's mesmerized by the list of ingredients on the aerosol can.

Someone POUNDS furiously at the door.

Ignoring the pounding, he starts listing the ingredients on the piece of cardboard, finishing his new drawing by including a

symbol of a cockroach to the left of the list.

LANDLADY

Miss Cardinale... Open up for me, please!

He gets up and peeks through the security hole. He sees a middle-aged Hispanic woman reaching to unlock the door. He opens it.

LANDLADY (CONT'D)

Ohhh, Dios mio!

She stares at him levelly.

LANDLADY (CONT'D)

I just want the rent.

BASQUIAT

Why didn't you say so? Damn! She's asleep!

Jean draws on a piece of paper on the counter next to him. He hands it to the landlady. It's a a little shack with a big head next to it that says "'Here' For Rent."

The landlady looks at him like he's crazy. She balls up the drawing and puts it in her pocket.

Gina arrives in the doorway, wearing a robe. The landlady's trapped between them.

GINA

(to Jean)

What're you doing?

The landlady wags her finger at Gina.

LANDLADY

Next Monday.

Gina and Jean look amused as they watch her leave.

BASQUIAT

Wanna go get some breakfast?

GINA

A friend of mine offered me a job doing a little work installing a show in a gallery. He's an electrician. I was supposed to be there an hour ago.

She looks at the bugspray drawing on the floor.

GINA (CONT'D)

Ohh, that's nice.

Jean kisses her neck as she looks at the drawing.

We HOLD on the drawing.

INT. MARY BOONE GALLERY - DAY

White dust sprinkles down onto Jean's face from the ceiling. Unable to use his hands, he tries to blow the dust out of his eyes...

His boss, GREG, a mild-mannered hippie electrician, works above him on the ladder. Jean steadies the ladder. Greg's head is out of frame.

The gallery is an impressive space under preparations for an opening.

GREG

Jean, could you get me a Phillips screwdriver?

BASQUIAT

A what?

GREG

A Phillips head. From the toolbox.

BASQUIAT

Yeah.

Jean searches through the toolbox. He picks up a screwdriver and reads the handle: "CRAFTSMAN"

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

'Phillips head,' right?

GREG

Yeah.

Jean shakes his head and puts it back. He tries a couple more - they each say "CRAFTSMAN." He puts them back.

Finally, he finds one with a different handle. It says "G.S.C. 2000."

BASQUIAT

You don't have any!!!

GREG

That's impossible. I've got, like, five of 'em!

He comes down off the ladder.

GREG (CONT'D)

You're holding one in your hand!!!

(beat)

You've never done this kind of work before, have you?

(demonstrating)

See, this is a regular screwdriver, and this is a Phillips head. The cross thing... I'll tell you later what all the tools are so you'll know.

A GROUP of people arrives.

Albert Milo comes into view, tailed closely by Rene Ricard and MARY BOONE - well dressed, petite, intense, 30. Milo, (also about 30), wears casual clothes splattered with paint. Mary Boone is engaged in conversation with Milo. Rene chatters away.

Greg climbs back up the ladder. He holds a piece of wire down to Jean. Jean stares at the group while trying to be invisible.

RENE

I need to make a call, Mary. You don't mind, do you?

MARY BOONE

Certainly not. You can use my line.

Rene picks up the phone.

RENE

To Paris. Bernard Picasso -

(to Mary)

You know Bernard -

MARY BOONE

(wincing)

Be my guest.

Jean watches the group talking.

GREG

Jean? Hold this, please.

(beat - he sees why Jean's so distracted)

You'll get there. But it's good to have something to fall back on. That's why I

became an electrician. It pays the rent.
Y'know, I'm an artist, too.

BASQUIAT

I didn't know.

GREG

I sculpt. I'm really just starting to find myself. How old are you? Twenty? You're just like I used to be. I'm forty-one. And I'm glad I haven't gotten any recognition. It gave me time to develop.

Jean watches Mary and Milo talking.

MARY BOONE

(to Milo)

I can't tell you how happy I am with this show.

Mary yells across the room to Jean.

MARY BOONE (CONT'D)

(her tone impersonal)

Excuse me - you - what's your name? Would you move those tools there and put them somewhere else?

He looks at her.

Milo watches to see what he's going to do.

BASQUIAT

(to Milo)

My name is Jean Michel Basquiat. Have you heard of me?

ALBERT MILO

(amused)

No. Should I have?

BASQUIAT

I'm a painter, too.

ALBERT MILO

Really. Huh. Too bad.

MARY BOONE

Excuse me, would you please move those tools?

Jean looks at Milo. Milo looks back at him.

Jean walks past the tools and continues toward the door. He walks out without turning around.

Milo smiles to himself.

EXT. BOONE GALLERY - ALBERT MILO OPENING - DUSK

The ART WORLD CROWD fills the gallery. Jean lurks across the street, watching through the window.

Cabs and limousines line the block. A crowd outside blocks the street.

Jean's obviously impressed, jealous and estranged - he feels entitled to all this.

He crosses the street to get a closer look.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

He sees Albert Milo talking with ANDY WARHOL and BRUNO BISCHOFBERGER. Andy, of course, is thin, silver-haired, and nearly albino. Bruno is a Swiss art dealer in his 40's. He exudes money - a pillar of security.

On the other side of the room, Rene Ricard is surrounded by a coterie of young, mostly BLACK AND HISPANIC MALES. Rene looks drunk, enjoying the moment, holding court.

Rene crosses to Albert and Andy.

People pass by.

Jean starts to walk.

About half a block away, he sprays on a wall:

"THE WHOLE LIVERY LINE BOW LIKE THIS WITH THE BIG MONEY ALL CRUSHED INTO THESE FEET"

He looks pleased. He turns and looks up West Broadway beyond the buildings at the sky:

SUPERIMPOSED IN THE SKY

We see a surfer emerging from a HUGE WAVE. He looks powerful and exalted.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

ANGLE ON: A wall. We see the following graffiti:

"JIMMY BEST ON HIS BACK TO THE SUCKERPUNCH OF HIS CHILDHOOD YEARS"

A basketball bounces against a wall.

Jean and Benny amble onto a basketball court. Jean's changed his hairstyle. Now the dreadlocks stand straight up from his head.

Benny dribbles with skill while Jean puffs furiously on a cigarette. He doesn't look like he's slept, but he's happy.

Benny throws the ball to Jean. It bounces off a puddle and splashes Jean.

BENNY

Come on, Jean. Get rid of your cigarette.
Concentrate.

BASQUIAT

I am... On Gina.
(beat)
Fuck - I didn't think we were actually
gonna do this.

BENNY

Concentrate on the ball. Shoot.

Jean shoots. It flies up, up, up - and over the backboard.

He runs after the ball, gets it, and dribbles clumsily.

BENNY

You're shattering all my myths.

BASQUIAT

About what?

BENNY

Your people.

BASQUIAT

Oh - you mean black people!

He shoots and misses again. He throws it to Benny, who does a picture-perfect lay-up.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

(changing the subject)

How long do you think it takes to get really famous?

During the following, Benny performs a series of amazing shots while Jean looks on admiringly.

BENNY

For a musician or a painter?

Jean shrugs.

BASQUIAT

Whatever. Famous. To where you can do your stuff all day without thinking about anything else.

BENNY

Ummm... Four years. Six to get rich.

He shoots. Swish.

BENNY (CONT'D)

First, you have to dress right.

He shoots again. Swish.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Then, you have to hang out all the time - with famous people - the right people, the right chicks, the right parties.

He shoots again. Swish.

BENNY (CONT'D)

And you gotta do your work all the time when you're not doing that. The same kinda work, the same style - over and over again, so people recognize it and don't get confused. Then, once you're famous, you have to keep doing it the same way, even after it's boring - unless you want people to really get mad at you - which they will anyway.

Benny tosses Jean the ball. Jean walks off the court.

BASQUIAT

Come on. I hate this. I'm no good at it.

Jean shoots the ball and keeps walking. The ball goes in. He doesn't notice. Benny runs after it.

EXT. HOUSTON ST. - DUSK

Benny and Jean walk along. Benny dribbles.

BENNY

Famous people are usually pretty stupid. You're too smart. You'd get bored to death. You don't wanna be like John Henry - fighting the machine. Just do what you do. It's about integrity. Follow your heart.

BASQUIAT

Who's John Henry?

BENNY

Oh man! Folklore guy - worked on the railroad. Y'know, pounding in spikes and laying down track. Then one day they invented a machine to do it. And he says "Fuck that, I'm a MAN" and he challenges the machine to a race to lay down a mile of track. It takes two days. Neck and neck the whole time. They get right to the end, and he beats it by one spike.

(pause)

Got a cigarette?

BASQUIAT

So then what?

BENNY

He drops dead! See? Just do your shit like you do it! Your friends like you, you get laid, everyone walks by, sees your stuff everywhere. It's good. What else do you want?

They watch a long stretch limo cruises up across the street.

BASQUIAT

Like I said - my liquid hijack Marlboros.

(indicates limo)

Check it out.

The LIMO DRIVER opens the back door. Andy Warhol and Bruno Bischofberger step out.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

Andy Warhol. He's famous and he's not boring.

**INSERT: AN IMAGE OF ANDY'S PAINTINGS AT THE WHITNEY MUSEUM
(FOOTAGE FROM JONAS MEKAS FILM)**

Jean scrounges in his pockets, pulls out his Xerox cards, and readies himself as Bruno and Andy enter BALLATO'S RESTAURANT.

BENNY

What're you doing? You're doing something.

BASQUIAT

He's the best painter in the world. I'm gonna give him one of these.

BENNY

Don't give him anything, man. Your art's worth a lot. Trade. That's what real artists do with each other. Besides, he'll just use you. He's famous for that.

Benny watches Jean cross the street. Jean passes the limousine. Inside, the driver (a 24-year old Rasta) takes a hit from a joint and watches Jean.

CLOSE ON

The driver's eyes.

CUT TO:

DRIVER'S POV:

He watches Jean cross the street.

Jean enters the restaurant.

INT. BALLATO'S - DAY

Jean enters. Andy and Bruno spot him. The Maitre'd becomes alarmed. but it's too late - he's at their table.

He spreads his cards on the table. The topmost card reads **"REDEEMABLE BECAUSE OF HIS YOUTH."**

Andy stares dead ahead, Sphinxlike.

Bruno watches the non-interaction between the two.

MAITRE'D

(to Jean, flustered)
Can I help you?.

He taps Jean's shoulder.

MAITRE'D (CONT'D)

(to Jean)
Sir...?

BRUNO

(sympathetically)
I think it's ok.

MAITRE'D

Of course, Mr. Bischofberger.

Bruno picks up one of the cards.

BASQUIAT

You wanna buy some ignorant art? Ten bucks.

ANDY WARHOL

Ignorant art?

BASQUIAT

Yeah... Like - stupid, ridiculous, crummy art.

ANDY WARHOL

Ohhh. That's new. That sounds good.

BASQUIAT

Ten bucks apiece.

ANDY WARHOL

I can give you five. You didn't do very much to these.

BASQUIAT

You don't even work on your stuff!

BRUNO

It doesn't matter how much you worked on them. It matters how much you can get for them.

BASQUIAT

I can get ten.

ANDY WARHOL

I'll take two. This one and... that one.

(to Bruno)

Can I borrow some money, Bruno?

Bruno pulls out a hundred dollar bill.

BRUNO

Here. Do you have change?

As WAITER arrives with the tray, Jean pockets the bill.

BASQUIAT

You made a good deal. Here, you can have these, too.

He leaves all the cards and walks toward the door.

BRUNO'S POV:

Jean leaving past stupified Maitre'd.

EXT. GINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jean and Benny are outside the entrance to Gina's building. Jean carries two huge bags overflowing with groceries and flowers. He buzzes. There's no answer.

BASQUIAT

I'll be right back.

He produces a key and lets himself in.

He enters the building.

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jean sets the groceries on the counter and leaves.

We notice the Bugspray painting on the wall, along with more of Jean's work and supplies.

EXT. GINA'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Jean rejoins Benny in front of Gina's building.

As they're leaving, Gina comes up the street.

BASQUIAT

(to Benny)

Check you later, man.

BENNY

Hi Gina.

GINA

Hi.

INT - GINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Flowers and groceries are strewn on the counter.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

Over the following MONTAGE we HEAR:

RENE (O.S.)

... 'APT 20'... The church bells would ring
at noon and six a.m.. 24 strokes:
How many times we counted them.
We called our bed the cloud.
And there we'd float.
The bathtub was in the kitchen
and took forever to fill up.
We'd bathe together afterwards.
Oh the countless cigarettes and
take out Chinese food...
The bed was so narrow
Three years we made it fit.
The sheets were green the
sheets were pink the sheets
white linen from the past.
Little home, farewell,
The broken windows
and the bodega on the corner.
Now from my balcony
I look out over all New York...

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jean and Gina are sleeping.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES: As they're turning together in their sleep.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP:

INT. KITCHEN / LIVINGROOM (GINA'S APARTMENT) - DAY

Filled with Jean's paintings.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES: Paintings and objects fill the room.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: "A YEAR AND A HALF LATER EAST 9TH ST."

FADE UP:

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jean watches "The Little Rascals" on TV in the living room. The sound is turned off and a record player PLAYS Gypsy music loudly.

Rolled up in a large drop cloth, Gina is asleep on the floor. Next to her, Jean works on all fours, drawing figures, crowns, and houses.

Working feverishly, he writes "HEY, HEY, HEY" in big clusters, then writes other words: SHARK, IMMORTALITY, JOHN THE REVELATOR, FAME, INK, TEETH, HAWAII SUPERMARKET, POLE STAR, BABOON and TAR.

He has an acoustics manual and Bible open on the floor. He copies the technical blueprints from the manual. He reads the Bible, following the text with a dirty finger. It seems that he watches TV, draws, listens to the music and reads at the same time.

He mixes Liquitex paints and puts some colors on the drawings. He draws a long blue line and carries it over onto the floor. Up the wall. Through the fridge. Across the window.

He takes off his paint-covered clothes and changes into Gina's black slip. He rummages around the room, gathering pieces of his and Gina's clothes.

He spreads the clothes on the floor, and selecting wide brushes with long bristles, picks up the cans of Liquitex paint.

When paint spills on the clothes, he spreads it into shapes.

Gina wakes up. She reaches for one of the painted shirts.

GINA

(in disbelief)

Basquiat, those are my best clothes!!! What are you doing?

BASQUIAT

C'mon, baby, I painted them for you. They're beautiful now.

GINA

I'm going to my parents this weekend. What am I going to wear?

(she begins to cry)

How could you do that to me?

Jean wipes his hands off on his thighs and puts his arms around Gina, holding her.

BASQUIAT

... I'll buy you some new ones.

GINA

You don't have any fucking money..

Jean lets her cry for a moment, then notices the music playing on the stereo - a Gypsy song sung in Spanish.

BASQUIAT

Do you know what he's saying?

GINA

What who's saying?

BASQUIAT

Manzanita....

(translating song)

... if one day I die, and	you read this
piece of paper, I want you	to know how much
I love you. Although I'll	never see you
again, Gypsy, Gypsy, your	hair, your hair,
your face, your face'	

Gina looks up at him.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

'Even though you were never mine
And you never will be
You have a piece of my heart
You have, you have, you have...'

(he reaches down, wiping off
Gina's face)

'Gypsy, Gypsy, your hair, your hair, your
face, your face.'

No longer crying, Gina leans her head against Jean.

We HEAR a CALL from the window:

BENNY (O.S.)

Willie Mays!!! Willie Mays!!!

BASQUIAT

(at the window)

Come on in!

CUT TO:

Benny and two GUYS come barreling into the apartment. Immediate chaos. Benny holds up a packet of drugs and jiggles it temptingly. They make themselves at home. Jean sits with them and starts to chop up the drugs.

Gina gives Jean a look. She stands, still wrapped in the drop cloth. She lets it fall to the floor. She's wearing only her underwear. She walks to the bedroom. Benny watches her.

BASQUIAT

Gina, don't you want any of this? You could use some.

Gina doesn't respond. She comes out of the bedroom with a small suitcase.

GINA

See you later.

She leaves.

Silence.

GUY #1

Nice underwear...

They start to laugh.

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Kneeling on the floor, Jean covers the surface of the refrigerator door with fast, rushing strokes. He mixes paint in a

large soupbowl and dips his hair in the bowl. Pressing his head to the door, he paints with his hair. He stops to examine the marks.

He HITS his head against the door harder and harder.

FADE TO

WHITE

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

CAMERA PULLS BACK: Revealing Jean's eyes. They're open and motionless. His head is tilted toward his chest.

OFF SCREEN WE HEAR the sounds of Gina coming home:

The LOCK turns. The door OPENS.

Gina comes in and drops a bag on the floor.

GINA

Basquiat?

Silence. She picks up the mail from under the door and walks into the room. There's a lump on the floor. It's Jean.

GINA (CONT'D)

Wake up! I'm back!

She shakes his arm. No result. She lifts his head, revealing his painted hair.

She shakes him harder. His body is totally limp.

The whites of his eyes are red; his pupils slowly float up, vanishing.

GINA

Jean, what did you do to yourself?

She listens to his breath, then to his heart.

GINA

(panicking)
Jesus Christ!

She finds heroin sprinkled into some pot on the floor near him.

GINA

(slapping his face)
Don't do this to me.

She shakes him until his eyes unglue. His pupils float into their proper place.

BASQUIAT
... What's the matter?

GINA
(furious)
Oh, God, Basquiat, you scared the shit out of me. How the fuck could you do that to yourself?

BASQUIAT
You're back.

GINA
It's Monday morning.

BASQUIAT
It's not Sunday? I missed you. You shouldn't leave me alone.

GINA
You're blaming me? I had to go see my family.

BASQUIAT
I'm your family.

GINA
Basquiat, what did you take?

Jean tries to pick himself up from the floor. He gets up stiffly, like Pinnocchio. The long sleep made his limbs wooden.

BASQUIAT
Nothing special - just some weed.

He finds an old joint and lights it up.

GINA
Basquiat, don't lie.
(holds up powder)
This is smack.

BASQUIAT
You want some?

He offers her the joint.

EXT. ST. MARK'S PLACE - NIGHT

Jean and Benny walk along, sharing a beer in a brown paper bag.

They approach a DRUG DEALER and exchange money for dope.

Jean finds a discarded window frame in a pile of trash and carries it with him.

They sit down on a stoop. Jean rolls up a dollar bill, empties the dope onto the window, and splits it into two lines. He hands the rolled up bill to Benny, who snorts the line.

Benny shakes his head involuntarily, making a violent face, as though the dope burned a hole in his sinus.

BENNY

We got beat.

BASQUIAT

For real?

Jean takes a taste with his finger... He tastes his tongue and makes a face..

He snorts part of his line, anyway, to make sure.

He frowns.

They continue onwards. Jean still carries the window.

BENNY

You gonna carry that around all night?

BASQUIAT

Yeah... I'll paint on it.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

The party's winding down - hip-hop kids, Lower East Side types. Jean and Benny pass through the room, ignoring the two or three clusters of people - maybe fifteen in all...

Jean encounters a familiar face: an enormous red-haired dealer - ROCKETS (35). They greet each other as friends.

Rockets leads Jean aside. They stand near a wall where a painting hangs ("Flats Fixed"). It bears Jean's three-point crown.

ROCKETS

You did that, didn't you?

Jean shrugs.

BASQUIAT

I gave it to Maripol. She let me stay here
for awhile.

Jean hands him twenty dollars. Rockets hands him two dime bags.
As if thinking better, he hands the bill back to Jean.

ROCKETS

Do one for me and it's free. How's that?

Jean re-pockets his money. He gestures to Rockets as if to say
"fine - it's a deal."

He and Benny sit down across the room and split a bag onto the
window, as before. This time, it's good. They lean back into it,
slumping down into the couch.

Nearby, Rene sits on a couch with THREE STREET KIDS - artists
(who we've seen at Milo's opening). They sit on their knees
looking out a window passing binoculars back and forth.

ARTIST #1 looks through the window with a pair of BINOCULARS. He
points down towards the street, trying to get Rene's attention.

ARTIST #1

Check this out, Rene.

Rene lunges towards the window. The stereo BLARES (Curtis Blow's
"Survival")

RENE

(singing along)

"The name of the game is survival, You
learn it in jail upon your arrival!"

Another ARTIST (#2) a young black man, runs up and tries to turn
down the volume.

Rene grabs his crotch.

ARTIST #2

Chill, man! Be cool! This isn't even my
apartment!

RENE

Oh man, you a FINE nigga! You know that?

ARTIST #2

Cut it out, man! And don't be callin' me
that shit!

ANGLE ON:

Benny is now alone on the couch. He nods out.

RENE

(noticing him)

Oh my, there goes the neighborhood. Who's
house is this, anyway?

Artist #2 is still mad at Rene.

RENE (CONT'D)

(to Artist #2)

That's what I like about you straight boys.
You're so sensitive!!!

(resumes singing)

"The name of the game is survival,
Survival! Survival! only the strong
survive"

ARTIST #1

Rene! Come here, man!

RENE

I gotta go pee.

Rene weaves across the room. Suddenly, he stops cold. He's
staring at Jean's painting. He doesn't move.

RENE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Who did this?

(beat - louder)

Who did this?

ARTIST #2

I don't know. I told you, this isn't my
apartment.

ARTIST #3

I know who did that. That's Jean Michel's.
He's right here, man...

He turns to look for Jean.

ARTIST #3

Fuck, man, where'd he go? Where's Jean?

Benny looks around ineffectually and shrugs.

RENE

(to himself)

It's fucking amazing. Motherfucker's got to put a crown on it.

ARTIST #1

(yelling from the window)

Rene, man, check this out. Whoa... He's kinda cute.

Rene looks to him and back at the painting. He takes one last look.

He stumbles towards the window and grabs the binoculars from Artist #1..

We look through the binoculars' POV at a GUY coming down the street. He's wearing all black, cowboy boots, and sunglasses.

RENE

Naaaa. Poor thing has a little dick.

ARTIST #2

How do you know?

RENE

Just look at him.

(Rene hands the binoculars to him)

Little silver thingies on his cowboy boots?
Honey, I don't think so.

He looks around the room again as if looking for Jean.

ARTIST #3

Whoa - check it out. It's him!

Rene grabs binoculars.

BINOCULARS POV:

Jean pauses before one of his own graffiti pieces:

"PLUSH SAFE, HE THINK"

Rene watches in awe. Jean, moving a bit slowly, `signs' his tag

with the copyright sign. He walks off.

RENE
MOTHAFUCKAH!

ARTIST #2
That's the same guy who did this painting.

RENE
I know that. Don't let him get away.

He hands the binoculars to Artist #3 and runs towards the door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

BINOCULARS POV

We watch as Rene looks frantically for Jean, but can't spot him. Finally he sees Jean's hair-do bobbing up and down a block away. He runs towards it.

RENE
Hey, wait up!!!

Huffing and puffing, he catches up.

RENE
You heard of Albert Milo. I made that
niggah. I'm Rene Ricard. Didn't you read
"Not About Albert Milo?" I know who to
hype. Baby, I'm gonna make you a star.

BASQUIAT
Can you put me in the ring with him?

RENE
I can put you in the ring with him. Even
book the dates.
(beat)
But those big boys know how to fight. They

could make you look real sissy.
(they laugh)
I was looking at that painting upstairs.
It's the first time a picture made me
embarrassed to own anything.
(beat)
So what's your real name? 'Samo?'

BASQUIAT
Jean Michel Basquiat.

They shake hands.

RENE

Sounds famous already.

INT. PS 1 SHOW - DAY

INSERT: A huge poster reads:

**"NEW YORK / NEW WAVE
100 ARTISTS"**

CLOSE ON: A HAMMER, POUNDING

Jean pounds a nail into one of his pieces, nailing it directly onto the wall. Everyone stares.

RENE

Oh child... You got no respect. Didn't anyone teach you how to mount paintings?

Rene smiles. Jean finishes pounding the last piece into the wall.

CAMERA pulls back to reveal several of Jean's paintings - found objects with paint on them.

RENE (CONT'D)

This is a very important season in New York. One's public appearance is absolute.

(beat - a man approaches)

Oh!!! Louise!!! I'd like you to meet Jean Michel Basquiat -

(beat)

SAMO. This is Henry Geldzahler.

A crowd begins to gather around the work.

HENRY

Ohh... SAMO. I've heard a lot about you. I love your graffiti.

BASQUIAT

I was a kid then.

HENRY

(to Rene)

How much are these?

RENE

You or the museum?

HENRY

It's for me.

RENE

Five.

HENRY

I'll take it.

Henry leaves.

RENE

That's five thousand dollars.

(hissing to Jean)

He's from the Metropolitan Museum of Art so
suck my pussy, you star.

LATER

There seems to be a buzz about Jean already. People gather around
his paintings.

Gina arrives. She looks great.

BASQUIAT

You look fucking beautiful, beautiful.

GINA

Well thanks!

ANNINA NOSEI, a sophisticated, well-groomed woman appears at
Jean's side. She takes in his paintings.

As Jean, Rene, and Annina talk, Gina is left out.

RENE

This is Jean Michel, whose work I told you
about.

ANNINA NOSEI

(to Jean)

Rene hasn't stopped talking about your
paintings. Haven't I seen you in my
gallery?

BASQUIAT

No.

ANNINA NOSEI

(to Rene)
You haven't been by lately.

RENE

I didn't have the subway fare. My Medicare ran out.

ANNINA NOSEI

(to Jean)
How do you come up with all those words you put over everything?

BASQUIAT

I don't know.

Jean sees Bruno and turns his back to her.

Bruno looks at the paintings with a smile... He gives a cheerful nod to Annina.

BRUNO

You're doing well.

He leaves. Annina's impressed that Jean knows Bruno.

ANNINA NOSEI

I'd love to see some more of your work...
Where's your studio?

BASQUIAT

You name it, I paint there.

ANNINA NOSEI

Well, I don't want to get mugged on a Bowery street corner. Maybe I could find a place for you to work. Take my card.

BASQUIAT

You want a drink?

He produces a pint bottle in a paper sack.

ANNINA NOSEI

No thanks.

(to Rene)

But I'd like one of these paintings.

She walks off.

GINA

Who's that?

RENE

You kidding? That's Annina Nosei. Jean's been in her gallery a thousand times.

(to Jean)

You slut. How do you know Bruno Bischofberger?

(to Gina)

He's only the biggest art dealer in Europe.

BASQUIAT

I had lunch with him once.

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Jean and Gina lay in bed.

BASQUIAT

Which island of Hawaii do you want our house to be on? Maui? Kauai? Molokai?

GINA

(a little upset)

I hadn't thought about it.

BASQUIAT

(in perfect Hawaiian)

Oahu, Lanai, Niihau, Kahoolawee -

GINA

Staten Island would be ok.

Beat. Silence.

Jean can't sleep. He stares at the ceiling.

BASQUIAT

Do you wanna marry me?

Beat.

No reply.

Gina's asleep.

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - LATER (NIGHT)

Quietly, Jean kneels on the floor of the kitchen. He paints on an old window.

He draws figures of three people sitting at a table - obviously a family. He crosses out one person and paints a dog under the table.

He crosses everything out.

He mixes the paint in a large bowl and starts again.

Again, he crosses everything out.

INT - GINA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jean continues to work. He's wearing pajamas and a bathrobe.

Gina enters, waking up.

She looks at the painting.

GINA

Kind of a family portrait.

Jean moves to add something. She stops him.

GINA (CONT'D)

It looks done.

BASQUIAT

Think so?

He pauses.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

... babies.

GINA

You mean babies with you?

BASQUIAT

What's wrong with me?

GINA

You're your own baby.

Jean paints out the image.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

GINA

Who is it?

ANNINA NOSEI (O.S)

Annina Nosei.

GINA

Who?

Jean jumps up and locks himself in the bathroom. Gina goes to the door, unlocks the chain, and looks out.

GINA (CONT'D)

(through the crack)

Hello? Oh. Come in.

She opens the door.

ANNINA NOSEI

Is Jean Michel here?

GINA

No.

Closed in the bathroom, Jean smiles while eavesdropping.

ANNINA NOSEI

I'm here to see some work.

Annina starts noticing all the work around her. Gina hands her a stack of drawings.

ANNINA NOSEI (CONT'D)

These are great.

GINA

Aren't they?

ANNINA NOSEI

How much for these five?

GINA

You should talk to him about this.

Annina contains her excitement.

ANNINA NOSEI

(continuing to stare at the work)

Um... Do Rene and Jean have a contract together?

We see Jean in the bathroom looking at himself in the mirror with a bird's nest on his head.

ANNINA NOSEI (CONT'D)

I'm interested in showing Jean's work.

GINA

I really think you should talk to him about this.

Jean pops out of the bathroom.

BASQUIAT

When?

ANNINA NOSEI

How about right now?

She opens the door.

Unnoticed, Gina starts for the bedroom.

GINA

(calling back)

Be ready in a minute!

CUT TO:

THE DOOR SLAMS

As Jean exits with Annina.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Jean waits in a taxi in front of Benny's apartment.

BASQUIAT

Honk the horn again, will you please?

The DRIVER obliges. The back of the cab is loaded with all his belongings. Boxes piled with junk. Bags of new painting supplies.

Benny emerges from his building and jumps into the cab.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

You're late.

(to cabby)

One-fourteen Prince.

The cab pulls out. Jean lights a joint. and smokes it furiously. He doesn't pass it to Benny.

BENNY

What's the rush, John Henry?

BASQUIAT

I ain't John Henry.

BENNY

Good.

BASQUIAT

What's your fuckin' problem, anyway?

Benny holds out his hand for the joint.

BENNY

(inhaling)

I don't really have any problems.

BASQUIAT

Good. What do you have?

BENNY

What's your fuckin' problem? You get a girlfriend and a little attention and then start acting all uppity with me.

BASQUIAT

(mortified)

'Uppity?' Like as in 'uppity nigger?'

He snaps his finger for the joint back.

BENNY

That's not how I meant it.

(beat)

For all you know, you might just be a flash in the pan! You can never tell.

BASQUIAT

Hey fuck you! I deserve this shit. You're just jealous 'cause it ain't happening to you!

The cab stops for a red light. Benny gets out. He doesn't say a word. Jean doesn't look at him. The cab sails off.

EXT. ANNINA NOSEI GALLERY - DAY

It stops in front of the gallery. From outside, we see Annina conversing on the phone. She looks up and opens the door for him.

INT. STAIRWELL - BLACK.

Off screen we HEAR Jean walking down the stairs.

ANNINA NOSEI

I've got to find the switch.

INT - BASEMENT, ANNINA'S - DAY

Annina flips on a light.

ANNINA NOSEI

Here it is.

Jean looks around him. He's in a large, empty cement-floored room lit by fluorescent lights.

INT. BASEMENT, ANNINA'S - (LATER) - DAY

Jean bends over, beginning several canvases. He pours paint on them - kind of like photographs we've seen of Jackson Pollock. We HEAR Miles Davis' "Flamenco Sketches."

INT - BASEMENT, ANNINA'S - DAY (LATER)

GRANDMASTER FLASH'S "WHITE LINES" fills the room.

The walls are covered with half-finished, unstretched CANVASES. Two or three more lie on the floor.

He works like a maniac, buzzing back and forth from one painting to another, adding figures, crossing out words, all the while smoking and eating cookies. The crumbs fall onto the paintings. He walks on them.

Every so often, he refers to a book of DaVinci drawings. Torn pages litter the floor beneath the book.

We hear someone THUMPING down the stairs.

It's Rene. A PUPPY follows him.

He dumps a huge load of paint supplies, art books, and carryout ribs. The puppy sniffs around happily, licking at Jean and walking over the paintings, wagging his tail.

He stops the tape player and inserts some Persian music.

Jean empties some foil-wrapped bags of coke. He cuts a line of coke on a foil plate.

Rene starts reading from a poem he's evidently written:

RENE

3rd night I called him 'boy'
He sed "don't call me 'boy'" "Well
Then don't call me 'Boss'" That
Was the end for us and I've
Been seeing him for 2 1/2 years.
In kangaroo court I want to be

Able to say I never kept a
Slave. But he tricked me in
To Tying him up and busting his
Face. He'll jump up at my Trial
Yelling 'He wupped me gud.'

Jean warms the plate 'til the coke crackles, and then "chases the dragon," sucking the smoke through a straw.

He offers it to Rene, who refuses. He lights and hands Rene the joint. Rene takes a hit. Jean takes it back.

Jean starts to work again.

The PUPPY runs around, chasing after him, getting in his way, running across the paintings. Jean laughs, playing tag. The puppy gets a hold of Jean's sleeve. It unravels about ten feet.

While Jean's playing, Rene spots a painting with the words "Famous Negro Athletes."

RENE

Oh man! That's one looks famous already.

Without hearing him, Jean walks towards the painting and with a swipe, paints out what Rene is pointing to.

RENE (CONT'D)

You are a willful boy. How'm I s'posed to write about you if you keep changing everything?

The phone RINGS... Jean ignores it. Rene gets it -

RENE (CONT'D)

Uh huhh... Band practice?
(to Jean)

It's Benny. He wants to know why you're not at band practice...?

BASQUIAT

(quietly)

Fuck...

(to Rene)

I forgot about that.

He sets his brush down.

Rene hold the phone against his leg.

RENE

Fuck band practice... If you're gonna be a painter you're gonna have to break a few hearts - you don't wanna be like Tony Bennett..

BASQUIAT

Tony Bennett... What do you mean?

RENE

Singing on stage and painting in your spare time.

BASQUIAT

I didn't know Tony Bennett painted.

RENE

My point exactly.

Jean picks up the phone... All he hears is a DIAL TONE.

RENE (CONT'D)

So keep painting.

BASQUIAT

Yes, Boss.

(beat)

If you're so smart, why are you here with me in this basement?

RENE

You're news. I want the scoop. I write it down. When I speak, no one believes me. But when I write it down, people know it's true.

(beat)

There's never been a black painter in art history that's been considered really important, you know?

BASQUIAT

So what?

RENE

So shut up and keep painting..

BASQUIAT

(touched)

What time is it?

RENE

5:11.

Jean regards a near-finished painting. He writes "5:11" on it. He crosses it out and re-writes it, "Rene 5:11." Rene looks pleased.

BASQUIAT

That one's for you.

RENE

Thanks... I'll take it tonight.

BASQUIAT

I can't. After the show.

Jean continues painting. Rene slumps down onto the floor, happy - a parasite content to have a host, impressed with Jean's limitless energy. Rene closes his eyes.

BLACK

INT. ANNINA'S BASEMENT - LATER

Jean is bent over his work. He looks to see a pair of legs. They belong to Albert Milo.

BASQUIAT

Hey - it's the big A.M..

ALBERT MILO

Rene's been telling me about your work.

Milo takes his time looking at the paintings.

Jean continues to work, never wanting to appear impressed by anyone. He walks on top of the paintings.

ALBERT MILO (CONT'D)

Is this finished yet?

BASQUIAT

I don't know.

ALBERT MILO

When's your show?

BASQUIAT

Not sure. How was yours?

ALBERT MILO

I haven't decided yet.

(beat)

Rene, you wanna come over to the studio tomorrow. I wanna make a painting of you.

RENE

How about now?

Rene shrugs to Jean. He prepares to leave.

ALBERT MILO

See you at your opening. Thanks.

Albert and Rene begin to ascend the stairs. Jean continues painting. The dog leaves with Rene and Albert.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Ohhh, Albert Milo, what a pleasure to meet you.

Jean's brush stops.

ALBERT MILO (O.S.)

This is Rene Ricard.

Jean paints over the words "Rene 5:11."

We hear FOOTSTEPS COMING DOWN THE STAIRS. The woman continues -

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

We're Tom and Cynthia Kruger - nice to have met you.

JEAN'S POV

We see Annina's legs coming down the stairs.

REVEAL

A man wearing a pin-striped suit and gold-rimmed glasses. The woman is wrapped in a cashmere shawl.

ANNINA NOSEI (O.S)

Tom and Cynthia Kruger.

BASQUIAT (O.S)

I know.

We SEE that Jean continues to paint, looking down.

ANNINA NOSEI

This is Jean Michel Basquiat.

(beat)

You've seen the SAMO graffiti everywhere.
That's his. This is the true voice of the
gutter.

As she speaks, Jean squirms. He grabs a banana from a fruit bowl. Without peeling it, he takes a big bite. And another. And another. Everyone looks uncomfortable. Annina starts showing them the paintings.

CYNTHIA KRUGER

We've seen the graffiti. I work on Wall Street. And I've heard wonderful things about the paintings. Everybody's talking about you.

BASQUIAT

Yeah.

He looks up at them, eating the banana.

ANNINA NOSEI

Here's a very good example of his recent work that's not spoken for yet.

(beat)

He's got to work in a basement. He's got so much energy that if he worked in a place with a window, he'd jump right through it. Most of these are reserved already. After this week, this work will not be available.

TOM KRUGER

(to his wife)

... I don't know.... This one's nice, but I don't know if I could live with it. That green is so... institutional.

He (Kruger) looks up to see two KIDS enter - young black artists, one of whom we saw with Rene at the loft party.

They walk right into the middle of the room, completely oblivious to the presence of Annina and the Krugers..

KID #1

(enthusiastically)

Yo, man, you're a damn lucky nigger selling this shit!

BASQUIAT

You like it?

KID #1

Not bad. Yeah, I do.

The Krugers hem and haw in front of the painting next to Jean.

CYNTHIA KRUGER

I'm fascinated by his choice of crossing out words that way.

ANNINA NOSEI

Yes, well, they are more meaningful in their absence, no?

KID #1

(to Jean, joking)

What does it mean?

Jean paints the words "Rene 5:11" back into a painting. They ignore the kid..

CYNTHIA KRUGER

I like this one, but that green...

Suddenly, we see LEGS coming down the stairs. It's Gina. Everyone looks at her.

BASQUIAT

Y'want me to make it a nice shit brown?

TOM KRUGER

Beg pardon?

Gina hadn't expected to find herself in the middle of this scene.

BASQUIAT

Hi. This is Gina.

Annina nods to her.

Gina nods to the group.

CYNTHIA KRUGER

They're something like Dubuffet's...
That... childlike quality.

Gina tries to connect with Jean. He's cold.

CYNTHIA KRUGER (CONT'D)
(to her husband and Annina)

I can't make up my mind.

TOM KRUGER
I like this one. If it were just another color..

BASQUIAT
Get a fucking decorator. If you buy one, you'll have to change your whole lives - maybe even sell your kids!
(to Annina)
These paintings aren't even done yet!!!

He sets his brush down. As he leaves -

TOM KRUGER (O.S.)
I think we'll take the green one.

HOLD ON:

Gina, left standing in the middle of this.

INT. MCDONALDS - DAY

CLOSE ON McDonald's COUNTERMAN. He smiles.

BASQUIAT
I'll take three big Macs, two chocolate shakes, two orders of fries, and an apple pie.

COUNTERMAN
You want three Big Macs, two chocolate shakes, two orders of fries, and an apple pie.

A line begins forming behind Jean.

BASQUIAT
Forget it .I'll take six, no, seven chocolate shakes, an order of fries, a Big Mac, and two apple pies.

COUNTERMAN

You only want one Big Mac?

The people in line are beginning to get impatient.

BASQUIAT

Yeah... And make it three apple pies.

EXT. SOHO STREET - DAY

Jean leans on a fire hydrant, eating a Big Mac.

A pink scarf blows on the wind right in front of his face. He catches it.

A BOMBSHELL BLONDE arrives with her hand outstretched to retrieve it.

BIG PINK

How can I ever thank you?

BASQUIAT

(with a smile)

I'd like to squeeze your titties.

He offers her a Big Mac.

BIG PINK

Come on.

BASQUIAT

Wanna Mac?

BIG PINK

No, I'd like the scarf.

BASQUIAT

Have a Mac.

BIG PINK

I don't eat junk food.

BASQUIAT

Oh. I didn't know. I'll take you to the best restaurant in town.

(beat)

You'll miss a great meal and I'll keep the scarf, anyway. What's your name?

BIG PINK

You're a fast mover.

BASQUIAT

No name? That's ok. I'll just call you Big Pink.

A man sleeping on the ground with a beehive of paper bags on his head and three overcoats sticks out into the sidewalk.

Jean leaves the McDonald's bag near his head as he walks down the street with the girl.

INT. GINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jean enters the apartment.

GINA

Hi.

BASQUIAT

Hi.

GINA

What's that?

BASQUIAT

A present I picked up for you.

Gina holds the scarf up and looks at it.

GINA

It's beautiful. Thanks.

As she holds it up he puts it around her neck and kisses her.

BASQUIAT

(tenderly)

You look like an angel.

INT. ANNINA NOSEI GALLERY - NIGHT

Silence.

CLOSE UP PAINTING

We read the words:

"BOOM #2

A CAT POURING TACKS ON ITS TONGUE"

SOMEONE (the big red-haired dealer we met earlier) walks in front

of us.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal a crowd in a gallery. It is literally filled with people. Again - all this takes place in silence.

We begin to HEAR Peggy Lee's "Is That All There Is?" It colors the motion of the crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRINCE ST (BET. MERCER AND WOOSTER) - DUSK

Jean walks down the street. He's got on a new set of clothes and he listens to a Walkman. We HEAR Miles Davis' "Flamenco Sketches."

JEAN'S POV

We MOVE down Prince St. and take a left on West Broadway. We approach a huge crowd. We get closer and closer until we are immersed in it.

The crowd realizes Jean's amongst them. People start approaching him. Someone removes the headphones.

The DIN of the crowd replaces the music. Amongst the normal crowd chatter, we hear friends' calling out:

VOICES IN CROWD

Jean!!! Jean Michel!!!

INT. ANNINA NOSEI GALLERY

Annina beckons to him. Beyond her, he sees Albert, Andy, and Bruno. He's being escorted or maybe just pushed - it's hard to tell. Each step of the way, he's pounced upon by INDIVIDUALS we've never met. The room is wall-to-wall with people. People are swept along in currents.

MAN

(wildly enthusiastic)

Jean, man!!! Let's make a record!

WOMAN

(slyly, intimately)

You finally did it.

MAN #2

(pointing to Jean, sneering)

He's so fulla shit.

MAN #3 (O.S.)

How much is he getting for these?

Jean walks up to Andy Warhol.

BASQUIAT

Andy, man, thanks for coming. I'd like to paint your jacket.

ANDY WARHOL

My jacket? Gee, great...

(he Polaroids Jean)

Your show looks great. Quite a turnout. You look great. You kids. You drink red wine with fish. You can do anything! Make paintings in the basement of your gallery? First time I've heard of that!

They are approached by Mary Boone, a short woman in high heels and an Armani suit).

ANDY WARHOL (CONT'D)

Jean Michel, this is Mary Boone. She's got the great new gallery.

BASQUIAT

Yeah, I met her already.

MARY BOONE

(shaking Jean's hand)

You should be pleased. It's a great show...I'm having a dinner later at Mr. Chow's for Albert. You should come.

In the background, we see Annina watching.

ANDY WARHOL

You'll like it. Everyone'll be there.

Annina walks over to Jean with a COUPLE.

ANNINA NOSEI

Jean, your parents are here.

BASQUIAT

Hi Dad. Hi Nora.

NORA

Congratulations.

BASQUIAT

Thanks for coming.

Rene appears out of the crowd.

ANNINA NOSEI

(continuing to Jean's father)

You must be very proud.

FATHER

I am!

RENE

How does it feel to have a genius in the family?

FATHER

It feels... good!

Jean notices Benny across the room. He slows down and waves.

Jean sees Gina across the room wearing the scarf.

Just beyond her, he sees Big Pink approaching.

There must be ten people between them.

BASQUIAT

(to Rene)

I'll be right back.

He moves towards her. Suddenly, directly in front of him are the Krugers.

TOM KRUGER

We love our painting.

BASQUIAT

Which painting?

TOM KRUGER

The green one.

BASQUIAT

Oh yeah.

CYNTHIA KRUGER

We got a couch to match.

TOM KRUGER

She's only kidding!

Looking past the Krugers, Jean looks for Gina. He sees her. His

path is blocked.

He presses forward, looking for Gina, getting caught in the crowd.

Jean strains to keep an eye on Gina and Big Pink..

Benny arrives at Jean's side holding a bottle of Jack Daniels and a shot glass.

BENNY

Willie Mays. A Toast.

Jean brushes past him.

BASQUIAT

Not now, ok?

Benny is left standing next to Andy holding the bottle.

Jean manages to advance a few more feet through the crowd, then runs smack into Rockets, his drug dealer.

ROCKETS

Jean Michel, my man. Nice party. Should we step into my office?

Nearby, Benny sees this meeting and walks off, disgusted, thinking this is why Jean gave him the brush off.

BASQUIAT

That's alright. I'm cool now.

Jean looks off and sees Big Pink fingering the scarf, saying something to Gina.

Gina slaps her in the face.

Jean tries to get around the dealer.

Gina turns to leave. She catches Jean's eye.

She walks out.

ROCKETS

A gift! I was just trying to give you a gift!

The dealer palms something to Jean.

BASQUIAT

I gotta go.

Jean steps away from Rockets, but is trapped in the crowd.
Rockets looks after him with disappointment.

Rene arrives with, Andy, Bruno, and a PHOTOGRAPHER.

RENE

(edging his way in)
This guy wants a picture.

They shrug and crowd in - Jean, Andy, and Rene. The photographer gets them to squeeze closer and closer.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Of the painters, please.

There's not enough room. Rene accidentally gets pushed out of frame.

Rene fumes. Albert Milo arrives with his parents (JACK AND ESTHER MILO). They are a nice Jewish couple in their 70's.

BASQUIAT

He said 'of the painters!' Hey - Albert!
Get in the picture!

Albert crowds in. The photographer SNAPS a picture and the FLASH blinds everyone momentarily.

ALBERT MILO

Hey, Jean, I'd like you to meet my
wife....and my parents. Mom, Dad, this is
Jean Michel Basquiat.

Jean pulls out a joint and lights it as if it were a cigarette.
He offers it to Albert, who takes a hit.

ESTHER MILO

(frowning at her son)
Don't do that.
(beat)
Hello, Jean.

JACK MILO

Hi, John... Are your parents here?

BASQUIAT

Well.
(inhaling)
My dad's here with his wife. My mom
couldn't make it.

He offers the joint to Albert's mother.

ESTHER MILO

(waving it away)

No thanks.

Everyone laughs.

BRUNO

(to Jean)

I'd like to do a show with you.

(pointing to "Rene 5:11"
painting)

I'm especially interested in that one. I'd
like to buy it for myself.

Jean spots the very word on the painting ("Rene 5:11") and
freezes for a second.

BASQUIAT

I wasn't gonna sell this one.

He looks around the room for Rene, but doesn't see him. Bruno
remains smiling, waiting for an answer.

BRUNO

You shouldn't have put it in the show. This
is the one I absolutely have to have. I
really love it.

BASQUIAT

Sure, ok..

Jean wants out. He feels compromised.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

Do you think I could borrow your limousine?
I'll get it back to you in an hour.

BRUNO

It's OK. Just have him bring you to dinner
at Mr. Chow's later. We'll be there.

ANDY WARHOL

Bye, Jean.

Jean makes his way through the crowd, as we see images of the
crowd and fragments of paintings. As he nears the door, he feels
his arm pulled.

RENE

(hissing)
You fucking little whore! You sold my painting! I'm gonna tell you something, brother - when you're climbing up the ladder of success, don't kick out the rungs! Believe that shit.

BASQUIAT

I'll make you another one.

RENE

Forget it.

He pulls out a scrap of paper and starts writing.

BASQUIAT

Rene -

Rene shushes him... He hisses loudly, like a cat.

RENE

SHHHHHH. Later.

(speaking to himself)

"What is it about art, anyway....."

Jean pauses. He turns around and surveys the room once more.

A blink.

Silence.

We see the crowd in SLOW MOTION.

Everyone's eyes are shut.

RENE (O.S.; CONT'D)

... that we give it so much importance?
Artists are respected by the poor because what they do is an honest way to get out of the slum using one's sheer self as the medium. The money earned is proof pure and simple of the value of that individual...
The Artist.

INT. / EXT. GALLERY - NIGHT

The CAMERA rises higher and higher over the crowd and follows Jean as he makes his way toward the street.

We begin to DISSOLVE into a MONTAGE of stills of ARTISTS:

RENE (O.S. CONT'D)

The picture a mother's son does in jail hangs on her wall as proof that beauty is possible even in the most wretched. And this is a much different idea than the fancier notion that art is a scam and a rip-off. But you could never explain to someone who uses God's gift to enslave that you have used God's gift to be free."

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jean enters a waiting limo. It pulls away from the curb.

Rene finishes as the limo threads its way through the night-lit, twinkling city.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

The DRIVER is the young Rasta we saw earlier outside Ballato's driving Bruno and Andy.

Jean slumps in the back seat.

The driver can't help staring in the rearview mirror.

DRIVER

I really... admire you.

BASQUIAT

Me? Why?

DRIVER

You did it! You made it. I'm a painter, too.

BASQUIAT

That's great.

DRIVER

Would you check out my studio some time?

BASQUIAT

Sure. I'd be glad to.

The limo pulls over.

DRIVER

Here?

Quickly, Jean gets out of the limo. He leaves the door open.

The DRIVER watches as Jean talks to two DRUG DEALERS.

Jean jumps back into the limo.

The driver pulls away. In the rearview mirror, he sees Jean separate a bag from a bundle of ten. He rips it open and snorts directly from it.

He lays his head back and takes a deep breath.

BASQUIAT

(calm, relieved)

What's your name, man?

DRIVER

They call me Steve, but I prefer Shenge.

BASQUIAT

Nice to meet you, Shenge. Want a job?

INT. MR. CHOW'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An elegant Chinese restaurant on the Upper East Side. The dining room is split level with a mezzanine reserved for celebrities and special friends of the owner.

At the podium, the MAITRE'D approaches.

MAITRE'D

Good evening.

From behind the Maitre'd on the mezzanine we see Bruno waving to Jean.

In the dining room on the lower level sit Annina and Rene. Nearby, at another, smaller table, are seated DAVID MCDERMOTT and PETER MCGOUGH, two artists dressed in Victorian attire.

Annina beckons him.

Rene looks away from him and talks to a WAITER. Jean waves to

Annina and continues towards Bruno's table.

Seated at a large table are Andy, Bruno, Albert Milo, his wife and parents, Henry Geldzahler, MELINA PORTOS (a young heiress) and FRANCESCO and ALBA CLEMENTE and Mary Boone. Dinner's already served.

At the large table, everyone watches as Milo makes a portrait of Francesco in a beautiful leatherbound book. It belongs to Mr. Chow, who is nearby at the bar.

ANDY WARHOL

Hi, Jean.

He motions to Mr. Chow to set a chair for Jean between Mary Boone and himself.

BRUNO

Jean, everyone loved your show.

As Jean is seated, Andy and Jack Milo resume conversation -

JACK MILO

Nixon lives in Saddle River, New York.

ANDY WARHOL

Saddle River's in New Jersey.

JACK MILO

Saddle River, New York!

ANDY WARHOL

It's in New Jersey.

JACK MILO

New York.

ANDY WARHOL

I think it's in New Jersey.

JACK MILO

It's in New York.

ANDY WARHOL

Oh, I didn't know that.

CLOSE UP: Jean smiles at Andy's diplomacy.

Albert finishes drawing his portrait: it's Francesco with his arm around a headless torso.

ALBERT MILO

(to Francesco)

You finish it.

He pushes the book across the table.

Francesco begins to draw.

MARY BOONE

(to Jean)

I hear your show was sold out already.
There's a very important collector who's
interested in some of your works.

BASQUIAT

Bring him over sometime. I have some other
stuff to show him.

Annina watches from the other table as Jean talks to Mary.

Francesco finishes his drawing.

Albert takes the book and passes it to Jean.

ALBERT MILO (CONT'D)

Go on, take it..

Jean takes it. Mr. Chow watches his book change hands.

Jean takes a bowl of moo-shoo pork in front of him and dumps it
onto the book. Then he uses a piece of pork to draw a head.

Suddenly, there's a shrill, familiar voice.

RENE

I'd like a glass of your best champagne,
please?

(reading)

This is an enormously important season in
New York, and to make a false step could
have severe repercussions for years. We are
no longer collecting art, we're buying
individuals.

ANDY WARHOL

Oh shut up, Rene.

RENE

Everything's over your head, Andy. Even Mr.
Chow's menu.

(beat - to Jean)

Thanks for not inviting me

He leans over everyone and helps himself to some spears of
asparagus.

ANGLE ON

Esther Milo, watching.

RENE (CONT'D)

I'm starving. You can't buy advertising
like this. This is the most glamorous
dinner you'll have here this fall. How
about some of that imitation crab?

MR. CHOW

I'm not paying for the drawing with crab.
It's a present to my friends. It's my
birthday.

Jean finishes his drawing - a big beautiful head that fills the screen.

Rene grabs it from him. He holds it up for everyone to see.

RENE

Isn't he great? Thanks, Jean.

He rips the page from the book.

RENE (CONT'D)

He owes me one.

Everyone's face drops. Mr. Chow grabs his book. He motions to a couple WAITERS -

MR. CHOW

You're too much, Rene. Get this guy out of here.

RENE

I haven't eaten yet!!!

The waiters grab Rene's arms.

RENE (CONT'D)

Hands off me, you faggots! I'm going. I'm going...I've kept Diana Vreeland waiting too long, anyway.

ANDY WARHOL

Wow... That was a nice drawing, too, Jean.
Maybe you should do another one.

MR. CHOW

(exhausted)
Some other time.

Spontaneously, David McDermott climbs onto the tabletop downstairs and sings "Paris Je T'aime."

As he belts it out in a theatrical falsetto, he glides over glasses and plates, executing a leap to another table in mid-song.

The restaurant staff and OTHER DINNER GUESTS watch, agape.

CLOSE UP - DAVID'S SHOES.

As David dances, Annina walks over to the table, greeting people and saying goodnight.

ANNINA NOSEI

(to Jean)

It's great that people are interested, but if anyone's going to buy anything, I'll handle it for you. Everything goes through the gallery, even if they come to your studio.

BASQUIAT

Sure.

Annina leaves.

Jean leans back in his chair, taking in this splendid new world. He pulls out a joint, lights up, inhales with pleasure, closes his eyes and smiles.

SUPER OVER HIS FACE: "FOUR YEARS LATER"

SCREEN GOES BLACK

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

... had twenty-three one man shows, been in forty three group shows from Zurich to Tokyo..

FADE UP

INT. GREAT JONES STREET LOFT - DAY

Note: The following scene is shot in documentary style.

INTERVIEWER (O.S, CONT'D)

... had over fifty articles written about you, switched galleries - how many times? - DJ'd in the hottest clubs -

Jean looks out the window, yawns and rubs his eyes. He now sports dreadlocks bundled into groups of spikes sticking out of his head. He wears a wrinkled Wesleyan College T-shirt, paint-splattered jeans, and no shoes; just out of bed, it would seem.

An INTERVIEWER - a balding Brit with all the humor of a bank clerk - tries to buddy up with Jean on camera.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

... one of the youngest artists ever to be included in the Whitney Biennial, also produced a rap record. It's said you're quite the ladies man - even dated Madonna for a couple months!!!

(takes a breath)

All at the ripe old age of 24. One might ask: is there anything left for Jean Michel Basquiat to do?

Jean and the interviewer face each other in front of one of Jean's paintings. Jean stares at the interviewer, incredulous.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

What is it that gets you out of bed in the morning?

(nervous laugh)

BASQUIAT

I hate this. Turn that off.

Jean walks off camera and disappears into his bedroom.

Shenge (the former limo driver, now working as Jean's assistant) assembles stretchers.

SUPER: "GREAT JONES STREET, 1985"

A CAMERA CREW waits in the room. Jean returns.

INTERVIEWER

We're running a little late.

He signals to the crew that he's beginning.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

(to crew)

Ready?

He points to some scribbled words on the canvas.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

... Can you... decipher this for us?

BASQUIAT

Decipher?

INTERVIEWER

Yes. What do they... stand for?

BASQUIAT

They're just words.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I understand - but where do you take them from?

BASQUIAT

Where? Do you ask Miles where he got that note from? Where do you take your words from?

(beat)

Everywhere.

INTERVIEWER

(pointing to a detail)

What are they?

BASQUIAT

(smiling mischievously)

Leeches. A long list of leeches.

(looking at some frames

Shenge's working on)

It looks good like that.

INTERVIEWER

Hmmm. And 'Parasites.'

(beat)

You seem to be a Primal Expressionist.

BASQUIAT

You mean like an ape?

He grabs a huge double mouthful of French Fries and washes them down with champagne..

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

(chewing, spilling)

A primate?

INTERVIEWER

Well, you said that.

(beat - looks at notes)

You've got a lot of references from

Leonardo da Vinci, don't you?

BASQUIAT

Oh, that's a "Leonardo's Greatest Hits" painting. You like it?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, but as a black painter -

BASQUIAT

I use a lot of colors - not only black.

INTERVIEWER

What?

BASQUIAT

I'm not black.

INTERVIEWER

You're not?

BASQUIAT

Not what?

INTERVIEWER

Not black.

BASQUIAT

No, I'm Haitian-Puerto Rican.

The BUZZER sounds. He signals for Steve not to answer the door.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, yes... Let's talk about that.... your roots... Your father is from Haiti, isn't he?

BASQUIAT

(growing weary)

Yup.

INTERVIEWER

Hmmmm. Interesting. And when you grew up were there any primitives hanging in your home?

BASQUIAT

We don't hang them at home, y'know - just in the streets..

INTERVIEWER

I see..

(beat)
And... How do you respond to being called -
hmmm...

(peruses some notes)
- yes, "the pickaninny of the art world."

BASQUIAT

(smiles - hurt, stunned)
Who said that?

INTERVIEWER

Why, that's from Time Magazine.

BASQUIAT

No, he said I was the Eddie Murphy of the
art world. He said the Eddie Murphy.

INTERVIEWER

Is it true that your mother resides in a
mental institution?

Jean walks off camera like he just received a punch in the
stomach.

The filming of the interview becomes increasingly erratic.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

Let me... just... open something up here.
You come from a nice, middle class,
respectable home. Your father is an
accountant. Why did you at one time live in
a cardboard box in Tompkins Square?

Jean walks back into frame.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

Or rather, do you think you're being
exploited or are you yourself exploiting
the white image of the black artist from
the ghetto?

BASQUIAT

Are those the only two possibilities?

(cramming a French Fry into
his mouth)

You wanna French fry?

INTERVIEWER

OK. One last thing. Is there any anger in
you? Any anger in your work?

BASQUIAT

Should there be?

INTERVIEWER

Tell me about it. What are you angry about?

Jean drifts off.

BASQUIAT

Mmmm. I don't know. I don't remember.

INT. FANCY GOURMET DELI - DAY

Jean and Andy browse through the aisles. Jean piles things into his cart.

Jean approaches the specialty counter. Andy continues with the cart.

BASQUIAT

(to COUNTERMAN)

Can I have some caviar, please?

The Counterman selects a miniscule plastic spoon of caviar and begins to put it into a tiny glass jar.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

I'd like to taste it, first.

Reluctantly the Counterman gives him a taste with a look like "what's a person who looks like you doing buying caviar?"

Jean tastes the caviar and hands him back the spoon.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

Is that the best quality you have?

COUNTERMAN

Yeah, it's the best one.

BASQUIAT

I'll take the whole tin.

COUNTERMAN

It's three thousand dollars!

BASQUIAT

I'll take it.

(wipes nose with sleeve.)

Andy, gimme three thousand dollars.

(beat)

Just the caviar - I'll get the rest.

He hands two one hundred dollar bills for the other items to the counterman, who checks them carefully.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

You check everyone's bills or just mine?

CUT TO:

EXT. WINDOW - DAY

A cheap pharmacy gift shop window. Jean and Andy look in on two yellow furry stuffed ducks which are part of a larger display.

ANDY WARHOL

When I was little, my brother and I used to have two ducks as pets. We called them the Rodriguez Brothers.

They walk into a beauty salon.

INT. BEAUTY SALON - DAY

Jean and Andy recline on the beautician's armchairs. THREE BEAUTICIANS busy themselves with the two of them, simultaneously giving them pedicures and manicures. Jean sets down a magazine.

BASQUIAT

I wish they'd quit writing this shit about me.

ANDY WARHOL

That's good. At least they're interested.

BASQUIAT

Everybody's paying top dollar for scraps of paper, refrigerator doors - anything with a SAMO tag on it.

(beat)

The other day, I just wanted a pack of cigarettes, so I did a drawing and sold it for two bucks. A week later this gallery calls me up: "Somebody's offering us the drawing. Should we buy it for five thousand?"

ANDY WARHOL

Wow... Stop giving them away.

(beat)

I got an invitation to model for Comme de

Garcons... You wanna do it with me?

BASQUIAT

Yeah - I'd do that... You could teach me.

ANDY WARHOL

Gee. I don't need to. You're a natural. You should sign up with my modeling agent.

Jean points to Andy's ankles - they have plastic flea collars on them.

BASQUIAT

Cool.

ANDY WARHOL

My dog, Archie... I woke up with flea bites... Creepy. I ran out and bought flea collars. They work really well.

Beat.

BASQUIAT

Let's leave this town and go someplace.

Some island.

ANDY WARHOL

Let's go to the Carnegie Museum. They have the world's most famous sculptures all in these giant plaster replicas. It's really great. It's in Pittsburg.

EXT. STREET - - DAY

They walk out of the beauty salon..

Jean sees the back of a girl. She looks a lot like Gina.

BASQUIAT

Ouch..

ANDY WARHOL

What's wrong?

BASQUIAT

That girl looks just like my old girlfriend Gina.

ANDY WARHOL

Do you still love her?

BASQUIAT

Yeah. I really blew it. I still think about her.

ANDY WARHOL

Well, have you asked her to come back?

Jean shakes his head `no,' sorry that he didn't.

INT. BARBETTA'S (RESTAURANT) - DAY

A medium-sized dining room with dark wood paneling and tastefully appointed furnishings.

Jean and Gina enter. Gina looks considerably more conservative than previously - more like a student. Jean's dressed well, but looks even more careworn than usual. His hair is tied back with a necktie. He has a couple sores on his face. His skin looks a little puffy.

The MAITRE'D smiles at Jean and bows -

MAITRE'D

Mr. Basquiat - what a pleasure to see you again.

BASQUIAT

Hey George, what's up?

A huge table with NINE WHITE EXECUTIVES. WAITERS clear their lunch settings. As they spot Jean and Gina entering, they gawk and snicker.

George leads them to their table. As they take their seats, Jean notices the suppressed giggles coming from the executives' table. They try to ignore it. George disappears.

Jean seems self-conscious about the sores on his face.

GINA

So are you really friends with Andy? He seems like such a weirdo.

BASQUIAT

He's not. He's out of town and he calls me every day. What's weird about him?

GINA

Don't you think he's using you?

BASQUIAT

Why does everybody say that? He's the only person I know who doesn't need to use me.

George reappears.

GEORGE

Would you like to see the wine list?

BASQUIAT

Chateau Latour '64, please.

George disappears again.

GINA

So. Are you ready? I start Columbia next fall. Of course, there's like, a year of pre-med stuff, but - whatever. I'm really excited.

(beat)

And: Rene gave me a job as his secretary. His poems are getting published.

BASQUIAT

How is he?

GINA

Pretty much the same.

Jean's eyebrows go up.

BASQUIAT

Wow. Congratulations. I hate that asshole.

(beat)

Thanks for coming. I guess I just wanted to find out how you're -

GINA

(referring to an extra loud snicker from execs)

What's that about?

BASQUIAT

Forget it.

George arrives and pours a sip for Jean to taste. He nods. George moves off. Two or three of the executives break out laughing.

Jean puts the glass down and looks at them. The other table is clearly making fun of him.

GINA

That is amazing. What year is it?

BASQUIAT

George?

George hurries over.

GEORGE

I'm sorry, Mr. Basquiat.

BASQUIAT

See that table over there? I'd like to pay their bill.

Long silence.

GEORGE

I'm sorry?

Gina looks at Jean, confused.

BASQUIAT

Yeah, just put their bill on my tab.

GEORGE

Really?

BASQUIAT

Yeah.

GEORGE

Very well.

He moves off towards the executives. George whispers to the HEAD EXECUTIVE, and nods towards Jean. The executives spread the words amongst themselves. They're horrified.

BASQUIAT

(continuing)

Baby, I think about you a lot. I'm really sorry about everything. You have to believe me. I'm serious. I wish, y'know, that we were -

GINA

I don't believe it, Jean - they're picking straws.

A YOUNG EXECUTIVE, obviously the loser, takes a deep breath and heads towards them.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE

Excuse me... On behalf of my friends I'd like to apologize. We're really sorry.

BASQUIAT

I wish you niggahs could get it together-
ahhhhhh.

The Executive reaches to shake Jean's hand. Jean puts a hundred dollar bill in his hand.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE

What's this for?

BASQUIAT

The tip.

Jean turns back to Gina. The Executive leaves them. George smiles.

GINA

You don't have to be sorry. There's no one to blame. Jean, you're a real artist. I thought I was one. You made me realize I wasn't.

BASQUIAT

What's his name?

Gina balks. Rather than face a disappointment -

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

I have to go to the bathroom.

INT. BARBETTA'S (BATHROOM) - DAY

CLOSE ON JEAN - looking in the mirror.

He looks at himself.

He starts to pick at his face.

INT. PALLADIUM - HUGE ROOM - NIGHT

Jean and Albert Milo sit on a banquette

A huge white painting of Jean's with a dragon's head hangs on one wall to their left. On the opposite wall in back of the bar hangs another huge painting with a lot of heads, mostly black.

Lots of PEOPLE mill about a huge room.

A GIRL - another Gina look-alike walks through the crowd. Jean's eyes follow her momentarily..

BASQUIAT

(re: the paintings)
What do you think?

ALBERT MILO

I like the one with the dragon's heads a lot. But the black one's filled up with too many heads...

(beat)

I'd take some of them out.

(beat)

I think you're painting too fast. I wouldn't put in so many heads. Let it breathe a bit.

BASQUIAT

It's always how you would do it. This is my version.

ALBERT MILO

You're right. It's your version. You should come over to the studio sometime.

BASQUIAT

Why, so you could humiliate me?

ALBERT MILO

No, I wanted to make a painting of you.

EXT. UNION SQUARE PARK - DAY

Jean rides his bicycle through the park. He's looking up at the birds flying in the trees.

ANGLE ON

The birds. We see the statue in the middle of the park, but we have no idea where we are until we see the Mays Dept. Store sign. The birds circle in flocks, never lighting on the trees.

EXT. THE FACTORY (ENTRANCE) - DAY

Jean presses a buzzer. He's admitted. He carries his bike on his shoulder.

INT. THE FACTORY - DAY

Jean enters a broad, high-ceilinged studio. It's neat. Paintings lie on the floor.

Andy's back is turned to him. As Jean gets closer, he sees that Andy's assistant FRANK is peeing on canvas covered with copper pigment. We hear the SOUND of the piss.

Frank holds a bottle of beer in his hand.

ANDY WARHOL

A little more to the right, Frank. OK...
Good. Now up... You got a little more?

Jean notices a bunch of Andy's wigs on a desk.

BASQUIAT

What's with the wigs?

ANDY WARHOL

I'm going to send them to my friends for
Christmas presents.

BASQUIAT

You think those are good presents? Who
wants an old wig?

Jean makes a grimace. He walks up to the painting Frank's peeing on.

BASQUIAT

Piss painting?

ANDY WARHOL

I wanted to make a few more of these.
Frank's been drinking this Mexican beer. It
makes a good green.

BASQUIAT

How come you're not peeing on them
yourself?

ANDY WARHOL

I don't like beer.

Looking down at the painting -

BASQUIAT

If you ever want me to shit on 'em, just ask. You could finger paint.

INT. THE FACTORY - LATER

Jean and Andy collaborate on a large canvas. Andy outlines a Mobil Oil winged horse.

Jean paints it out. To the side he paints a penguin with a hat.

ANDY WARHOL

That was my favorite part!

BASQUIAT

We can do better. It needed more white.

Andy watches as Jean lights a joint and continues working on his penguin.

ANDY WARHOL

Jean, you make me feel worthless. You're so famous.

Andy paints an Amoco logo next to the penguin.

BASQUIAT

I don't even have any friends anymore besides you. And everyone says "Warhol?

That death-warmed over person on drugs? He's just using you."

ANDY WARHOL

Gee. You shouldn't take it so seriously, Jean. That's why you can't stop taking drugs. You always think people don't like you. Everyone likes you.

BASQUIAT

People are only interested in you because you're famous, not because they know a fuckin' thing about your work.

Jean paints out part of Andy's logo.

ANDY WARHOL

Bruno called. In Europe, people are saying you're gonna die from drugs. They think they can cash in on your death.

BASQUIAT

When I was poor, everybody doubted I could make it. When I got rich, everyone said, 'yeah, but he'll never keep it up.' Now everyone says 'he's killing himself.' So I clean up, and then they say 'Look. His art's dead.' I don't take drugs, anyway. I'm healthy now.

Jean obliterates Andy's logo.

ANDY WARHOL

If you say so. You sleep until 5:00 p.m. You call at four in the morning. You never show up anywhere on time - if you show up. You're painting out everything I do!

Andy paints back in part of the horse.

BASQUIAT

That's better.

Jean adds some letters on top of Andy's logo.

ANDY WARHOL

I can't even see what's good anymore.

Jean Michel obliterates the rest of the logo with some white.

Andy steps back and squints as he examines Jean's work.

ANDY WARHOL (CONT'D)

Yeah, I see what you mean about the white. It's better.

Jean quits painting.

BASQUIAT

After the show we should take a nice long vacation. Maybe go to Hawaii. That's what

I'm gonna do. I'm going to give up painting and start playing music again. I wanna sing.

ANDY WARHOL

That would be a pity because you're a real painter.

Frank arrives.

FRANK

Here's the poster for the show.

He presents them with a yellow poster of Jean and Andy facing each other with boxing gloves.

INT. FACTORY - NEXT DAY

Shenge hands Andy a box.

Andy opens the box. Inside is a football helmet with Jean's dreadlocks glued to the outside.

CLOSE UP: Andy in mirror wearing helmet.

CUT TO:

INSERT

The screen is filled with the cover of the New York Times Magazine. Jean is featured on the cover, without his dreadlocks.

INT. GREAT JONES ST. LOFT - NIGHT

As Shenge opens the door, a CROWD of people spill out. They pour into the loft. The studio is crowded with PEOPLE. (Many of them we recognize from earlier scenes in Mudd Club, Jean's opening, etc). On the wall there is a portrait of Jean by Andy. The background is a piss painting.

Inside, Jean kneels on the floor in the corner of the loft with a bunch of people around him - girls, mostly. Twenty-five copies of the Times Magazine lay stacked on the floor.

Crouching on one knee, Jean signs a copy for a BRUNETTE.

Looking up -

BASQUIAT

Name?

BRUNETTE

Elke.

BASQUIAT

Number?

BRUNETTE

505-0236.

A BRUNETTE walks up -

BASQUIAT

Name?

BLONDE

Monica.

BASQUIAT

Number?

BLONDE

477-0258.

Andy's assistant, Frank, arrives with CHRISTINE, 25, a model.

BASQUIAT

Yo, Frank.

FRANK

This is really great. What a nice place.

Jean is taken with Christine.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Have you met Christine?

BASQUIAT

I don't think so.

He's thrown off his rhythm.

CHRISTINE

Would you sign one of those for me?

TOXIC (seen with Rene at loft party earlier) spots Jean and steps in.

TOXIC

YO! Jean, this is Ramellzee.

RAMMELLZEE

Yo... You know why Rammellzee's here, don't you?

TOXIC

Uh-oh!

RAMMELLZEE

I'm here for an interrogation. You've been called a graffiti artist and I wanna know

why. All I see are scribble scrabble
abstractions!

BASQUIAT

Boom.

RAMMELLZEE

Boom? As in ordnance? Are your letters

armed? What is the prime directive of
graffiti culture? Do you know, black man?

Jean likes Rammellzee enough to be patient... Toxic grins and
rolls his eyes to Jean. Jean watches Christine as they go on.

TOXIC

(to Ram, re: Jean)

Man, I was up on him years ago on the IRT.

RAMMELLZEE

You're selling and ending the culture. Not
one bit of information. Only to get the
money and growl with the power, man.

TOXIC

That's ignorant.

BASQUIAT

That ain't ignorant - that's just stupid.

(beat - to Christine)

Can I get you a bowl of gumbo?

Rammellzee yells after him -

RAMMELLZEE

This interrogation is not over!

Jean escorts Christine to the kitchen.

Bruno and Andy stand in the crowd.

Nearby are two WOMEN.

WOMAN

Albert Milo? Ugh! He's just a pressmonger.
That's all these people do.

WOMAN #2

You know, I love Jean's early work. It's
really got something. But this
collaboration with Andy - maybe they
thought it was a joke... I mean - whose

work is it? Jean's or Andy's?

Walking by, Rene responds to this -

RENE

His early work? He's only twenty-six!

Rene walks over to Jean.

BASQUIAT

Hey, Rene.

RENE

Thanks again for not inviting me. I'm only here on business.

Rene heads back out into the party.

Jean eats gumbo while Christine thumbs through the Times Magazine.

ANGLE ON

Rene responds to something Andy's been telling him in a low voice.

RENE (CONT'D)

(loudly)

You're asking me? Nigga, please. After the way you treated me? This is the first time I've heard from either of you in months! I had to crash this party! You treated me like a suede biscuit. Rene don't play that! I can't get him off drugs! I don't even talk to him any more!!!

ANDY WARHOL

(to Bruno)

What's a suede biscuit?

CUT TO:

CHRISTINE Looks up from her magazine..

CHRISTINE

(amused)

Hey, what's this? It says right here you're Andy's... "lapdog"...

Jean walks away.

He passes through the crowd, making his way to the door.

He exits.

EXT. GREAT JONES ST LOFT - NIGHT

Drugged, upset, Jean leaves the party.

He opens a limo door and looks back at his house. The party continues.

The limo drives off.

We HOLD on Jean's building.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

The limo floats through the streets.

Jean stares out the window.

BASQUIAT

Here... Pull over.

The limo pulls over.

Jean exits.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jean disappears around the corner.

ANGLE ON

THREE KIDS in the process of prying a door panel with crowbars.

We see that they're removing one of Jean's SAMO pieces from a wall. We read:

**"PAY FOR SOUP
BUILD A FORT
SET IT ON FIRE"**

Jean arrives behind them.

BASQUIAT

What's up?

KID #1

Mind your own fuckin' business.

BASQUIAT

(recognizing his work)

That's mine.

KID

That ain't yours, man. Some asshole named SAMO did this.

KID#3

He's dead. That's what I heard.

KID #2

He ain't dead yet. He's gonna kill himself. That's why all those art fags in Soho are paying more every time we bring one of these in.

KID #1

Stupid SAMO... Hardly any of this shit left.

The panel is almost pried free without a scratch.

KID #3

This one's damn nice. I say we hang onto it if he's almost dead.

Jean shoves his way in front with a magic marker and adds a couple words; now it reads:

"SAMO IS DEAD"

BASQUIAT

There you go. Now it's worth more.

The kids are outraged, thinking Jean's ruined their find.

They jump on him.

They beat the shit out of him.

They're done.

Jean lies curled up on the ground, trying to talk.

KID #2

What's he saying?

BASQUIAT

I'm SAMO... I'm SAMO...

KID #3

(bending close)

He says he's SAMO.

Kid #1 whacks him in the back once more for good measure.

KID #1

He wish.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE SEA

It is flat, dead, gray.

Ominous and waiting.

INT. GREAT JONES ST. LOFT - DAY

Washed in sunlight, a large painting leans against the wall, the words "HAITIAN BASEBALL FACTORIES" scrawled through its center.

Jean lays down, watching TV.

He looks older now, more worn. His face is slightly swollen. His complexion is discolored.

Shenge covers a triptych with wide brush strokes of yellow paint. He circles a large, primitive figure of a black man drawn with magic marker in the center. He is careful to leave the figure intact.

BASQUIAT

Paint it out.

SHENGE

Out?

BASQUIAT

Yeah... Maybe just his arms.

(Shenge paints out the arms)

Put some Cerulean Blue there.

Jean points to the lower corner.

Shenge picks up the phone, which has been RINGING for some time.

SHENGE

It's Andy again.

BASQUIAT

Still not here.

SHENGE

- In this corner?

BASQUIAT

(not looking)

Yeah..

Shenge changes the brush and dips it in the can.

SHENGE

You want me to put it here?

BASQUIAT

Use your fucking instinct.

Shenge shrugs and starts to spread the blue. Jean looks at his work.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

Don't try to make art. Just paint like a housepainter.

A woman's shout can be heard through the open window. Shenge looks out.

SHENGE

It's Maria Portos. What should we do?

BASQUIAT

Why don't you try letting her in, Steve - I mean Shenge.

SHENGE

Get up. She won't buy anything if she sees me working on it!

BASQUIAT

Wanna bet? If you show too much respect for people with money, they don't have respect for you.

MARIA, a raven-haired, sharp-featured beauty in a Chanel suit jacket, blue jeans, and pearls walks into the room. She's with ELLEN - younger - a millionaire fake hippie from Texas.

Maria carries a bag with clogs in it - a present for Jean. She takes them out.

MARIA

(showing him the clogs)
These reminded me of you, the clogs. I found them in Amsterdam.

Jean doesn't get up from the floor.

MARIA (CONT'D)

How are you?

BASQUIAT

Fine.

MARIA

You remember Ellen?
(looking around)
What are you working on?

Basquiat points at the painting.

ELLEN

How much is something like that?

Jean raises his hand and pumps five fingers three times in the air.

MARIA

Fifteen. Reasonable.

Ellen makes a snotty face.

BASQUIAT

It's unfinished.
(to Shenge)
How 'bout some blue in the corner?

Shenge gives Jean a stupefied look.

SHENGE

Blue? Where?

BASQUIAT

What's wrong with you today?

Shenge is embarrassed by Jean's remark in the company of the two women.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. It hurts my

feelings.

He points. Unsure, Shenge picks up the brush and paints one of the corners.

Maria browses through a stack of paintings leaning against the wall.

MARIA

I love these.

ELLEN

God... I just can't even care anymore.
Compare this to a mountain or a tree.
Who're y'all trying to kid? That's what I think. I was just in the Himalayas, and like - OK - is this important? No. I mean, compared to the rain forest or something? These are just narcissistic jokes.

MARIA

(to Jean)

Who are you selling these through now?

Jean gets to his feet. He dips a long, thin brush into black paint and nonchalantly crosses out the half figure that Shenge is carefully surrounding with blue.

BASQUIAT

Well, that's better.

(to Maria)

You can buy direct from me.

ELLEN

Look at these - silkscreens? What're you?
Andy Warhol Junior? It's like - not even handmade anymore.

She's not even worth a response. Jean looks around, numb.

INT. MARY BOONE GALLERY - DAY

Jean enters the gallery. Cleaned up. Healthier. Bruises healing.

He looks like he's been painting.

Mary looks up from her desk, surprised to see Jean.

MARY BOONE

Jean Michel... Crawling from the wreckage?

BASQUIAT

I need a dealer.

MARY BOONE

You have a bunch of them, don't you? Albert Milo walks in from another room.

ALBERT MILO

Hey Jean!

(to Mary)

It'll never fit.

MARY BOONE

It'll be ok.

ALBERT MILO

You better take a look. Why's your door so small? The ceilings are sixteen feet and your door's the size of a mouse hole!

MARY BOONE

Why are your paintings so big? Just go home. I'll get it in.

ALBERT MILO

(to Jean)

You doing anything right now?

BASQUIAT

Naa..

ALBERT MILO

Let's get out of here.

BASQUIAT

See ya in an hour.

(to Mary)

So what do you think?

MARY BOONE

Bruno spoke to me already. We could talk about it.

BASQUIAT

I'm here.

MARY BOONE

OK. I'll be at your studio Thursday three o'clock.

INT. ALBERT MILO'S LOFT - DAY

Albert shows Jean through a series of large rooms filled with enormous paintings.

It looks like the Cairo Museum.

They pause before a painting.

ALBERT MILO

This is painted on a backdrop from the Kabuki theater in Japan. I painted it after Joseph Beuys died. A rebirth painting. I felt like he could've painted it, or maybe someone else was painting it instead of me. The Chinese calligraphers used to change their name mid-career so they could start over as someone else..

BASQUIAT

Do you ever get sick of it?

ALBERT MILO

Of what?

BASQUIAT

The whole thing - painting.

ALBERT MILO

No. It's one of the few times I feel good. I used to have to go to work and cook every day. That I got sick of.

BASQUIAT

What about the shit they write?

ALBERT MILO

You're asking me this because of the 'lapdog' remark. I read that. The person that wrote that has the compassion of a housefly. That's your enemy, not your audience. Your audience hasn't even been born yet. It's a lie that art is popular. The only thing popular about it is that it's written about in newspapers. I'm surprised when anybody comes to my openings. There're about ten people on the planet who know anything about painting, and Andy's one of them.

BASQUIAT

I haven't felt like talking to him since that thing came out.

ALBERT MILO

As long as I've known Andy, he's never asked me for anything except to speak to you about getting off drugs. He's painted my picture, we've eaten dinner in God knows how many places together. But he doesn't care about me. He cares about you. You're the only person he cares about. He's your friend. Fuck that article. You want a toasted bagel with cream cheese?

Milo's daughter STELLA (12) calls out from over the balcony.

STELLA (O.S.)

Papa, the TV's broken... Will you fix it please?

ALBERT MILO

Alright. I'll be right up.

Albert leaves.

Jean looks at some paintings.

Stella comes downstairs.

STELLA

(to Jean)

Hi.

BASQUIAT

Hi.

STELLA

I've seen you before. I like your paintings a lot. Your hair was different.

BASQUIAT

You like your dad's paintings?

STELLA

Some of them.

BASQUIAT

Stand still.

He draws her.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

See you later.

STELLA

Thanks

He walks to the door, leaving the drawing on the floor.

Albert returns.

ALBERT MILO

Where's Jean?

STELLA

He just left.

Albert opens the door to the stairwell looking for Jean.

He hears the sound of URINATING.

He leans over the stairwell.

He sees Jean Michel, taking a piss on the landing.

He shuts the door quietly.

EXT. GIFT SHOP WINDOW - DAY

Jean walks out of the gift shop (seen earlier, next to beautician's)

EXT. BROADWAY AND HOUSTON STREET - DAY

Jean walks through the middle of the intersection. He carries two yellow, furry toy ducks under his arm.

SUPER: "FEBRUARY 22, 1987"

Seeing Bruno at the wheel of a black Mercedes stopped at a light, Jean clowns around like a street vendor who wants to wash his window.

Bruno doesn't notice him.

BASQUIAT

B.B. It's me - Jean! What's the matter? No snow in Switzerland this year?

BRUNO

I didn't see you.

BASQUIAT

What do you mean?

BRUNO

You haven't heard? Andy's dead.

The light changes.

Bruno pulls across the street because of the traffic.

Jean drops one of the ducks in the street and walks off.

ANGLE ON

The duck lying in the street.

EXT. GREAT JONES ST. LOFT - NIGHT

The "OUT FOR RIBS" sign hangs outside Jean's door.

EXT. GREAT JONES ST - DAY

Mary sits in her limo trying to call Jean.

INT. GREAT JONES ST. LOFT - DAY

Near darkness. The curtains are drawn. Music plays: 'Birds' by Neil Young: "it's over.....it's over".

Jean watches a video tape with the sound MUTED. The screen fills with Andy's face. We SEE a series of quick scenes from his life.

Jean and the remaining duck are lit by the TV.

INT. GREAT JONES ST. LOFT - DAY

EXTREME CLOSEUP: A COLORED PENCIL TIP

Held in Jean's hand. It's stalled in mid-stroke. He writes with a magic marker on the heel of two wooden clogs the word: "TITANIC"

There's a loud BANGING at the door.

When it stops, the pencil tip resumes its long voyage across the

page.

MUSIC UP: Tom Waits' "Tom Traubert's Blues"

EXT. GINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jean buzzes the doorbell. He's wearing the clogs. He's hurting.
The intercom comes on.

BASQUIAT

Hello? Gina?

MALE VOICE

Who is it?

Jean recognizes Benny's voice.

ANGLE UP

Gina and Benny look out the window into the street.

Jean's a block away.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Jean gets out of a cab. He walks up to the entrance.

The doors are locked. He rattles them.

Inside, an OLD JANITOR keeps mopping.

Jean pounds harder, RATTLES the doors more.

BASQUIAT

Hey, come here! Please. Just for a second.
Open the door.

The janitor gets nervous. He leaves.

He returns a moment later with a large SECURITY GUARD.

BASQUIAT

Open up! Open up!

The guard unlocks the door, hoping to settle Jean down.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

My mother's inside.

GUARD

Come back tomorrow. Visiting hours are over.

(beat)

Don't cause any trouble.

BASQUIAT

I'm not here to visit... I wanna take her home.

The guard gently ushers Jean out through the door.

GUARD

Don't cause any trouble.

He locks the door and walks off with the janitor.

EXT. STREET - DAYBREAK

Jean, walks around, drifting, stoned. He looks up at the skyline.

DISSOLVE TO:

Waves crash silently over a surfer.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

STREET SOUNDS

BENNY (O.S.)

Willie Mays.

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Jean has been passed out on a sidewalk.

CLOSE ON: Benny's face.

He leans over Jean and helps him up.

BASQUIAT

Willie Mays... Nice to see you.

Benny looks at Jean's eyes.

Jean stretches, kicking life back into his limbs.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

How's Gina? You guys getting along?

Benny looks at him guiltily.

BENNY

She's good.

BASQUIAT

I guess it was a long time ago.

BENNY

Come on, let's get out of here.

EXT. JEEP - STREETS - DAY

Jean and Benny zoom along in a battered old Army Jeep. Now revived, Jean stands up, waving at people miming General Patton. We HEAR the music of "Summer of Siam."

BENNY

Sit down! You're gonna fall out!

BASQUIAT

Me fall? Let's get some drugs!

BENNY

Drugs??!

BASQUIAT

Medicine, man! Like health food. I'm taking care of my health!

INT. HEALTH FOOD STORE - DAY

A mountain of homeopathic medicine and health food on the counter. Benny helps the clerk load it into a box.

CLERK

You starting a hospital?

Jean approaches and dumps some more stuff onto the counter.

He's chewing something.

BASQUIAT

Just ring it up. I don't need a bag.
(to Benny)
Try this tabouli - it's great...

Tabouli spills onto Jean's shirt.

EXT - WEST BROADWAY - DAY

Jean and Benny walk along. Benny's arms are full with boxes.

Jean walks in front, eating yogurt. He's wearing his Titanic clogs. Benny tries to keep up.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

My mom told me this... Or was it a dream?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CELL - DAY

A crude stone jail - almost medieval - fairy-tale like. A thick wooden plank suspended by chains for a bench. A candle on the wall.

A small, crowned prince (the boy seen in the dream in intro.) looks longingly out the window at rolling green hills. Terraced hillsides, cedar trees, cottages, smoke wafting up from chimneys. Dirt streets.

The prince smashes the window. He hits his head on the bars, gripping them tightly.

EXT. MEDIEVAL VILLAGE' - DAY

The villagers cease their activities as they listen to the SOUND. Looking up, they smile, as if warmed to their souls by some unearthly and intangible substance. They look heavenwards.

CAMERA follows their collective gaze skywards.

We shoot up, up, into the sky.

BASQUIAT (O.S.)

There was this little prince with a magic crown. An evil warlock kidnapped him, locked him in a cell in a huge tower and took away his voice. There was a window made of bars. The prince would smash his

head against the bars hoping that someone would hear the sound and find him. The crown made the most beautiful sound that anyone ever heard. You could hear the ringing for miles. It was so beautiful, that people wanted to grab the air. They never found the prince. He never got out of the room. But the sound he made filled everything up with beauty.

BASQUIAT (O.S)

It's definitely time to get out of here.

EXT. WEST BROADWAY - DAY

We rush down, down through the sky.

Buildings come up at us.

We're over Soho.

We're back on the ground.

Benny and Jean continue walking.

We see Jean from behind. He's looking up.

Benny stops to readjust his parcels.

Jean continues down the street, talking louder.

BASQUIAT (CONT'D)

Hawaii? Fuck Hawaii. Let's go to Ireland.
We'll stop in every bar and have a drink.

FREEZE FRAME ON HIS FACE

SUPER:

"JEAN MICHEL BASQUIAT
BORN: DECEMBER 14, 1961
DIED: AUGUST 12, 1988"

EXT. IRELAND - DAY

Rolling hills. Green. Lush. Peaceful..

FADE OUT

THE END