

SIR DUKE

written by

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A Black Screen. Not a single sound. Then...

BUBUM BUBUM

The pressured, bass-like sound of two heart beats. It happens again-

BUBUM BUBUM

A third time-

BUBUM BUB--

CUT TO:

EXT. PITTSBURGH--FALL--DAY

What was the darkness of the black screen illuminates into a flying, gliding view over the cityscape of downtown Pittsburgh. It's a simple, fall day with slight overcast.

The final heartbeat is snuffed out by what we hear now: A symphony of sounds. Different sounds, noises, and echoes blast through the city's every little crack- between its skyscrapers, streets, and bridges. Cars honking, babies crying, birds chirping, city folk walking, etc. All the possible noises that could leak out of a city, we hear.

The sound of tuning violins fade up slowly over the city commotion. The horns follow shortly after. Then the woodwinds. And, last but not least, the percussion section. The sound of city life seems to flow perfectly with beautiful, but chaotic clashing of sounds as an orchestra preparing itself. But, that being said, preparing for what?

Over these sounds and music we view the everyday vibrancy of Pittsburgh's city life, giving vision to what we hear. Taxi's and Ubers fight the traffic through Forbes Ave. A couple sits outside of a coffee shop sharing a pastry. A mother has a picnic with her two infant children. A student rolls across the street on a skateboard as his dog runs beside him.

The music builds in volume, the chaos of its sound grows thicker. The images of city life go by our eye faster and faster as the music reaches the peak of volume. Then-

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK--PITTSBURGH--DAY

Complete silence. All the sound from before has disappeared just like that.

A bird flies over the open field of a park resting on the outskirts of Pittsburgh. It finds a partner and flies together, but we still cannot hear either of their chirps. We hear nothing.

EXT. BENCH - PARK - DAY

We now see an empty park bench, a little damp from past rain, sitting dead center of a congested walkway. A kid runs by and tries to hop off it, catching some air while trying to catch up with his friends who already ran by. We still can't hear a single beat of this.

We move a tad farther from the bench, it staying in the center of our attention. A shoulder enters the frame, a hooded man- we'll call him **THE PERFORMER** for now- holding an enormous, 90's boombox in one hand and a backpack on his shoulders. He walks straight for the park bench as the camera follows him. His head looks around as he scans the area, just to be safe. He brushes off the bench before setting down his boombox. Though we still hear almost nothing, a bit of a pressured *SWISH* can barely be heard when he wipes off the bench of rainwater. He sets down the boombox, followed by a slightly muffled *BUMP*- think of it as if as if you were to cover your ears with your hand then tap it with your finger.

THE PERFORMER strips off his backpack and digs into it. Out of the backpack, sitting in both of his hands are two, old CD cases. Two albums: David Bowie's "Hunky Dory" and Stevie Wonder's "Songs in the Key of Life." Rock or Motown?

He chooses: "Songs in the Key of Life."

He slides the disk into the boombox and clicks through the different tracks. He slides up the track list - 9,10,11,12 - then back down- 7,6,5... 5. Perfect. He turns up the bass to its maximum capacity. He taps his finger on the play button for a second with a little bit of hesitation. We hear the muffled *BUMP, BUMP, BUMP* from the tapping of his finger. His finger presses down anyway and the magic begins.

There's no piano chord, no vocals, no horns... not yet. All we hear are the beginning beats to Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke":

BA dada BA dada BA dada BA

The Performer flips his hood off his head to show his youthful, good-looking face. His hand rests right on the boomboxes' main speaker and begins to vibrate to the beat. He pats his hand on it to sync up with the rhythm. He's got it synced... easy.

His feet begin to roll a bit through his rugged converse, stretching and warming up just for a second. We move back, seeing THE PERFORMERS entire body as he begins to dance. We still hear the pressured beat of the song.

He starts off smooth with a few simple tricks, contorting his body and turning perfectly to the rhythm of the song. To picture his style of movement: imagine if you crossed the rugged, rhythmic style of a hip hop street dancer with the smooth, controlled jazz steps of legends like Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, or the Nicholas Brothers. His dance shows off remarkable skill, as if he'd been trained for years. We move farther from him.

AUDIO SHIFT

The further away from THE PERFORMER we move, the audio shifts and the more we begin to hear sound again. The sound of birds, people, wind, and Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke" become audible. The volume rises higher as another person's shoulder steps in frame: it's a woman just watching, in awe by the talent of a local street performer. She holds a massive smile on her face, similar to the massive crowd doing the same around her. We move to them, and see their same curiosity and awe of THE PERFORMER. A little girl pulls her dad towards the dance underway, pointing at it.

As the crowd grows, people whip out their phones and record the dance. Some throw money as THE PERFORMER rolls by their feet. He calls for an audience member to join him. The same woman we saw before joins him as he does a little swing-dance with her, twirling her back to the crowd. He pulls out all of his tricks now: doing flips, turns, and leaps right in the faces of his audience, even doing a backflip off the soggy bench. He leaps onto the bench and strikes a final pose. The crowd erupts into applause.

THE PERFORMER hops off the bench, gives his audience a final bow, flips up his hood, and begins to collect all of his things. The crowd begins to disband, tossing him coins, ones, and fives. He collects it.

As the crowd disbands, an annoying sound of hooting and hollering comes from the back. There stands four young, white men, looking as if they came straight from college-edition of a "Euphoria" episode. They dress in high class, frat boy-ish attire, two of which have their phones out recording.

THE BOYS

(Ad-libbed)

Fucking "A" bro! - What're ya
stopping for man?! - Do the shit
again! - Encore! Fucking encore!

Their aggressive calls start to make some of the other crowd members uneasy, making some leave. THE PERFORMER, still packing up his belongings, pays no attention to them no matter how loud they make fun of him. THE PERFORMER zips up his backpack, lifts his boombox over his shoulder, and bolts his way out of the park. The Frat Boys are quick to follow.

THE BOYS (CONT'D)

Where ya goin man?! - Get back in
it bro! - Shit!

They follow him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - PITTSBURGH - DAY

THE PERFORMER lightly struts down an empty road along the edge of the park. Each one of his steps lightly taps the ground and leaps off, like a skip to the beat of a song. He sees a sleeping homeless man at the edge of the corner. He lightly plops his collecting in a little cup by him, making sure not to wake the man.

He still pays no attention to any of the clammer behind him as "The Boys" from before continue to follow him, still recording him with their phones, and heckling him loudly. One of "The Boys" jumps out in front of the others.

BOY #1

Hey bro! If I drop you 50, will you
do the-

He mocks his dancing, badly.

BOY #1 (CONT'D)

-again! Pretty fucking please, bro!

One of the other Boys pulls him back to the back and steps out in front of the others. He gives off the impression that he's the leader of the pack. He calls out to THE PERFORMER, who still seems to not realize they're even there.

BOYS LEADER

'Ey man! Just wanted to pay some
respect to you, that shit back
there was dope. We've been
recording the entire time. Shit's
awesome! Say "what's up" to the
world bro!

No response from him. Just silence and walking.

BOYS LEADER (CONT'D)
 Hey! You hear me man?! The WORLD is
 watching, say your name!

No response. "The Boys" go quiet for a bit.

BOYS LEADER (CONT'D)
 (to his boys)
 Is this motherfucker ignoring-

Some of the others try to call out and get his attention.

BOY #2
 EY! HOODIE! HE'S TRYING TO HELP YOU
 DUDE, DON'T BE FUCKING RUDE, BRO!

Nothing.

BOY #1
 THE FUCK'S YOUR PROBLEM MAN?!

Nope.

BOY #3
 FUCKIN DISRESPECTFUL, BRO! TAKE OFF
 YOUR FUCKING HOOD! TURN-

All of "The Boys," except for the leader, who scans THE PERFORMER up and down, cry out and curse at the Performer. He seems not to bother any of it. The leader is fumes in pent-up, white-man's rage.

AUDIO SHIFT

We being to movie away from the leader and his boys, making our way back to the performer. The sounds begins to fade as we do so. It falls and dampens to almost nothingness as we 180 to actually see THE PERFORMER's face again, including the hearing-aid, hiding in his left ear. It looks like he doesn't realize anything is happening behind him, because he doesn't.

We hold on him for a while as he continues to strut down the street . He has a smile on his face. Possibly because he enjoys a bit of the quiet, accompanied by the view of a beautiful city. We start to enjoy the quiet too, just for a second. Then-

BANG* *AUDIO SHIFT

A rock slams into the back of the head of THE PERFORMER, sending him to the ground, and cutting off the silence sharply. We now hear everything.

THE PERFORMER hops to his feet and turns to see who tossed the rock. The leader of the Frat Boys, the obvious culprit, marches right into his face and pushes THE PERFORMER back, hard. THE PERFORMER stumbles but maintains his balance, holding tight to his boombox. He put's his hand on the back of his head to check for blood. There's nothing. The leader of "The Boys" gives him another push.

BOYS LEADER

The talent of being a fucking ballerina, doesn't give you the right to be a pretentious prick. The fuck's your problem?!

THE PERFORMER moves back more with the second push. He attempts to sign and communicate.

NO SUBTITLES

THE PERFORMER

(Signed)

Who the hell are you? What's your problem

The leader doesn't understand, all he sees are hand gestures.

BOYS LEADER

What are-? The fuck is this?
What're you-?

BOY #1

Beat his ass, Jay!

THE PERFORMER can tell he doesn't understand him. He pushes the leader, now named Jay, back towards "The Boys." He stumbles into them, furious.

JAY

Really?! Really, you want to do that?!

JAY charges at THE PERFORMER. He dodges, making JAY stumble almost to the point of tripping. Jay collects himself quickly and follows with a punch. THE PERFORMER ducks barely in time, hops back up, and nails JAY right in the jaw, sending him to ground. As JAY smacks to the ground, the rest of "The Boys" dart at THE PERFORMER. Instinctively, he bolts, dropping his boombox with a crash on the ground next to JAY.

WHEN THE BOOMBOX CRASHES ON THE GROUND, STEVIE WONDER'S "SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED" IMMEDIATELY STARTS PLAYING OVER THE ACTION

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALS - FALL - CONTINUOUS

Bolting around the corner of a building, THE PERFORMER sprints down the congested end of town. He bobs and weaves throughout crowds of people with ease as he tries to make his escape. Not too far behind are "The Boys" pushing through the crowd like tanks.

THE PERFORMER sprints down sidewalks, cuts across parks, tries to dodge traffic in order to get away from the mob behind him. They don't budge.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE - PITTSBURGH - MOMENTS LATER

THE PERFORMER manages to stretch this chase out long enough to where we now reach a bridge on the far edge of town. He scans for any routes of escape.

His eyes shoot to the bottom of the bridge. A bus stop sits with a huddled group of people waiting to be picked up. Next to them sits a band of fellow street performers: Drummers banging their sticks on whatever they can (Buckets and Boxes) for a little bit of coin.

THE PERFORMER dashes down a staircase to reach the bottom of the bridge, "The Boys" seem not too far behind him now. He's just within their reach. As he paces quickly down the steep stairway, JAY, who has now caught up, manages to grab hold of THE PERFORMER's backpack. The backpack rips in half, tripping THE PERFORMER right off of his feet. He tumbles hard down the concrete stairs.

CUT STEVIE WONDER SONG & AUDIO SHIFT

We go back to the muted perspective of THE PERFORMER, though it's not as quiet. We hear constant muffled beats as he makes impact with each rolling step. He slams his head on one, giving him gash on his forehead. With his focus going from step to step, he doesn't even notice that "The Boys" tripped as well, and continue to fall right behind him. He slams onto the concrete at the bottom of the stairway with a hard THUD. One of the frat boys lands right next to him, barely maintaining consciousness.

EXT. BUS STOP - PITTSBURGH - CONTINUOUS

THE PERFORMER's head begins to pulse as his fingers run over the gash on his forehead. He's bleeding. THE PERFORMER's head lifts up quick to see all of his belongings smattered around the floor. His CDs, extra clothes, change, etc.

He hops up quickly, ignoring his bruises and cuts, rummaging all of his things together in his ripped up backpack.

We hear the scratching of his fingers on the concrete as he tries to snatch up anything he can. From the moment his body slammed into the ground we can now hear his overpowering heartbeat, louder and faster than it has ever been before.

BUBUM BUBUM BUBUM BUBUM

THE PERFORMER's gaze shoots ahead to the bus stop, where a group of people just stare and begin to approach the men that just tumbled down an abundant amount of stairs. Next to them, the Drummers don't stop playing. THE PERFORMER hops to his feet and stumbles the best that he can forward, but not towards the people waiting for the bus. Instead, he stumbles for the Drummers.

He tries to call out with the word "Help," but-

THE PERFORMER
(Muffled)
HE-! EL-!!! HEEEE-!

Nothing but sounds can be heard by any of the people. He tries to sign:

THE PERFORMER (CONT'D)
(Signed)
HELP ME! PLEASE! THEY'RE TRYING TO
KILL-

With his focus turned away from them, THE PERFORMER doesn't even realize "The Boys" have managed to get up just fine. JAY, charging at him, appears out of no where and knocks him down to the ground. JAY spits at him.

AUDIO SHIFT

We're now back in the perspective of the hearing. We can hear all sounds from dialogue to passing cars on the road. Though, for some reason, we can't hear any drumming.

JAY
Motherfucker! I'll fuckin kill you!

JAY starts kicking at the Performer curled up in a ball on the ground.

JAY (CONT'D)
Use all that fuckin change to fix
this, you homeless piece of-

JAY is cut off entirely as he takes a white, plastic bucket to the face. He falls off THE PERFORMER. He looks around confused of where the hell that came from.

Four men now stand in the way of THE PERFORMER as a human wall: the Street Drummers. All four look a lot older than both "The Boys" and THE PERFORMER. The other Boys stumble to JAY's side as the two groups stare each other down. One of the Drummers speaks up for the rest of the group.

DRUMMER #1

Stand down, boys. Leave the kid alone and walk away.

JAY

I don't remember you being apart of this.

DRUMMER #1

There is no "this." Now step the off. Go home.

BOY #1

Fuck you, bum!

DRUMMER #2

Nice insult, white boy. Now leave the kid be and get the fuck on.

BOY #1

What did you-?!

DRUMMER #3

You heard him, pasty-ass. No more talking on this, you hear?

A quick beat of hesitation. Then-

One of "The Boys" lunges at the third drummer, but he dodges him, wraps his arms around the guy's waist and throws him to the floor. Both groups now start to throw hands at each other, turning their stare-down into a full out brawl. Punches are thrown and landed. Both groups try to tackle each other at the same time, making them wrestle, throwing some punches while they can. THE PERFORMER, still on the ground, watches in frozen shock.

The crowd, now scattered around them, whip out their phones and watch, either recording the brawl or calling the police to make it stop. One young kid, hyped up by the fight, get's closer with his camera, laughing and cheering.

KID

Oh shit! WORLDSTAR! WORLDST-

The kid get's too close and is knocked down on his ass by one of the Drummers.

Over the loud chaos of people cheering or crying for the fight to stop, a loud siren wails. Two police cars roll up to the bus stop. The sound of siren triggers DRUMMER #1 to shoot his head up. He calls out to his group.

DRUMMER #1
Shit! Boys, we've got to roll!

He turns his head to see that a bus has arrived at the perfect time. DRUMMER #1 hops to his feet and kicks away the boy he was tussling with. He lunges at DRUMMER #3, hurling him away from the fight and towards the bus. He calls out to the other two.

DRUMMER #1 (CONT'D)
BOYS! LET'S GO!

No response. The police have now parked and start to get out of their cars, but the fight continues. THE PERFORMER still curls up on the ground.

DRUMMER #1 (CONT'D)
TROY! JACK!

He catches their attention.

DRUMMER #1 (CONT'D)
Grab the kid, grab the shit, and
get the fuck outta here!

The two stumble off of "The Boys," who now lay in pain on the ground. JACK (DRUMMER #4) manages to lay one final punch on JAY before grabbing The Performer by his hood and tugging him onto the bus. TROY (DRUMMER #2) nabs all the drumming buckets and boxes, some of which hold their tips. The Bus closes its doors and takes off into the streets of Pittsburgh, just in time.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - PITTSBURGH - CONTINUOUS

The Drummers try to catch their breath as they manage to find a couple seats in the back of the bus. THE PERFORMER sits on the floor by himself, looking around and trying to calm himself down. DRUMMER #1 stands and checks in on his friends, seeing if they've been hurt too bad: everyone seems fine. All four, in unison, look down at THE PERFORMER on the ground.

DRUMMER #1 crouches down to him.

DRUMMER #1

Hey, kid?

No response. He taps the kid on the shoulder. THE PERFORMER jolts from the touch and looks at him, terrified. His jolt knocks some of his CDs onto the floor.

DRUMMER #1 (CONT'D)

Hey, hey! Woah... you're okay,
we're not gonna hurt-

He notices the gash on the Performer's forehead.

DRUMMER #1 (CONT'D)

Jesus, fuck, kid. They got you
good.

(seeing the CDs)

Look, let me help you with these.

He tries to help THE PERFORMER pick up his CDs on the floor. He picks up one we've seen before. Stevie Wonder's "Songs In The Key Of Life." He smiles at it.

DRUMMER #1 (CONT'D)

Great choice, kid. "Little Stevie?"

(beat)

Name's Tyrell. What to do they call
you?

He doesn't speak. JACK speaks up from behind.

JACK

You speak kid?

THE PERFORMER looks blankly at TYRELL, not hearing JACK.

TYRELL

Jack!

Jack stands down. THE PERFORMER starts signing his name. His hands shake too much to do it effectively. He puts his hands and head down in embarrassment. TYRELL catches on immediately.

TYRELL (CONT'D)

Ohhhh! Shit, okay.

(To Troy)

Yo, Troy. Give me a dollar out of
the bucket.

TROY

I thought we split at the end-

TYRELL
Just give me a single fucking
dollar. Please?

TROY pulls out a dollar from one of the buckets and hands it to TYRELL. TYRELL pulls a sharpie out of his pocket. He writes something on the dollar, then...

TYRELL (CONT'D)
Hey, kid.

THE PERFORMER doesn't notice, his head is still down. TYRELL taps him on the forehead. It stings him. THE PERFORMER lifts up in pain.

TYRELL (CONT'D)
Sorry, sorry. Shit.
(handing the dollar)
Here. Look.

He tries to hand over the dollar and sharpie. The Performer looks at it. Written in sharpie on the back it reads:

"Name?"

THE PERFORMER gives a slight smile to TYRELL, taking the Sharpie and Dollar from him. He sets it on the floor, writes, and hands it back. TYRELL looks down at the name the kid scratched in and laughs to himself. It reads, "DUKE." TYRELL thinks for second, grabs the sharpie and ads something on the bill. He hands it all back to the performer, DUKE.

It now reads: Sir DUKE.

DUKE smiles at it and extends his hand to TYRELL for a shake.

TYRELL (CONT'D)
Nice to meet you... Duke.

They shake and smile at each other.

The second they shake, the same sounds we heard at the very start begins to flood our ears. The volume and returning, tuning instruments build in volume over DUKE's smile. He gives a slight chuckles then...

Silence.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD

END