

# Who Am I To Stop It

[distorted ambient music]

[singing church hymn]

[applause]

PASTOR: How many of you believe God answers prayer?

[claps, cheers]

How many of you really believe?

ALL: Amen!

PASTOR: Because if we really believe....

DANI: If I could ask any freakin' question, it would probably be, "Why me?"

PASTOR: I'm not talking about cars, money, riches, wealth. I'm talking about asking for what we need. Father, in the name of Jesus, you've seen every hand raised that said hey, I've got a need. I've got a need. And in the name of Jesus....

DANI: I've been asking that question for the past five years, and no one can answer it.

PASTOR: I'm just gonna pray. Just gonna pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you.... Lord, sometimes this life throws out things to us that we don't even know how to explain. Sometimes we mess up; we create our own messes. Father, forgive us. Forgive us, Lord.

DANI: It was me because I smoked weed. It was me because I've had sex when I wasn't married. It was me because I had bad friends. It was me because I..didn't go to church enough? I don't know.

PASTOR: But it is amazing how sometimes we take something that's bad that's happened in our lives, and two, three and four years later, we see God's hand and direction in that. And that if you would have made a different choice, or if that didn't happen, you'd be on a different path.

[piano]

♪ ALL: Bless the Lord,  
oh my soul, oh my soul.... ♪

♪ ATHENA: Come and get it.  
Nah na na nah. Nah na na nah. ♪  
♪ If you're ready, come and get it.  
Na na na nah. ♪

This is my jam!

That's awesome! I've never had my own Jaegermeister. Thank you!

LADY: Happy birthday!

ATHENA: Thank you. It tastes delicious.

DANI: Mom, I'm making a song for Pride. It's YAY Gay. You know what YAY gay stands for?

You're always you,  
even if you're gay.  
You can be trans, queer,  
even hetero, this I swear.  
Cuz we're all fucking  
people, and how do they dare?  
They mock, and they judge.  
But do they really know?

CATHERINE: Yeah.

DANI: You see these people  
here, hating here, that only  
seem to grow, right?

It's good. You have to hear the whole thing.

CATHERINE: All right. [laughs]

DANI: I'm serious.

TAMARA: Do you remember when we first got there, and you kept saying, "Prom's coming. Prom's coming." When you went to Children's Hospital, your memory was three minutes long.

DANI: That's crazy. That's weird.

TAMARA: You kept thinking you had to get ready for homecoming. I'm like, "No, you already went." But you were crying because you really wanted to go to homecoming. But I'm like, "You already went," and I showed you a picture. And that was it. It threw you for a total loop. Seeing the picture of you at Homecoming it was like your brain wouldn't let you think that.

DANI: Who'd I go with? Keeshawn?

ATHENA: Patrick.

JORDAN: Ugh.

TAMARA: He, who shall not be named.

ATHENA: We had to cut him out of the picture. [laughs]

TAMARA: We did. We cut him out of all the pictures.

ATHENA: Yeah, we did.

JORDAN: Or speaking in Spanish. Are you kidding me?

TAMARA: Oh my gosh, yeah. She spoke in Spanish. Everything was in Spanish, but she doesn't even know Spanish that well.

JORDAN: Hola, ¿qué pasa?

[All laugh]

TAMARA: We were just talking about Ashley House. Remember Ashley House?

CATHERINE: Mmhmm.

DANI: She doesn't like Ashley House. Nana doesn't like it either. I'm trying to tell you.

ATHENA: Didn't they hit your head, too? Didn't they hit her head or something, the ambulance people?

DANI: When they took me out, yeah.

[beat boxing] See, I do that. I love beat boxing.

[ambient music]

This is really choking my mom up because with this camera it's bringing it back to the accident, and she's...kinda getting to her. I guess I can understand cuz if I had a kid...and I almost lost her, that would suck. And all this getting brought back up. But she has to understand, her daughter's a freakin' survivor. And I'm her daughter. So it's good.

[ambient music]

KRIS: 2008, I was in the hospital for a week, and I was suicidal and out for two weeks. One of my most beloved cats died. He was named after Jackson Pollock. You ever heard of him?

FRIEND: No.

KRIS: He just blew the whole art world away. Yeah, with his paintings, back in the '40s and '50s. My cat that was named after him, he was very special because this cat used to bring me flowers in his mouth into the studio.

FRIEND: Oh, are you serious?

KRIS: I'm dead serious. We're talking for 2 1/2 years until the day he passed away. So I commemorated his passing. And then a year later, I had 10,202 pieces!

[buzzing fluorescent light]

NURSE: I'm gonna check your heart rate.

KRIS: OK.

DR: Your pulse is really high. Are you getting out and going for walks at all or anything?

KRIS: I've only started recently doing that and a little bit of yoga and more meditation. Trying really hard to get consistency.

DR: Oh, awesome. OK. Do you get nauseous when you get overwhelmed and you get a headache?

KRIS: Yeah, it, see, like I can tell either like um...shoot, sorry. Like with the migraine, it will be either the nausea or the head pain that kind of all the sudden in just a few moments kind of bump up a little bit. And it's like, oh shit. And that's kinda like a warning.

DR: You were mentioning about a noise cancellation device.

KRIS: How the [crying]. Sorry.

DR: Yeah.

KRIS: You know like the sound cancelling device cuz that like when I'm out...cuz I wanna, I wanna get out more, you know? And so I mean that's a huge thing. I mean this helps a lot visually, but the sound, you know? It's just, I think it's harder to block out.

[cars roar]

DR: Yeah. Is it difficult for you to ride the bus and to make transfers?

KRIS: I mean, if it's busy, yeah, it's wear and tear on my brain. [bus, cacophonous talking] You know, whoosh, tons of people, tons of things going by, multitudes of sounds. [overwhelming traffic, siren blares]

[cat purrs]

I'm home. I'm safe.

"Let your heart speak to others' hearts."

"True understanding is found through compassion."

[low-key music]

I know that people don't see me as having a brain injury disability. I think that they'd rather see me as an eccentric artist...who only wants to paint! You know, la la.

[knife scrapes paper, then tapping on paper]

NICKI: I feel like we're being taped.

BRANDON: Yes, sometimes I think that is the truth as well.

[mellow music]

BRANDON: So....

NICKI: I'm thinking!

BRANDON: Well, okey-doke. Okey-doke.

NICKI: Leave me alone! Geez!

BRANDON: Okey-doke. [laughs]

NICKI: Did you move?

BRANDON: Yes.

Mmhmm....Mmhmm!!

BRANDON: Check. [laughs]

MICHAEL: Mate?

NICKI and BRANDON: No.

NICKI: No, no.

BRANDON: But why did you move my piece back?

NICKI: Oh, OK. My bad. See? Now I'm confusing. Aw, dang it.

BRANDON: [laughs]

MICHAEL: I think you are in check mate.

NICKI: Oh, check.

BRANDON: Dang it!

MICHAEL: Mate.

NICKI: No, it's not mate.

BRANDON: Dang it, dang it, dang it! What is it with you and check mate?

NICKI: Yeah! Yeah!

BRANDON: It's like every check, has gotta be a mate.

MICHAEL: Every check has to have a mate.

NICKI: OK.

BRANDON: I... [sighs] I am not even going to get into this.

NICKI: Mm-mm.

MS. HALL: Listen up!

MR. WENTZ: Right now, what we're gonna do is we're gonna pretend to march in.

DANI: Being the oldest person to graduate, it's weird.

Do I walk now? Do I go? I'll follow you.

MS. HALL: OK.

DANI: Do I have to hold this thing up?

I think kids are so annoying, and these are all kids to me cuz I'm like three years older than most of them.

DANI: You know I walk slow?

MS. HALL: That's OK.

DANI: The other person was bitching me out cuz I walk too slow.

MS. HALL: You walk as fast as you wanna walk.

DANI: Mokay.

MS. HALL: You're the leader.

DANI: Leader of the pack, right?

MR. H.: You're number one, man.

DANI: I like number 7. I like number 7.

MR. H.: Wish they were you.

MS. HALL: That's your favorite number, 7?

DANI: 7 and 4 and 3. But not because 4 and 3 equals 7. Cuz I don't like 5 or 2 or 6 and 1, and zero's not a number.

MS. HALL: That's true. OK. What about number 3? Where's 3 at?

DANI: 7, 4, and 3 are my favorite numbers.

MS. HALL: OK.

DANI: Am I supposed to be following you?

MS. HALL: Yeah! Stay close to the building.

DANI: Oh.

Oh no, you know Nicki Minaj? She called me last night. We're gonna do a trio together. You think I'm playing. Nicki Minaj did call me.

MS. HALL: For real?

DANI: No.

MS. HALL: [laughs]

DANI: What if I fall?

MS. HALL: You won't fall because, Hon, you're gonna go the exact pace you wanna go, OK?

DANI: OK. Only reason why I went back to high school to get my diploma is because, when I have a goal, I have to reach it. And if I don't reach it, I will freakin' beat myself up for it constantly. My goal was to walk. I'm walking again. My goal was to freaking eat. I'm eating again. My goal was to graduate. I'm graduating tonight. So it's good!

[crowd talking]

Thank you.

I'm about done. I'm done. I'm done.

[music plays in the shop]

DANI: These ones, right here. Do you have these in size 8?

CLERK: Yeah, I can go look.

DANI: Did you graduate too from Oly?

CLERK: Yeah, I graduated 2011.

DANI: Yeah, I was supposed to graduate 2007. So it's good.

CLERK: Yeah. How have things been, though? Good?

DANI: I'm walking.

CLERK: Yeah, I know. That's good.

DANI: Definitely.

I don't have one person I can call a friend. It's pathetic, I know. But my grandma says you needa do other things. But what can I do? Cuz I can't go to college cuz I failed my CPT, and I got below ABE, which is basic education. And a job when I get that, but I don't have patience, and I cuss like a sailor. I don't know where I fit in anywhere but getting high and drinking coffee all the fucking time. I don't mind it, but after a while, it gets...lonely, you know? [beat boxing]

DANI: Guess what.

GIRL: Oh, what?

DANI: Chicken butt. Ha ha ha.

GIRL: Oh, my gawd. I peed my pants.

[girls laugh]

I don't get it.

DANI: I don't get it either. It's OK.

People said "Dani, just get your GED. Dani, just get your GED." And I was going to. But it was hard. And then people said, "Get your diploma." People said I couldn't, I wouldn't make it. That's what fucking thrived me to do better, you know? I did get expelled from a few schools. But shit happens.

CASSANDRA: Ok, what are you doing? Have you planned your future out, Danielle?

DANI: No, I have not planned my future out.

CASSANDRA: You've got so much hair. OK, let me just go ahead. Just, just.

DANI: Nana, I know. I know.

CASSANDRA: I wanna get these back here.

Here we go. Ok, zip it all up.

DANI: Oh, it zips up?

CASSANDRA: Yeah. Dani earned this moment, you know? OK, there you go. She worked hard enough for it.

DANI: Is it like this? Yeah?

CASSANDRA: [laughing] She says, "I remember." And the tassel goes where?

DANI: On the hat.

CASSANDRA: Whatever makes you happy. Oh Dani!! I'm gonna cry!

DANI: Don't cry. Stop, stop. I'm gonna put the hat on myself. But how does it go? OK.

CASSANDRA: Well— [laughs] how can you put it on yourself if you don't—

DANI: Does this go frontwards or backwards.

CASSANDRA: I don't know. Let's ask Debbie.

DEBBIE: Your elastic's gonna go—

CASSANDRA: She does have a lotta hair. Maybe I should've ordered you a large cap.

DEBBIE: Right there.

DANI: [giggles] I'm sorry for taking your time.

Does this go on the left or the right?

DEBBIE: Left.

CASSANDRA: It goes on the left. Then after it's done it's on the right, right?

Turn around. Wow! [everyone claps]



This is so cool. This is like yay!

DANI: [giggles] All right. Don't cry.

CASSANDRA: I'm not.

DANI: Don't cry!

CASSANDRA: [chuckles] Not yet.

Say cheese. Dani!

DANI: OK [giggles].

CASSANDRA: I will not take any of those pictures.

DANI: Not to do! I'm gonna do that when I get my diploma.

DEBBIE: Smile. Let's see those pretty whites. There we go. That's a good one.

DANI: Wait, Mom just texted me. She says, "You got this, sugar. We are on our way. We love you." [laughs]

[many conversations]

Want me to start break dancing?

I don't know that person. [giggles]

[crowd all chatting]

[crowd cheers]

[graduation music: "Pomp and Circumstance"]

[energetic cheers, applause]

PRINCIPAL: Graduates, Class of 2013 graduation ceremony. This class came together to experience triumph in the face of adversity. One student, Dani Sanderson, is walking with you tonight after coming back from a horrific car accident in October 2007. She's a 7th year senior. Dani, would you please stand? Let's recognize you.

[enthusiastic cheers, applause]

DANI: Do I sit now? Do I sit?

CLASSMATE: Just wait.

[applause continues]

DANI: I was feeling pathetic and shit so I wrote this.

[somber music]

Head held high to the sky  
No lie but  
Walk tall, can't fall  
Still 5 foot 3  
Although 2 foot 3  
when I'm kneeling  
on the floor.  
Asking Hey, God,  
hey, what's more?  
Crying to yells at my head  
What's next to be said  
Steady, contemplating, thinking  
Why me? Why me?  
As if I'm happy  
Although, what you see  
It's fake, all fake  
With this crooked  
smile I tend to give  
I dream I was more active  
in sports and the friends  
and plus the way  
that I live  
To give me strength in  
life to get off this floor  
What's next, what's real?  
Not you, though, although I feel  
I feel hopeless, no thrive  
for the future, one  
I feel as weak  
Let's talk about failure, two  
I failed dreams I wish  
I was much more  
active in adventure, three  
Negative condescending  
meaning such lies  
It gets better  
Although, what's true?  
Cuz do you know what  
I've been f'ing to do?  
Sleeping around  
with random people  
Smoke out of  
an apple or two  
Been lied, betrayed,  
left by a few  
Nobody's left but  
who do I look up to?  
Which life?  
Should I want that?  
For high school  
with kids who taunt

Or a brother who reminds me  
he's better, that he flaunts  
One thing, one person,  
one friend to need  
One wish I feel,  
but only how to proceed

[applause]

SPEAKER: Class of 2013, this is the moment we have all waited so long for! Congratulations!  
We are now officially the 2013 graduated class of Olympia High School!

[massive cheers, band plays]

CATHERINE: Dani!!!!!! I love you.

DANI: I love you too, Mom.

CATHERINE: I love you.

DANI: I love you too, word!

Is my hat all fucked up?

ATHENA: It's been 7 fucking years. 7. 7 years.

DANI: I was in high school for 7 years. 7 years for what?

ATHENA: For this moment!

[classical music rises and falls]

[laid back music]

KRIS: It's First Thursday, and it's kind of a big deal in the Portland art scene or just actually too, even Portland. I mean, it's an event. It's almost like, in a way, a coming out party, coming out day, or whatever it is. Because I have been wanting to get out more and just not see the world so much from my computer.

[patrons chatting]

To me, you know, if I was in a gallery like one of these down here, that would mean I made it. I'm starting to get teary-eyed. I guess it's just, you know, a big dream. [crying] And I want it to happen.

Even though my symptoms right now, but I can still see something like that...and forget about...for a second. It's like, that's fucking cool. All of a sudden, I just felt sorry for all the people that have brain injuries that aren't artists because I at least have that to look towards. I mean, this is what I miss. Like, when you see their work, it's like it inspires you.

[upbeat music]

You know, I've just been so isolated.

AMY: Hi!

KRIS: Hi, I'm Kris.

AMY: Hi, I'm Amy Archer.

KRIS: Nice to meet you.

AMY: Thank you for coming and looking at my work.

KRIS: Oh, you're welcome. Thank you for having it here.

Jennifer? Hi, I'm Kris. Nice to meet you.

JENNIFER: Hi, nice to meet you.

KRIS: Actually, it's the art that saved my life, pretty much. A little story about, though, when I first had Major Depression Disorder, I was hospitalized with it. I'd been painting even before the brain injury, but 2008, I came out, and they had the election going on. So there's a whole huge amount of euphoria, wonderful, people hyped. Then my cat, named after Jackson Pollock, he passed away on November 8th, 2008. This cat used to bring me flowers in his mouth.

AMY: He what? Oh.

JENNIFER: Wow.

KRIS: Yeah! So I commemorated passing on that day. I did 4 paintings that were totally different than anything I'd done.

AMY: Because of your cat.

KRIS: To commemorate.

AMY: Yeah, yeah.

KRIS: Yeah, just like—

AMY: An homage, yeah.

KRIS: And then, I liked it so much when I went back down the next day, and then the next day, and then the next day. And then flash forward to November 7th, 2009, and a year later, I had finished piece 10,202.

AMY: Oh, my gawd!

KRIS: Yeah. I totally became the artist that I wanted to be.

OK, you know how— OK, this is something of course you can answer. You know how judgmental we can be?

AMY: Oh! Oh gawd!

KRIS: That shouldn't be that way. That's something that I learned. There was this one quote. I keep forgetting who said it to who, but from Cecil B. DeMille to Martha Graham, or the other way around. But what I got it from was who are you to stop it?

AMY: Good, yes. Right.

KRIS: Who am I to stop it? To remove the ego. It would be really cool to see what else you can do.

AMY: It's really hard, yeah. It's great you came out. It's really great that you came out.

KRIS: It helped me to be non-judgmental about my work, whatever I produced.

JENNIFER: Chris, who's my fiancé, and I, are both bipolar. We met in a support group, and we started talking about the concept for a painting gallery featuring artists with mental illness. I've been told that I've created kind of a safe haven for some artists that might not have the confidence or ability to approach other galleries.

KRIS: Yeah. I know. Yeah, actually, that's very good point because I actually do feel more comfortable talking with you than I would, than I have in the past before, with other gallerists.

So yeah, can I just ask you? Would you ever mind coming up— My studio's five minutes away.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I would love to.

KRIS: Are you sure?

JENNIFER: Yeah!

KRIS: You can say no. It's OK.

JENNIFER: No. [giggles] I really would. I would love to see your art.

KRIS: OK.

I love this! Look at that. For like-minded artists.

[bright acoustic guitar]

[riders cheering, laughing]

BRANDON: ♪ Flowers out her window ♪  
♪ Rain inside her head ♪  
♪ The power of persuasion ♪  
♪ darkens the stars  
of purple and red ♪  
♪ And the sunlight  
comes through the glass ♪  
♪ But it never  
seems to last ♪  
♪ And this tear is  
but a microscopic ♪  
♪ fraction of her past ♪

♪ Well, you say that  
you've got problems ♪  
♪ Well, all right,  
then so do I ♪  
♪ But if mine reach  
clear above my head ♪  
♪ Then hers  
reach to the sky ♪

[action movie sound effects, giggles]

BRANDON: This is how the song looks that I wrote after my brain injury. And this is how the song looks that I wrote before my brain injury. And the difference between the two is really kind of jarring because it's like, well, why? Why? What? I don't get it! [chuckles] But you know, it's just a fact of life, I guess.

It started off that I would just write about anything, you know? And as I progressed as a musician, I slowly got involved in the Christian arts, and I became a Worship Pastor for the church at the time. I can't play that role anymore because when you walk in the room, and your face is like "Hey guys, how's it going?" instead of "Hey guys, how's it going?" It's ridiculous. It's just going to be difficult, is all.

PASTOR BEN: Welcome to refuge. If this is your first time, we're glad you're here. Tonight, Brandon Scarth who's just part of our community, came up to me a couple weeks ago and said, "Man, I would really love to share my story at Refuge sometime." I said, "I would love that, bro."

BRANDON: It is a group of people who are broken, kind of like me, but in different ways, you know? I am just thankful that this group of people are here and that I can be here with them, being broken as well.

[applause]

BEN: So Brandon, tell us a little bit about yourself and maybe where you grew up and kind of just how you got to where you're at.

BRANDON: OK. I grew up in a little town called Sandy, Oregon. I wanted to be a star, as it were.

This was a lovely time in high school in a play called "The Imaginary Invalid." That's me and my mom and my sister and my other sister. I am thinking that I can still do that, but not quite as happy and such. But anyway.

I think you might have done a better job with all these photographs if you would have actually put in the information on the sides.

BETH: Where were you in the birth order?

BRANDON: I was third.

BETH: Exactly.

BRANDON: Ooooooh. I see. I see.

BETH: [giggles] I'm sorry, but that's what happens.

BRANDON: Wow.

Several things pushed me down to Multnomah Bible College, where I spent my first year getting all As in every single class. I got straight As.

BEN: I went to Multnomah. It's not easy.

BRANDON: [laughs]

BEN: What were you studying to do?

BRANDON: I was studying to be a Worship Leader and also basically a Bible degree.

BEN: You had one year at Multnomah and then something significant happened that kind of changed your life. Can you talk to us a little bit about what that was?

BRANDON: Yeah. Well, I was— I've heard this because I don't remember any of it.

BEN: Yeah, and you were out for a while.

BRANDON: Oh yeah. I was out for a good...[chuckles] I would say 6, 7, 8 months.

BEN: You know, this guy was on meth, doing his own thing, and he changed your life. You were in the middle of Bible college, becoming a Worship Director. You were gonna write music. All of a sudden, your life changed. How do you feel about him or about that?

BRANDON: Well, I actually— It rather surprised my mom one day when I told her that, "Hey, mom. How do I get ahold of the guy that ran into me? Because I'd like to forgive him, you know?"

BRANDON: [giggling]

BETH: He wanted to go see the man in prison that—

BRANDON: Oh yeah.

BETH: —caused the accident, but I didn't wanna go to prison and visit him. I really didn't wanna do that.

BRANDON: Ay ay ay. [sighs] You know, see, I would've loved to go to the prison and visit him. I think that that would've been a very freeing moment.

BETH: But then Brandon wrote him a letter. The whole idea was that you wanted him to know that you forgave him.

BRANDON: Yeah.

BETH: Which was pretty incredible for a lot of people that you would want to do that.

BRANDON: Yeah.

BETH: But I don't know that it was ever sent.

BRANDON: What?

BETH: I know Pam had it and—

BRANDON: I think it was.

BETH: Well, because she found out that he'd been moved, and now I don't even think he's in prison anymore.

BRANDON: Well, I know he's not in prison anymore. But I thought that she had—

BETH: Maybe she did. I'm not sure.

BRANDON: Ugh.

BETH: But it was...it was amazing, really.

BRANDON: Huh. Well, that's kinda disappointing.

It just seemed like the right thing for me to do, is forgive the guy that did this horrible thing.

BEN: Yeah. So you don't carry this burden of anger. You're a pretty joyful guy.

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BEN: If you've ever seen Brandon at church singing, he is up front, and he is full fledge. He loves singing.

So now looking towards the future and kinda going all right, this is what my life looks like now. You're living in a community, right? What is that?

BRANDON: Yeah, yeah. It is a place for people to live who have received brain injuries.

So this is KMS. I've lived here about two years. This is the office. There's all the people in the office. You can wave to them if you want to, you know. [chuckles] It's pretty cool. It's not, it's certainly not where I want to spend the rest of my life. I would like to spend a good portion of my life traveling to all kinds of places. But it's a good place for me to start out, you know?

So yeah. So this is my room. [chuckles] Michael is my roommate. He is kind of a challenged individual because he cannot stop his hands from moving, and so that's kind of challenging for him, especially. But it's also challenging for me because then he makes a mess in a room, and... [door creaks open] I've gotta help him. [door closes]

[relaxed acoustic guitar]

I had decided to try and go back and to see how I would do just taking one class. And that was not very good. I got an F, I believe. That was kind of a wakeup call for me that this is probably not exactly what I'm supposed to be doing right now. I would like to get enough songs together to form a album, kind of a doorway for people who don't have brain injuries to see what does it look like to someone who has a brain injury.

My next tune will be a song that doesn't really have a title yet, at least. But I wrote it after my accident. So I hope you guys like it. [chuckles]



[strums chords]

BEN: So this is Brandon Scarth live. We're gonna have him sing a song.

[applause]

♪ Hello, hello, hello ♪  
♪ Is there anybody  
out there for me? ♪  
♪ And what makes me  
so crazy up in here? ♪  
♪ I don't know,  
I don't know ♪  
♪ I'm a little crazy  
So what? ♪  
♪ So I may have gotten off on  
the wrong bus, not to mention ♪  
♪ the wrong bus stop,  
but so what? ♪

[audience and Brandon giggle]

♪ Not to mention the wrong  
bus stop, but so what? ♪  
♪ I don't know, I don't know ♪  
♪ I don't know, I don't know ♪  
♪ I do know a man,  
now I'm not crazy ♪  
♪ A man who can take all  
the pains and drown them ♪  
♪ Like a rat in the  
muddy Mississippi ♪  
♪ Like a rat in the  
muddy Mississippi ♪  
♪ A man who can take all  
the joys and raise them ♪  
♪ Up through the roof where they  
oughta be in the first place ♪  
♪ I do know  
I do know ♪  
♪ I do know I do know  
I do know I do know ♪  
♪ I do know! ♪

[applause, Brandon giggles]

[windchimes]

DANI: You have no idea how much I fucking love basketball.

My Grandma, I love her so much. I don't wanna be without her. Every morning I wake up, I go straight to her bedroom just to make sure she's there, give her a hug, and tuck her in if she's not

covered. But I definitely do wanna be on my own just because I'm not allowed to have friends over cuz I do whatever, and I'm a lesbian. She doesn't believe in that cuz of her religion.

[beat boxing] Like, when I become famous and just huge, me and Nicki, Missy, do a collabo. You have no idea. It's my dream.

This is where I smoke now. Smoking is bad. I just think it's good. Feels good. And I know it kills people, but everything kills people, you know? You could walk across the street and die. You can get in a car accident and die, you know? Cigarette. What the fuck?

The only reason why I hate the bus, you see, is because I can drive. I was cleared, but I don't know how. No one will teach me how to fucking drive. It's pissing me off.

Listening to Nicki now.

[bus beeps]

[upbeat, playful music]

OK, well my nickname is Street ANGEL cuz I'm always on the freakin' street, not like I don't live there, but I'm always downtown hanging out, smoking weed or just having coffee, smoking cigarettes. If I see someone down, I'll be like, "Hey, you're beautiful. Can I give you a hug?" It's good.

The one in the black dress shirt is my cousin. I don't hang out with him much, cuz I'm trying to do positive shit. Smoking weed is positive for me, to me. So that's what I'm about to do.

[beat boxing]

M1: I didn't see. Hold on. Hold on! Cuz now y'all may wanna record this. How you gonna rap in front of a camera and what not, film a whole documentary when I'm your family, and I didn't even know you rap? I mean, I knew she rapped a little bit, but beat boxing, I sure as hell didn't know you did.

DANI: You saw me over here on Friday.

M1: I saw you rap cuz—

DANI: OK, I beat box all the freakin' time. How do you not hear me?

M1: No, you don't!

DANI: OK, are you ready? OK, let's go.

[beat boxes]

M1: [laughs] Shit.

Wow, Dani.

DANI: You had no idea, right?

M1: I didn't. OK.

DANI: It's good.

STAFF: You ready to go in?

DANI: Yeah, I'm ready.

STAFF: Let's get you in here.

DANI: All right.

STAFF: Did you sign in?

DANI: I did.

STAFF: Did you medicate?

DANI: I'm super good right now.

STAFF: Did you medicate?

DANI: Definitely, medicate.

STAFF: All right. That's always good to see.

WOMAN: As long as you medicated.

DANI: I medicated. I medicated.

[music]

I don't know. I don't know if I should be ashamed of it, but I feel like I fit in when I'm high cuz everyone's talking to me, listening to me.

CLERK: How's your day going, sweetheart?

DANI: It's going good. I've just been recording and rapping and shit like that.

CLERK: Yeah.

DANI: Yeah.

It's the only place I can get lost in myself. This is cool. I'll rap one about why people are hating and why they're mad. OK.

[fluorescent lights buzz]

KRIS: I wanna get my internet back on. Hopefully crazy man won't be in there. He's still here. He was supposed to have been evicted.

[man's voice in hallway]

KRIS: That's crazy man.

I'm just getting really tired of the light and the ventilation and having to deal with some of the crazy.

You know, if I didn't have the art— If I had a brain injury, but I didn't have the art, I probably would've been practically suicidal, even more so. [chuckles] Cuz I have to do something. You know, I just can't sit there, waiting for Social Security. I'm not going to.

I didn't win benefits because they didn't think I was disabled enough as in my head wasn't cracked open, bleeding, my guts spilling out. And this is the most frustrating thing is like yeah, I look normal. But you hang with me one day.

How many more sites can I put my work on? Because also too, there's so many more sites I could be posting on. And that's what I wrote, you know, having an intern helping me with that. And oh, this is my business proposal for my father to hopefully help me out financially, of course, cuz I need rent money, and I need to get my Etsy shop back up. But also, I need to get canvases, I need— [sighs]

"Because of my inability to spend no more than 20 hours a week on the computer due to lighting on the computer as well as short-term memory is involved, along with multi-tasking, my sales in my shop dropped to about 1/4 of what I was making in previous months."

And then I write, "What I need is the following." So, and then "What I'm offering you," that's what I wrote, "is a return on this investment of the following." Then I just write that's the simplest thing, "Year 1, 15% of all my art sales to be distributed quarterly."

[pensive, driving music]

There was this guy that I had trouble with that was right below me for like a year and a half or so. Total heroin addict. He just...he had no sense that there were other people in the building besides him. So music would be loud, video games would be loud, he would be talking. He talked so loud one time, like he was yelling at someone, I was shaking in my apartment. So that was a whole drama that was with him. He was evicted, and he actually had to get escorted out. You know, I just felt sorry. I ended up feeling sorry for him cuz I saw what it was doing to him, but it's like he's doing that to himself in a way. And he's been given opportunities to improve, people trying to help him. It's just frustrating when I see stuff like that, you know?

Hi, sweetie. [cat purrs]

BRANDON: I missed curfew a couple times, actually. I was on probation for a month, and then I was off. Then I missed curfew again, and then I was on probation for another month. And that was all a terrible, horrible blah kind of thing. I could only go to Starbucks once a day.

Oh, that's a really cute puppy!

I couldn't go anywhere else for 30 days unless it was on this list of pre-approved places. And I am hoping to never be on probation ever again here at KMS. But I honestly don't know because I have such a horrible memory, and maybe some time I will.

[group singing warmup arpeggios with piano]

JIM: Let's get these chairs circled up so we can start right on time.

BRANDON: Ever since my brain injury, it has been worlds harder to write music.

JIM: The actual creation of the music or the actual writing it down?

BRANDON: I would say the actual creation of the lyrics is the hardest part. Because I can sit here and write a tune, and it'll go [strums chords, sings note names] B, E. And I'll do that again. And then I'll go to F-sharp, you know. And I can do that kinda stuff, but it is harder to come up with lyrics that are fitting of whichever situation I find myself in.

JIM: You picked up your guitar, and you played it so that you could kind of talk through it, to physically do it.

BRANDON: Yeah.

JIM: All right. Who's next?

NICKI: I can write chords really easy. I can't make lyrics though. It's like impossible for me.

JIM: [laughs] I doubt that.

NICKI: Nah. It's very hard for me.

JIM: You have never struck me as one that would fall short when it's time to share your opinion on things.

NICKI: What do you mean?

JIM: What are you trying to say?

[people chuckle]

I think that really, lyrics is just kind of what you've got inside put to music. So you've got a lot of stuff inside you. Maybe you're just selling yourself short right now.

NICKI: Hmm.

JIM: Is this the song you think you might wanna play? Or do you wanna play a different song?

BRANDON: I have lots of songs. [laughs]

JIM: I know, and I wanna hear them all.

So would you rather hear it in the piano or in an organ?

BRANDON: I'd rather hear it with an organ. Yeah, try jazz organ.

[downtempo-type music]

♪ Summer rain is falling down  
Mixing with my heart ♪  
♪ In this blender of emotion  
It's easy to be torn apart ♪  
♪ Spinning round inside  
these glass walls ♪  
♪ I wish I could

break free ♪  
♪ But with all these  
cloudy thoughts inside ♪  
♪ The walls  
I cannot see ♪  
♪ Beautiful light, beautiful  
light, beautiful Lord ♪

[piano, singing notes]

JIM: Next week's note is F-sharp, OK? [piano]

SINGER: That's F-sharp?

JIM: This is F-sharp here.

ALL: [sing]

SINGER: You want F-sharp or A-flat?

[distorted ambient music]

DANI: Here. Wanna put it on?

Ever since the car accident happened, dreams are irrelevant. Cuz like I had dreams of playing basketball and...doing things I can't do now. And I don't dream anymore.

Guess who called me last night?

SAM: Nicki Minaj?

DANI: Nicki Minaj. She did.

SAM: Hi, pumpkin.

DANI: Who're you talking to?

SAM: My pumpkin.

DANI: Your pumpkin? Did you say hi to your pumpkin? Your pumpkin has a brain injury as well. Look at that. No brain.

CATHERINE: So you know I talked to Sam's teacher today. Remember I told you that if you go in there and volunteer more, that you could— She said that Head Start's really big with that. That you could even be, that they need subs and stuff. If you go and volunteer more—

DANI: But the thing is, is I don't like volunteering.

CATHERINE: Why?

DANI: Cuz I don't get paid for it. I'm sick of not getting paid for doing the stuff I do.

CATHERINE: Do you think that that's a way to go through life thinking? It's ok to help people.

DANI: I feel like I help people a lot.

CATHERINE: That's where our argument is.

DANI: I help, I think.

CATHERINE: But it's ok cuz you need a lotta help. And we help you. So you could—

DANI: You say that, but I don't see it.

CATHERINE: But I just want you to get your life— You're so depressed over your life. And you don't, and I don't think that you say we don't understand your brain trauma. And we don't. We don't. We don't have it. We don't understand anything, but you also don't understand what we went through as a family when you almost died and how much it hurt us.

DANI: OK. What my family goes through. What do they go through?

CATHERINE: Really?

DANI: Yeah. What do you guys go through? Cuz seriously, you guys, I—

CATHERINE: You're my daughter.

DANI: I get that.

CATHERINE: You almost died. You don't have any friends. You can't play sports. You're sad. You don't see life the way that we see it Of course that hurts us.

DANI: But like—

CATHERINE: There's a part, when the accident happened, Dani, there's a part of me that died. I don't have brain trauma, but you were my mom. You took care of me. You did everything for me.

DANI: You mentioned that.

CATHERINE: Had you when I was 15. And then here it was, my daughter who was dying. And yeah, you've had to learn. But I was with you every single step of that accident. I wasn't in a coma, so in a sense you could say you were a little bit luckier. Cuz I watched every second of.... I had the conversations with the people that you were gonna die, you weren't gonna live. When do we want to take you off the breathing monitor. That's not.... I have the nightmares.

DANI: And I get that. So like....

CATHERINE: It hurts us to see you sad. It hurts us to see you—It hurts me to see you cry yourself to sleep every night because you don't have any friends.

DANI: It's not just cuz I have no friends.

CATHERINE: It hurts me to see you try to be somebody that you're not just because you think that that's the way that people are gonna like you. In all honesty, people without brain trauma lose friends. People are mean to people.

DANI: Ok, I know, Mom, but I don't lose friends—

CATHERINE: If you have the right people around you, the right friends, they would accept you for who you are. You're so, you wanna get accepted that you go—

DANI: Are you talking about the Christian who says I'm going to hell cuz I'm gay? That he's gonna accept me?

CATHERINE: Geez Louise, where'd that even come out? I don't think that you're gonna go to hell cuz you're gay. I am a Christian, but no, I don't think that. You know I don't care about you being gay. That's—

DANI: I'm just saying.

CATHERINE: I think the accident made you gay. I don't know if that—I know that sounds really stupid.

DANI: That is weird. How could a car accident—

CATHERINE: I don't think it made you gay. But before the accident, you were very against, not against it, but you weren't.

DANI: [heavy sigh]

Mom, listen. I wrote this.

It goes "Fail, fail, fail  
The constant thoughts  
that I tend to have  
I can't, though I can't  
Or I try to remind myself daily  
Fightin' for freedom  
I feel stuck in my head  
Some call me crazy  
Some who don't know me,  
some who don't care  
Someone...."

Ok, I'm not gonna read the next line. I'm not gonna read the rest of this. This is kind of bad words.

CATHERINE: Why do you see failure?

DANI: I see it because I'm here now, and it's been 6 years and...what have I done that's positive? Except for graduation, but that's like—

CATHERINE: Well, you lived, first and foremost.

DANI: I lived. Ok. But everyone always says this. Someone says, "You lived." I didn't ask. If I was me, if I knew this was my life, then—

CATHERINE: If you knew then—



DANI: If I knew then this was gonna be my life, I woulda asked to fucking die. I swear to God. I just fucking— Mmm. I don't like to talk about how much I hate it cuz it hurts my mom. But I hate life, fucking.

CATHERINE: Why?

DANI: Cuz it's just stressful and unfair. And I don't feel right. I don't.... I don't know. I don't like it.

[music]

DANI: Do you guys ever have volunteering?

LYNN: When you're 25 and up, yes, you are eligible to volunteer.

DANI: OK.

CHRIS: We have open mic, which is a perfect opportunity to be able to express yourself. Cuz you're interested in rap?

DANI: I do rap, yeah.

CHRIS: OK. So we're gonna do an epic rap battle.

DANI: That's cool. You make your own raps, right?

CHRIS: Yeah.

DANI: Cool.

CHRIS: The only caveat with that is that it has to be Oasis appropriate.

DANI: Yeah. That's what I was gonna ask. Cuz like cuss words, you guys, no cuss words?

CHRIS: No.

DANI: That's maybe 99% of my music.

CHRIS: Ok.

DANI: I won't do it on purpose to piss you off.

CHRIS: Right.

LYNN: Yeah, it's just a part of something to work on, you know.

DANI: Yeah, definitely. I need to work on it anyways to get a job.

LYNN: Yeah.

CHRIS: Well, this is kind of a place to be able to work on those skills.

DANI: Definitely. I have another question. I was here last week, and there was a really attractive female, and I talked to her for a minute. But it says on the rules, don't hit on older, younger people.

LYNN: Mmhmm.

DANI: Before you talk to someone everyone I talk to you, I say, "How old are you" before I talk to them? I'm not gonna hit on anybody, but what does that mean?

LYNN: Well, the first thing to understand when you talk about hitting on someone, that's not why we're here. Certainly, if you find someone attractive, yeah. But again, you've gotta realize—this is for you—that dating—if you're over age—dating someone underage is illegal.

DANI: Yeah.

LYNN: So that is a piece that just societally, you need to be aware of.

[excited voices talking, music]

DANI: Do you have erotic books?

PARRIS: Uh-huh. I think so.

DANI: Yeah? You know what that is, right?

PARRIS: Uh-huh. You can find them on that shelf too.

MARIE: If you ever find a book you like, you can check them out from the library.

DANI: OK.

"At 19 years of age, Marvelyn Brown was lying in a stark white hospital bed at Tennessee Christian Medical Center, feeling hopeless. A former top track and basketball athlete, she was in the best shape in her life that she was battling a sudden illness in the Intensive Care Unit." Like how surreal is this, you know? "The Naked Truth."

HOST: So if you wanna rap or sing or battle, whatever you wanna do, write your name and then the function. All right?

[talking in the background]

DANI: Do you wanna read my poem so you could get a feeling what it's about?

HOST: Sure.

[music, conversations]

[Dani beat boxing]

HOST: Street ANGEL, is that your MC name?

DANI: Street ANGEL, well actually no, that's just my street name. I don't have an MC name, but I use that as my MC name too.

MC: OK, everybody. Welcome to Oasis's first rap battle!

[cheers]

This is a rainbow rap battle!

Let's see. Who do we have first? I'd like to welcome Dani! Dani come up.

[cheers, applause]

MC: You got your beat?

DANI: Do I have beat? No, I don't have a beat, but I just have a poem.

Attention goes to Dani. All right. Look, I have traumatic brain injury, and I was in a car accident about 6 years ago, and I almost died. It was this huge thing. I was in a coma for about a few weeks, and then I woke up, had this injury called traumatic brain injury, aka TBI. And I wrote this poem. It's called "Never Ending Trauma" by Dani Sanderson. Cuz that's me, all right?

All right. It goes:

Why do they make fun of  
me when I look just like you?  
What, you ain't got that clue?  
I've been through trauma too  
At a young age,  
I was 16, whoa  
Hard car crash, 80 to 100 feet  
out back window, out I go  
It's about 6 weeks later,  
and I wake from a coma  
Talk about crazy  
Listen here, and I'll tell ya  
Just a few just seconds, moments  
later, I notice I can't walk  
Wait. Can you hear me?  
I can barely  
hear myself talk  
Now picture you lying there  
wondering what just  
happened to you  
Just sitting there,  
thinking what's going on,  
and what did you do?  
Just a few seconds later,  
I notice there's  
a tube in my tummy  
So I pull,  
and it's stuck  
Now I'm thinking, wow Dani,  
let's talk about great luck  
My mind is now racing  
"Someone help," I cry  
Thinking to myself what  
is this, what happened,  
and what, did I die?

Cuz I thought I was dead, OK?  
I'm lying in bed,  
lost in my head  
Searching for an answer  
or even a clue  
Why am I in this room, and  
it looks as if baby blue?  
I'm still crying, now  
there's people everywhere  
Saying this name, Danielle, it  
can't be me, this ain't no fair  
Please someone tell me  
what has happened to me  
Tell me am I alive,  
or is this a dream?  
Someone please tell me cuz I'm  
begging here, feel me scream or  
some shit like that...  
stuff like that

[chuckles]

Even long after,  
I'm still thinking still  
Crying Dani, stop, for  
the second life I got  
Now, as if I wanted  
or as if I asked  
Cuz if I knew my life  
was gonna be like this,  
I sure would've passed.

By Dani. That's me.

[cheers, applause]

MC: Thank you, Dani! Give me some love. That's cool. That's cool.

DANI: All right. Thank you.

[music, cheers, laughter]

DANI: I have a question for you.

LYNN: Yes?

DANI: Has anyone told you you're beautiful today?

LYNN: Oh.

DANI: I wanna be the first.

LYNN: Dani, thank you.

DANI: All right. I got you.

LYNN: Thank you so much.

DANI: Mmhmm.

LYNN: I appreciate that.

DANI: I got you.

I'm 21. How old are you?

GIRL 1: I'm 18.

DANI: 18. You look older than 18. That's cool.

GIRL 2: How old are you?

DANI: 21.

GIRL 2: Really?

DANI: Yeah. People say I'm like 17.

GIRL 1: You look like you're like, yeah.

GIRL: I love your curls.

DANI: Do you play cards?

GIRL: Do I want to?

DANI: Yeah.

GIRL: Yeah. Wait, how many? Five and five?

DANI: Five and five, yeah. All right.

You serious? Oh wait, wait, wait, I can do this. What do you know?

GIRL: No! Uh.

DANI: What church do you go to?

GIRL: Agape Church of Christ.

DANI: I go to Abundant Life.

GIRL: No! Ah, you're killing me.

DANI: Dolce and Gabbana  
And watch it all fall

Let's see the pictures.

I have a question. You know Jesus says man's supposed to be with man. What do you think about that?

GIRL: A woman's supposed to be with man? God made Adam and Eve for each other.

DANI: Oh yeah. Adam and Eve, not Adam and Adam. Yeah.

GIRL: But also He says He loves all His children, all, no matter how big you are, no matter how small you are, no matter what, because we're all put here for a purpose. And we don't know what our purpose is until we're gone.

DANI: But it doesn't say in the Bible that I will go to hell for being a lesbian, right?

GIRL: It doesn't say that at all.

DANI: OK. I went to the Catholic store, and she brought the Bible out. And it said, "You have punishment for your sins." Does that mean— I'm sinning every day being a lesbian. So does that mean my sin's are gonna be like—

GIRL: No. Definitely not. Because a sin is forgiven, and God knows your heart—

DANI: But He's not just gonna forgive you just every time. I don't know. It's just. I don't know.

GIRL: You, after all you've been through and everything, He's just gonna judge your heart. Cuz He knows how your heart is. And that's how it's gonna be. Anybody can tell you that you're gonna go to hell.

DANI: OK, well, I tried to commit suicide, right, like a few times, like a lotta times. And suicide is an automatic sent to hell, right?

GIRL: Yeah.

DANI: OK, well, you don't think that if you, if I had a conversation with God first before I decided to commit suicide, like I said, "Jesus, you see me living this. You see I'm stuck in my head. I'm going through this every day. I'm beating myself up. So if I kill myself, don't send me to hell." Do you think he would've listened to me?

GIRL: If you're hurting and stuff like that, suicide is just like automatic easy way out. You know what I'm saying?

DANI: It's the only way out. It's the only fucking way out.

GIRL: But also have you seen the effect of suicide? It doesn't just affect you. It affects a lot of people.

DANI: No, I get that. That's the only reason why I'm still here cuz my brother and sister have a big influence on my life. Well, actually, of them, you know?

GIRL: Yeah, I feel it. I really do. And it's hard being strong for someone, it's hard to be strong for someone when you're hurting so much yourself, right?

DANI: Yeah. OK, but God is way more powerful than me.

GIRL: He is.

DANI: Do you know how much He put me up to? I was in high school for 7 fucking years, you know? That shit's rough, being 20 years old, just graduating from high school. Anyways.

GIRL: Hey, you finished it.

DANI: I did.

GIRL: That's the thing. So many people that are 20 have dropped out of school and just left it at that. But yet, you kept going.

DANI: And I get that. I just I don't think it's fair. I just don't think it's fair. I just want someone to agree with me it's not fair. If that's OK, you know?

GIRL: Mmhmm. OK, I hear you. I agree with you. It's not fair. All right.

DANI: [giggles]

GIRL: It's not fair.

[pensive music]

KRIS: It's like, where do I start? I actually first went to my brother, and then my second brother, and then my father. Then I ended up at my sister. I'm kinda surprised that she has not gotten back to me at all. It's like she's purposely avoiding contact.

[chuckles] I realized like 5 years ago, my father is not the caring kind. I don't think my father believed that I had this. My father sold insurance. So he kinda had that mentality of they're all faking it. You think I'd go to these lengths to make this up?! You know, when I could easily be working two jobs if I was normal? Or sorry, uninjured! And my mom's sitting there going like don't lend it to her.

[soft droning music]

BRANDON: This object connects me to a past life, full of memories. It's like being transported there through some type of magic. I'm not really sure when it takes place. I just know it takes place. And in thinking about the object, I am free of all the stuff they had to do to me to survive the awful car crash that should have ended my life. But it did not end my life. Nope. I'm guessing the All-mighty God had other plans for me, plans to do something wonderful, something cherished and magnificent. What that thing is, however, I cannot say. But whatever it'll be, it'll be. And that's all that I have to say about that at this time.

I used to blog because I think that...I just needed a place to express my feelings, and I thought that there wouldn't be any better spot than to write it down on a blog.

[lighthearted acoustic guitar]

I don't know if you got told this about me, but I'm kind of a big deal. Kind of a big dill. [laughs]

DANI: This girl is me on a book, and it is so freaking cool. I guess you just have to read the book. I don't know if I showed you my book, but I'm doing this too. The cover of it was called "The Unexpected" cuz the accident was unexpected, and I thought that was a cool title. This is just pages and books and so many stories. My attempts. I wrote about my attempts. I tried to kill myself a few times, a lotta times actually.

"So due to all the mess with the kids at school and all the rejection of friendships and what not, I have become mad, and I was now 16, trying to kill myself every day. I walked in roads late at night. I overdosed a few times. I cut myself and hit my head against the walls" cuz I heard if I had any big impact to my head, I could instantly die. But anyways, I hit my head, and "there are more. I just have a hard time remembering them due to my brain injury."

So someone wrote, "We are proud of you." I said, "4 wat?"

"I find what calms me down is that I love music, OK? It's my savior. I suggest it for anyone if you're having a bad day. Just pop in your iPod and just get lost in the music. Your bad feelings just seem to drift away."

[bold Hip Hop instrumental]

I wrote this cuz I want people to know me, and I wanted to know myself. I have to reassure myself that I have been through this, Dani. I've been through hell and back a few times, and I have accomplished this, you know?

♪ a fire in disguise,  
you are blazing ♪  
♪ I hope you don't  
let this world ♪  
♪ put your fire,  
put your fire out ♪

This is the first time I've lived without family. Well, I left my Grandma's house because she didn't like my choice of friends. And I never had my own house key, which pissed me off, cuz I was paying some of the rent there. And yeah. I needed to do my own thing, you know? I don't wanna live with someone who doesn't trust me, you know? I've been talking about it for 3 years, maybe 4. I saw a chance, and I took it, you know? I pay half the rent here. Kayla pays the other half. So it works perfect.

Everybody who knew me before the car accident has gone, left, or doesn't talk shit about me but has their thoughts of who I am. That's not who I am anymore, and they need to know that. I gotta meet new people, I guess.

ATHENA: Dani?

DANI: Yo.

ATHENA: You have less naked women in your room. Actually, I haven't seen one.

DANI: Un momento, por favor.

ATHENA: [giggles]

DANI: I know, right?



ATHENA: Oh, that's great. I really like that chair a lot. Where'd you get it?

DANI: The furniture store.

ATHENA: Well.

DANI: Really.

ATHENA: Thank you—

DANI: I know, right?

ATHENA: —for that clarification.

DANI: Let's make a rap.

ATHENA: OK.

DANI: Stepping into  
Jake's with my cuzo  
Gonna have a few little drinks  
and a little bit of bitter.

No. That doesn't make sense. No one is here yet.

ATHENA: Buzz and cuz rhymes.

Walkin' into  
Jake's with my cuz  
Gonna get on my buzz.

DANI: Is it 8:00 yet?

ATHENA: Mmm...maybe not. 7:30.

DANI: OK, let's go get your little beer, my little—

ATHENA: Fancy drink?

[music]

Wanna play Pacman?

DANI: [giggles]

Oh, hello. Hi! I see you too. Ha ha.

[Aha's "Take On Me" plays]

You see that girl?

ATHENA: What girl? Did she say you could sit with her?

DANI: Aw, maybe—

ATHENA: Did you tell her we only wear pink on Fridays?

DANI: Call her to come over here. Call her to come sit over here. She looks lonely.

ATHENA: You tell her. You're sitting next to her.

DANI: [laughs]

ATHENA: I think she stole your style, though.

DANI: Oh, I see someone like you too. [giggles]

ATHENA: This is a strange parallel universe. [laughs] We're even drinking the same drinks.

DANI: I know, right? Oh, I like your drink. What are you drinking?

ATHENA: Have yours talk to mine. Oh wait, you talk to mine. I'll talk to yours.

DANI: OK [giggles].

ATHENA: That's confusing. Go. That's really weird. That's really unsettling.

DANI: I don't like that! I don't like that at all.

ATHENA: They can't sit with us. They can't sit with us. You can't sit with me.

[distorted lyrical music]

KRIS: I went to court this morning and came to an agreement of a two-week extension to come up with the \$1500, yeah, an additional extension. And then I found out about the You Care, We Care something site for the fundraising!

I was figuring out how many more blocks to go to my first written-down destination, just a month ago. I was there, and I just looked over here. It's like, that must be new. That looks really cool there. I like this place. I wanna go there. So yeah. I know, and a month later.

JENNIFER: So you're still in your apartment?

KRIS: Yeah. Actually, I don't know what happened. I was expecting a notice Tuesday morning that the sheriff was gonna be coming. I haven't gotten one yet. So I have no idea. I was just in such an emotional state on Monday.

JENNIFER: Yeah, well, of course. Understandably. Anybody would be.

KRIS: It wasn't till afternoon that I peeked my head out, and there was no notice.

JENNIFER: That's good.

KRIS: I know, I know.

JENNIFER: Fingers crossed, right?

KRIS: I know.

CHRIS: How do you like the way your pieces look?

KRIS: Oh my gawd. They look great. Are you kidding?

CHRIS: They look great.

KRIS: Yeah. I know. It's like finally I'm in the right place, to look good!

JENNIFER: So this is Kris, one of our artists.

KRIS: Hi. Hi, nice to meet you.

PATRON: Nice to meet you.

JENNIFER: This is Kyle's wife. This is Jan and Jim.

JAN: Hi, nice to meet you.

KRIS: Hi, hi.

If I didn't have the brain injury, I would've still had the house. I wouldn't have been worried about being evicted. I have no idea if I would've gone down the same path. I'm actually grateful for that. I am incredibly grateful for this.

OK. You know what? I'm gonna...I'm gonna step outside for a second, OK?

PATRON: It was lovely meeting you.

KRIS: Lovely to meet you. Sorry! Gotta put my ear plug back in and— I'm gonna go outside.

[cheers, music, announcements]

MC: Welcome to Capitol City Pride, guys!

DANI: For what? You know. I could do that many with one hand. That's all I have is one hand.

Let's go find the Stonewall booth.

PERSON: Yeah, I think it's 2:30 is when you're supposed to be there.

DANI: I'm gonna talk to the sound guy. I have my iPod, that I gotta stick in for a beat.

MOLLY: We're supposed to meet them in 25 minutes backstage.

DANI: I can do that.

MOLLY: Yeah?

DANI: Hey, how are you?

CHARLIE: I came to watch.

DANI: Came to watch?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

DANI: Is Kelly here?

CHARLIE: I don't know. She might be coming. She has to see if she has to work

DANI: We're on at 3:00 to 3:30.

EJ: You're excited to rap? You're not nervous at all?

DANI: No, I'm fuckin' hella nervous. What're you talking about? I'm shaking in my pants right now.

EJ: You're gonna do awesome.

DANI: What if I fell?

TAMARA: What?

DANI: Nothing. Just kidding. [chuckles]

TAMARA: Are you ready?

DANI: I'm Ready Freddy.

TAMARA: Did you get that music thing figured out?

DANI: It's on my iPod. I already gave it to the sound person.

TAMARA: We're right there.

DANI: I see you.

TAMARA: Ok, so. You have enough Chapstick on.

DANI: I like to feel like it's slippery.

TAMARA: I love you, Dani.

DANI: I love you, too.

TAMARA: Kill it, ok?

DANI: I'm gonna rock this house!

MC: OK, next, we have Dani, known as the Street ANGEL come here to do some beat boxing and rapping.

DANI: Awesome. Dani!

[crowd cheers, calling "Dani!", driving music]

DANI: All right.  
All right.

Say YAY Gay all day  
All right  
You're always you every day  
You can be trans, queer,  
even hetero, I swear  
Cuz we're all equal people  
How do the others dare?  
See, they mock, judge  
But do they really know?  
That there's constant  
teasing acts, you see  
I only seem to grow  
That's right YAY Gay all day  
You're always you every day  
So screw all the haters and  
we'll fuck what they say OK.  
[cheers]

So hold up, hold up, hold up. So this is no beat right here.

So I'm saying  
If you're proud, get loud  
Go ahead and stand up.

You're not standing up.

[cheers]

MC: That's more like it!

DANI: If you're  
proud, get loud  
Go ahead and stand up  
and rep your preference  
There should be no  
need to defense, OK?  
Do what you like for  
it only makes sense  
You see they have the  
right to be straight  
So we have the  
right to be gay  
So should I make myself clear  
Or do I needa translate?  
I don't think so. All right.  
[cheers]

All right well. Look, I'm gonna beat box just a little bit for you cuz I'm kinda out of breath right now. I'm shaking. OK.

[cheers]

MC: You're doing great, Dani. Keep it up! Whoo!

[beat boxes]

[cheers, beat boxing picks up speed]

[cheers]

MC: Come on everybody! Give it up for Dani!

DANI: All right. Thank you!

[music]

It's sunny now. I gotta go say hi to my family.

How come I was so stressed out for 3 weeks straight, nervous, anxiety. But it was great. Everyone loved it. I felt pretty confident about it, too. I think my beat boxing went hard. So we're good.

All right, I gotta get ready for this talent show tonight and I'm really excited for that too. Cuz I love music. So I'm gonna go and find people to go do music with.

♪ You don't have to  
change your ways ♪  
♪ for them to  
accept you, child ♪  
♪ if you do,  
let it be for you ♪  
♪ make them respect you, child ♪  
♪ You're beautiful, amazing ♪  
♪ like a fire in disguise  
you are blazing ♪  
♪ I hope you don't  
let this world ♪  
♪ put your fire  
put your fire out ♪  
♪ GO HEAD AND BE GREAT!  
Go head and do you! ♪  
♪ But no matter  
what you do, my love ♪  
♪ please don't be  
A PEOPLE PLEASER! ♪  
♪ (people pleaser  
people pleaser) ♪  
♪ You don't have to follow them  
Just make them follow you ♪  
♪ You don't have to  
♪ be a bad person ♪  
♪ and trust your instincts too ♪  
♪ See you're beautiful, ♪  
♪ so amazing ♪

♪ like a fire in disguise,  
♪ you are blazing ♪  
♪ And I hope you ♪  
♪ don't let this world ♪  
♪ put your fire ♪  
♪ put your fire out ♪  
♪ GO HEAD AND BE GREAT!  
Go head and do you! ♪  
♪ But no matter what  
you do, my love ♪  
♪ please don't be  
A PEOPLE PLEASER! ♪  
♪ (people pleaser  
people pleaser) ♪