

Writing Sample: LOOSE CANON

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TEASER

FADE IN.

EXT. MOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

A NOT-SO-QUIET cleaning cart swivels and bumps into the door.

KEESHA LACROIX (black, 14) knocks.

KEESHA
Housekeeping!

She notices something on the ground by the door handle: a white RABBIT'S FOOT KEYCHAIN, pristine condition. She picks it up, feels the smooth fur. Puts it in her pocket.

She enters and is... disgusted at what she sees--

INT. "CIGARETTE BUTT" MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--Beer bottles full of cigarette butts dot the counter landscape, right in front of a very clearly displayed--
ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING sign.

One of the sheets is wet from God-knows-what.

Keesha SIGHS in surrender.

INT. "CIGARETTE BUTT" MOTEL ROOM - LATER

High-pitched HUM from a war-horse of a vacuum. Bed sheets are in a pile on the floor. Beer bottles gone. Counters clean.

A picture on the wall is RATTLING, but Keesha, now sweating, doesn't notice. The vacuum continues to suck up: cigarette ash, crumbs, burnt matches, nut shells, a G-string.

UNDER THE BED

Vacuum runs over three CONDOMS. High-pitched hum goes up an OCTAVE before it... JAMS. It's had enough.

ON ROOM

Keesha turns off the vacuum.

She can now hear the RHYTHMIC KNOCKING and muffled grunts from the room next door: the source of the rattling picture.

She turns the vacuum over to examine the jam...

Fucking gross. She pulls out a phone from her apron, makes a call.

KEESHA

(into phone)

You ever think how humiliating the life of a vacuum is? These rooms...they so nasty. Worse than Mr. Jimmy's. I don't know if I can do thi--

MARY (V.O.)

(interrupts with coughing)

--Stop whinin', girl. You can and you will. Oh, god--

(coughs)

Call you back... And quit talkin' like that, like you don't know better.

INT. SHABBY HOUSE/BATHROOM - DAY

MARY LACROIX (black, late 20's), hangs up her phone, hugs the toilet, face flushed and sweaty from the flu.

She RETCHES.

Phone RINGS/VIBRATES. Caller ID shows: KEESHA with a picture of Keesha snuggled up to a cute kitten.

Recovering, Mary answers the phone.

MARY

What now?

INT. "CIGARETTE BUTT" MOTEL/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Keesha is as far away from the toilet as she can be.

KEESHA

I ain't--

(corrects herself)

I have never seen a toilet as clogged as this. With a capital C.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SHABBY HOUSE/BATHROOM AND MOTEL ROOM

MARY

Welcome to my world, chil'. Stay in school.

KEESHA

Funny. Cuz I'm missing it today--

MARY

I write you a note, kay? Dear Goodwyn, please excuse Keesha from school today, but her Mama sick and can't afford to lose her shit-maid job at the fuckin' Ramada...

There's a sudden look of shame on Keesha's face.

Mary gets water from the faucet. Swishes and spits.

KEESHA

I'm sorry, Mama...
(re clogged toilet)
What do I do? Should I get the lady?

MARY

Don't you bother Mrs. Red Dot. Git the plunger from the utility closet.

INT. MOTEL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Plunger in hand, Keesha walks back to the nasty motel room. Passing the next door's DO NOT DISTURB sign, she hears--

BANG, BANG, CLANK... And a stifled SCREAM.

Keesha winces. Hurries past the door.

INT. "CIGARETTE BUTT" MOTEL ROOM - DAY

A plunger rests next to a CLEAN toilet. Keesha's phone RINGS.

ON SCREEN: Mama, with a picture of Mary in a tough-lady "you want some of this?" pose. Keesha answers.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SHABBY HOUSE/BATHROOM AND MOTEL ROOM

KEESHA

I got it. It was ugly.

MARY

D'you get any tips at least?

Keesha scans the room. Feels the rabbit's foot in her pocket.

KEESHA

This is where I lie and tell you I got twenty dollars so far.

MARY

This where I cry, "Praise the Lord." And then tell you to keep it for yourself, but don't tell Mrs. Red-Dot--

Through the phone line, Mary hears--

THUMP. SLAP. Something breaks.

MARY (CONT'D)

What's goin' on there?

Keesha tries to ignore what she hears from next door--

A WHIMPERING voice.

KEESHA

(whispers)

Nothin', Mama.

Something else from the other side of the wall BREAKS. A SHRIEK, followed by a MUFFLED CRY.

GRUFF MAN (O.S.)

You keep those eyes open. That's right. Look at me.

MARY

(overhearing)

Put the phone to the wall.

Keesha does as Mama says.

ASIAN WOMAN (O.S.)

(Korean accent)

You understand, bitch? Eyes open.

Mary recognizes the voice.

KEESHA

Mama--

MARY

Listen to me right now. You git the hell out that room. Go to the next floor. Do it now, baby. Keep me on the line.

EXT. MOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Keesha sneaks past the next door room. Hears hysteric CRIES.

MARY (V.O.)

Keep movin'.

Keesha stops. MUTES phone. Peeks through the curtain crack.

KEESHA'S POV

GRUFF MAN (mid-20s), shirtless, faces away from Keesha. A SWORDFISH tattoo--among others--on his back.

Kneeling in front of Gruff Man is MOTEL TEEN GIRL (blond, 13-14), on her knees, wearing a T-shirt with large letter words: JOIN MY SQUAD. Gruff Man has a tight grip on her head.

A phone on the table by the window LIGHTS UP.

ON KEESHA: No one notices except Keesha. She gathers the courage to sneak a peek at--

ON PHONE: From Piranha: Cali Roll 6 or 8 piece, \$20

Motel Teen Girl sees Keesha. Her big blue eyes wide in fear.

MOTEL TEEN GIRL

God. Help--

ASIAN WOMAN (O.S.)

--God not here today.

MARY (V.O.)

Where you at?

Motel Teen Girl is laser-focused on Keesha.

Gruff Man follows Motel Teen Girl's stare to the window. Keesha ducks.

Gruff Man bolts toward the door.

ON CORRIDOR

Door swings open. The corridor is EMPTY--except for the maid CART next door. Gruff Man looks both ways.

ASIAN WOMAN (O.S.)
Diz, don't have all day.

Gruff Man goes back inside. Door SLAMS.

AROUND THE CORNER

Keesha is tense, up against the wall.

MARY (V.O.)
Keesha? Keesha, you there?

Keesha unmutes her phone and--

EXHALES.