



FERAL

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Keynote Description

The word *FERAL* has been tagged on buildings across the city. FX (Francis Xavier), is behind this politically motivated campaign. He is young, Black and full to bursting with ideas about himself and the world around him. On a warm night in late July, FX and the local police share a moment of violence. The city and country respond...but what about FX, his family, friends, and the complex ideas that he hoped to communicate? In the national conversation “Black Lives Matter,” *FERAL* looks at youth, idealism, and desperation. It all starts with a word spray-painted on a wall.

Setting

Chicago Summer of 2016, in any historically Black neighborhood on the city’s south side.

Scene 1 *Strobe*

It’s the dark of night on a Chicago street. In the darkness the sound of birds chirping is heard. Lights up on singular concrete wall—it is suggestive of a viaduct freshly painted but still structurally battered/compromised. The lights of this underpass throb from a soft glow to total darkness and then back again. In the rhythm of this throbbing a lone figure (FX) enters. He comes to a stop before the naked wall. He lingers—still. The lights throb in a slow and steady rhythm. In the time between darkness and light FX has scrawled the word FERAL in bright red paint. The bottom of the paint runs down the wall toward the sidewalk. The light throbs from light to darkness and then back again. FX is gone—but the word lingers throbbing in counterpoint to the light. Fade to black. FERAL in bright red pierces the darkness. The sound of chirping birds persists. Midway through this sequence a voiceover breaks through—

Reporter (V.O.)

Someone is on a crusade. City aldermen report that a singular word has been scrawled across the walls of Chicago's south side communities... In Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore—the word has been written with such frequency that authorities feared that a new gang was carving out a large swath of territory in these traditionally middle class and integrated neighborhoods. Both the gang unit and the organized crime unit have countered that there is no evidence to support such speculation. In recent days this disturbing trend has expanded into the loop and has begun encroaching on the downtown business district. There is concern that this tagging may have political undercurrents—perhaps it is the first salvo in a domestic terrorism plot...the police ask that the community keep an eye out for suspicious behavior. Please call the number at the bottom of your screen or report anonymously to the crime stoppers website.

End Scene

Scene 2 *Buy a Lexus*

Lights up on the front stoop of a Chicago-style brick bungalow. It has all the trappings of a middle class single family dwelling. Two Black men (Toma and FX) are seated. We join them in mid conversation.

Toma

What does it mean?

FX

It means whatever you want it to mean.

Toma

Bullshit.

FX

Why it gotta mean something?

Toma

You spraying it all over the city—you don't know why?

FX

Why do I have to tell you what it means...you've got a brain...puzzle it out.

Toma

Fuck a puzzle—tell me what it means.

FX

Where's the fun in that?

Toma

It's not your name—you ain't got no set 'cept me and your sister—so it ain't a set...You ain't in a set are you?

FX

Toma—you've known me your whole life...You know I ain't running with no set.

Toma

If your daddy knew he would kill you.

FX

I said that I ain't in a gang man.

Toma

I'm talking 'bout if your daddy knew that his big-time college boy was spray painting stupid shit all over the city.

FX

It ain't stupid.

Toma

Then what it mean?

FX

It means you're used to being told what to think...and since I won't tell you. You don't know what to think.

Enter Lacey from the house.

Lacey

(*To FX*) You still won't tell him? (*To Toma teasing*) You just letting him fuck witchu like that? You ain't got no pride...just letting him yank your chain?

Toma

Did he tell you?

Lacey

Didn't have to...we're of the same mind.

Toma

Then what it mean?

Lacey

(*Laughing*) Fuck if I know...he on some new shit since he come back from state...fucking crusader...

Toma

If don't nobody know what it mean, how you a crusader for anything... then it's just vandalism...you just fucking up people's property...Shit, my dad had me in the alley trying to get some graffiti off the garage door...he brought this "*formula 409*" spray shit that was supposed to take off the graffiti but leave the paint...It stripped everything off. Now the garage looks worse than when the graffiti was there.

FX

I don't do alleys...It's about big canvas...where people can see the message.

Toma

Canvas...Niggah please—you just a public nuisance.

Lacey

(*To Toma*) On your garage—What did it say?

Toma

Can't nobody read that shit...I mean it was a tag but I don't know whose tag it was or what it was supposed to say.