

Skrappy Suburban Skidz

(in down & out timez during the
twilight of a crumbling economy)

flashbax, premonitions and scribblez from johnmichael rossi

Playaz:

MARLON

CLAIRE

MARY ZABDULLAH

NDASHIA

PHILIP

MICK

JAY ZABDULLAH, aka BeatRoot

TOMMY

Notes:

b-ball is neither basketball nor baseball. It might not even involve a ball as we know it. It is most certainly a game, a game that should be invented by the ensemble and used as a coming together ritual, that will find its way into the play. It should involve dancing, and make a whole lot of racket, banging and whatnot.

b-ball gets the blood going.

b-ball makes adults nervous.

When the game is played, in Scene V, it will not be clear to the audience, who is playing, or what exactly the game is.

There is a system, but it is not easily followed by an audience that has never heard of the game.

D. *In the hallway.*

MARLON

I'm running away from home. Well...

Not running, because when i run i don't breathe properly and i get this pain in my side. Right here. Always right here.

I get a sharp piercing pain in my stomach, like a steak knife, when my parents fight about what i don't know.

I'll never get married.

Girls don't like me. But neither do boys.

I'm bad at b-ball. Stings yer handz. Well, stings my handz. All sorts of pains-I don't get it.

So I'm running away.
 Walking away.
 Slowly. As if...
 someone might notice.
 I like to pretend that there's a
 camera following me around and a
 world of people on another planet
 watching my every move. Framing me.

I'm walking away towards that other
 universe-
 That's Mary. Mary is from Egypt.
 Well not really. She's from here.
 Lives up the block from me.
 But her family is from Egypt. I
 imagine them moving out of their
 pyramids and coming here
 to live in these square houses,
 rows of boxes.
 I saw some pictures of my block
 from when before I was born. These
 houses used to look all the same.
 But they have each weathered
 differently-
 That's Claire.

K. Further down the hallway. Lockers?

MARY

I just can't.

CLAIRE

But why not? You in trouble? What'd
 you do?

MARY

I din't do nuthin'. Shut up.

CLAIRE

You did something.

MARY

I did nothin'!

CLAIRE

Then why can't you go? You're
 always gettin' punished.

MARY

I don't want to go is all.

CLAIRE

Did something happen with you and Tommy?

MARY

Shutit with Tommy, Claire! Shutit with the stupid b-ball party. Just shutit.

CLAIRE

Fine. I'll shut it.

MARY

Good.

CLAIRE

Good. Shut.

MARY

CLAIRE

MARY

You do the math homework?

CLAIRE

Yeah.

MARY

Give it.

CLAIRE

(a bored but giving pause)

MARY

Truth tables. P's and Q's.

CLAIRE

Better than x's and y's.

MARY

Why?

CLAIRE

I dunno. Just do. I guess right all the time. X's and Y's there's no guessin'.

MARY

You guessed your way through the homework? Last time I cheat off you.

CLAIRE

If I had a dollar for every time I heard that.

MARY

If you had a dollar we'd be at the corner store.

CLAIRE

Hey! I stole this cigarette from my mom's pack.

MARY

Cool! Should we smoke it after school?

CLAIRE

We need matches.

MARY

Cornerstore. They've got em on the counter.

(bell ringing pause)

CLAIRE

Let's go.

MARY

Nah, I'll catch you out front after class.

CLAIRE

You're not going?

MARY

Nah. Truth tables sound boring. I don't believe in truth.

CLAIRE

Why'd you bother copying the homework?

MARY

So you can hand it in for me.

CLAIRE

And say what?

MARY

Say that... Mary had a little... Say I had an emergency.

CLAIRE

An emergency? What kind of emergency?

MARY

Who cares. An emergency is an emergency. My brother said that when you drop the E word, lips numb, and people don't say nuttin' back-

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

"Unless they're nosy, and nosy people don't deserve an explanation.

CLAIRE

You're brother is cray cray.

MARY

My brother is a genius.

CLAIRE

That's why he's seventeen and still in the eighth grade?

MARY

Misunderstood.

CLAIRE

I'm gonna be late.

MARY

Be late.
(walks off)

M. The backwoods of an overgrown cemetery, not too far from school.

PHILIP

Go look behind that one.

MICK

(looking pause)
No way. Where'd you get those?

PHILIP

They were there. Just there. As if someone knew.

MICK

You think that someone knows that we're ditchin'?

PHILIP

You think someone's snitchin'?

MICK

I dunno. I'm just sayin'. Should we take em back to yours?

PHILIP

Heck no! We can't bring those into my house. My mom will find them in no time.

MICK
Whyz your momz always home now all
the time?

PHILIP
Lost her job.

MICK
Where'd she lose it?

PHILIP
You're an idiot.

MICK
It was a joke.

PHILIP
You're a joke. Whyz your momz
always home?

MICK
I... dunno. She's gotta watch my
brother and sister.

PHILIP
And your dad too?

MICK
Something about his hip. Disability
something.

PHILIP
Can't he watch your brother and
sister?

MICK
I dunno. They're a handful.

PHILIP
Bad hip.

MICK
Should we go back to school? I'm
bored.

0. *By the field, or parking lot.*

MICK (CONT'D)
Yo! Yo! Jay!

JAY

MICK
Jay! Jay!

JAY

Yo! Shutit son. You gonna announce to the whole world where I iz?

MICK

Sorry Jay.

JAY

It's not Jay no more.

MICK

Huh?

JAY

I'm droppin' Jay. Jay'z all played out. Call me BeatRoot from now on.

MICK

Beetroot?

JAY

Yeah! BeatRoot. That's me. From now on.

MICK

Beetroot? I hate beetroot.

JAY

Not no more you don't. Cuz I'm BeatRoot. Now what's ya problem?

MICK

I need a late pass to get in.

JAY

Signed?

MICK

Of course.

JAY

How you gettin' in?

MICK

Exit 7, quarter in the door, no?

JAY

Not no more. They got exit 7. All sorts of tagged. There's a camera there now.

MICK

So what am i-

JAY

Exit 12.

MICK
Exit 12? But Jay, that's-

JAY
BeatRoot.

MICK
BeatRoot.

JAY
Exit 12. Today, that's the only way
in.

MICK
What do I owe you for this?

JAY
You got any candy on you?

MICK
Got a pack of dunkaroos.

JAY
Anything else?

MICK

JAY
Let me get the hat.

MICK
My ScraperZ hat? But it was a gift
from my-

JAY
Givit.

MICK
Dad.

JAY
Let me wear it for the week.

MICK

JAY
And the dunkaroos.

MICK

JAY
Exit 12. When you get there, go
directly up the staircase to the
right. Don't go Left.

MICK
Thanks.

JAY
(a dunking pause)

MICK
Hey Jay.

JAY
It's BeatRoot.

MICK
BeatRoot.

JAY
What's that?

MICK
Why BeatRoot. I mean, what's wrong with the name you got. Jay Zabdullah sounds fine to me. Besides, everybody knows you with that name already.

JAY
Namez already taken. Might as well drop it now while I'm still young.

MICK
But you're older than everyone in school.

JAY
And that's why I'm so misunderstood. Now get outta here before you miss your chance.

MICK

JAY
Goof.
Hate the ScraperZ. Team sux.
Don't even like bball.
Don't like ball- just makes me wanna throw em at people. Then I do, and I get ejected. Rules.
Stupid rules these games have. Why I gotta run in between these lines and stay in those boxes, bounds...?
And I gotta wear a uniform? Alotta conformist hoo-ha if you ask me.
That's what my uncle used to always say.
I wondered what he'd say about nowadays. World needs my uncle these days. He'd tell it how it was. Put it in its place. And people, you know, they listened to him. Or at least I did.

(MORE)

JAY (CONT'D)

And back then, I didn't really understand any of what he was sayin'.

L. *Bathroom Stall.*

MARLON

Just when i think i'm about to get somewhere nature calls.
Pullin' me back in.
There's a big underground b-ball game happening on the field late Friday night. Word in the hallz is that Jay Zabdullah is gonna be making his comeback. Actually, I know for a fact that he is. He hasn't played since... it's been a long time.
We ain't allowed to play b-ball in s'kool. It's forbidden.
Anywayz, a bunch of kidz from s'kool are hackin' into the s'kool security system to shut down the alarms and get everyone onto the field. Game is at midnight. Everyone's goin'. So I guess I can't be leavin' just yet.
See? Pullin' me back.

I have a crush on Mary. She knows. She's nice to me. She pities me. Her brother, he watches out for me. People in town say all sorts of bad stuff bout him, but I think he's one of the realist people I've ever met here on this planet. Then again, I've only met 142 people. I keep track.
(counts the audience aloud)
Cool, now it's (x + 142)! Thanks!

R. *Cafeteria.*

CLAIRE

I really cannot believe you're not goin. How can you not be goin?
Ndashia, can you believe Mary's not goin to the game?

NDASHIA

I'z goin'.

CLAIRE

See. Ndashia's goin'.

MARY

Good for Ndashia.

NDASHIA

That's riiight.

CLAIRE

You have to go.

MARY

You have to shut up with the stupid b-ball game. You don't even know how the game is played.

NDASHIA

Ain't that hard to follow.

CLAIRE

Don't matter what I don't know. I know how to cheer, and I'm gonna be cheerin' on Tommy.

MARY

You what?!
(a peppery pause)
Excuse me?

CLAIRE

What?

NDASHIA

Uh. Oh. Spagitty-O.

MARY

You'll be doin' what?

CLAIRE

I knew it. It's true. Your brother is makin' a comeback. That's why you're not goin'.

MARY

You talkin' out your backside. You jibber jabberin'. If you keep it up, I'll tell your momz what you told me about you know what.

(a pause of power)

Now, can I eat my dry hockey puck of a salsbury steak in peace without you harpin' on where I ain't gonna be on Friday night.

NDASHIA
You drinkin' your chocolate milk?

MARY
Take it.

NDASHIA
Thanks! How bout u?

CLAIRE
Stob grubbin'.

NDASHIA
(teethsucking pause)
I need more ketchup. Here comes
Tommy.

TOMMY
Girls.

CLAIRE
Hi Tommy.

TOMMY
Mary, can I-

MARY
No.

TOMMY
We need to talk.

NDASHIA
You gonna eat dem fries?

TOMMY
What?

NDASHIA
Fries.

CLAIRE
I'll talk with you Tommy.

MARY
Talk.

TOMMY
Can we maybe-

MARY
No we can't maybe, so maybe you
should go now.

TOMMY
Look, I just wanted to say that I
decided, I ain't playin' Friday
night.

CLAIRE

WHAT?!

NDASHIA

Knew I shouldn't of placed any bets yet.

CLAIRE

You have to.

MARY

I hope you're not doing this on account of me, cuz if you are Tommy Thompson, you're makin' a big fool outta yourself.

TOMMY

T-squared don't make a fool out of himself. T-squared makes fools out of his opponents.

MARY

And you can go right on with your bad self, running a fool factory over in that big ole head of yours, cuz you and me, that was just foolish.

TOMMY

Mary.

MARY

Tommy, why don't you have a nice chat with Claire here. I suspect you two got a lot in common.

NDASHIA

Damn, she didn't.

MARY

(walks off)

NDASHIA

She did.

TOMMY

She's crazy about me.

CLAIRE

She's crazy alright.

TOMMY

What got into her?

CLAIRE

She's not going to the game on Friday. It seems to be a sore subject.

TOMMY
This stupid game.

NDASHIA
You really not playin'? Be straight
cuz I may be able to back out of my
bet if I call right now.

TOMMY
Natasha, can you-

NDASHIA
It's Ndashia.

TOMMY
Ndashia. Can you excuse us for a
moment.

NDASHIA
Mad shady you are.

CLAIRE
Ndashia!

NDASHIA
I'm goin I'm goin.

E. Out Frontback behind the s'kool.

MARLON
Hi Beatfoot.

JAY
Root! It's BeatROOT you dummy.

MARLON
Oh.
BeatRoot.
But wouldn't it make sense if it
was foot, cuz like y'know you tap
your foot to the beat and all?

JAY
Marlon my man, leave the namin' to
me. Ain't no one wanna be named
after a foot. Whatchu doin' out by
here anywayz?

MARLON
Oh you know, just... leavin'.

JAY

You? Ditchin'?
Nah. Ditchins not for you.

MARLON

I ain't ditchin'. I got lunch.
Whats that mean anywayz? 'Ditchins
not for me?' I can ditch y'know, if
I want to.

JAY

Yeah but you don't, want to.
Whatchu you doin out here? Somebody
botherin' you?

MARLON

No, no. Nobody botherin'.

JAY

Good.

MARLON

Word in the halls is, that you're
making your big b-ball come-back on
Friday night.

JAY

You should be weary of words in the
hall. You know my b-ballin' dayz
are over.

MARLON

But everyone's all excited about-

JAY

I told you, dem dayz are over.
Period. Y'hear me.

MARLON

I hear you, but maybe you should
set things straight, y'know, cuz
like people are gonna be all
disappointed on Friday-

JAY

What I care about people bein'
disappointed?
'Set things straight.' I ain't
never been into straight lines.
Let's leave the words of the hall
to fester up and create all sorts
of nonsense. Best thing about
junior high is how little things
blow up into stupid things. Then
you see who's really who?

MARLON

Is that why you're still in junior high-

JAY

MARLON

OW!

JAY

Watch it. I like you, ain't mean Ima take any lip from you. Now go on, get outta here. Lunch is almost over. Go tell some of dem fools that you saw me practicin' in the alley, and that my stroke is more fierce than ever.

MARLON

But, I didn't.

JAY

Say you did.

MARLON

I don't get it. You said that-

JAY

There's nothin' to get. Just feedin' the mill.

MARLON

You gonna at least go to the game on Friday night?

JAY

I'll check my calenduh. Now go on get outta here. Security will be doin' their hall sweep in about three minutes.

MARLON

JAY

That way ya knucklehead.

X. At another exit, around the bend.

MARY

Jay!

JAY

Whuddup sis?

MARY

You didn't tell Marlon did you?

JAY

Coursenot! Marlon's perfectly
confused enuff to botch up ad
misinform the hallwayz.

MARY

You sure this is gonna work?

JAY

Ain;t bout workin' or not workin'
sis.
It's bout stirrin'.
Shakin' up.

MARY

(a pause of stillness)
If you say so.

JAY

I know so.
Mary. It's about seeing what
happenz if.

MARY

That's what I'm afraid of.

JAY

That's cuz you alwayz goin' to the
worst in dat der head of yourz.

MARY

Can't help it.

JAY

That's sourtalk.
Hey, go on get outta here. Hallway
sweeps.

MARY

See ya at home?

JAY

Lata.
(MARY starts to go)
Hey Mare-
(pause)
Friday. The Legend of BeatRoot
will be born.

PHILIP

All I'm sayin' is if Jay really is makin' a comeback on Friday, ain't nobody got a chance, not even Tommy.

MICK

Tommy sure does think he does.

PHILIP

He don't.

MICK

But he did. He's already beat Jay.

PHILIP

No he didn't. He won on a technicality.

MICK

Rulez a rule.

PHILIP

It's a cheap way to win.

MICK

Who cares cheap? Winnins winnin'. You get to be on top.

PHILIP

But not really. There was no big triumphant moment. Just-

MICK

So. Who needs the big bang? Besides, wasn't Jay cheatin' by using that stuff, which is why he was disqualified.

PHILIP

There was no proof he was using it. Tommy just saw it in his bag. Shouldn't of been goin' through people's bags.

MICK

Looks like a duck, walks like a duck.

PHILIP

DUCK!!

(they duck behind something; a trashbin? A Hallway Sweep occurs: A larger-than-life suit sweeps through with a broom; MICK gets swept away. PHILIP gets away)

U. *Outside the girl's bathroom.*

CLAIRE

Wait a minute. So you're tellin' me that Jay Zabdullah is making a comeback on Friday night?

NDASHIA

Damn. Dizzle me dizzy.

MARLON

Yeah but he's no longer Jay. He's BeatRoot.

NDASHIA

BeatRoot? Aiiight. I can digit.

CLAIRE

Marlon sweetie, where are you getting your information from? Are you having one of your confused moments?

MARLON

No, I'm not confused, I'm , I was, I saw, I...

V. *Friday night. At the Field. The underground b-ball game. Loud music. The game begins. BeatRoot appears, face unseen, a hoodie or jacket that reads: 'BeatRoot.' Eventually, TOMMY and BeatRoot are the only ones left. The rest watch, cheering and taking sides. BeatRoot wins. Tommy is a sore loser. JAY appears to announce BeatRoot as the winner.*

MARLON (CONT'D)

Freeze! I've always wanted to do that. Rewind. Back in October, when b-ball season gets its most heated. Big championship season ending round. Before b-ball was officially banned in s'kool.

NDASHIA

I got my money on Jay.

CLAIRE

My money's on Tommy. You ain't got no money anywayz.

MARLON

Tommy is determined to take the crown and beat Jay, who has been the reigning champion since as long as as of us could remember since he's been in this s'kool forever.

JAY

(on the phone)

Yo Mary, when you get this, I need you to do me a favor pronto before you get to the game. My bag somehow got mixed up with Marlon's . My gatorade and my lucky socks are in that bag. I need em for the game.

MARLON

Mary doesn't get the message. She's already on her way. The game begins. Jay doesn't have his lucky socks or his gatorade. Halftime, Tommy is desperate, and starts to look through Jay's bag, which is really my bag.

TOMMY

(going through JAY's bag)

Hmmm...

MARLON

He finds something suspicious and runs to Mick.

MICK

Hemwhat? A cream. Royal cream?

MARLON

Mick runs to Philip.

PHILIP

Roidal cream?

MARLON

Philip runs to Claire, as he often does.

CLAIRE

Jay is using steroidal cream?!

NDASHIA

No wonder why he's so much bigger than us.

MARLON

Now, I'm not sure why, but Jay never tried to say anything about it being my bag, that the cream wasn't his, that the cream wasn't steroids, and that taking steroids wouldn't really help him play b-ball.

The bag disappeared before Tommy could prove it, but it was too late. But, Jay never contested it. He disappeared from the game of b-ball for seven whole months. I don't really get it...

So I'm leavin' cuz this place just doesn't make sense, and how could I ever get Mary to fall in love with me in a place that don't make no sense. Besides, now that Mary is BeatRoot, and the new reigning b-ball champion.

MARY

Hey Marlon, you comin' or what? We gonna celebrate.

MARLON

You, want me to come, celebrate?

MARY

Of course we do.

MARLON

We?

MARY

Jay too.
(a pause of recognition)

MARLON

Nah.
I'm leavin'.
Need to make sense of things.

MARY

Marlon, you always leavin'.

MARLON

Leavin' makes sense.

MARY

Only if you come back.

MARLON

Depends on where your back is.

JAY

Marlon man, I gotchyer back.

MARLON

That's why I need to leave.