

## **Mos Def & Talib Kweli**

### **"Respiration"**

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What'd you do last night? We, did umm, two whole cars  
It was me, Dez and Main Three right?  
And on the first car in small letters it said  
All you see is and then you know

Big, big, you know, some block silver letters  
That said 'Crime in the city', right?  
It just took up the whole car?  
Yeah, yeah, it was a whole car and shit

Escuchela, la ciudad respirando  
Escuchela, la ciudad respirando  
Escuchela, la ciudad respirando  
Escuchela

The new moon rode high in the crown of the metropolis  
Shinin', like who on top of this?  
People was tusslin', arguin' and bustlin'  
Gangstaz of gotham hardcore hustlin'

I'm wrestlin' with words and ideas  
My ears is picky, seekin' what will transmit  
The scribes can apply to transcript, yo  
This ain't no time where the usual is suitable

Tonight alive, let's describe the inscrutable  
The indisputable, we, New York, the narcotic  
Strength in metal and fiber optics  
Where mercenaries is paid to trade hot stock tips

For profits, thirsty criminals take pockets  
Hard knuckles on the second hands of workin' class  
watches  
Skyscrapers is colossal, the cost of living  
Is preposterous, stay alive, you play or die, no options

No Batman and Robin, can't tell between the cops and  
the robbers  
They both partners, they all heartless  
With no conscience, back streets stay darkened  
Where unbeliever hearts stay hardened

My eagle talons stay sharpened, like city lights stay  
throbbin'  
You either make a way or stay sobbin'  
The shiny apple is bruised but sweet and if you choose  
to eat  
You could lose your teeth, many crews retreat

Nightly news repeat, who got shot down and locked  
down  
Spotlight to savages, Nasdaq averages  
My narrative, rose to explain this existence  
Amidst the harbor lights which remain in the distance

So much on my mind that I can't recline  
Blastin' holes in the night 'til she bled sunshine  
Breathe in, inhale vapors from bright stars that shine  
Breathe out, weed smoke retrace the skyline

Heard the bass ride out like an ancient mating call  
I can't take it y'all, I can feel the city breathin'  
Chest heavin', against the flesh of the evening  
Sigh before we die like the last train leaving

Breathin' in deep city breaths, sittin' on shitty steps  
We stoop to new lows, Hell froze the night the city slept  
The beast crept through concrete jungles  
Communication with one another and ghetto birds  
where waters fall  
From the hydrants to the gutters

The beast walk the beats, but the beats we be makin'  
You on the wrong side of the track, lookin' visibly  
shaken  
Taken them plungers, plugin' to death that's painted  
by the numbers  
With crime unapplied pressure, cats is playin' God

But havin' children by a lesser baby mother but fuck it  
We played against each other like puppets, swearin'  
you got pull  
When the only pull you got is the wool over your eyes  
Gettin' knowledge in jail like a blessing in disguise

Look in the skies for God, what you see besides the  
smog  
Is broken dreams flying away on the wings of the  
obscene  
Thoughts that people put in the air  
Places where you could get murdered over a glare  
But everything is fair

It's a paradox we call reality  
So, keepin' it real will make you a casualty of abnormal  
normality  
Killers born naturally like Mickey and Mallory  
Not knowing the ways'll get you capped like an NBA  
salary

Some cats be emceeing to illustrate what we be seeing  
Hard to be a spiritual being when shit is shakin' what  
you believe in  
For trees to grow in Brooklyn, seeds need to be planted  
I'm asking if y'all feel me and the crowd left me  
stranded

My blood pressure boiled and rose 'cause New York  
niggaz  
Actin' spoiled at shows, to the winners the spoils go  
I take the L, transfer to the 2, head to the gates  
New York life type trife the Roman Empire State

So much on my mind, I just can't recline  
Blastin' holes in the night 'til she bled sunshine  
Breathe in, inhale vapors from bright stars that shine  
Breathe out, weed smoke retrace the skyline

Yo, don't the bass ride out like an ancient mating call  
I can't take it y'all, I can feel the city breathin'  
Chest heavin', against the flesh of the evening  
Sigh before we die like the last train leaving

[Foreign content]

Yo, on the amen, corner I stood lookin' at my former  
hood  
Felt the spirit in the wind, knew my friend was gone for  
good  
Threw dirt on the casket, the hurt, I couldn't mask it  
Mixin' down emotions, struggle I hadn't mastered

I choreograph 'Seven Steps To Heaven'  
And hell, waiting to exhale and make the bread  
leavened  
Veteran of a cold war, it's Chicago for  
What I know or, what's known

So, some days I take the bus home, just to touch home  
From the crib I spend months gone  
Sat by the window with a clutched dome listenin' to  
shorties cuss long  
Young girls with weak minds, but they butt strong

Tried to call, or at least beep the Lord but didn't have a  
touch-tone  
It's a dog-eat-dog world, you gotta mush on  
Some of this land I must own, outta the city, they want  
us gone  
Tearin' down the 'jects creatin' plush homes

My circumstance's between Cabrini and love Jones  
Surrounded by hate, yet I love home  
Ask my God how he thought travellin' the world sound  
Found it hard to imagine he hadn't been past  
downtown

It's deep, I heard the city breathe in it's sleep  
Of reality I touch but for me it's hard to keep  
Deep, I heard my man breathe in his sleep  
Of reality I touch, but for me it's hard to keep

So much on my mind, I just can't recline  
Blastin' holes in the night 'til she bled sunshine  
Breathe in, inhale vapors from bright stars that shine  
Breathe out, weed smoke, retrace the skyline

Yo, how the bass ride out like an ancient mating call  
I can't take it y'all, I can feel the city breathing  
Chest heavin', against the flesh of the evening  
Kiss the eyes goodbye, I'm on the last train leaving

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