

THE CONCRETE JUNGLE

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EXT. MANHATTAN - MORNING

A TOUR GROUP of eight moves through a crowd behind THE GUIDE, late 30s, dressed like he is leading a jungle safari. Khaki shirt. Cargo shorts. Hiking boots. Wide brimmed safari hat. Binoculars around his neck. A MACHETE hangs from his belt.

The Guide stops at a corner and raises his binoculars toward a building across the street.

GUIDE
Empire State Building.

TOURIST #1
That's not the Empire State Building.

GUIDE
No.

He lowers the binoculars.

GUIDE
That's where it used to be.

TOURIST #1
What?

GUIDE
Moved it in '86.

TOURIST #2
They moved the Empire State Building?

GUIDE
Four blocks.

TOURIST #4
Why?

GUIDE
Traffic.

TOURIST #1
How do you move a building that big?

GUIDE
Slowly.

TOURIST #5
I'm looking that up.

Tourist #5 reaches for her phone.

GUIDE

Phones.

The Guide removes a CLEAR WATERPROOF CONTAINER from his backpack. A heavy STEEL RECOVERY PLATE hangs from a nylon tether fixed to the outside. He holds the container open.

GUIDE

You'll get them back by the end of the day.

TOURIST #2

Why?

GUIDE

Experience first. Research later.

Nobody moves.

GUIDE

Come on.

One by one, they reluctantly surrender their phones. The Guide seals the container and puts it in his backpack.

GUIDE

Single file. Arm's length. Stay behind me.

The tourists look at each other, then get in line behind him. He starts walking.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - MORNING

The group moves single file through the crowd. The Guide points toward the arch.

GUIDE

Washington Square Arch. Built after New York defeated Washington, D.C. in the Municipal War.

TOURIST #4

What war?

GUIDE

Municipal.

TOURIST #4

I've never heard of that.

GUIDE
They don't teach it outside the
city.

TOURIST #6
Who won?

The Guide points at the arch.

GUIDE
Use context clues.

TOURIST #6
What context?

GUIDE
Washington: opponent. Square:
formation. Arch: victory.

TOURIST #4
Washington Square is named after
George Washington.

GUIDE
Part of the surrender.

He keeps walking.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The Guide suddenly raises a fist. The line stops. Tourist
#7 nearly walks into Tourist #4.

TOURIST #7
What is it?

GUIDE
Quiet.

He approaches a SPOTTED LANTERNFLY clinging to a wall.

GUIDE
Red hindwings.

He studies the insect for a beat.

GUIDE
Spotted lanternfly.

He kills it with the butt of the machete.

GUIDE
Invasive.

He sheathes the machete.

GUIDE
City wants these killed on sight.

TOURIST #2
That's actually true.

GUIDE
I know.

He reaches into his backpack and pulls out a separate plastic food container full of DEAD LANTERNFLIES. Everybody recoils.

GUIDE
Everybody take one.

Nobody moves.

GUIDE
Eat it.

TOURIST #5
Absolutely not.

GUIDE
They're invasive.

TOURIST #6
Why would that mean we should eat them?

GUIDE
That's why the city brought them here.

A beat.

GUIDE
To feed the homeless.

Silence.

TOURIST #4
That is absolutely not true.

GUIDE
Program got out of control.

He holds the container toward her.

GUIDE
Now everybody has to help.

TOURIST #8
Why don't the homeless eat them?

GUIDE
They did.

He gestures around the city.

GUIDE
Look how many are left.

Nobody moves.

GUIDE
Come on.

A tourist reluctantly takes one. The Guide nods.

GUIDE
Good.

He moves down the line.

GUIDE
One each.

TOURIST #1
You're not eating one?

GUIDE
I'm not homeless.

MONTAGE - THE TOUR CONTINUES

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" kicks in.

They walk beneath scaffolding. The Guide knocks one of the poles with his machete.

CLANG.

GUIDE
New York scaffolding. Critical to the local ecosystem.

He looks up through the framework.

GUIDE
We used to climb these as kids.

TOURIST #3
That sounds dangerous.

GUIDE

It was.

He raises his binoculars.

GUIDE

Some of these are older than the
buildings they're attached to.

TOURIST #7

How is that possible?

GUIDE

Nobody knows.

TOURIST #3

Why don't they take them down?

GUIDE

Nobody knows.

He studies the structure above them.

GUIDE

This one's mature. Fifteen, maybe
twenty years old.

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" swells.

The music fades toward quiet as they keep moving. At a HOT
DOG CART, Tourist #3 is halfway through a bite.

GUIDE

Street hot dogs can legally
contain up to ten percent human
meat.

Tourist #3 stops chewing.

GUIDE

Old Mafia exemption. Same grinders
they used for bodies.

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" swells back up.

The music fades toward quiet as they move on.

They pass a FIRE ESCAPE.

GUIDE

These all used to be slides.

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" swells again.

The music fades toward quiet.

They pass a row of BROWNSTONES.

GUIDE

Stoops kept the front door above
the horse shit.

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" surges back up.

The music fades toward quiet as they keep walking.

They pass an orange-and-white STEAM STACK venting into the street.

GUIDE

City steam system. Older than the
subway.

TOURIST #2

What's the stack for?

GUIDE

Keeps the street from exploding.

"WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE" roars back to full volume.

For a few seconds, it almost looks like a normal tour. We only hear the song.

THE FLATIRON BUILDING - The Guide talks as he points up at the facade. Tourist #3 listens politely. Then his expression changes.

THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - The real building is right there. The Guide keeps talking. Tourist #1 looks at the building, then at him.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - He gestures between the stone lions. Tourist #4 and Tourist #6 look at each other. Both very concerned.

GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL - The Guide talks with both hands. Tourist #2's eyes widen. Tourist #7 silently mouths a question.

ROCKEFELLER CENTER - He points somewhere offscreen. Half the group recoils at once.

CENTRAL PARK SOUTH - The Guide keeps talking as they walk. Tourist #5 stares at him, horrified. Tourist #8 is fading. The Guide is not.

The song cuts out.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - EARLY AFTERNOON

They pass a HOMELESS MAN sleeping on a bench. The Guide gestures toward him.

GUIDE

You guys picked a good week.

TOURIST #5

Why?

GUIDE

Last year I had a group on Purge Day.

TOURIST #5

Wait. Isn't that a movie?

GUIDE

Everything's based on something real.

TOURIST #1

That doesn't make it any more believable.

GUIDE

Loosely.

He keeps walking.

GUIDE

Used to allow guns. Too many tourists got hit.

The Guide taps the machete.

GUIDE

Hand tools now. Bows. Nets.

The tourists stare at him.

TOURIST #7

That's insane.

GUIDE

Used to be worse.

A beat.

GUIDE

No head start.

He keeps walking.

After a beat, they follow.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - AFTERNOON

The group waits for a train.
A train arrives. The doors open. One car is completely empty. Every other car is packed.

TOURIST #5
Oh, perfect.

She starts toward the empty car. The Guide catches her by the backpack and stops her.

GUIDE
No.

TOURIST #5
Why?

GUIDE
Booby-trapped.

He leads them into the packed car.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - LATER

The tourists are packed shoulder to shoulder.

At the next stop, the doors open.

Through the window, they see a completely NAKED MAN sprint out of the empty car and tear down the platform.

Tourist #5 looks at the Guide. He does not react.

One stop later, a MAN steps into the car carrying a badly dented TRUMPET held together with tape.

He starts playing.

It's HORRIBLE.

Not just amateur. It's genuinely hard to listen to. The tourists wince.

The Man stops.

TRUMPET MAN
If you want me to stop, pay me.

The Guide immediately looks at the group.

GUIDE

Pay him.

Nobody moves.

The Trumpet Man starts playing again. Somehow worse. The tourists scramble for cash.

One by one, they hand the Man money.

He counts it.

TRUMPET MAN

Thank you.

The doors open.

He gets off.

Silence.

The train continues uptown.

TOURIST #8

Why would anyone live here?

GUIDE

You'll ask yourself that every six months.

EXT. HARLEM RIVER BRIDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

The Guide leads the group onto a bridge and stops at the railing. He opens his backpack and starts handing out heavy MAGNET-FISHING ROPES.

GUIDE

River survey.

TOURIST #4

What are we doing?

GUIDE

Magnet fishing.

He removes the waterproof phone container from his backpack.

TOURIST #6

Oh, finally.

The Guide throws the entire container into the river. The steel recovery plate flashes for a second, then disappears under the water.

The tourists erupt.

TOURIST #7
WHAT THE FUCK?

GUIDE
Historically, about sixty percent
of groups recover their phones.

He tosses a magnet into the water.

GUIDE
Go!

They reluctantly begin casting.

A blue CITI BIKE FRAME comes up first.

GUIDE
Catch and release.

He points to the opposite side of the bridge. They drag the bicycle frame across and dump it back into the river.

Then another BICYCLE FRAME. Across the bridge and over.

A dented YELLOW TAXI DOOR, half the black T logo still visible. Across and over.

A rusted ONE WAY STREET SIGN. Across and over. An NYPD CROWD-CONTROL BARRICADE. Across and over.

A SMALL LOCKED SAFE, a strip of clothing caught in the door. The Guide looks at it for a beat, then points to the opposite railing. Over it goes.

Tourist #5's magnet catches something. She hauls up a HANDGUN.

Everyone freezes.

TOURIST #5
Is that a fucking gun?

GUIDE
Yeah.

He leans in and examines it.

GUIDE

Ninety-four percent of guns
recovered from New York waterways
have been used in a murder.

TOURIST #6

Should we call the police?

GUIDE

They know.

He unhooks the gun from the magnet, walks it to the
opposite railing, and drops it back into the river.

TOURIST #5

You just threw it back.

GUIDE

Catch and release still applies.

More casting. A length of REBAR. A SHOPPING CART WHEEL. A
dented TAXI MEDALLION PLATE. An MTA TURNSTILE ARM. Each
gets hauled across the bridge and dumped over the opposite
railing.

Finally, Tourist #3's magnet locks onto the STEEL RECOVERY
PLATE. The waterproof phone container breaks the surface.

The Guide takes the container, checks the seal, and puts it
back in his backpack.

TOURIST #4

Can we please have them back now?

GUIDE

End of the day.

He gathers the magnet ropes.

GUIDE

Next portion is the hood.

The tourists exchange looks.

TOURIST #8

The hood?

GUIDE

You didn't come all the way to New
York to see an Apple Store.

He starts walking. The group follows.

EXT. UPTOWN SIDE STREET - LATER

The Guide leads them onto a quieter mixed residential-commercial block. A bodega, parked cars, apartment entrances. Nothing about it looks staged for danger.

THREE MEN in their 20s linger outside a closed storefront. One of them notices the safari hat, the binoculars, and the obvious tourists. The three look at each other.

The group walks past. The men let them get a little ahead, then follow. One stays behind the tourists. Another moves toward the next corner. The third starts catching up.

Tourist #5 glances back. The Guide has already noticed all three. He says nothing.

At the corner, the third man steps up beside Tourist #1.

MAN

Yo. Hold up.

The group stops. The Man steps in front of Tourist #1.

MAN

Let me get your wallet.

Tourist #1 looks at the Guide. The Guide looks away and studies a building through his binoculars.

TOURIST #1

He's asking for my wallet.

GUIDE

I heard him.

MAN

Wallet.

TOURIST #1

What do I do?

GUIDE

Whatever feels natural.

TOURIST #1

You're the guide.

GUIDE

Correct.

The Man steps closer.

MAN
Give me the fucking wallet.

Tourist #1 nervously hands it over. The Man takes it. The Guide watches.

GUIDE
Good.

TOURIST #1
Good?

MAN
Watch too.

Tourist #1 removes his watch. The Man takes it.

MAN
Phone.

TOURIST #1
I actually don't have one.

The Man stares at him.

MAN
Don't fuck with me. Give me your phone.

TOURIST #1
I'm serious.

GUIDE
Allow me.

The Guide opens the waterproof container, finds Tourist #1's phone, and hands it to the Man.

TOURIST #1
What the fuck?

GUIDE
Stay in it.

TOURIST #2
Are you seriously just going to let this happen?

TOURIST #2
Do something!

GUIDE
Then you wouldn't know what it was like.

The Man turns toward Tourist #2.

MAN
Your bag.

TOURIST #2
No.

MAN
Give me the bag.

TOURIST #2
No.

The Man gets more aggressive.

MAN
Give me the fucking bag.

The Guide watches calmly.

TOURIST #2
HELP ME.

GUIDE
He's not done.

The Man produces a GUN. Instantly, the Guide reaches beneath his safari shirt.

BANG.

The Man drops. His gun skitters away. The group recoils and SCREAMS. The other two men bolt. Silence.

The Guide is holding a HANDGUN. The tourists stare at him.

TOURIST #4
YOU SHOT HIM.

GUIDE
He pulled a gun.

TOURIST #8
I'm done. I'm leaving. I'm going
to the police.

The Guide says nothing.

He taps the handgun against the machete. Tap. Tap. Tap. He just looks at them. Eyebrows raised. Lips pursed. A beat.

Tourist #8 stays where he is.

TOURIST #6

You've had a gun this entire time?

GUIDE

Of course.

Tourist #5 stares at the body.

TOURIST #5

I need to sit down.

She drops straight onto the sidewalk.

TOURIST #6

Then why the machete?

The Guide looks at the machete. Then the gun.

GUIDE

Different situations.

He retrieves Tourist #1's wallet, watch, and phone from the Man.

He hands back the wallet. The watch.

Tourist #1 reaches for his phone.

The Guide puts it back into the waterproof container.

TOURIST #1

Seriously?

GUIDE

End of the day.

He seals the container and returns it to his backpack.

TOURIST #1

You could have stopped that immediately.

GUIDE

And where's the experience in that?

A beat.

He checks his watch.

GUIDE

We're behind.

He starts walking. Nobody follows.

He keeps walking.

One by one, the tourists fall back into line. Tourist #5 gets up last.

EXT. JEWELRY DISTRICT - EARLY EVENING

Back in Midtown, the Guide stops outside a row of jewelry stores. He opens his backpack and removes THREE SMALL HANDHELD VACUUMS. Each has a different photocopied prospecting image taped to it: a GOLD PAN, a PICKAXE, and a SHOVEL.

GUIDE

Three groups.

He passes the vacuums down the line.

GUIDE

Prospecting. Loss mitigation.

TOURIST #6

'Cause we were supposed to get robbed.

GUIDE

Most groups do.

He points to the seams between the sidewalk slabs.

GUIDE

Work the seams. Whatever you find is yours.

They split into three groups and crouch awkwardly along the sidewalk with the vacuums. Tourist #5 holds one but doesn't turn it on.

Tourist #6 empties a vacuum chamber into his palm: grit, hair, a bottle cap.

TOURIST #6

Nothing.

The Guide takes out a JEWELER'S LOUPE and examines the debris.

GUIDE

Keep going.

Tourist #5 just stands there with the vacuum at her side, staring down the block.

Tourist #1 empties another chamber. Something tiny catches the light.

TOURIST #1

Wait.

The Guide plucks out a SMALL RED STONE and studies it through the loupe.

TOURIST #5

I can't believe you shot that guy.

GUIDE

Garnet.

TOURIST #1

Seriously?

GUIDE

Looks like it.

He drops the garnet into Tourist #1's palm.

The Guide takes Tourist #5's wrist, lifts the vacuum with her hand, turns it on, and points to the seam.

After a beat, she crouches and starts vacuuming.

The Guide points farther down the sidewalk.

GUIDE

Next claim.

The groups shift down.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DUSK

The Guide stops before entering Times Square. He unsheathes the machete. Nobody questions it anymore.

GUIDE

Stay close.

Tourist #5 follows without looking up.

The group enters. A COSTUMED ELMO approaches.

ELMO

Hey! Picture, picture!

GUIDE

No.

Elmo sees the machete and immediately backs away. The Guide keeps moving.

They continue through the crowd.

TOURIST #5

I can't believe you shot that guy.

Nobody responds. The group keeps moving.

EXT. BROOKLYN - NIGHT

The tourists are exhausted. The Guide is perfectly fine.

TOURIST #8

How long have we been doing this?

TOURIST #4

Eleven hours.

TOURIST #6

I think we missed dinner.

GUIDE

Good.

Tourist #6 stares at him.

GUIDE

Now you're eating like a New Yorker.

EXT. SMALL BROOKLYN PARK - NIGHT

The Guide leads them into a quiet section of the park and stops beneath a streetlamp. He turns to face them.

GUIDE

All right. That's the tour.

He opens the waterproof container and returns the phones one by one.

They stare at him. Nobody has the energy to care.

GUIDE

You maintained formation. Followed instructions. Identified invasive species, completed a river survey, handled a hostile encounter, and worked an active claim.

Tourist #5 has been staring at the ground.

TOURIST #5

I can still see the body.

A beat. Nobody looks at her. Somebody coughs.

The Guide doesn't acknowledge it.

GUIDE
You're all here.

He seals the empty phone container and puts it back in his backpack.

You can hear traffic and people somewhere outside the park. Every once in a while, a horn.

GUIDE
That's the standard. Keep the group together. Account for every person. At the end of the day--

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a SPOTTED LANTERNFLY crawling across a dusty CONCRETE FLOOR. We stay close enough that we can't tell where we are.

We can still hear the park and the end of the tour. A furnace HUMS somewhere nearby.

GUIDE (V.O.)
--everybody comes back.

The lanternfly moves past a floor drain and the foot of a utility shelf.

GUIDE (V.O.)
Tips are appreciated.

TOURIST #2 (V.O.)
I don't have any cash.

TOURIST #4 (V.O.)
Neither do I.

TOURIST #2 (V.O.)
What's your Cash App?

GUIDE (V.O.)
I don't have a phone.

TOURIST #4 (V.O.)
Figures.

A SHOE enters frame. The lanternfly changes course toward it.

TOURIST #7 (V.O.)

It says an hour and twelve back to my Airbnb.

TOURIST #4 (V.O.)
Fuck that. I'm getting an Uber.

TOURIST #6 (V.O.)
Yeah. Me too.

The lanternfly crawls onto the shoe.

TOURIST #1 (V.O.)
I don't care anymore. Shoes are coming off.

TOURIST #6 (V.O.)
Damn. That bad?

TOURIST #1 (V.O.)
There's literally blood on my sock.

TOURIST #5 (V.O.)
Please don't talk about blood.

TOURIST #1 (V.O.)
Yeah. Sorry.

The lanternfly climbs over the laces and up the pant leg.
The camera follows it up as we slowly PULL BACK.

TOURIST #6 (V.O.)
Mine's nine minutes away.

TOURIST #4 (V.O.)
Mine says eleven.

TOURIST #4 (V.O.)
I'm gonna steal your Uber.

TOURIST #6 (V.O.)
Just wait for yours. It's literally the same difference.

TOURIST #4 (V.O.)
Not really.

Now we can see ROPE around the man's ankles.

TOURIST #7 (V.O.)
Can someone just throw food at me so I don't have to think about what I'm gonna eat?

TOURIST #1 (V.O.)
What do you want?

TOURIST #7 (V.O.)
I don't know. I'm too tired to
think.

We keep pulling back. His wrists are bound too. He's tied
to a chair. He moves against the restraints.

TOURIST #7 (V.O.)
I'm not setting an alarm tomorrow.

TOURIST #5 (V.O.)
I don't think I can sleep.

The lanternfly reaches his shirt. We finally see his face.
Gagged. Terrified. The REAL TOUR GUIDE. His laminated TOUR
GUIDE ID hangs from his neck. His TOUR COMPANY FLAG is on
the floor next to him. He strains against the gag.

A CAR HORN starts BLARING somewhere outside and doesn't
stop.

TOURIST #6 (V.O.)
God, that's fucking annoying.

Another horn joins it. Now two cars are just laying on
their horns.

CUT TO BLACK.