

MIRRORS WITH NO IMAGES

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Reflection 1: Justifiable beatings

FADE IN:

INT. THE LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

The sun glares through the windows of the peaceful setting where students are hard at work.

We turn our focus on TEENAGE MONICA and TEENAGE DEENA sitting at a table across from each other.

Teenage Monica is a golden brown vision of beauty with soft brown eyes.

She's wearing a baggy gray jogging suit with her hair pulled up in a ponytail.

A stack of books rests beside her and you can tell by her expression she's focused on her education as she writes in her notebook.

Teenage Deena is a brown skin free spirit, wearing a colorful crop top and black leggings.

She's playing with her brown and blue braids, staring at the flyer in her hand.

INSERT FLYER PROM NOTIFIER

THE ARTWORK IS PRICELESS AND THE CALLIGRAPHY LETTERS ARE POPPING. TEENAGE DEENA SMILES, PLACING THE FLYER DOWN LOOKING AT TEENAGE MONICA.

TEENAGE DEENA

What are you wearing to prom?

TEENAGE MONICA

(Continues writing)

I won't be attending.

TEENAGE DEENA

Why? You only get one prom.

TEENAGE MONICA

Should I be impressed?

TEENAGE DEENA

It's not about being impressed. It's about enjoying one last night with the people you know.

TEENAGE MONICA

Uh huh. Like I said, I won't be attending.

TEENAGE DEENA

I know why.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why?

TEENAGE DEENA

You're scared of leaving your comfort zone.

The words catch Teenage Monica's attention, looking up from her notebook.

TEENAGE MONICA

What is my comfort zone?

TEENAGE DEENA

Those baggy clothes. Your basic hairstyles. You're scared of being free.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why should I...

(Finger quotes)

..."Be free" as you call it, when I already get enough attention?

Teenage Deena laughs, covering her mouth, pointing at Teenage Monica.

TEENAGE DEENA

What attention?

TEENAGE MONICA

I'm the only graduating virgin. Need I say more?

TEENAGE DEENA

As long as you know it's not your looks.

TEENAGE MONICA

You ugly women love hating, don't you?

TEENAGE DEENA

(Smacks lips)

I'm far from ugly. Come with something

better.

TEENAGE MONICA
If you were worth the time, I would.

TEENAGE DEENA
Whatever. You're going, right?

TEENAGE MONICA
(Sighs, annoyed)
Why are you so pressed?

TEENAGE DEENA
Going to prom without my best friend
wouldn't seem right.

TEENAGE MONICA
Uh huh.

TEENAGE DEENA
Seriously. You know we do everything
together.

TEENAGE MONICA
I'll think about it.

TEENAGE DEENA
Girl, stop playing. You're going.

TEENAGE MONICA
I said I'll think about it.

TEENAGE DEENA
What? You'd prefer sitting at home
staring at the walls.

Teenage Monica is silent, looking down at her nails in
desperate need of a manicure.

She begins flicking the grit from under them.

TEENAGE DEENA (CONT'D)
My point. When do you wanna go look
for a dress?

Teenage Monica gives her an annoyed smirk.

TEENAGE MONICA
I'll figure it out.

TEENAGE DEENA

I hope you don't pick something tacky.

TEENAGE MONICA

As long as I don't let you pick it,
I'll be fine.

TEENAGE DEENA

What do you mean by that?

TEENAGE MONICA

Nothing, hotbox.

TEENAGE DEENA

(Laughs)

Oh, I'm a hotbox?

TEENAGE MONICA

And my best friend.

TEENAGE DEENA

Whatever.

Teenage Deena gets up laughing, walking away. Teenage Monica laughs, reaching across the table for the flyer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS LOCKER ROOM - FLYER - CONTINUOUS

We see the flyer taped on the inside of a locker surrounded by various pictures of half naked women before the locker is closed.

Indistinct laughter and talking is heard while the boys walk around.

TEENAGE CRAIG and TEENAGE JASON are sitting on the bench wearing their basketball jerseys and shorts.

Teenage Craig is a handsome dark skin male with a Southern charm.

Teenage Jason is a medium sized pretty boy with hazel eyes, and curly hair.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Who do you have lined up for prom?

TEENAGE JASON

There's so many to choose from.

TEENAGE CRAIG
Living in that fantasy world again?

TEENAGE JASON
Fantasy? Look at me.

He flexes his muscles

TEENAGE CRAIG
So?

TEENAGE JASON
What female can resist these guns?

TEENAGE CRAIG
Apparently a lot, considering you
don't have a date.

TEENAGE JASON
Hater. Why did you ask?

TEENAGE CRAIG
Just wondering.

TEENAGE JASON
I do have my eye on Monica.

TEENAGE CRAIG
(Sarcastic laugh)
Is that right?

TEENAGE JASON
Who doesn't? But unlike them, I'll be
the one taking her to prom, and her
virginity.

TEENAGE CRAIG
Oh, you think so?

TEENAGE JASON
I don't have to think what I know.

TEENAGE CRAIG
I doubt either scenario happens.

TEENAGE JASON
Oh, let me guess. You'll be the one to
do it.

TEENAGE CRAIG
I'm not saying that.

TEENAGE JASON

Good. You don't have a chance with her anyway.

Teenage Craig strokes his goatee, interested in what Teenage Jason has to say.

TEENAGE CRAIG

What makes you think that?

TEENAGE JASON

You don't have the three things.

TEENAGE CRAIG

What are the three things?

TEENAGE JASON

The body. The looks. And...

He opens his locker retrieving his wallet. Opening the wallet, he pulls out a nice amount of money.

TEENAGE JASON (CONT'D)

...The money.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Money?

TEENAGE JASON

Money makes women open their legs faster than you can flash it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I believe you're using the wrong analogy. Money doesn't make "women" respond the way you're claiming.

TEENAGE JASON

They're all the same, Bro. Don't get it twisted.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Monica isn't that way.

TEENAGE JASON

What makes you so sure?

TEENAGE CRAIG

With a woman like Monica, you need the one thing you don't have.

TEENAGE JASON

I'm all ears.

TEENAGE CRAIG

The manners of a gentleman.

TEENAGE JASON

(Laughs)

Women these days don't know what a gentleman is. All they know is money, and they'll use their body to get it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

So...why is Monica still a virgin?

TEENAGE JASON

I haven't put my game down yet.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Even with this so-called "Game" you claim to have. Nothing will happen.

TEENAGE JASON

Are you sure about that?

TEENAGE CRAIG

I don't have to think what I know.

TEENAGE JASON

(Extends his hand)

Put something on it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'm not betting on that.

TEENAGE JASON

Because you know I'll win?

TEENAGE CRAIG

No. I, unlike you, don't view women as objects to bet on.

Teenage Jason pulls his hand back.

TEENAGE JASON

You're admitting I'm right?

TEENAGE CRAIG

Think what you want.

TEENAGE JASON
I'll tell you how good it was.

TEENAGE CRAIG
You can't tell me what you'll never
know.

TEENAGE JASON
Watch what I tell ya.

Teenage Craig stands up and pats Teenage Jason on the
shoulder laughing as he walks off.

Teenage Jason stands with a cocky attitude.

TEENAGE JASON (CONT'D)
He hates the fact I'm right.

CUT TO:

INT. TEENAGE MONICA BEDROOM - NIGHT

Teenage Monica is laid on top of a blanket reading over a
book, taking down notes.

Her mother GWEN comes into the room wearing something casual.
If you didn't know she was an older woman, you would think
the two are twins.

GWEN
Have you decided on a dress?

Teenage Monica places her book to the side, sitting up on the
bed sighing.

TEENAGE MONICA
What is it with you and Deena?

GWEN
What?

TEENAGE MONICA
What's the big deal about prom?

GWEN
You don't consider this day important?

TEENAGE MONICA
Dancing with a bunch of people you
barely speak to. Guys trying to get
you drunk, so they can have sex with

you. No, I don't consider it important.

GWEN

Is that the real reason?

TEENAGE MONICA

Why wouldn't it be?

GWEN

I was thinking it's because you don't have a date.

TEENAGE MONICA

(Scoffs)

You don't think I can get a date?

GWEN

Oh, I know you can get a date, you're beautiful like your mother. I just find it strange you don't wanna go.

TEENAGE MONICA

There's more important things to think about.

GWEN

You need to have fun at some point in your life. Don't end up alone, relying on a toy for satisfaction.

Teenage Monica laughs.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Go have some fun. Your goals will get accomplished.

TEENAGE MONICA

...I'll go.

GWEN

You'll probably end up meeting the one.

TEENAGE MONICA

I doubt it.

GWEN

Girl, just go have some fun.

TEENAGE MONICA

Okay.

GWEN

I love you.

TEENAGE MONICA

I love you, too.

Gwen walks out the room. Teenage Monica sits sighing, shaking her head.

TEENAGE MONICA (CONT'D)

I don't know why those two believe
prom is about to change my life.

INT. THE HALL - NIGHT

The students are dressed up enjoying themselves dancing to the music.

Teenage Monica comes into the hall and the guys who see her catch themselves from staring at her beauty.

She's wearing a fitted fancy powder blue dress with her hair down.

She makes her way over to the table preparing to pour some punch, and Teenage Jason comes over wearing a black Tuxedo pouring it for her. "What are you doing?" is the expression on her face.

TEENAGE MONICA

What are you doing?

TEENAGE JASON

(Extends the cup)

A woman with your beauty shouldn't
pour her own punch.

TEENAGE MONICA

What?

TEENAGE JASON

This is a job for a gentleman.

She takes the cup skeptically.

TEENAGE MONICA

You're treating me nice, because?

TEENAGE JASON
I always liked you.

TEENAGE MONICA
Don't give me that. This devastating
body has you acting up.

TEENAGE JASON
I was thinking---

TEENAGE MONICA
You would take my virginity tonight?

He clears his throat embarrassed, followed with a nervous
laugh.

TEENAGE JASON
Why would you say that?

TEENAGE MONICA
(Takes a sip)
Considering everyone in school knows
I'm a virgin, it fits perfectly with
that goofball expression on your face.

TEENAGE JASON
I'll be honest with you. My limo is
outside. After the dance, we should go
for a ride. Have a drink or two. Maybe
go down by the water---

TEENAGE MONICA
And give you some, right?

TEENAGE JASON
Nah. We could just---

TEENAGE MONICA
This conversation is over.

She gets ready to walk away, and he grabs her arm.

TEENAGE JASON
Don't act like you don't want me,
girl.

TEENAGE MONICA
(Laughs)
If I wanted you, I could have you.
Since that's not the case, you can let
my arm go, please and thank you.

Teenage Craig walks into the hall wearing a black suit. He sees the conversation between Teenage Monica and Teenage Jason isn't looking good.

He calmly walks over to the two unnoticed, stepping behind Teenage Jason.

TEENAGE JASON

Don't tease me, slut. You can play the innocent role with everybody else, but you don't fool me.

She snatches her arm away.

TEENAGE MONICA

You got the wrong one. Get ya trifling ass away from me.

He gets ready to grab her again, and Teenage Craig grabs him by the back of the neck making him fold over.

TEENAGE CRAIG

What's the problem? She said leave her alone.

TEENAGE JASON

What's wrong with you, man?

TEENAGE CRAIG

The fact that you're bothering her, is bothering me.

TEENAGE JASON

All of a sudden you care about her?

Teenage Craig squeezes harder.

TEENAGE CRAIG

This conversation is over, right?

Teenage Jason shakes his head yes. Teenage Craig lets him go, following it with a push.

TEENAGE CRAIG (CONT'D)

I think you need to find a girl that fits those three things you told me about.

Teenage Jason gathers himself.

TEENAGE JASON
When did you start caring about her?

TEENAGE CRAIG
Get moving.

TEENAGE JASON
I'll get you.

TEENAGE CRAIG
Yeah, okay.

Teenage Jason walks off. Teenage Monica stands blushing, but she quickly straightens up.

Teenage Craig focuses his attention on Teenage Monica.

TEENAGE MONICA
I had that under control.

TEENAGE CRAIG
You probably did.

TEENAGE MONICA
I did.

TEENAGE CRAIG
A little extra help never hurts.

TEENAGE MONICA
Thanks.

TEENAGE CRAIG
No need for that. Enjoy the dance.

He gets ready to walk away, and she grabs his arm.

TEENAGE MONICA
Wait. Why did you help me?

He turns to look at her.

TEENAGE CRAIG
Two important things about women all men should know. One, she already knows if she wants you. And two, if she doesn't show you interest, it's best to leave it alone.

TEENAGE MONICA
Out of all these girls, you decided to

rescue me?

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'm just making sure what I want is safe.

TEENAGE MONICA

And what is that?

TEENAGE CRAIG

You'll know if you give it to me.

He walks off. Teenage Deena walks in wearing a soft pink fitted dress. She walks up behind Teenage Monica tapping her on the shoulder.

TEENAGE DEENA

Sexy, sexy.

Teenage Monica doesn't respond, standing in a trance.

TEENAGE DEENA (CONT'D)

Hello?

Teenage Monica turns around.

TEENAGE MONICA

Huh? Hey, what's up?

TEENAGE DEENA

What's wrong with you?

TEENAGE MONICA

Nothing. Just a little stunned.

TEENAGE DEENA

Are you sure?

TEENAGE MONICA

Yeah. Let's get on this floor.

The two mingle with the other people beginning to dance.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PARKING LOT - LATER

Some fairly nice cars, a few limos, and some party buses are in the parking lot.

Teenage Monica and Teenage Deena come out of the hall

laughing.

TEENAGE DEENA
You had fun after all.

TEENAGE MONICA
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TEENAGE DEENA
And you came out of your comfort zone.

TEENAGE MONICA
(Laughs)
But of course. What made you think I
was a lame, I'll never know.

Teenage Jason and three other boys approach the two. The two look at them disgusted.

Teenage Jason takes a sip from his flask.

TEENAGE JASON
(Drunk tone)
Ready to go on that ride?

TEENAGE MONICA
You again? What do you want?

TEENAGE JASON
I was waiting for you so we can have those drinks by the water. Since your friend is with you, she can keep my boys occupied.

TEENAGE MONICA
I don't think we'll be doing anything with you or your boys. I suggest y'all get in your limo, and use your hands to keep each other company.

TEENAGE DEENA
Low key, they already did.

TEENAGE JASON
(Takes a sip)
That's very funny, sluts. Look. We can give y'all two hours of our time before we ditch y'all, and move on to something better.

Teenage Monica steps up in his face, slapping him.

TEENAGE MONICA

That's the second time you
disrespected me. Don't think about
going for a third.

He rubs his face, smiling.

TEENAGE JASON

You're right. I'll just take what I
want, now.

Teenage Jason grabs her attempting to get a kiss, while she's
trying to break free.

Teenage Deena steps up hitting him upside the head. The other
three guys are standing back stunned.

Teenage Jason keeps his grip on Teenage Monica, absorbing the
pain from the punches.

TEENAGE JASON (CONT'D)

Don't stand there looking dumb! Get
her girl!

The three come from their trance, and quickly grab Teenage
Deena.

The two women are screaming. They're struggling to get free
as they get pulled towards a limo.

Teenage Craig rushes out the hall over to Teenage Jason
grabbing him by the collar, slinging him to the side. The
three let Teenage Deena go, focusing on Teenage Jason getting
up from the ground.

TEENAGE CRAIG

You're that desperate to get some,
you'll resort to this?!

Teenage Jason looks at Teenage Craig, wiping the saliva from
his bottom lip.

TEENAGE JASON

After I knock you out.
(Licks his lips)
I'll finish what I was about to start
with that slut.

The two begin tussling. Teenage Craig gets Teenage Jason on
the ground and starts pounding him.

The other three jump on Teenage Craig. Teenage Jason gets up and takes a sip from his flask.

TEENAGE JASON (CONT'D)
 (Winded)
 Hold him down!

The three hold Teenage Craig down. Teenage Jason stomps on Teenage Craig's ankle until it breaks.

Teenage Craig screams in pain. The four turn their attention back on the girls.

TEENAGE JASON (CONT'D)
 Back to you two. Get ready to---

Finally, some of the teachers come running out of the hall, causing the four to get in the limo. The limo pulls off.

Teenage Monica comforts Teenage Craig.

TEENAGE MONICA
 Are you okay?

TEENAGE CRAIG
 (Moaning)
 Don't worry about me. As long as you're okay, that's all that matters.

TEENAGE MONICA
 Thank you. Once again, you didn't have to do that?

TEENAGE CRAIG
 This time I had to. If you're not ready for sex, it should stay that way.

Teenage Monica gives him a kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOSPITAL - LATER

Teenage Craig is lying on the bed with his ankle wrapped. Gwen and Teenage Monica are standing beside his bed.

GWEN
 Thank you for helping my daughter.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Any man would've done the same.

TEENAGE MONICA

You and I know that's a lie. The only way any other man would've helped me is if they knew I'd give it up.

TEENAGE CRAIG

(Light chuckle)

That's true.

GWEN

Regardless of the fact, I appreciate what you did. Your parents taught you well.

TEENAGE CRAIG

The thanks would go to my grandmother. She's the one who taught me the rules of life as far as how to treat a female.

GWEN

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend.

TEENAGE CRAIG

No offense taken. My grandparents raised me because my parents were going through some domestic issues.

GWEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

TEENAGE CRAIG

It's fine. The situation helped me become a better man.

GWEN

At least you didn't let it hold you down. Well, I'll leave you two alone. Thank you, once again.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Not a problem.

Gwen walks out the room.

TEENAGE MONICA

I would've never thought that about your parents.

TEENAGE CRAIG

(Deep breath, sharp exhale)
Yeah. My alcoholic father beats on my mother, and my mother believes she can't find love in another man.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why does she believe that?

TEENAGE CRAIG

She feels since he's the only man she's been with, there's no point in moving on.

TEENAGE MONICA

She's in denial of the truth.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Indeed. Watching those two growing up...
(Sighs)
...I came to the conclusion I'll never take a drink.

TEENAGE MONICA

That's a wise choice.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Do you think so?

TEENAGE MONICA

If that's what made you the man you are now, yes.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Thank you.

TEENAGE MONICA

You're welcome. What did you mean when you said you wanted something from me?

TEENAGE CRAIG

Truthfully?

She stares at him blushing.

TEENAGE MONICA

Duh.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I wanted to grab something to eat, have a nice conversation and get to

know each other.

TEENAGE MONICA
That's it?

TEENAGE CRAIG
That's it.

TEENAGE MONICA
You're in the hospital because you
wanted to go on a date?

TEENAGE CRAIG
(Laughs)
And get to know you better.

TEENAGE MONICA
Why didn't you just ask me out?

TEENAGE CRAIG
...Good point.

TEENAGE MONICA
What have you learned?

TEENAGE CRAIG
When my ankle heals, hopefully when I
ask you out you'll accept.

TEENAGE MONICA
I'll be waiting.

TEENAGE CRAIG
Really?

TEENAGE MONICA
Why wouldn't I? You're in here because
of me.

TEENAGE CRAIG
I'll hold you to those words.

She leans down giving him a kiss.

TEENAGE MONICA
Just make sure you ask.

She walks out the room.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN LIVING ROOM - LATER

Teenage Monica and Gwen are sitting on the sofa. Gwen has a cup filled with tea resting on the table beside the sofa.

TEENAGE MONICA

What do you think about Craig?

Gwen picks up her cup and takes a sip.

TEENAGE MONICA (CONT'D)

Well?

GWEN

He seems like a good man. I appreciate him helping you.

TEENAGE MONICA

But?

GWEN

It's something about his story.

TEENAGE MONICA

What about it?

GWEN

I can't put my finger on it.

TEENAGE MONICA

(Sighs)

Oh my God.

GWEN

What?

TEENAGE MONICA

How do you always find something negative in everything? You nagged me about going and because of that, I was almost raped and a good man ended up in the hospital. Now here you are searching for negativity. Why?

GWEN

I'm not looking for negativity.

TEENAGE MONICA

Yes you are. He's a nice man, but it's something about him I can't place my finger on. I can't win with you. I

believe I met someone who actually cares about me. If I didn't go to the prom, you would've complained. What do you want from me?

GWEN

It doesn't matter what I want. I'm just sharing my thoughts.

TEENAGE MONICA

Considering I came up just fine without a father figure, I don't see how his situation is any different.

GWEN

Despite your father not being in your life, you had me. I made it my point to make sure you didn't come up like I did. But if that's the scenario you wanna use, you go right ahead. I'll keep my thoughts to myself.

TEENAGE MONICA

That would be a first.

GWEN

And it won't be the last. Technically, you're grown, so it's time you learned things on your own.

TEENAGE MONICA

I'm glad you know.

GWEN

Don't think for a second I won't be here to protect you.

TEENAGE MONICA

I know you will. I just wanna give this a try.

Gwen smiles trying not to cry, placing a hand on her shoulder.

GWEN

My baby girl grew up so fast.

Teenage Monica stares at her trying not to cry.

TEENAGE MONICA

I'll always be your baby girl.

They embrace in a hug.

GWEN

My baby girl. I hope this works out
for you.

TEENAGE MONICA

Thank you.

BLACK SCREEN:

SIX YEARS LATER...

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Craig is sitting on the bed wearing a wife beater and shorts
watching the basketball game.

Anguish is on his face, rubbing the ankle he had broken.
Monica enters the room walking on sunshine wearing a two
piece business suit that shows her five month stomach. She
walks over to Craig giving him a kiss on the cheek.

MONICA

How's my baby?

You can tell he's bothered by her presence.

CRAIG

I'm okay.

MONICA

Are you hungry?

CRAIG

Nope.

MONICA

What's wrong?

CRAIG

Just leave me alone.

MONICA

Attitude, much?

She brushes him off, and then heads over to the closet. Craig
looks over with his eyes, sucking his teeth.

CRAIG

It's bothering me watching my career I

couldn't pursue.

She turns to look at him.

MONICA

What are you talking about?

CRAIG

Not being in the NBA.

MONICA

Baby, I understand your pain. Sadly, there's nothing we can do about that.

CRAIG

(Scoffs)

I should've let what was about to happen go down.

MONICA

Are you serious?!

Craig doesn't respond.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Give a nigga some pussy and look how they turnout.

She walks out the room. Craig gets up following behind her, stopping her on the landing.

CRAIG

Turn out like what?!

MONICA

Nobody asked you to intervene!

CRAIG

You're so stupid!

MONICA

Well, watch my stupid ass walk out the door.

She snatches away, and he grabs her again.

CRAIG

Where are---

She slaps him hard across the face.

MONICA

Don't put your hands on me! You know
damn well---

He backhands her, knocking her down the stairs. She lands at
the bottom not moving, moaning in pain.

CRAIG

What made you think you could talk to
me like you're crazy?! I'm the man in
this relationship! You better remember
that from now on! Do you hear me?!

She doesn't respond or move.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Mo, get up! I'm hungry, and you need
to get up and cook!

She still doesn't respond.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Mo, if I have to tell you one more
time.

CRAIG POV

He sees blood leaking onto the floor.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

(Gasps)
My baby.

Craig rushes off to call 911. Monica remains on the floor
bleeding, moaning in pain.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOSPITAL - LATER

Monica is on the hospital bed exhausted. Deena is standing
beside her bed.

DEENA

What happened?

MONICA

I don't wanna talk about it.

DEENA

You don't wanna talk about it? You

lost your baby, and you don't wanna talk about it?

MONICA

We got into it.

DEENA

And he had to put his hands on you?

MONICA

Who said he put his hands on me?

DEENA

He told me you tripped over your own feet and fell down the steps? So let me guess, that's the truth?

MONICA

That's exactly what happened.

DEENA

Are you comfortable with that lie?

MONICA

Of course I'm comfortable because it's not a lie.

DEENA

Does he still go to that bar you told me about?

MONICA

Yeah.

Craig enters the room.

DEENA

Mo---

CRAIG

How's she doing?

Deena turns her head, sucking her teeth.

DEENA

We'll talk when you get back to work.
All of a sudden I feel sick.

Deena eyes Craig up and down before walking out the room. Craig walks over to Monica attempting to hold her hand, and she snatches away.

CRAIG

I know what you're thinking. There's nothing I can say that'll justify my actions.

MONICA

You damn right. I lost our first child because you have regrets about helping the woman you claim to love.

CRAIG

That's my fault. I was watching the game---

MONICA

And you decided to take it out on me over a decision you made?

CRAIG

I know sorry won't cut it.

MONICA

Do you understand my child is gone? Why should I have anything to do with you?

CRAIG

Because you still love me the same as I love you.

MONICA

(Sighs)

If that was true...our child would still be in the process of coming into this world.

He gets down on his knee, grabbing her hand.

CRAIG

I know you don't want anything to do with me, and I know no matter how much I apologize, it won't change the situation. But I swear on my life...I'll never do this again.

MONICA

The man I love would've never done this.

CRAIG

I am the man you love.

She begins crying.

MONICA
I can't believe you.

CRAIG
All I'm asking is for one more chance.

MONICA
Craig, you---

CRAIG
Just say yes. I'm begging you. Say
you'll stay.

BLACK SCREEN:

THREE MONTHS LATER...

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Monica is standing over the stove wearing something casual humming a tune, cooking dinner.

Craig staggers in drunk wearing his construction uniform holding a bottle of vodka.

His eyes are red and he can barely hold the saliva in his mouth.

He makes his way to the table plopping down in his seat.

CRAIG
What's cooking?

She turns around, walking over to him smiling.

MONICA
Roast. Macaroni, green beans---

CRAIG
Okay, whatever.
(Takes a sip)
When will it be done?

MONICA
(Clears her throat)
It'll be ready in a matter of minutes.
I'm waiting for the roast to get done.

He shakes his head disappointed, taking a swig from the

bottle.

CRAIG

You've been here all day, and my dinner ain't ready yet? What the hell were you doing?!

She takes a step back, nervous.

MONICA

I had to clean the house before I started.

He takes a swig, and then slings the bottle across the room. Monica shrieks, stepping back with a look of fear on her face.

CRAIG

You know after a long day, I want my meal hot and ready! I don't wanna hear excuses!

MONICA

Craig---

CRAIG

Craig what?! Craig what?! That's not putting a meal in front of me!

He gets up and grabs her by the wrists, causing her to scream.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I know why my meal isn't ready! You were in here fuckin' another man!

MONICA

Craig I swear---

Releasing one of her wrists, he slaps her hard across the face.

CRAIG

Shut up! I smell another man on you! You wanna be with another man?!

(Sinister tone)

I'll make sure he wants the lights off.

She screams as he slaps her a few more times before throwing her into the island.

Falling down to the floor, she continues crying with her hands over her face.

He takes his belt off, and wraps it around his knuckles.

INT. MONICA CUBICLE - MORNING

Pictures of Craig and Monica when they were happy are taped on the walls, along with some sticky notes with various messages on them.

Monica has her head low typing on the keyboard. She pauses to make sure her hair is covering the bruise on the side above her eye.

Deena enters the room walking over to Monica, placing a hand on her shoulder.

Monica jerks in fear, slowly turning around.

DEENA

Are you okay?

Monica laughs nervously, making sure the bruise on her face doesn't get revealed.

MONICA

I'm fine. I didn't get a lot of sleep last night. You know how it is when the husband can't get enough of what you got?

Deena moves Monica's hair to the side, sighing looking at the bruise.

DEENA

When does the wife get enough of her husband beating her?

Monica moves Deena's hand ashamed. Deena walks over to an empty cubicle grabbing a chair, and then she comes back placing it beside Monica taking a seat.

MONICA

I don't know what you're talking about.

DEENA

Girl, everybody knows. He's no longer the loving high school sweetheart you fell in love with.

MONICA

He...he's under a lot of stress. I'm the woman of the house, so I should uphold my job as far as keeping the house clean and having dinner ready on time. I lack in those areas from time to time, so we have our altercations.

DEENA

Mo, you can't honestly sit here making yourself believe what just came from your mouth.

MONICA

It's the truth. I don't focus hard enough on my duties as far as being a wife.

DEENA

So, a beating justifies it?

Monica doesn't respond.

DEENA (CONT'D)

(Sighs)

I can relate to your situation.

Monica stares at her with glossy eyes.

MONICA

What do you know about my situation?

Deena pulls the neck part of her shirt down, just enough to see the scar on her chest from being stabbed. Monica covers her mouth.

MONICA (CONT'D)

What happened?

DEENA

I was like you. I thought it was love, and nothing else in the world mattered.

(Soft sob)

...Thank God I survived. I told myself, there's no love in the world worth losing my life. When are you going to realize that?

Monica shakes her head in denial.

MONICA

It'll never go that far with us.

DEENA

That's the same thing I said. I kept saying this can't be the man I love doing this to me.

MONICA

We love each other.

DEENA

He loves knowing his grip is so tight, you'll never leave. Can you honestly tell me why you love him?

Monica doesn't respond, closing her eyes letting the tears fall.

Deena places a hand on her shoulder feeling her pain, doing her best not to cry.

DEENA (CONT'D)

Don't let what happened to me or worse happen to you. You're a very beautiful intelligent woman. There's a man who'll actually love you without putting a bruise on your face to express it.

Deena gets up, and walks away. Monica remains with her head down, weeping low, wiping the tears from her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Monica is sitting on the sofa looking at old pictures of her and Craig in a scrapbook, wiping the tears from her face. The front door is heard opened, and then closed.

Craig comes in drunk wearing a basketball jersey and shorts, holding a bouquet of roses, leaning up against the wall.

CRAIG

(Drunk tone)

Baby, I'm home.

She snuffles, wiping her eyes, placing the book down.

MONICA

Hey.

CRAIG

I know I was out of line last night, and there's nothing I can do or say to make you forgive me. But I have something explaining I'll never do you wrong again.

She turns her head looking at him, pointing at her bruise.

MONICA

You think roses can heal this bruise because you thought I was with another man? Do you think roses can heal the inner scarred tissue you embedded in me, due to lack of trust?

She lowers her head. Craig walks over to her kneeling down, placing the roses next to her.

CRAIG

I understand what you're saying.

MONICA

What happened to the man I love? The man I gave my heart without a doubt of taking it back.

CRAIG

It's my fault you lost him. I lost myself somewhere. By doing that, I also lost my real true love. That's why I have this.

He pulls out a ring box opening it, revealing a diamond ring. She covers her mouth shocked.

MONICA

Oh my God.

CRAIG

This day marks our anniversary.

MONICA

Craig---

He places a finger to her lips.

CRAIG
Don't say anything. Just know from
here on, I'll never hurt you again.

Tears fall from her eyes as she hugs and kisses all over his
face...and then the look of joy turns sour.

MONICA
What's that smell?

CRAIG
What smell?

She pushes him back.

MONICA
Unless you're searching for your inner
woman, which I highly doubt. Why do
you smell like perfume?

CRAIG
(Clears his throat)
Baby, I don't know what you're talking
about.

MONICA
Right. So all these scratches on your
neck means what?

She picks up the roses and hits him over the head a few times
before standing up, walking away. He stands up with an
exposed look.

CRAIG
Baby, let me explain.

She pauses, but keeps her back turned.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
...I was with the fella's playing ball,
and I got scratched up playing
defense. The perfume smell is from the
women trying to give me hugs for
winning the game, but I told them I
have a wife.

She turns around looking at him disgusted.

MONICA
You're so full of it. Why can't you be
a man for once, and fess up to what

you did?

His look turns serious.

CRAIG

Is that what you wanna hear?

MONICA

It's not about what I wanna hear. It's about telling me the truth.

CRAIG

(Deep breath)

...Okay. I was with another woman tonight. Actually, I've been with a different woman for the past few months. And you won't do anything about it because you know better. Get that ass upstairs, and get in bed.

MONICA

You're a worthless excuse of a man. You know what? As much as this is about to hurt me because I wish it didn't happen. But I'm glad you knocked me down the stairs so I could lose our child. It would've killed me watching our child see his father turnout to be a worthless duplicate of his father!

He charges at her, and she kicks him between the legs, making him drop to the floor in pain.

MONICA (CONT'D)

You're so predictable. I'll be back to collect my things, but my heart you can keep. Let it remind you of a good woman you ruined because you weren't built to handle her.

She makes her way out the room. The front door is heard opened, and then closed.

CRAIG

Monica! Monica, get back here! I'm killing you! I swear to God, I'm killing you!

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Monica and Gwen are sitting on the sofa. Monica is wiping the tears from her eyes.

MONICA

I can't believe this.

GWEN

I tried to tell you it was something about him.

MONICA

Mama, it's not the time for that.

Gwen turns looking at her.

GWEN

Do you enjoy getting smacked in the face with everything, but the truth?

MONICA

How can you say that at a time like this?

GWEN

The same way you took those beatings. The same way you lost your child. Baby, I love you to death. How can you not listen to a person that's been around the world more than once?

MONICA

I'm a product of that old saying "Love is blind."

GWEN

(Laughs)

That's not what you're a product of. You're a product of stupidity.

MONICA

Mama, come on.

GWEN

You're a tad bit on the stupid side. You loved him being your prince charming to the rescue. The good looks. The sex.

(Coy snicker)

How was the sex? I heard those tall

boys---

MONICA

(Laughs)

Mama, please.

GWEN

(Laughs)

Sorry. But what you thought was love back then was nothing more than spur of the moment. You told me to let you handle it on your own, and I did. Do you remember what I told you my mother told me?

MONICA

You told me a lot of things she said.

GWEN

A real man never puts his hands on a woman. A real man loves his woman for more than just an object. He loves her for being his woman in general, making sure he stands strong.

Monica sighs, shaking her head.

MONICA

What do I do now?

GWEN

Are you happy you're still alive?

MONICA

Yes.

GWEN

Then that's all that matters. Everything else from here on out is your new beginning.

MONICA

Thanks.

GWEN

No need to thank me. I should've stepped in sooner before it went this far.

MONICA

There's no one to blame but myself. He

said the signs when he told me about his parents. I just didn't expect him to go through the same phase. Hell...we're reliving his parent's relationship.

GWEN

You don't feel like I let you down?

MONICA

Mama, I let myself down. I remember when I asked him why his mother couldn't move on. He said it's because his father was her first love.

(Sighs)

...Look at what's happening to me.

GWEN

I feel like I should've done something.

MONICA

Being here for me now is the best thing you can do.

GWEN

I love you, baby.

MONICA

I love you, too.

(Low laugh)

You don't mind if your baby stays here for a few days?

GWEN

No matter how old you get, this will always be your home.

They give each other a hug. When they release, Gwen gives Monica a kiss on the cheek, and then makes her way out the room.

Monica snuffles, wiping her eyes, pulling her phone out calling Deena.

MONICA

Hey. Can you meet me at my house in twenty minutes?

(Listens)

I'll tell you all about it when we link up. You still got the key I gave

you, right?
(Listens)
Good. Okay, I'll see you there.

She hangs up, placing the phone back in her pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The front door is heard opened, and then closed. Craig is on the sofa appearing to be asleep.

A bottle of vodka is resting on the table. Monica comes in trying to creep towards the stairs.

When she gets to the steps, he sits up grabbing the bottle, taking a sip.

CRAIG
It's about time you came home.

She turns around.

MONICA
This is not my home. That feeling left a long time ago. I was just naive and didn't hand over the keys.

He takes another sip, and then stands up.

CRAIG
This is your home! Now like I told you before...
(Takes a sip)
Get ya ass up those stairs! Get in the bed, and take what I have to give you.

Monica stares at him with a smirk, shaking her head feeling sorry for him.

MONICA
At one point I loved you, and didn't wanna lose you. My eyes are open now. I realize it was neither of those reasons. I was afraid to not love you because of what you would've done to me. I didn't wanna leave because I knew you would torment me until I came back. But here's something I know you're not expecting to hear.

(Proud tone)
I'm no longer your recyclable object.
I'm about to get my few things and
start a new life...without you!

CRAIG
You think it's that easy?! You think
you can come in here all high and
mighty without repercussions?!

MONICA
There's nothing you can do or say
that'll knock me down.

CRAIG
If I come over there and go upside
your head you'd get knocked down.

MONICA
You do what you need to do.

She starts to walk up the stairs, and he runs over grabbing her, causing her to turn around and push him back, followed with a slap across the face.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Don't you ever put your hands on me
again! I'll be damned if I continue
being your punching bag! You put
another finger on me, and one of us
has to go.

A sinister smile spreads across his face.

CRAIG
One of us has to go?

MONICA
That's what I---

He hits her with enough force to break her neck on the rail.
She falls to the floor dead.

CRAIG
Get up! I've done worse than this!

He kicks her a few times.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
Monica?

The front door is heard opened, and then closed.

DEENA (O.S.)

Mo?

Craig looks around in fear before running out the room. The back door is heard opening.

Deena comes in and sees Monica lying motionless, and she quickly runs over to her.

DEENA (CONT'D)

I told you!

Deena drops down to her knees, and holds her dead friend in her arms, rocking back and forth crying.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Some jazz music is playing. The few customers there, you can tell they're trying to wash away their problems with alcohol.

Craig is sitting at the bar taking shots. With each shot he shakes his head in sorrow.

CRAIG

(Drunk sadden tone)

I can't believe I did that.

Deena walks in with a stone cold expression, making her way towards Craig.

DEENA (O.S.)

You're a worthless bastard.

Craig is confused, but he doesn't turn around to see the face behind the voice.

CRAIG

Who is that?

DEENA (O.S.)

Don't even look at me until I say so.

She pulls a snub nose out and cocks it, placing it to the back of his head.

Everybody in the bar screams, dropping to the floor. He tries turning around, and she presses the gun harder against his

head.

DEENA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Didn't I tell you not to look at me
until I say so?

CRAIG
What do you want?

DEENA (O.S.)
I want you to feel helpless. If I had
the time, I'd beat your ass. But for
now...
(Scoffs)
...Savor these last few moments of
whatever this is you called a life.

Craig registers Deena's voice.

CRAIG
Listen. I didn't mean---

DEENA (O.S.)
You meant it. You meant every bruise
you put on her. Every ounce of her
dignity you took, leading to you
ending her life.

CRAIG
(Sobs)
I didn't mean to kill her. She said
something hurting my pride.

DEENA (O.S.)
Pride?! You have the audacity to say
you have pride? What kind of man beats
on a woman, and then turns around
saying he has pride?

CRAIG
I honestly can't tell you.

DEENA (O.S.)
Turn around and look at me. These eyes
filled with hate will be the last
thing you see.

He turns around with tears pouring down his face, staring
into the barrel of the gun.

CRAIG
I guess I deserve this.

DEENA
You deserve a beating. You deserve a
destroyed soul, with the scars to
match. That's what you deserve.

CRAIG
Can I say one more thing?

DEENA
What?

CRAIG
I really did---

She fires a round in his head, and he falls back against the bar before falling to the floor dead. Everyone screams.

She takes his seat, picking up one of his shots tilting it back.

Placing the gun on the counter, she waits for the police to arrive.

FADE TO BLACK:

Reflection 2: Family abuse

FADE IN:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Slow scan of the living room. The sound of rain is heard hitting against the windows. The front door is heard opened and then closed.

Barely able to keep his balance, CARL staggers into the room laughing low, drunk. He's soaking wet.

You would think it's the rain leaking from his brown brow, but it's actually sweat from drinking hard all night.

He staggers toward the stairs, and when he places a foot on the first step, he slips, falling on his face. He laughs, turning on his back.

A door upstairs is heard opened, followed by footsteps approaching the stairs.

Reaching the staircase, we see the beautiful brown skin
NIKKI.

She's wearing a nightgown with her arms folded across her
chest, looking down at Carl disgusted.

Attitude resides at the bottom of her feet with each step she
takes heading towards him.

When she reaches the bottom, she stares at Carl shaking her
head.

NIKKI

I should slap the hell outta you.

Recognizing his wife's voice, he stops laughing, looking up
at her with an expression saying he's done nothing wrong.

CARL

Why would you...

The drinks catch up, and he turns his head to the side
vomiting.

NIKKI

Look at you. This is sad.

YOUNG TAMARA comes from her bedroom wearing her pajamas. The
adorable six-year-old with crinkly long black hair makes her
way towards the steps rubbing her eyes, yawning, indicating
she's been fighting sleep.

YOUNG TAMARA

Mommy, what's wrong with daddy?

Nikki looks up at their daughter, sighing softly.

NIKKI

Daddy isn't feeling well.

Wiping the residue from his mouth, Carl looks around trying
to focus on where his daughter's voice came from.

CARL

(Breathing shallow)

That's my little girl. Where...where is
she?

Nikki looks at him shaking her head.

NIKKI
She's upstairs.

YOUNG TAMARA
Can I give daddy a hug?

Nikki keeps her eyes locked on Carl.

NIKKI
Not now. Mommy has to clean him up.

CARL
Come give daddy---

Nikki softly kicks his leg.

NIKKI
You don't say a word.

Nikki makes her way upstairs, kneeling down caressing Young Tamara's face before giving her a kiss on the forehead.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
Go to bed.

YOUNG TAMARA
I want daddy to read me a story.

NIKKI
How about I read to you tonight, and
when daddy feels better, he'll read to
you tomorrow?

Young Tamara looks at her smiling.

YOUNG TAMARA
Okay.

NIKKI
I love you.

YOUNG TAMARA
I love you too, mommy. I love you,
daddy.

Young Tamara goes back into her room. Nikki sighs deep,
making her way back downstairs.

CARL
...Daddy loves you, too.

She kicks him with a little more force.

NIKKI

I don't know what you had nor do I care. What I care about is the feelings of a six-year-old little girl, who wants nothing more than for her daddy to read her a story.

With no further words, she makes her way back upstairs going into Young Tamara's room, closing the door.

Carl realizes what just transpired, ashamed of himself, looking at the vomit.

He tries standing, but he's unable to gain his balance, sitting on the steps in self-pity.

CARL

(Shallow breathing)

...I love my family. I love...

With no more gas in the tank, he drops his head, fast asleep.

INT. THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Nikki is standing over the sink washing dishes wearing some jogging pants and a T-shirt.

Young Tamara is wearing her school uniform sitting at the table eating.

Carl comes into the kitchen wearing a suit. Young Tamara gets up from the table running towards him smiling.

He opens his arms embracing her in a hug, picking her up.

CARL

Are you ready to go?

YOUNG TAMARA

Are you okay from last night?

CARL

(Clears throat)

Yeah.

Nikki pauses from washing the dishes looking at him.

NIKKI

I'm glad daddy cleaned up his mess.

He looks over at her with an innocent smile.

CARL
Why wouldn't I?

She goes back to washing the dishes.

YOUNG TAMARA
Can we have doughnuts?

CARL
Is that what you want?

YOUNG TAMARA
Yes. We have to share doughnuts.

CARL
We can do that.

YOUNG TAMARA
Thanks, daddy.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek before he puts her down.
She walks out the room.

Carl walks over to Nikki smiling trying to wrap his arms
around her waist, and she turns around pushing him back.

CARL
What's wrong?

NIKKI
Don't give me that. You know what's
wrong?

CARL
What? I cleaned up the mess.

NIKKI
Do you realize she saw you last night?

CARL
I don't recall. But I really did eat
something bad.

NIKKI
Was it drugs or alcohol?

CARL
(Sighs)
Just drinks. I haven't used anything

since counseling.

NIKKI

You needed a drink before you came home?

CARL

No. Last night---

YOUNG TAMARA (O.S.)

Daddy, I'm ready to go.

NIKKI

Take her to school. We can talk when you get home tonight.

CARL

You know I love you both, right?

NIKKI

Just take her to school. I'm having good vibes, so please...don't disturb them.

As he makes his way out the room, he lowers his head, sighing low.

CUT TO:

INT. CARL CAR - LATER

The light gray Toyota is parked in front of the elementary school.

Indistinct chatter can be heard from the parents and children seen making their way towards the school.

Carl and Young Tamara are sitting in the car laughing, eating doughnuts.

Finishing her doughnut, she takes a napkin from the bag wiping her mouth.

YOUNG TAMARA

I love these doughnuts.

CARL

I know.

YOUNG TAMARA

Why was mommy mad at you?

CARL
It's nothing to worry about.

YOUNG TAMARA
Mommy said you'll read to me tonight.

CARL
And I will.

YOUNG TAMARA
Any story I want?

CARL
Any story you want, big girl.

YOUNG TAMARA
Good. I have six books in mind.

CARL
(Laughs)
Six books?

YOUNG TAMARA
Yes. I don't know what mood I'll be
in.

CARL
(Laughs)
What do you know about having a mood?

She looks at him with the biggest smile.

YOUNG TAMARA
I'm a daddy's girl. I learned from
you.

Proud his daughter looks at him as a role model, he gives her
a kiss on the forehead.

CARL
Thank you for the compliment. I'll see
you tonight.

YOUNG TAMARA
I love you, daddy.

CARL
I love you, too. Get in the building
before you're late.

She gets out, closing the door behind her, and then makes her

way into the school with the other children.

As Carl sits smiling watching his daughter go into the building, his phone rings.

He pulls his phone out answering, placing it on speaker.

CARL (CONT'D)

Hello?

DOMINIC (OVER THE SPEAKER)

How's it going?

CARL

I'm good, and you?

DOMINIC (OVER THE SPEAKER)

You know me. I was calling to see if you want the special?

CARL

I'm reading to Tamara tonight. I don't know if I'll be able to do that if I take my medicine.

DOMINIC (OVER THE SPEAKER)

It's something special, C. It'll have you so good you'll be able to read with your eyes closed.

The enticing words make Carl rub his chin.

CARL

Adding the sugar on top, huh?

DOMINIC (OVER THE SPEAKER)

You're my friend. I'm letting you know now so you can get first dibs.

CARL

Bag me some up and I'll be over when I get off.

DOMINIC (OVER THE SPEAKER)

You're the man.

Carl hangs up delighted knowing he'll get his fix when he gets off work.

CUT TO:

INT. YOUNG TAMARA ROOM - NIGHT

Young Tamara is in bed under the covers with Carl sitting next to her reading the last few lines from a story. He finishes the book and places it on the nightstand.

CARL

This makes book number six.

YOUNG TAMARA

Are you tired of reading?

CARL

Princess, it's late. It's past your bedtime, and you need rest.

YOUNG TAMARA

I'll be okay, daddy. I can multitask, like you.

CARL

(Laughs)

You can multitask, like me?

YOUNG TAMARA

I told you I'm a daddy's girl.

CARL

Well, daddy's girl needs rest so she can multitask.

He gives her a kiss on the forehead, and then gets up from the bed.

She sits up scared, grabbing at his hand.

CARL (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

YOUNG TAMARA

I don't want you to leave.

CARL

I'm not leaving. I'll be right down the hall with mommy.

YOUNG TAMARA

I don't want you to leave, ever.

CARL

What makes you think I'll leave you?

YOUNG TAMARA

I don't know. I just don't want you to leave.

Carl takes out his wallet, opens it, and pulls out a gold engagement ring extending it to Young Tamara. She takes the ring.

YOUNG TAMARA (CONT'D)

This is beautiful.

CARL

Your mother gave me that ring. Do you know what she told me when she gave it to me?

YOUNG TAMARA

What?

CARL

No matter where I'm at or what I'm doing, she'll always be with me.

YOUNG TAMARA

Why are you giving it to me?

CARL

Now as long as you have it, I'll always be with you.

YOUNG TAMARA

Thank you, daddy.

CARL

Daddy is thankful he has you for a daughter.

YOUNG TAMARA

What will we tell mommy?

CARL

We won't tell her until you get older.

YOUNG TAMARA

Where will I put it?

CARL

Think of a safe place.

YOUNG TAMARA

I love you, daddy.

CARL
Daddy loves you, too.

He gets up from the bed, and walks out the room. While standing outside of Young Tamara's door, he pulls some Heroin from his pocket, sighing deep.

He stands in sorrow staring at the Heroin for a few more seconds before placing it back in his pocket, heading down the hall to the bedroom.

A program is heard on the television playing low. Nikki is in bed with her lower half under the covers, propped up against the headboard with her hair wrapped reading a book.

Carl walks in stripping down to his boxers before getting in the bed trying to nestle underneath Nikki, but she pushes him back annoyed.

NIKKI
What are you doing?

CARL
I'm getting up under you.

NIKKI
You are not out of the doghouse.
You're lucky I'm allowing you in this bed.

CARL
Is this about last night?

She turns to look at him.

NIKKI
Do you know how embarrassing it was?

CARL
It couldn't have been that bad.

NIKKI
What do you remember about last night?

CARL
Very little.

NIKKI
Let me tell you about last night. I don't know how you made it home, but thank God you did. You came in

throwing up in front of your daughter
and before it was said and done, you
passed out in your vomit. That's what
happened last night.

CARL
(Sarcastic laugh)
...So, it wasn't that bad.

NIKKI
Are you serious?

CARL
Calm down baby, I'm playing.

NIKKI
Do you see a smile on my face? What
did you have last night?

CARL
Only drinks.

NIKKI
That's your famous line.

CARL
I'm serious. Last night I overdid it
while watching the game with the guys.

NIKKI
Why did you feel like you needed a
drink?

CARL
I didn't.

NIKKI
What are you doing about the problem?

CARL
Disciplining myself to know when
enough is enough. I can't tell you
here and now I quit.

NIKKI
The last time I saw you in that
state...we ended up in the hospital.

She turns her back to him. He nestles in closer wrapping his
arm around her, leaning his face closer to hers.

CARL
I'm not going through that stage
again. I wouldn't be able to live with
myself.

NIKKI
(Sighs)
I can't sit back and watch you destroy
this family.

CARL
You don't have to worry about that. As
long as I have the love from you two,
nothing else matters.

NIKKI
(Sniffling)
I love you, Carl.

He gently grabs her by the chin, turning her head so he can
kiss her.

CARL
I love you, too.

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carl is sitting on the bed smiling wearing a T-Shirt and
jeans watching something on television.

Young Tamara comes into the room in her pajamas taking a seat
on the bed beside him.

YOUNG TAMARA
What's going on, daddy?

CARL
Oh nothing. Waiting to see the outfit
your mother bought.

YOUNG TAMARA
Where is she going?

CARL
I don't know.

YOUNG TAMARA
It'll be just me and you tonight?

CARL
That's right.

YOUNG TAMARA
(Excited tone)
Can we stay up all night, eat candy
and watch movies?

CARL
(Laughs)
We'll see.

Nikki's phone is on the bed beside Young Tamara ringing. She picks it up, and hands it to Carl.

YOUNG TAMARA
Here's your phone, daddy.

He takes the phone.

CARL
This is mommy's phone, but let me see.

He takes the phone looking at the text message from an unknown person.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN

I can't wait for you to get there. This is something I know you'll truly love.

He puts the phone down with sadness etching his face. Young Tamara is shaking his arm trying to gain his attention, but at the moment...the only thing that matters is the thought running through his head.

YOUNG TAMARA
What's wrong, daddy?

He finally comes from his trance.

CARL
Daddy---daddy has something on his mind.

Nikki comes into the room wearing a fitted black dress looking marvelous.

NIKKI
How do I look?

YOUNG TAMARA
Oh, mommy, you look so pretty.

NIKKI

Thank you. C, how do I look?

Carl sits with his head down, rubbing his chin.

CARL

You look beautiful, just like she said.

NIKKI

What's wrong with you?

He looks up at her.

CARL

I'm just thinking about the movies we'll watch tonight.

NIKKI

Right. Well, I'll be back later.

YOUNG TAMARA

Bye.

Nikki gets ready to walk out, and Carl holds out her phone.

CARL

Your phone.

She walks to him, takes the phone and gives him a kiss.

NIKKI

I love you. I'll see you later.

Nikki walks out the room.

YOUNG TAMARA

Are you ready to get the movies started?

CARL

Go pick what you wanna start with, and I'll be right there.

Young Tamara gets up and walks out of the room excited. Carl sighs deep, standing up walking over to the closet opening it.

He kneels down fumbling around in the corner for a few seconds, and when he stands to his feet, he's holding a fifth of vodka.

Walking back over to the bed taking a seat, he opens the bottle.

Placing the bottle to his nose, he inhales the aroma shaking his head.

 YOUNG TAMARA (O.S.)
Daddy, I'm ready!

 CARL
Here I come!

Closing his eyes, he places the bottle to his lips taking a deep swig.

 CARL (CONT'D)
You complain about my drinking...but
you're cheating?

He takes another deep swig before placing the bottle down, walking out the room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAR - LATER

The room is fairly dim with some contemporary music playing faintly throughout the sophisticated atmosphere.

Nikki and JACKIE are sitting at the bar laughing, having drinks.

Jackie is an attractive dark skin woman.

 NIKKI
You got it?

 JACKIE
You know I do. It took me a little
time, but I got it.

She reaches into her purse pulling out a ring box handing it to Nikki.

Nikki takes the box smiling.

 NIKKI
This is the perfect gift for our
anniversary.

JACKIE

Putting up with what you go through is love on another level, girl.

NIKKI

That's what you do when you take a vow. No matter what, you stick through the hard times.

JACKIE

I couldn't do it. Anyway, take a look at the work.

Nikki opens the box and she's overwhelmed.

NIKKI

Perfection. The first rings he gave me fused together forever like our love.

JACKIE

(Takes a sip)

So, he wasn't always this way?

Nikki closes the box and places it to the side.

NIKKI

...No. I drove him to that point.

JACKIE

What happened?

NIKKI

(Sighs, takes a sip)

When we were in high school, I dated the star player on the football team. He treated me like crap, and then Carl came along showing me a better life.

JACKIE

What made him turn to drinking and drugs?

NIKKI

(Sighs)

...Me. We were together for a few weeks, and I started fooling around with the football player again. Carl found out, and he resorted to drinking so he could deal with the pain.

JACKIE

Why did you go back to the football player?

NIKKI

Greed. Sexual desires. Not believing Carl could give me a better life.

JACKIE

That explains why you love him.

NIKKI

Yeah. Hopefully on our anniversary I can finally bury the past.

JACKIE

I hope you can. I'll pray for you.

NIKKI

Thank you.

They pick up their glasses and toast.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM - LATER

Indistinct fearful talk from Young Tamara is heard. Carl is sitting against the wall drunk with the empty bottle resting by his leg, along with a syringe.

His eyes are glazed, and his mouth is open staring off into space.

Carl slowly leans to the side, finally falling to the floor, closing his eyes.

Nikki and Young Tamara rush into the room. Nikki kneels down, shaking him before slapping him across the face.

NIKKI

Carl?! Carl, wake up, you're scaring your daughter!

Carl doesn't respond. Nikki pulls her phone out dialing 911.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Carl is lying on the hospital bed slowly waking up. Nikki is

standing by his bedside looking down at him ashamed. Young Tamara is sitting in a chair looking at him smiling, holding a picture she drew.

CARL

...Where am I?

NIKKI

The hospital. They had to flush your system.

CARL

I don't remember what happened.

NIKKI

This has to stop, C. I mean...what were you thinking?

He's silent, shaking his head.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Is it because I went out? Did you think I was with another man?

CARL

...I don't know what I was thinking.

She pulls out the ring box opening it, showing him the ring.

NIKKI

I was out getting your anniversary gift.

She hands him the box, and he takes it with tears in his eyes.

CARL

...This is beautiful.

NIKKI

I love you, Carl. What happened in the past is meant to stay buried in the past. This can't go on.

Young Tamara gets up from the chair walking over to him, handing him the picture.

He takes the picture, and a tear falls from his eye.

YOUNG TAMARA

I made this for you, daddy.

CARL
(Sniffling)
Thank you, princess.

NIKKI
Go wait outside for mommy so we can go
home.

Young Tamara gives him a hug and kiss on the cheek.

YOUNG TAMARA
I love you, daddy.

CARL
I love you, too.

Young Tamara walks out the room.

NIKKI
You can't have your family and your
addictions expecting this to have a
good outcome. Think about it.

Nikki walks out the room. Carl holds the ring box and picture
close to his heart, closing his eyes letting the tears fall
down.

FADE TO BLACK:

BLACK SCREEN:

TEN YEARS LATER...

EXT. THE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The family is enjoying a picnic in front of their nice ranch
style house in the peaceful neighborhood.

CARL
How are things in school?

TEENAGE TAMARA
I can't complain.

Nikki turns looking at her smiling.

NIKKI
What about this boy you told me about?

Teenage Tamara turns looking at her blushing.

TEENAGE TAMARA

Mama.

NIKKI

(Laughs)

Girl, don't be embarrassed. You should hear how I ended up dating your father.

Carl looks at her embarrassed.

CARL

What do I have to do with this?

TEENAGE TAMARA

I wanna hear this.

NIKKI

Let me tell you.

CARL

Nikki, come on, now.

TEENAGE TAMARA

Be quiet, dad. I wanna hear the story.

NIKKI

He had this goofball expression holding some flowers, candy and a card. The card said, I'm taking you out after school, and I'll say it for you. You're my girl.

Nikki and Teenage Tamara laugh. Carl sits shaking his head, taking a sip from his soda.

TEENAGE TAMARA

That was pretty lame, dad.

NIKKI

Girl, who are you telling?

The two start laughing again.

CARL

Laugh it up. It got you.

NIKKI

I felt sorry for you. I figured, why not?

TEENAGE TAMARA

(Laughs)

Yeah. I probably would've done the same.

CARL

Yeah, yeah. Whatever.

Nikki leans over giving him a kiss.

NIKKI

Don't be so sensitive. You're still my favorite lame, honey bunny.

The three sit laughing. Dominic, the smooth talking brown skin drug dealer comes walking up wearing a suit, carrying a briefcase.

DOMINIC

C. How's everything going?

The laughter stops, and they focus their attention on Dominic.

Nikki instantly gets an attitude standing up making her way over towards him, stopping, placing her hands on her hips.

NIKKI

What are you doing at my house?

DOMINIC

Nikki, calm down. I didn't come to cause trouble.

NIKKI

You are trouble. Whenever you come around, you bring grief.

Carl and Teenage Tamara stand up.

TEENAGE TAMARA

Who is that?

CARL

Nobody. Go in the house.

Teenage Tamara makes her way into the house. Carl walks over to Nikki and Dominic, wrapping his arms around her waist.

CARL (CONT'D)

What's the problem?

DOMINIC
No problems, C. I was just explaining
to Nikki---

NIKKI
I don't see you getting your ass in
gear. Or should I call the police?

CARL
Head on in the house. I got this
covered.

NIKKI
Make sure you do.

Nikki makes her way towards the house.

DOMINIC
She still got some fire in her.

CARL
What do you want?

DOMINIC
I haven't seen you in awhile.

CARL
When you go clean, you stay away from
the thing that almost ruined your
life.

DOMINIC
C, I moved on to bigger and better
things. The new stuff I got---

CARL
You're wasting your time.

DOMINIC
C, hear me out. The stuff I mess with
now has no side effects. I tried some
myself, and I'm perfectly fine.

CARL
Even with you saying this, I want no
parts of it.

DOMINIC
Just take a look at it.

INSERT INSIDE THE BRIEFCASE

It's filled with packs of pure heroin. Carl looks at it rubbing his chin with an orgasmic look in his eyes.

CARL

As tempting as it looks...I can't get down with it. You can leave.

Dominic takes one of the bags out, and then closes the briefcase.

DOMINIC

Since we're good friends, you can have this one on me.

CARL

Dominic---

DOMINIC

If you decide to give it a try, cool. If you don't, that's cool, too.

Temptation gets the best of Carl extending his hand. Dominic places the bag in his hand.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Let me know if you try it.

Dominic turns his back walking away, and then he stops, turning back around.

DOMINIC

Oh, one more thing. You and Nikki did a good job with Tamara.

Dominic continues walking off. Carl sighs deeply, lowering his head.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nikki and Carl are in bed watching the television on low. Nikki turns looking at him, grabbing his chin so he can look directly in her eyes.

NIKKI

What did that snake want?

CARL

He wanted me to buy something.

NIKKI
I'm glad you turned him down.

CARL
(Gives her a kiss)
I changed my life for my family.

NIKKI
Good.

CARL
Who is this boy you two were talking
about?

NIKKI
He's somebody from school.

CARL
Okay. What's so special about him?

NIKKI
(Laughs)
Boy, calm your nerves. It's nothing
serious.

CARL
Keep it that way.

NIKKI
Look at you. Extra protective.

CARL
I don't play when it comes to my
ladies.

NIKKI
(Gives him a kiss)
We know. That's why we love you.

He looks at her smiling.

CARL
Well, since you know. Come here and
give me some love.

NIKKI
You freak.

CARL
And we're one in the same. That's how
we ended up with Tamara.

NIKKI
She'll be the only one.

CARL
It's only one way to find out.

The two laugh before embracing.

INT. THE KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Teenage Tamara is sitting at the kitchen table wearing something casual looking over her homework with a bowl of cereal beside her.

Carl comes into the kitchen wearing some jogging pants and a shirt making his way over to the sink for a glass of water.

CARL
What's going on, princess?

She eats a spoon full of cereal.

TEENAGE TAMARA
Looking over my homework.

CARL
It's always good to double check.

Eating another spoon full, she looks over at him smiling.

TEENAGE TAMARA
I learned from...

She begins having problems breathing, wide eyed, grabbing at her chest, falling out the chair.

Carl drops his glass, and rushes over to her kneeling down as she begins shaking, foaming at the mouth.

CARL
Baby, what's wrong?! What's wrong
baby, talk to daddy!

Nikki rushes into the room.

NIKKI
What's wrong with her?!

CARL
Call 911!

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Teenage Tamara is asleep on the hospital bed hooked up to machines.

Carl and Nikki are standing by her bedside worried. The DOCTOR comes in.

CARL

What's wrong with her?

DOCTOR

This isn't easy to say.

NIKKI

What's wrong with my little girl?

DOCTOR

Right now, she's fighting for her life. She ingested Heroin, and she's in a coma. We're doing the best---

NIKKI

A coma?!

DOCTOR

Ma'am, I can't imagine how you feel, but right now, I need you to calm down.

NIKKI

My daughter is in a coma, and you're telling me to calm down?! I'm far from calming down!

She tries to swing on the Doctor, and he steps back. Carl grabs her holding her back.

CARL

Can you leave us alone?

Without having to ask him twice, the Doctor leaves. Carl continues holding her until she realizes it's him, turning around shoving him.

NIKKI

Don't touch me, you bastard! You're the reason why my baby is in a coma.

CARL

Wait a minute. I didn't---

NIKKI

Don't give me that. You bought some junk from that snake, and now my baby is in a coma. I kept asking you to choose between your family or those drugs. I see you made a decision.

CARL

Nikki, I can---

NIKKI

There's nothing you can explain that'll get my baby out of this coma. My baby is close to dying because her father is weak.

Carl lowers his head in shame, sighing deep. She grabs him by the chin, lifting his head.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Where did you have it?

CARL

...In the sugar canister.

NIKKI

Out of all the places, you put it there? Did you use your brain or were you too busy trying to hide it from me?

Carl gets ready to speak, and she places a finger to his lips.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

You know what makes this sad? All she wanted to do is be like her father. She'd always tell me how strong her father is, and he can do anything. Some role model you are.

CARL

I'm---

NIKKI

You're not sorry. You're a sorry ass. Please leave. I no longer know or want anything to do with you.

CARL
Nikki---

NIKKI
Leave! Go back to your drugs and
alcohol.

Disgraced as a man. Empty as a father. He takes one last
glance at Teenage Tamara before walking out the room.

CUT TO:

INT. DOMINIC ROOM - NIGHT

The fruits of a successful drug dealer is what you'll see
when you enter the room.

Dominic is sitting at the table filled with drugs and money
smoking a cigarette, taking a sip from his glass filled with
cognac.

His two husky HENCHMEN come walking in with Carl. The
Henchmen go stand off to the side of Dominic, while Carl
makes his way towards the table.

DOMINIC
How was it?

CARL
Son of a bitch, I'm about to kill you!

The Henchmen get ready to attack, but Dominic calls them off.

DOMINIC
(Laughs)
What are you mad about?

CARL
My daughter is in a coma because of
you.

DOMINIC
How can you blame that on me?

CARL
I blamed you the second you stepped
back into my life.

DOMINIC
How can you place blame on me, and
you're the clumsy one?

Carl gets ready to jump over the table, and the Henchmen grab him.

Dominic takes one more pull from his cigarette before standing up smiling.

CARL

My wife was right about you. You're a monster.

DOMINIC

At least I'm not a sorry ass man who would put his child in danger. And if I am a monster...

(Takes a sip)

...You're the easy prey to feast on.

Carl lowers his head knowing what Dominic just said was the truth.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

(Sighs)

Pathetic. Unless you're buying something C, get ya tired ass outta my place.

The Henchmen let him go. Carl turns his back walking away.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

Hey, C. Since I know she doesn't want anything to do with you. Tell Nikki to give me a call.

Carl stops and places his hand under his shirt.

CARL

...There is one thing she'll be happy about.

DOMINIC

What's that?

Carl pulls a snub nose from under his shirt, and quickly turns around shooting the two Henchmen dead, after which he turns his aim on Dominic.

Dominic puts his hands up in fear.

CARL

She'll be happy I finally got this monkey off my back.

DOMINIC
C, you don't---

He shoots Dominic dead, and then walks to the table grabbing a bag of Heroin before making his way out the room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN - LATER

Carl is sitting at the table smoking a cigarette. A bottle of liquor, the snub nose and a syringe filled with Heroin are on the table.

Taking one last pull, he puts the cigarette out, and then picks up the bottle, taking a deep swig.

CARL
Maybe everybody was right. Look at me.
Only a weak-minded person would be
doing this, instead of accepting the
situation he created.
(Takes a sip)
There's only one thing I can do.

He places the syringe in his arm injecting the Heroin.
Feeling the buzz about to kick in, he picks up the snub nose, cocking it, placing it to his temple.

CARL (CONT'D)
(Sobbing)
...Daddy is so sorry. I'll always love
you.

Nikki comes walking in.

NIKKI
Carl!!!

He squeezes the trigger, blowing his brains out, falling out of the chair.

She rushes over to him kneeling down.

NIKKI (CONT'D)
Carl, no!

FADE TO BLACK:

Reflection 3: A father's love

FADE IN:

INT. TEENAGE TIFFANY ROOM - NIGHT

Whimpers are heard from TEENAGE TIFFANY, but we don't see her yet because we're slowly scanning through the well put together room.

When we reach her bed, we see her light brown eyes filled with fear peeking from under the covers she's cringed under. Her long black hair is frizzy, sprawled over the pillow. She was just raped by her father.

As we move to the bedroom door we see MICHAEL, her twisted dark skin father with a scraggly beard wearing a wife-beater and jeans.

He's zipping up his pants with a look of satisfaction staring at his daughter.

MICHAEL

This is so much easier than dealing
with your mother.

She completely covers her head, ashamed her father enjoys raping her every other night.

VIVIAN (O.S.)

Michael, are you on your way to bed?!

MICHAEL

In a second! I'm locking up the house!

VIVIAN (O.S.)

Hurry up!

He licks his lips keeping his eyes locked on Teenage Tiffany.

MICHAEL

Don't even think about trying to tell
your mother.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Because as long as I stay doing to her
what I do to you...

(Snickers)

She'll never believe you. Besides...

(Cocky laugh)

...What type of father would rape his
own child?

He walks off humming. Her eyes are red, slowly coming from under the covers sniffing.

She reaches on her nightstand for her diary and pen. Opening the book, a tear falls onto the page as she begins writing.

TEENAGE TIFFANY (V.O.)

How can a father take what's precious
from his child?

(Sobs)

God...please send me a sign. Your child
can't endure this abuse much longer.

Placing the diary back on the nightstand, she curls up under her blanket unable to sleep, unsure if he'll return.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Considering TEENAGE BERNARD and his mother FRANCINE just moved into their new house, the only thing in the spacious basement is a punching bag.

Teenage Bernard is wearing a pair of shorts with sweat covering his light brown skin.

He's taking his aggression out on the punching bag. He takes a few more swings before taking a break, rubbing his hand across his long strawberry blonde cornrows before picking up his water bottle, taking a sip.

Anger outlines his face breathing heavily, lowering his head. Francine comes downstairs wearing something casual, with her jet black hair in a ponytail.

She pauses at the bottom of the stairs looking at him. The love shown on her brown skin looking at her son is precious.

FRANCINE

Are you okay?

Taking another sip from the bottle, he turns facing her, wiping the sweat from his face.

TEENAGE BERNARD

...Why wouldn't I be okay?

FRANCINE

I'm glad you found another outlet to
release your anger.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Ma, I don't have anger issues.

FRANCINE

Who do you expect to believe that lie?

Placing the bottle down, he cracks his knuckles, sucking his teeth.

TEENAGE BERNARD

It's not a lie.

She walks over to him and places a hand on his shoulder.

FRANCINE

Son.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Ma, I'm okay. Just let me get back to my workout.

FRANCINE

Let it go. What happened in California has nothing to do with Detroit.

TEENAGE BERNARD

(Annoyed tone)

What makes you think I'm still dwelling on what happened there?

FRANCINE

Look me in my eyes, and tell me you're not?

He turns around with his head down.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Look at me.

TEENAGE BERNARD

(Sad tone)

Why?

FRANCINE

No matter what happened out there, I'm still the same woman who loves you, and would die for you at the drop of a dime.

Slowly lifting his head, his tears fall to the floor looking into his mother's eyes.

TEENAGE BERNARD

...It wasn't right.

FRANCINE

I had to provide for my child. I have no regrets.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I understand. I just...I just hate the fact there was nothing I could do.

She smiles, giving him a kiss on the forehead.

FRANCINE

You're doing something now. You're being strong for your mother.

He blushes, turning his head to the side.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Okay.

FRANCINE

Okay?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Yeah, okay.

She puts her hands up as if she's ready to box.

FRANCINE

Don't make me beat the brakes off you.

He puts his hands up surrendering, taking a few steps back laughing.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Okay.

FRANCINE

Are you ready for school?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I guess.

FRANCINE

You guess? Where's the positive attitude?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Ma, you know as well as I do, it's

about to be a bunch of pretend tough
guys, and hot to trot---

She places a finger to his lips.

FRANCINE
Hot to trot, what?

TEENAGE BERNARD
...I'm sorry.

FRANCINE
What did I tell you about women?

TEENAGE BERNARD
Truth or lie you respect her because
you don't know her.

FRANCINE
That's my boy. Are you hungry?

TEENAGE BERNARD
I'll probably get something after my
workout.

She gives him a soft right hook to the jaw, and he turns his
head smiling.

FRANCINE
Work on that defense. If I was a man,
I would've knocked you out.

TEENAGE BERNARD
A man wouldn't get that close.

They give each other a hug.

FRANCINE
Make sure. I'll leave you something to
eat on the table.

TEENAGE BERNARD
Thanks, ma.

She hits him on the chin before walking off. Engulfed by the
love from his mother, he focuses back on the punching bag
throwing a few punches.

INT. THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Teenage Tiffany is wearing her school uniform sitting at the

kitchen table with her head low, using her fork playing with the eggs on her plate.

VIVIAN, the short brown skin woman close to being on the heavy side is wearing something casual.

She walks over to the table placing Michael's breakfast down. Michael comes into the room wearing a suit smiling ear to ear, taking a seat at the table.

Teenage Tiffany keeps her head low, looking over at him with her eyes.

Vivian gives him a kiss on the cheek.

VIVIAN
Feeling good this morning?

MICHAEL
After a wonderful night. Yes, I am.

Vivian blushes, hitting him lightly on the arm.

VIVIAN
Don't talk like that in front of her.

Teenage Tiffany drops her fork, and then stands up prepared to leave.

TEENAGE TIFFANY
I'll be leaving.

Vivian looks at her with concern in her eyes.

VIVIAN
You barely touched your food.

TEENAGE TIFFANY
I'll eat lunch.

Michael looks at her with a sly smile, winking.

MICHAEL
You should eat your food. You need energy to make it through the day.

Teenage Tiffany runs out the room. Michael takes a sip from his juice.

VIVIAN
What has gotten into her?

MICHAEL
Maybe it's not what, but who?

VIVIAN
Shut your mouth. She's not doing that.

MICHAEL
You don't know what she's doing when
we're not around.

VIVIAN
I know she's not doing that. She knows
she can talk to me about anything.

Michael takes a sip from his juice, followed by clearing his
throat.

MICHAEL
I need to get going.

He stands up ready to walk away, and she grabs his arm.

VIVIAN
Wait, before you go.

He turns around giving her a kiss.

MICHAEL
What?

VIVIAN
What do you have planned for tonight?

Giving her another kiss, he stares at her with his bedroom
eyes.

MICHAEL
You'll find out.

He makes his way out the room. She stands blushing, fanning
herself, walking back over to the counter getting her plate.

VIVIAN
That man can't get enough of my
goodies.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCINE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Teenage Bernard is standing by the front door wearing his

school uniform aggravated.

Francine walks up wearing something casual, smiling.

FRANCINE

What's wrong?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I don't wanna go.

FRANCINE

Here you go. Why are you so negative?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I'm not negative. I just don't wanna go.

FRANCINE

Why?

TEENAGE BERNARD

We should've stayed in California.

FRANCINE

You'd prefer fighting your entire life, instead of moving away creating something better?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Yup.

FRANCINE

Did you go to sleep making yourself believe that?

He lowers his head, sighing.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Why do you even care?

She places her hands on his shoulders.

FRANCINE

Don't question why I care about anything going on with you. How can you say you have love for me, but you're questioning why I care about you?

TEENAGE BERNARD

...I love you. I just---

FRANCINE

Then you should trust the decision I made.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I trust you.

FRANCINE

Learn to let go, Bernard. This is our chance at a new life. Why do you wanna continue living in the past?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Because I know it'll come back around.

She embraces him with a hug.

FRANCINE

When you constantly think of negativity, it finds a way to you. Son...let California go.

TEENAGE BERNARD

(Irritated tone)

It's hard, ma. It's hard letting go of what you went through.

FRANCINE

My previous life was buried the day we moved. It won't remain buried if my son keeps relapsing.

She releases him, staring into his eyes.

TEENAGE BERNARD

...I'm sorry.

FRANCINE

Don't be sorry about how you feel. Just let the past go so you can live.

TEENAGE BERNARD

...I can do that

FRANCINE

(Kisses his cheek)

You never know. You might meet a girl you'll like.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I don't have time for girls.

FRANCINE

You better make time. A handsome man like you will have the girls all over him.

Teenage Bernard looks at her laughing.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Let's go.

The two laugh making their way out the house.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CLASSROOM - LATER

Teenage Bernard is standing in front of the classroom annoyed, looking around at the students, sucking his teeth. The TEACHER is sitting behind her desk. Low chatter from the students can be heard.

Teenage Tiffany is sitting at the back of the class staring at Teenage Bernard in awe, but she's doing her best not to let it be known.

DERRICK, the class clown is sitting in the row next to Teenage Tiffany.

He's playing with his short dreadlocks, looking over at her every few minutes waiting for the moment to crack a joke.

TEACHER

Bernard. How about you tell us a little something about yourself.

TEENAGE BERNARD

There really isn't much to tell. I moved here from California because of family issues. I played for the football team, and I love video games. I'm not really looking for friends, so...

(Shrugs shoulders)

...That's about all I have to share.

The teacher and class are silent. Derrick glances at Teenage Tiffany seeing her expression is indicating she has a crush on Teenage Bernard.

DERRICK

Uh, oh. Tiffany is plotting on giving

it up already.

The classroom breaks out laughing. Teenage Tiffany lowers her head ashamed.

Teenage Bernard looks towards Derrick with an attitude for a split second, and then focuses on Teenage Tiffany.

TEACHER

Everybody settle down. And you, young man. You must love spending time in the principal's office. Come up here and get your slip.

Derrick gets up from his desk, and makes his way towards the teacher with a cocky attitude. Teenage Bernard stares him down.

Derrick gets his slip, and then heads towards the door prepared to walk out, but he stops, turning around looking at Teenage Bernard.

DERRICK

Watch it, Bro. She's trying to give you some cat the whole school is friendly with.

The class breaks out laughing again as Derrick walks out the room.

Teenage Bernard just nods his head as he makes his way to a desk three seats in front of Teenage Tiffany.

TEACHER

Everybody settle down. Take out your math books, and turn to page twenty.

While everyone is doing what the teacher said, Teenage Bernard turns looking at Teenage Tiffany with her head down. He can't put his finger on it yet, but he sees something in her he likes.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LUNCHROOM - AFTERNOON

Loud talking is heard from the students. Teenage Tiffany is sitting at a table alone eating her lunch, staring at the people looking at her shaking their heads. KEVIN, the bulky bald-head dark skin bully is sitting at a table with some girls eating his lunch, while talking trash about other

students.

Teenage Bernard and Derrick enter the room. Teenage Bernard has his eyes locked on Teenage Tiffany.

DERRICK

You're gonna love it here. We got the best basketball team. The football team is okay, but you can help improve that.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Why is she sitting alone?

Derrick looks around spotting Teenage Tiffany.

DERRICK

Who, easy pickings?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Is that her name?

DERRICK

Her name is Tiffany.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Why do you call her easy pickings?

DERRICK

Three seconds alone with her, you'll be sleeping with her.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Have you got some from her?

DERRICK

No.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Then you shouldn't call her that. Now, why is she sitting alone?

DERRICK

The guys won't sit with her because everybody already hit it. The girls won't sit with her because she's a homewrecker.

TEENAGE BERNARD

All of this is facts?

DERRICK
Well...no, but---

TEENAGE BERNARD
I thought so. I'll sit with her.

DERRICK
What? Why? There's a table full of girls---

TEENAGE BERNARD
I'll talk with them later.

Teenage Bernard makes his way over to Teenage Tiffany's table.

Derrick looks confused before going to take a seat with Kevin.

Teenage Bernard takes a seat across from her, smiling.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)
How are you? My name is Bernard.

She looks up at him trying not to blush.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, did I say it in a different language?

TEENAGE TIFFANY
I'm Tiffany.

TEENAGE BERNARD
I know.

TEENAGE TIFFANY
So, if you knew, why did you---

TEENAGE BERNARD
I wanted to see if the voice matched the beauty.

TEENAGE TIFFANY
Look at you running some game.

TEENAGE BERNARD
If that's what you call telling the truth, then yes, I am.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

(Laughs)

Boy, get outta here.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I'm serious.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Thank you for the compliment.

TEENAGE BERNARD

No need to thank me. I should be thanking you for speaking to me.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

I'm shocked you wanna talk to me. I'm sure you heard the stories.

TEENAGE BERNARD

That dude was trying to tell me some nonsense, but I wasn't listening.

She lowers her head.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

(Ashamed tone)

It's true, to an extent.

He grabs her hand, and she lifts her head.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I'm not the one to judge. I wanna get to know you as a person.

Derrick and Kevin make their way over to the table, stopping behind Teenage Bernard.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Are you serious?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Yes.

He gets ready to kiss her hand, and Kevin places a hand on his shoulder.

KEVIN

I wouldn't do that if I was you. You don't know how many loads she wiped off with that hand.

Teenage Bernard turns his head, looking back confused.

TEENAGE BERNARD

What?

KEVIN

You don't wanna taste all the guys in school, do you?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Considering I don't know who you are, I think you should leave.

KEVIN

Listen to me. You don't need one on one time with her. She'll do anything with anybody, in front of everybody.

Teenage Bernard stands up getting in Kevin's face.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I really don't care about what you're saying. So do me a favor, and leave.

KEVIN

(Cocky laugh)

You don't care about what I'm saying? Tiffany you better---

Teenage Bernard grabs him by the collar and slams him on the table, beginning to choke him.

Teenage Tiffany along with the other students stand up stunned.

Derrick tries pulling him off, but doesn't succeed.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I told you to leave! You need to learn respect! I don't care what she does, if it's true or not! Learn some respect!

He begins hitting him. Kevin breaks free and starts fighting him back.

The students cheer on the brawl as security tries making their way through them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Teenage Bernard is sitting twiddling his thumbs, sighing softly with a minor bruise on his face.

Teenage Tiffany walks in taking a seat next to him. Teenage Bernard turns looking at her with a smile.

TEENAGE BERNARD

You okay?

TEENAGE TIFFANY

That was something different.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I know, right? The first day of school and I'm suspended.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

I'm talking about you beating him up. What set you off?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I'll tell you one day.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Why can't you tell me now?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I need to know something.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

What's that?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Would you call me?

She's silent for a moment.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)

There it goes.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

(Shy laugh)

I'm sorry. This is something different.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Because nobody is man enough to approach you with respect?

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Wow. I don't know what to say about you.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Say you'll accept my number.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

...And that's all you want?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I wanna get to know you for personal reasons. If you're talking about sex, that's the last thing on my mind.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

...You don't like girls?

TEENAGE BERNARD

I love girls.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

So, why---

TEENAGE BERNARD

You're more than a mattress.

Speechless by his words, all she can do is stare at him.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)

Hand me your phone.

She pulls her phone out and hands it to him. Francine enters the room as he finishes placing his number in her phone.

He hands her the phone back, and then looks at Francine.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)

I'll be with you in one second, ma.

FRANCINE

Okay.

Francine walks out. Teenage Tiffany is looking at his number confused.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

What does this mean?

TEENAGE BERNARD

It means what it says.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

...You're my man?

He stands up.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Think about it. You just remember
you're more than a mattress.

He walks out. Thinking hard on what he said, and how he
labeled himself, she places the phone in her pocket.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

I'm more than a mattress? I wish I
could believe that.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCINE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Francine is sitting on the sofa drinking a cup of tea.
Teenage Bernard enters the room taking a seat beside her.

FRANCINE

How did you get into a fight on the
first day of school?

TEENAGE BERNARD

You know I have that issue with women
being disrespected.

FRANCINE

Someone disrespected the girl sitting
with you?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Yes. It made me think about...

He puts his head down, breathing heavily.

FRANCINE

I keep telling you those days are
gone. I'm no longer---

There's a knock at the door. Teenage Bernard gets up walking
over to the door.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Who is it?

EARL (O.S.)
Can I come in?

Teenage Bernard turns to look at Francine. Both of them are shocked from hearing the voice on the other side of the door.

TEENAGE BERNARD
I know damn well.

Teenage Bernard flings the door open, and grabs EARL by the collar, pulling him in the house, pinning him up against the wall.

Earl is wearing a wife beater and jeans. You can tell he had weight back in the day, but the drugs and alcohol ruined his body.

His Afro is in shambles, and he desperately needs to shave his mountain beard.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doing here?!

EARL
Son, let me---

TEENAGE BERNARD
I'm not letting you explain shit! I should kill you.

Francine rushes over placing her hand on Teenage Bernard's shoulder.

FRANCINE
He's not worth it.

TEENAGE BERNARD
We're not free!

FRANCINE
Let him say his peace, so we can finally be done with him.

Teenage Bernard holds him for a few more seconds before releasing him.

TEENAGE BERNARD
Six minutes.

Earl fixes his clothes, staring at his son proud he's no longer afraid of him.

EARL

I can accept that.

Teenage Bernard gets ready to swing, and Francine holds him back.

TEENAGE BERNARD

You have no choice, but to accept it!

EARL

I know how you feel. You still need to understand I'm your father, and you should show me some respect.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Five minutes.

EARL

Fine. Fran, I'm truly sorry for what I put you through.

FRANCINE

These apologies hold no value. Continue, so we never have to deal with you again.

EARL

I can respect those words.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Can you respect those words? You have no idea what the word respect means. A man with respect wouldn't beat on his wife, causing her to turn tricks because his weak ass couldn't earn his own money. A man with respect wouldn't beat on his son because he got his ass beat on the streets. "You respect that?!" Don't you dare use that word around me!

EARL

You're a better man than me. All of what you said is the truth.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Why are you here?

EARL

Hopefully I can rekindle the love my family had for me before things went

bad.

TEENAGE BERNARD

(Laughs)

You had a drink or two before you came?

EARL

No drinks or drugs. I've been clean.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Then I suggest you confide in God. That's the only person who'll forgive you.

FRANCINE

Let me talk to him, alone.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Why? You know how he's cut? I'm not leaving you alone with him.

FRANCINE

I'm sure he won't do anything. Just give us five minutes, and he's gone.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Are you sure?

FRANCINE

Do this for your mother.

Teenage Bernard looks at Earl dying to punch him in the mouth, but because he loves and respects his mother, it prevents him from doing it.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Fine.

FRANCINE

It'll be okay.

Teenage Bernard stares at Earl with a tight mean mug, sucking his teeth.

TEENAGE BERNARD

And you call yourself a man?

Teenage Bernard walks off. Francine looks at Earl with a slight smirk.

FRANCINE

Bernard isn't the little runt you used to beat on. That's why I asked him to leave before he returned the favor.

EARL

My baby boy grew into a good man. His father was a stand up man before I got hooked on that stuff. But I'm a changed man now, and I need the love from my family to stay clean.

He tries giving her a hug, and she quickly pulls out her pearl handle .45.

FRANCINE

Don't get close to me.

He steps back with his hands up, stunned, looking in her eyes seeing she's not afraid to use it.

EARL

Whoa! When did you start carrying a gun?

FRANCINE

The blessed day I fully turned my back on you. I vowed I won't allow anyone else to do what you did to me.

EARL

(Sorrow tone)

I wish it didn't go down that way.

FRANCINE

You wish you didn't cause me to lose countless good jobs because of your insecurities? You wish I wasn't turning tricks, while you sat back getting drunk? You wish you didn't beat me every other day because you felt like it? You know what?

(Scoffs, sighs)

...I wish the first beating would've knocked some sense into my head right then and there. But at that point in my life, I thought I needed a man. When in reality, all I needed was my son.

EARL
There's nothing I can say behind that.

FRANCINE
No.

EARL
I'll be on my way.

FRANCINE
Have a blessed life if that's the path
you're on.

EARL
One last thing before I leave.

FRANCINE
What?

EARL
You can't tell me deep down inside,
some part of you still doesn't love
me.

FRANCINE
I love the man I married. You think
about that and let it register as you
walk out my door and my life.

Earl doesn't respond, making his way out the house. Taking a deep breath, she walks back to the sofa taking a seat, placing the gun down beside her.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Thank you Lord for helping me beat the
demon that darkened my door.

CUT TO:

INT. TEENAGE TIFFANY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Teenage Tiffany is laid across her bed writing in her diary.

TEENAGE TIFFANY (V.O.)
I can't believe I met someone who
views me for more than sex. Is this my
blessing from God? If it is, thank you
for answering my cries.

Michael comes into the room smiling wearing a T-shirt and jeans, taking a sip from the bottle he's holding, grabbing

his crotch.

MICHAEL

Mama's gone. Are you ready to give
daddy some honey?

She stands up.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

You stay away from me.

MICHAEL

(Laughs)
What did you say?

TEENAGE TIFFANY

You heard me. You stay away from me.

Nowhere near taking her seriously, he takes a sip from the
bottle, laughing.

MICHAEL

You think because you met this new boy
he can save you? This is all you're
good for. There's nothing special
about you. You're a whore, and that's
all you'll ever be. Now, get on the
bed so daddy can give you some good
loving.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

You'll never touch me again.

She tries to walk out, and he places the bottle down,
grabbing her, slapping her across the face.

The pain stings, but she refuses to cry standing her ground.

MICHAEL

You disrespectful tramp! I don't know
who you think you are, but you're
still my personal tramp! Lay down---

She kicks him between his legs, dropping him down to his
knees.

While he's on his knees, she grabs the bottle, and hits him
over the head.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

No man would enjoy doing what you've

done to me for years to his own child!
I hope the pain you're in continues,
even while you burn in hell!

She walks out the room.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCINE LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Teenage Bernard, Teenage Tiffany and Francine are sitting on the sofa.

Francine reaches on the table grabbing the box of tissues handing them to Teenage Tiffany.

She takes a tissue from the box wiping her eyes.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

(Sobbing)

Thanks for letting me come over.

TEENAGE BERNARD

You don't have to thank me.

FRANCINE

Calm down, honey.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

I still have to go home, and he'll be there.

FRANCINE

I'm trying to understand how your mother doesn't know what he's been doing to you.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

She's so caught up with him, she doesn't pay me attention. Even if I were to tell her, she wouldn't believe me.

FRANCINE

(Sighs)

I've been down that road. I know exactly how you feel.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

You do?

FRANCINE

When the people you love betray you,
you grow a pain deep inside that hurts
more than anything imaginable.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Why can't people understand me the way
you two do?

FRANCINE

Well, you have us now, and we won't
judge. If it makes you feel any
better, you can look at me as your
mother.

Teenage Tiffany doesn't respond. Francine gives her a hug and
kiss on the cheek.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

I'll leave you two alone.

Francine walks off. Teenage Bernard scoots closer to her.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

I really do appreciate this.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Don't worry about it.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

God, I don't wanna go back to that
house.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Who said you were going back tonight?

TEENAGE TIFFANY

What?

TEENAGE BERNARD

You can either sleep in my room, and
I'll sleep down here. Or you can sleep
down here, and I'll sleep in my room.
Whatever you decide, you're staying
here with us for the night.

She doesn't respond.

TEENAGE BERNARD (CONT'D)

(Laughs)

I see why you act so shy, now.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Yeah. Can you tell me why you stood up for me in the lunchroom?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Because of what my mother went through.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

What happened?

TEENAGE BERNARD

If my father wasn't beating on her in front of me, he had her turning tricks. It was all bad. So, we had to move.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

That's the family matter you were talking about?

TEENAGE BERNARD

Yeah. Any man treating a woman like trash, but she's doing everything in her power so her family can survive, I consider you less of a man.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

That explains why you did it.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Listen. I'm about to make us something to eat. Figure out where you wanna sleep.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Can I ask you something?

TEENAGE BERNARD

What?

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Can you sleep with me? Not on something sexual, but hold me. I feel secure with you.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I can do that if it makes you happy.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Thank you for---

He leans over giving her a kiss, and when he pulls back, she's in a state of awe.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I told you, stop thanking me. Figure out where you want us to sleep, and I'll be back with the food.

He walks off. Closing her eyes, she puts her hands together to pray.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Lord, I thank you.

INT. TEENAGE TIFFANY ROOM - AFTERNOON

The rage in Michael's eyes is intense sitting on the bed reading the pages in her diary.

Throwing the diary down on the bed, he picks up the bottle taking a deep swig before standing up leaving the room. The front door is heard opened.

VIVIAN (O.S.)

Tiffany! Tiffany, are you here!

As Michael comes down the staircase, he runs into the panicked Vivian.

He takes a sip from the bottle staring at her.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Is Tiffany here? The school called telling me she didn't attend today.

MICHAEL

They called me, too.

VIVIAN

Then why do you seem so calm?

MICHAEL

Because I have a good idea where she is.

VIVIAN

Where?

MICHAEL

I'm about to go get her, now.

He takes another sip from the bottle, pushing through Vivian, making his way down the stairs.

Vivian stands confused for a few seconds, and then she continues her way upstairs, making her way to Teenage Tiffany's room walking in.

Seeing the diary, she walks over to the bed and takes a seat, picking up the diary.

Her heart sinks, and her soul leaves her body reading the first page.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANCINE HOUSE - LATER

While Teenage Tiffany is sleeping, and Francine is making lunch, Teenage Bernard is in front of the house cutting the grass with no shirt on.

He takes a break, wiping the sweat from his face.

TEENAGE BERNARD

I'm almost done, ma!

FRANCINE (O.S.)

When you get done, there's some food
in the kitchen on the table!

Michael is slowly walking up behind Teenage Bernard holding a bat behind his back.

MICHAEL

Are you Bernard Mersier?

Teenage Bernard turns to look at him.

TEENAGE BERNARD

Yeah. Who are---

Michael quickly hits him in the stomach with the bat dropping him to his knees.

Michael kicks him over to the ground and begins beating him.

MICHAEL

You're the bastard who turned my
personal tramp against me?! That's my
honey you're trying to get!

Teenage Bernard covers up moaning in pain, while Michael beats him.

Francine runs out, letting off a round in the air. Michael stops beating him, dropping the bat holding up his hands.

Francine shoots him in the leg and he falls to the ground screaming, holding his leg in pain.

Francine rushes over to Teenage Bernard dropping to her knees, shaking him, but he doesn't move.

FRANCINE

Come on baby, get up! You're stronger than this!

Teenage Tiffany comes running out the house screaming, rushing over to the two.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Oh my God!

FRANCINE

This clown hurt my baby!

Teenage Tiffany looks down at Michael.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

You bastard!

Francine looks up at her.

FRANCINE

This is the man who did those things to you?

TEENAGE TIFFANY

Yes.

As Francine stands up taking aim at Michael, a police car pulls up coming to a screeching stop. Vivian and an OFFICER get out of the car. The Officer quickly takes aim on Francine.

OFFICER

Freeze!

She keeps her aim on Michael.

FRANCINE

I'm registered to carry a firearm!

OFFICER

I understand that, ma'am. I still need you to put the weapon down.

FRANCINE

Look at what he did to my only son! What would you do?!

OFFICER

Ma'am, I know how you feel, and I would do the same. Just listen. If you kill him now, it'll be cold-blooded murder. You'll never be able to see your son again.

Teenage Tiffany grabs Francine's hand, lowering her arm.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

He's not worth it.

Francine drops the gun crying, and Teenage Tiffany gives her a hug.

While the two hug each other, the Officer calls in for back up, and then checks Teenage Bernard's condition.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Indistinct talking can be heard over the intercom, and from the nurses and doctors walking pass.

Outside Teenage Bernard's room, Teenage Tiffany is standing by the door waiting for Francine to come out, praying Teenage Bernard is doing good.

Francine comes out of the room wiping the tears from her eyes.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

How is he?

FRANCINE

The doctors said he's doing fine, but he hasn't opened his eyes. I want my baby to open his eyes and talk to me.

TEENAGE TIFFANY

He will, ma. He's a strong man. I'm blessed he came into my life.

Vivian comes walking down the hall.

VIVIAN
Are you okay?

Teenage Tiffany and Francine turn to look at her.

TEENAGE TIFFANY
I'm not going back with you.

VIVIAN
Baby, I had him arrested. As soon as he gets out of the hospital, he's going straight to jail. Why didn't you tell me?

TEENAGE TIFFANY
Even if I did, you would've brushed me off.

VIVIAN
That's not true. I would've---

TEENAGE TIFFANY
Continued being his personal---

Francine places a finger to Teenage Tiffany lips.

FRANCINE
Go in the room with Bernard. I'll take care of this.

TEENAGE TIFFANY
...Okay, ma.

Teenage Tiffany walks in the room. Francine walks over to Vivian.

FRANCINE
So, you're supposedly the mother?

VIVIAN
(Attitude tone)
What are you talking about? I am her mother.

FRANCINE
No, you're a woman who was blessed with a child, and doesn't appreciate her. A real mother would've known something foul as that was being done

to her daughter.

VIVIAN

You don't---

FRANCINE

I know you because I was like you. Do you know the real meaning behind having a child?

VIVIAN

To love and protect, letting no harm come their way.

FRANCINE

When did you lose the meaning?

Vivian doesn't respond.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Don't think I'm judging you because the good book says, "Don't judge until you judge yourself." Since I was like you, I can tell you what I'm saying. The only difference between us is the man in this hospital who defended your daughter. He made me realize one thing my mother told me. Do you wanna know what that is?

VIVIAN

...What?

FRANCINE

Nothing comes before my child. I'll die for my child before I let anything happen to him. You let that sit on your mind.

Francine opens the door, and then turns around looking at Vivian.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

If my daughter wants to come back to you, she's more than welcome. But I highly doubt she wants to return to the woman who put a pedophile before her own flesh and blood.

She walks into the room, closing the door behind her, leaving Vivian standing sobbing, shaking her head.

FADE TO BLACK:

BLACK SCREEN:

TEN YEARS LATER...

INT. AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

The room is packed with people in silence, digesting the words Tiffany is saying.

She's standing on stage behind a podium wearing a two-piece black business suit.

Off to the side is a table with a large portrait of her, and on the side are copies of the book she published.

TIFFANY

That's how I overcame my issue, and was able to write my book, "You're more than a mattress."

The room applauds her.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Thank you. Now, I would like to bring out my mother.

Francine walks on stage wearing something casual, walking over to Tiffany giving her a hug.

FRANCINE

I would like to say, I was also a victim of beatings and rape, but I overcame the issues. With the help of the Lord and strength, you can overcome anything. But in my case, there's one more person who helped me realize things needed to change.

TIFFANY

I think I know who you're talking about.

FRANCINE

Of course you do.

TIFFANY

And I thank God, as well as you for bringing him into my life. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you

to my husband, Mr. Bernard Mersier.

Bernard walks on stage wearing a white suit. He gives Francine and Tiffany a hug and kiss.

FRANCINE

This is the man who made me realize not only am I a woman who deserves respect, but I am also a mother.

TIFFANY

He's the man who got me out of the situation I was in. Without him, I don't think I would be alive.

BERNARD

You two are funny.

FRANCINE

He's still shy after all these years. He hates compliments on his good deeds, thinking he shouldn't smile.

TIFFANY

I know how to make him smile.

Bernard looks at her laughing.

BERNARD

Come on now.

TIFFANY

When we get home, you know what time it is.

The people laugh.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

(Speaking to the people)

Always know you're more than what a person makes you out to be.

The room applauds as they start clearing out.

FRANCINE

I'm proud of you.

TIFFANY

With the right guidance and people who love you, you can do anything.

FRANCINE

Now, who told you that?

BERNARD

I'm glad I'm the center of y'all conversation.

TIFFANY

You know you love it.

FRANCINE

I don't know why he's acting brand new.

BERNARD

What do you know about somebody acting brand new?

TIFFANY

What do you know about the brand new things I'm doing to you tonight?

FRANCINE

And on that note, I'm about to head home. Y'all some freaks.

BERNARD

That's your daughter in-law.

FRANCINE

Call me when you two get home.

Francine walks off stage.

TIFFANY

Well, Mr. Mersier? What do you want for dinner tonight, aside from me?

Bernard doesn't respond.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Oh, you're acting like me now, getting silent?

BERNARD

I'm nothing like you. Thank---

She grabs him by the head giving him a kiss. When she pulls back, he looks at her smiling.

TIFFANY

You know the rules. I love you.

BERNARD

I love you, too.

TIFFANY

Let's get home. One of your meals is hot and ready.

BERNARD

Here you go.

The two look at each other and smile, holding hands making their way off stage.

FADE TO BLACK:

Reflection 4: Ethnicity

FADE IN:

INT. BENNY ROOM - AFTERNOON

We come in on BENNY sitting at his computer desk wearing a wife beater and jeans with his back turned hard at work on his computer.

The bedroom door is heard opened, followed by a few footsteps.

BENNY FATHER (O.S.)

How's it going, son?

Benny remains with his back turned, continuing to type.

BENNY

I'm busy right now, dad. What do you need?

BENNY FATHER (O.S.)

Do you have any plans for the next couple of days?

BENNY

Not to my knowledge.

BENNY FATHER (O.S.)

Can you watch the station for me? There's an important meeting I have to attend out of town.

Benny types for a few more seconds, and then stops, turning around looking at his father.

Benny is a handsome Teenage Chaldean. Slicked back black hair, dark brown eyes, and a thinly trimmed goatee.

BENNY

I can handle that for you.

Benny's father walks over to him and places a hand on his shoulder.

He's wearing a nice designer suit. Benny is the spitting image of his father.

BENNY FATHER

Thanks son. I knew I could count on you.

BENNY

You worked hard to get us from that other country, so why ruin what we have?

BENNY FATHER

You're right. We're never going back.

BENNY

Leave the keys on the counter and I'll make my way down there when I'm done.

BENNY FATHER

Thanks again, son. When I get back, we can go wherever you want to celebrate our new expansion.

Benny's father walks out of the room. Benny smiles, picking up his water bottle, taking a sip. When he's finished, he places the bottle down, and then returns back to typing.

CUT TO:

INT. TIMOTHY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Some rap music can be heard playing fairly loud on the television.

Posters of various rap artists are on the wall, along with fitted baseball hats hanging on hooks. The floor is covered with dirty clothes.

Collectible sport cards are scattered on the nightstand. TIMOTHY, the handsome ten-year-old Caucasian with blue eyes and blond hair is sitting on the bed wearing a baseball jersey, jeans and a fitted hat.

He's watching rap videos, imitating what he sees while lip syncing.

His brother MATHEW comes into the room wearing his busboy attire.

He's clean cut, in his early twenties. Mathew stands to the side with his arms folded across his chest, staring at his little brother in disbelief.

MATHEW

What are you doing?

Timothy keeps his eyes on the screen.

TIMOTHY

Nothing. Watching rap videos.

MATHEW

Rap videos? What do you know about rap?

TIMOTHY

I like listening to it.

MATHEW

Do you know what the message means?

TIMOTHY

The message?

Mathew walks over to the television, and turns it off.

MATHEW

The message. Do you know what it is?

Timothy sighs, shaking his head, shrugging up his shoulders.

TIMOTHY

Having fun.

MATHEW

Who has fun wearing their clothes like that? When they speak, you can barely understand what they're saying. Do you want me to tell you what the message

is?

TIMOTHY

...Tell me.

MATHEW

Start random fights. Talk to hood rats. Rob and kill people in your free time. It's obvious the message is you don't have to work for a living. Just kill whoever you have problems with, get women pregnant and don't take care of the child, calling them the "baby mama."

TIMOTHY

(Confused tone)

...You're saying?

MATHEW

I'm saying black people are foul, and you shouldn't like or imitate them.

TIMOTHY

Then who should I like?

MATHEW

Do you hear or see white people getting into trouble or have the same issues black people have?

Timothy sits silent.

MATHEW (CONT'D)

Try listening to music other than this rap nonsense. Be like your older brother. Get a steady paying job, speak correctly and take care of your responsibilities. Don't end up on welfare like all of the black people in the world.

Timothy looks at him confused, but he goes along with what he's saying.

TIMOTHY

...Okay.

Mathew pats him on the shoulder with a Sunday morning smile.

MATHEW

That's my little man. Remember what I said.

TIMOTHY

Okay.

Mathew walks out the room. Timothy waits a few seconds before turning the television back on imitating what he sees.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A house party is going on. We turn our attention to RICKY. He's a tall slender brown skin man with a thug appearance, dancing with a voluptuous woman.

Moving through the room, we spot his friend HUBERT standing by the table, taking a sip from his cup. He's brown skin, short and chubby.

By looking at him you can tell he's gullible, and will go along with anything Ricky says.

Focusing back on Ricky and the woman he's dancing with, she starts getting a little aggressive with her movement, causing Ricky to trip over his own feet, falling to the floor. Everyone laughs.

Ricky laughs, getting up from the floor, making his way over to Hubert.

HUBERT

She was too much to handle?

RICKY

(Winded)

Nope. One drink too many.

HUBERT

(Laughs)

Tell me anything.

RICKY

Watch by the end of the night.

Everybody begins running out the room. Ricky and Hubert take sips from their drinks looking confused.

HUBERT
What's going on?

RICKY
Let's go find out.

They continue drinking, making their way out the living room, to the front door, stepping outside.

The neighborhood is in the slums. Vacant lots. Abandon raggedy cars.

Cars parked up on the sidewalk. Trash flying around. A loud commotion and chanting is heard as Ricky and Hubert come down the rotted steps of the house approaching a circle surrounding BLACK MAN #1, BLACK MAN #2 and BLACK MAN #3 all in their early twenties.

They're stomping away at CAUCASIAN MAN #1 and CAUCASIAN MAN

Their faces are covered in blood, moaning in pain. Ricky and Hubert make their way through the circle, and the three men stop stomping them.

The crowd simmers down a little, but indistinct talk can still be heard.

RICKY (CONT'D)
What's this all about?

BLACK MAN #1
In the wrong hood, saying the wrong thing.

RICKY
What did they say?

BLACK MAN #2
They came up talking about "What's up, Bros."

RICKY
(Laughs)
They actually said that shit?

BLACK MAN #3
I was like what you mean Bros? And before they could answer, we started beating that ass.

Ricky takes a sip from his cup laughing.

RICKY

They should learn to stay in their own hood, instead of coming down here trying to gain acceptance.

Everyone except Hubert walks off, making their way back inside the house.

Hubert turns looking at Ricky and the other people disgusted, and then he focuses back on the two men on the ground feeling pity.

Caucasian man #1 slowly inches towards him, grabbing his leg moaning in pain.

CAUCASIAN MAN #1

(Pleading)

Help us. Please...help us.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The layout and decor would remind you of a kitchen straight out of the 70's.

Sitting at the kitchen table having a cup of coffee with a slice of cake resting on the side is RYAN, a handsome middle aged Caucasian wearing something casual.

He seems at peace taking a sip from his coffee. Elizabeth comes into the kitchen wearing some retro housewife attire.

By looking into her jade eyes, you can tell she has a one track mind.

Ryan sighs, taking another sip from his cup, watching as his wife approaches the table, taking a seat.

ELIZABETH

Have you talked to your son?

RYAN

Talked to him about what?

ELIZABETH

Please, don't play dumb. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

RYAN

(Sighs)

Why does that even bother you?

ELIZABETH

Why does it bother me?

(Scoffs)

Why does it bother me? You're sitting here blind to what your son is doing as if it's normal.

RYAN

All I see is a young man in love, enjoying his life. Why can't that compute in your brain, I have no idea.

ELIZABETH

(Attitude tone)

Compute in my brain? Aside from you being a man, all of you think pussy is pussy. But disregarding that... when has it been normal for blacks and whites to roam around in the world as couples?

RYAN

(Sighs, takes a sip)

Here we go with this worn out record. Your problem is---

ELIZABETH

My problem is you're acting like races are meant to mingle. White genes should never mix with blacks because they'll end up corrupted.

RYAN

I'm not about to sit here and listen to this rubbish. My son is happy, so I'm happy.

ELIZABETH

Fine! Since you won't handle the problem, I'll take care of it the moment he gets home. Had I known you would condone this foolishness, I never would've married you. Whites are not meant to mix with blacks under no circumstances.

She stands up furious, looking at Ryan sucking her teeth,

walking out of the room.

Ryan just shakes his head, breaking a piece of his cake off, placing it in his mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. THE INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We come in on CLARENCE, the handsome brown skin man with a bald-head and thick trimmed goatee.

He's sitting at the table with a case file resting to the side by a cup of coffee.

His expression shows exhaustion.

CLARENCE

Either you're just plum dumb or you love being locked up in our luxury suites.

THUG (O.S.)

(Scoffs)

This ain't shit. Sometimes I need a break from the streets.

CLARENCE

So, that means you're just plum dumb?

THUG (O.S.)

Think whatever you want. I'll stay here for a few weeks, and then I'm right back to what I was doing.

CLARENCE

Oh, not this time.

THUG (O.S.)

(Confused tone)

What?

Clarence stands up, and then slowly starts making his way down to Thug.

CLARENCE

Apparently you don't remember what I told you the last time we met. I told you if your moist ass got caught again, you'll be visiting a new suite.

He gets down to THUG, the light skin teenager with long hair and tattoos on his face.

Thug looks up at him confused. Clarence looks at him smiling, placing a hand on his shoulder.

THUG

What the fuck are you talking about, fam?

CLARENCE

I'm talking about your third offense sending you to where the big boys play. And what makes it so funny, is your own crew threw you under the bus. But the cherry on top...

(Chuckles)

They gave up photos of you with the connect. Your stash locations. They even told us where your baby mama hides your extra drugs and money.

(Laughs)

That last part came from your main homie. He got tired of sneaking around with your baby mama, so he figured why not get you out of the way.

Thug world is crumbling before his eyes. He doesn't know if he wants to cry tears of anger or sadness.

THUG

Them...that nigga---

CLARENCE

You'll have plenty of time to think about it. I hope that shit on your face truly stands for something that'll protect you in jail. It was a pleasure speaking with you as always.

Clarence makes his way out the room. Thug sits in silence with a red face, breathing heavy with tears rolling down his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Benny is standing behind the bulletproof glass ringing people up in line.

While this is going on, the teenage GANG LEADER and a few of his friends are putting items in their pockets thinking Benny isn't paying attention.

Gang leader grabs a pop, and then makes his way towards the counter and his friends follow.

The last person in the gas station walks out. Gang Leader moves up, placing his pop on the counter. Benny stares at him with a friendly smile.

GANG LEADER

Let me get a pack of blacks with this.

BENNY

No problem. Can I get you anything else?

GANG LEADER

That's it, cuz.

BENNY

Five fifty.

Gang leader drops a ten-dollar bill in the slot. Benny takes the money, places it in the cash register, and then closes it.

Gang Leader is looking at him confused.

GANG LEADER

Can I get my change?

BENNY

You sure can. Can you put back what you were trying to steal?

GANG LEADER

What?

BENNY

Put back what you were trying to steal, and yes, you can have your change.

GANG LEADER

Steal what, cuz?! I don't need to steal shit!

BENNY

Look, you're holding up my business.

I'll give you three options. One---

GANG LEADER

One, you can come from behind that glass, and get this work.

BENNY

You don't want me to come from behind here.

GANG LEADER

You know not to come from behind there.

BENNY

Look. Just put back what you tried to steal. I'll give you your change, and the day can continue how it was.

GANG LEADER

Come from behind that glass.

Benny makes his way to the door. The crew gets ready to attack, but they pause in their tracks when they see the barrel of the shotgun come out first. Benny walks up to the Gang leader and places the gun in his face.

Gang Leader is doing his best trying not to show fear, but his boys are a different story.

BENNY

Now, you have two options. One, I can kill you and say I was in fear of my life. Or two, you can place my items on the floor, leave and have a good day.

They all quickly place the items on the floor.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Benny goes back behind the glass. He opens the register retrieving the change, placing it in the slot along with the pack of blacks.

Gang leader grabs his change, pop and pack of blacks.

GANG LEADER

I'll get you.

BENNY

Thank you, come again.

The other boys walk out. Gang leader remains staring at Benny with hate in his eyes.

GANG LEADER

You're dead!

BENNY

(Laughs)

Yeah, I know.

Gang leader opens his pop and spills it all over the other items on the counter before walking out.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Just like the kitchen, you would be stepping into the 70's when you enter the room.

Now we see KYLE. He has a handsome baby face, brown hair and green eyes.

Kyle and Elizabeth are having a heated argument. Ryan is sitting in a chair, annoyed by the topic.

ELIZABETH

What do you see in that girl?

KYLE

It doesn't matter what I see in her as long as I'm happy.

ELIZABETH

Look at her. What about her makes you happy?

KYLE

Every time I kiss her my love grows stronger.

ELIZABETH

How can you stomach the idea of kissing her?

KYLE

Because she's the woman I love.

ELIZABETH

Love has nothing to do with it! I know what your issue is. You know those black girls are quick to give it up, so you're taking advantage.

KYLE

How can you say that?

ELIZABETH

Because I know it's the truth. I hope you're using condoms. I won't have a chocolate vanilla swirl as a grandchild.

KYLE

You won't ever have to worry about seeing our baby when we decide to have one.

ELIZABETH

You're absolutely right! That's your stupidity in your lap. I'm washing my hands of it.

KYLE

Wash your hands of your own stupidity.

ELIZABETH

I can't believe I call you my son.

Elizabeth walks off. Kyle turns his attention to Ryan.

KYLE

What do you think, dad?

RYAN

...When I was younger before I met your mother...I dated a few black women.

KYLE

You did?

RYAN

Yep. Ashley and I were together for some years before I met your mother.

KYLE

What happened?

He takes a deep breath, shaking his head.

RYAN

We had to go separate ways. By the time I could get back in touch with her, she moved on.

(Sighs)

Although we loved each other...there was nothing that could be done.

KYLE

I'm sorry.

RYAN

I'll tell you one thing. To this day, I wish I could have her back.

KYLE

...You still love her?

RYAN

Of course. Once you truly fall in love with someone, even if the person leaves, you never lose that feeling.

KYLE

So, you're saying?

RYAN

I'm saying don't let anyone ruin your true love, and never let your true love leave if you can prevent it.

KYLE

So, what's mom's problem?

RYAN

(Sighs)

Let me make a long story short. A black man raped your aunt, so because of that, she feels all black people are foul.

KYLE

That's no excuse to take it out on me.

RYAN

I just told you, son. Don't let anyone ruin your happiness.

KYLE

Thanks.

RYAN

Anytime you need me. Get going, and show Maria a good time.

KYLE

You know I will. I'll be back later.

Kyle walks off. The front door can be heard opened, and then closed. Ryan stands up shaking his head.

RYAN

(Sighs)

If only I could go back.

CUT TO:

INT. THE RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Silence cloaks the room while people peacefully sit eating their meals.

Mathew is walking around the room clearing tables. Clarence walks in wearing something casual making his way to a table taking a seat.

Mathew walks by Clarence doing a double take before walking back towards him.

MATHEW

Excuse me?

Clarence looks at him.

CLARENCE

How may I help you?

MATHEW

Are you sure you're in the right place?

CLARENCE

What do you mean?

MATHEW

I'm sorry, let me rephrase. You do know you're not the right, how shall I say...the right type to dine in this establishment?

Clarence looks around the room confused.

CLARENCE
What's the right type?

MATHEW
Let's stop with the games.

CLARENCE
I never knew it was a game. I truthfully need to know what's the right type?

MATHEW
(Laughs)
I can't believe you're about to have this conversation with me, Bro.

CLARENCE
(Laughs)
Bro? Are you a racist?

MATHEW
I'm far from racist, Bro.

CLARENCE
Can you please stop calling me, Bro?

MATHEW
Why would I do that? Isn't that what you and your people from the ghetto call each other?

CLARENCE
The ghetto?
(Chuckles)
You have no idea who I am, do you?

MATHEW
You're the average black man from the ghetto who stumbled into the wrong place.

CLARENCE
Your ignorance is starting to annoy me, so do me a favor. Send someone to take my order.

MATHEW
We don't sell fries, hamburgers and wing dings here. Why don't you pick something from the menu...if you can read the menu?

Clarence smiles, cracking his knuckles, sliding his chair back standing up.

CLARENCE

Let me tell you something.

Mathew jumps back in a defensive stance.

MATHEW

Get back! I have the right to defend myself! I'm sorry it had to come to this because you have an issue with our rules, but, listen! There's nothing I can do about the rules or my skin color!

Everyone looks at them confused. Clarence continues smiling, reaching in his pocket.

CLARENCE

All I have to say is you're---

Mathew grabs a glass from the table, and hits Clarence upside the head.

MATHEW

He's got a weapon!

The MANAGER comes running out over to the table. Clarence is holding his head, laughing.

MANAGER

What's going on?

MATHEW

He was about to attack me, sir. I had to defend myself.

MANAGER

What are you talking about? Do you know who this man is?

Mathew is confused, wondering why the Manager is more concerned with Clarence instead of what he said.

MATHEW

He's a man who was about to attack me, sir.

CLARENCE

I was trying to tell you.

Clarence drops his badge on the table. Mathew's eyes get wide looking at the badge.

MATHEW

You're---

MANAGER

This is our county sheriff.

MATHEW

So, that means?

CLARENCE

Don't even think about running because you're under arrest.

Clarence pulls his handcuffs out and steps over to Mathew placing him under arrest.

MANAGER

I'm really sorry about this.

CLARENCE

Not a problem. I'll just take my friend here down to the station. I'll see if he can follow the rules, and hold his own.

MATHEW

(Scared tone)

I can't go to jail.

CLARENCE

Be lucky you're not getting charged with assaulting an officer.

Clarence walks Mathew out of the restaurant.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We come in on the milk chocolate complexion Maria. She has beautiful brown bedroom eyes, and long black hair. She's sitting in front of her vanity playing with her hair. The bedroom door is seen opened through the mirror, and in walks her mother MICHELLE.

The two women could pass for twins how close they resemble.

MICHELLE
You're beautiful.

MARIA
Thank you. Kyle is taking me out for
dinner and a movie.

MICHELLE
Kyle? Is that the white boy?

MARIA
Yes.

MICHELLE
Is he rich?

MARIA
No.

MICHELLE
He's not rich? What do you see in him?

Maria turns looking at her.

MARIA
What makes you ask?

MICHELLE
He looks alright, but I wouldn't look
twice. I know you wouldn't know how he
is in bed because I can't see you
sleeping with him.

MARIA
Why?

MICHELLE
White boys compared to black men, size
does matter. I figure why have a
snack, when you can have the full
meal?

MARIA
(Laughs)
With that said, let me get going. I'm
already running late.

She stands up walking to the door.

MICHELLE
Maria, wait.

She stops, and turns around.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Are you sure you'll be okay?

MARIA

We've been out plenty of times, and nothing has happened.

MICHELLE

I'm just making sure. You're my only child, and my only reason to live.

MARIA

If something was going to happen, it would happen if I was with a black man or a white man. I love you, and I'll see you later.

Maria walks out the room. Michelle sighs deep, shaking her head, leaning up against the wall.

MICHELLE

...If you were dating a black man, I would feel more secure about what you said.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GAS STATION - NIGHT

Benny is sitting behind the glass reading a book. As we look out the window, we see a HOMELESS MAN wearing tattered clothes walking up to the window. The homeless man knocks on the window.

Benny sighs, placing his book down, turning his attention to the window.

BENNY

Can I help you?

HOMELESS MAN

May I please have a cup of coffee?

BENNY

I can't give you free coffee.

HOMELESS MAN

This dude gave me some bad stuff, and I haven't been feeling right. I'm not

asking you for food or money...I just need some coffee.

BENNY

I can't...

The man starts having a seizure, foaming at the mouth before falling to the ground.

Benny's eyes get wide, picking up the phone, dialing 911.

BENNY (CONT'D)

(Into the phone)

Yes, can you send an ambulance to Frank's gas station? I have a man out here having a seizure or dying of an overdose, I'm not sure of which. But, can you please send an ambulance?

Benny places the phone down, and then comes from behind the counter making a cup of coffee.

When he's finished, he goes to the door and unlocks it, walking out making his way over to the man kneeling down. The man wakes up, grabbing Benny's hand, making him jump back.

HOMELESS MAN

(Shallow breathing)

Please...please help me.

BENNY

Here, drink this.

The man takes the coffee. Barely able to sit up, the man's hand is shaking, placing the cup up to his lips.

After a few good sips, he places the cup to the side, but he's still barely able to sit up straight.

HOMELESS MAN

...Thank you, sir.

BENNY

No problem. I called you an ambulance, so they'll be here shortly.

HOMELESS MAN

You're a kind man, sir. We need more people like you in the world.

BENNY

It's nothing. Anybody would've done the same. Just relax until help gets here.

CUT TO:

INT. HUBERT CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ricky and Hubert are sitting inside the car in front of the liquor store drinking and smoking.

RICKY

Those white boys got what was coming to them.

Hubert doesn't respond, taking a sip from his cup.

RICKY (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you? You don't think they deserved it?

HUBERT

Yeah, I guess so.

RICKY

Do you feel bad?

HUBERT

I mean...I guess they deserved it.

RICKY

You guess?!

HUBERT

Do you really deserve a beating for saying what's up, Bro?

RICKY

They deserved death. You wanna know why?

HUBERT

I'm sure you're about to tell me.

RICKY

Hell yeah. What has any white man done for you?

Hubert doesn't respond, taking a sip from his cup.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Nothing. I'll tell you what they did. They took our style. Took our women away from us! Gave us these drugs to kill us off. And when we go hard to provide for our families, they give us the finger! Did they deserve it? Damn right they did!

HUBERT

If you put it that way...I guess you have a point.

RICKY

These crackers and other races don't want us to survive. That's why we have to take what we want, eliminating everybody, until only the black race is left standing.

HUBERT

You're right, bro. What was I thinking?

RICKY

It's okay. Sometimes you get sidetracked by what's going on in the world. The only people you can trust are black. Do you need something outta here?

HUBERT

Grab me some squares.

Ricky gets out of the car making his way into the shabby looking liquor store.

Inside the store, a Black middle aged man is standing behind the counter.

Ricky walks up to the counter and begins conversing with him. While the two are talking, CAUCASIAN MAN #3 comes to the counter with a bottle of wine.

RICKY

Let me get a bottle of Yak, black man.

Ricky turns to look at Caucasian man #3. Caucasian man #3 knows there could possibly be trouble, so he keeps his eyes forward with a straight face.

RICKY (CONT'D)

What are you doing down here?

Caucasian man #3 swallows deep, but remains with his eyes forward.

CAUCASIAN MAN #3

I'm sorry, what do you mean?

RICKY

I know you're sorry! What are you doing down here in my hood?!

Caucasian man #3 places his wine to the side, and then slowly turns to face Ricky.

CAUCASIAN MAN #3

I don't want any trouble. I don't know what your issues are, but they have nothing to do with me.

Caucasian man #3 tries to walk off, but Ricky gets in his face.

RICKY

You don't get off that easy. Why didn't you go to your suburbs to buy that wine?

(Finger point)

I know why. You wanted to come down here and see how we live, so you can talk about us to your other white trash friends.

CAUCASIAN MAN #3

As I stated, I don't want any problems. If I've offended you in some way I don't know, I apologize for---

Ricky hits him in the mouth, and then grabs him, slinging him into the chip rack.

RICKY

Apologize for breathing the same air as me!

Ricky turns to look at the man behind the counter.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Can I get my drink, so I can get outta here?

The man places the bottle on the counter. Ricky grabs his liquor, throws his money on the counter, and then looks at Caucasian man #3.

He sneers before kicking him in the stomach.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Don't you ever let me catch you down here again!

Ricky walks out the store. Ricky gets back in the car and throws the liquor on the floor, taking hard deep breaths.

HUBERT

What happened?

RICKY

White boy was in there talking trash.

HUBERT

Are you serious?

RICKY

I told you, they only come down here to take what little we got.

HUBERT

What about my squares?

RICKY

Go down to the station in the hood.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - CONTINUOUS

Mathew has his hands on the bars staring at Clarence smiling at him.

BRAD, the tattooed Caucasian with a buzzcut and brown eyes is leaning up against the wall staring at Mathew.

CLARENCE

That smart mouth of yours stopped running.

MATHEW

As soon as I'm released, I'm suing.

CLARENCE
(Chuckles)
Okay.

Clarence walks off. Mathew sighs walking over to the wall.

Brad gets off the wall, walking towards him.

BRAD
What are you in for?

MATHEW
The charge is assault with a weapon,
but he said he won't file the report.

BRAD
Is that right? You assaulted the guy
who brought you in?

MATHEW
Yup.

BRAD
Why did you assault him?

MATHEW
I was explaining to him he was in the
wrong establishment, but he wouldn't
listen.

BRAD
He was in the wrong establishment?
What made him wrong?

MATHEW
Can you name one black person that's
sophisticated? If you can, then yes, I
was wrong.

BRAD
Do you have a thing against black
people?

MATHEW
Of course I do. Look at the way they
dress. The way they talk and act. How
can you begin to think they're
civilized people?

Brad laughs, patting Mathew on the shoulder as if he's proud
of what he said.

MATHEW (CONT'D)

I'm glad you understand. We need more---

Brad grabs him by the collar, pressing him up against the wall.

BRAD

No, I don't understand. I happen to like black people.

MATHEW

...You what?

BRAD

You heard what I said. Not only do I like black people, my baby mama is black.

MATHEW

Baby mama? How can you---

BRAD

She's a beautiful black woman with her head on her shoulders, and has the heart to love a person like me. That's why I'm with her.

MATHEW

You said baby mama? I don't understand.

BRAD

And you'll never understand, white boy who thinks he's better than everybody. But I'll give you something you can understand.

MATHEW

What?

CLARENCE (O.S.)

Lights out in three minutes!

Mathew looks on in fear as Brad continues holding him against the wall with a smirk.

BRAD

When these lights go off...you'll learn to respect not only black people, but people in general.

MATHEW

...There's no need---

BRAD

There's a need for this. You need to learn that people are no different from the next.

MATHEW

But...you're white.

BRAD

I'm me as an individual. The color of a person doesn't make them.

The lights go out. Hard punches are being landed and Mathew's screams are heard.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

It's a quiet night. A playground is seen in the background as Kyle and Maria hold hands making their way to the store.

MARIA

I told you the movie would be good.

KYLE

It's about time you picked a movie worth sitting through.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek.

MARIA

Don't act like that. Just say your baby has good taste.

KYLE

What special benefits come with it?

MARIA

You'll be lucky if you get anything.

KYLE

I'm already lucky. I have the most beautiful woman in the world by my side.

They stop and engage in a passionate kiss.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I love you.

MARIA

I love you more.

They continue walking, making their way inside the store. Considering the store is in the hood, you would think the inside would look trashy, but it's actually up to par. The two come in and stop at the counter.

KYLE

Let me grab a few things from the back.

MARIA

I'll pick a drink since my baby did something I wanted to do.

KYLE

Make sure it's something to get you more in the mood.

MARIA

(Laughs)

Go get what you're about to get.

Kyle walks off to the back of the store. Maria stands at the counter looking over the drinks.

WILL, the dark skin wannabe thug staggers in wearing a wife beater and jeans, dropping his cigarette to the floor stepping on it before walking over to Maria stopping behind her.

WILL

What's going on beautiful?

She turns her head looking at him, sneering.

MARIA

Nothing.

WILL

Something has gotta be going on. Scrumptious women like you don't stand around alone without something going on.

MARIA

(Sighs)

If there was something going on, it would have nothing to do with you.

WILL

Playing hard to get? I like that, baby.

MARIA

Why are you calling me baby? People actually have names.

WILL

I'm calling you baby because that's all I'll be saying while I'm putting this pipe on you, girl.

He tries to wrap his arms around her waist, and she turns around shoving him.

MARIA

What's wrong with you?! You don't know me!

WILL

I'm trying to...

Kyle comes back holding some chips and pops, pausing when he sees Will bothering his woman.

KYLE

Who is this?

MARIA

I couldn't begin to tell you.

Will stares at Kyle confused.

WILL

Who is this?

MARIA

My man!

Kyle places his items down, and then moves Maria to the side, getting in Will's face.

KYLE

What's the problem?

WILL
Calm your nerves, white boy.

KYLE
Call me what you want, but you're not about to bother my woman.

WILL
(Laughs)
This is your woman? You don't realize you're getting used? This fine sister doesn't love you.

MARIA
Excuse me?!

KYLE
Baby, I got this.
(To Will)
This fine sister has been my woman for the past five years.

WILL
White boy, you're so dumb. Sisters only talk to your kind for money.

KYLE
Well---

MARIA
Hold up! Why should I talk to a no good, no job or a future black man like you?! Men like you made me try a white man in the first place. You think you're this and that, when you're only worth one night, if you can do that right.

WILL
(Laughs)
Sister, I understand. You don't wanna blow what you got going on, believe you me, I understand completely.

MARIA
Boy, if you don't get---

KYLE
Don't worry about it, let's just go.

Kyle takes Maria by the hand, and they walk towards the door.

WILL
(Mocking Kyle)
Don't worry about it, let's just go.

Kyle turns around walking back to Will. The two stare at each other for a hot second before Kyle shoves him to the floor.

KYLE
Leave well enough alone! You're not getting my girl. You're not doing anything with your life. You don't want what you're looking for!

Kyle goes back to Maria, and they walk out of the store. Will is on the floor dazed for a few seconds before standing up pulling a knife out making his way out the store behind them.

KYLE (CONT'D)
I can't believe people these days.

MARIA
Don't even think about it. Let's just go get a room and relax.

KYLE
You're right. I shouldn't let---

WILL (O.S.)
I guess you think you're tough, huh, white boy?!

Kyle and Maria stop walking, but don't turn around.

KYLE
Don't you have a corner to sit on and drink a forty ounce?!

WILL
That's funny.

Will runs at Kyle with the knife forward. Maria turns around jumping in front of Kyle getting pierced, releasing a loud scream.

Will is stunned, slowly pulling the knife out. Kyle turns around catching her falling back, and they both fall to the ground.

Will stands lost holding the bloody knife.

KYLE

Baby, it'll be okay. It'll be okay
baby, just lay here in my arms. Help!
Somebody help us!

Will runs off scared, accidentally dropping the knife.

MARIA

I'm okay. I just...I just need---

KYLE

(Sobbing)
I'm right here, I won't leave you.

MARIA

I know you won't. You love me.

KYLE

I'll always love you. There's no one
for me, but you.

MARIA

Kiss me.

He gives her a kiss and when he pulls back, her soul has
moved on.

KYLE

No!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Ricky and Hubert are outside the gas station laughing and
talking loud.

Ricky walks to the door trying to open it, but it's locked.
Benny watches him, shaking his head seeing Ricky walking up
to the window beginning to knock.

RICKY

Man, what's up? Why is the door
locked?

BENNY

It's after hours. I have to keep the
door locked.

RICKY

Come on man, open the door.

BENNY

Sorry sir, no can do.

Ricky turns his back as if he's going to walk away. Just as Benny prepares to go back to reading his book, Ricky turns back around and begins banging on the glass.

RICKY

Hello?! I'm good enough for you to take my money, but I'm not good enough for you to show me some service?!

Benny sighs, shaking his head, chuckling.

BENNY

How can I help you, sir?

RICKY

You can start by giving me some gas on that pump over there, and a pack of squares!

Benny looks at him confused.

RICKY (CONT'D)

What?! You didn't hear me, towel head?!

BENNY

What brand of cigarettes do you want?

RICKY

Give me some Newport's in a box.

HUBERT (O.S.)

(Drunk tone)

You tell him, cuz!

BENNY

I can't give you anything without you paying for it first.

RICKY

You can't give me anything without me paying for it first? But you can come to my country opening up stores, taking money from me and my people?!

Benny doesn't respond, smiling.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Answer me! You can do those things,
but I can't get my gas and squares?
Why is that towel head?

BENNY

The sad part about this situation is
you think I have this and that, when
you don't even know me.

RICKY

I know you. You're the reason why my
people can't make it in the world!
You're one of the reasons why all of
the jobs are gone! Y'all out here
spreading your little diseases,
turning black women out. But don't
dare let a black man talk to one of
your women. Yet, y'all can come over
here and do what you want, when you
want.

BENNY

Do you even know who you are? Have you
actually looked at yourself and
wondered why? It's people like you who
keep your race down. You're one of
those people always wanting a hand,
but can't help yourself.

RICKY

What did you say to me?

BENNY

You heard exactly what I said. If you
tried focusing on yourself instead of
what the next man has, maybe you
wouldn't be here drunk, bitching to me
about your own failures.

RICKY

Man just---

BENNY

Just give you your gas and squares,
right? You want me to give you free
gas because you think I'm rich. What
if I was to tell you, I'm just as
broke as you? The only difference
between us is I'm out here trying to
get mine, instead of being a drunken

fool like you.

Ricky throws some money into the slot.

RICKY

Give me my squares, and get my gas started.

Benny puts the cigarettes in the slot.

BENNY

No real response when the truth is in your face.

RICKY

Stop talking to me dude, for real.

Ricky takes his cigarettes, and then staggers back over to Hubert.

HUBERT

What was he over there talking about?

RICKY

I wanna crack his fuckin' head!

Ricky takes the bottle out of Hubert's hand and throws it at the window.

HUBERT

Don't let him get to you.

RICKY

I am letting it get to me! This is my goddamn hood and he's over here taking the money!

Ricky grabs a gun out of the car, and places it in his pocket.

Hubert starts pumping the gas as Ricky staggers back over to the window.

BENNY

What do you want now? I gave you your gas and cigarettes, what else do you need?

RICKY

I need everything, dog! I need you out my hood, my country, this world!

Ricky pulls the gun out aiming it at the window.

BENNY

Oh, wow.

RICKY

If you weren't behind this glass, I'd get rid of you myself.

BENNY

Is that supposed to make me scared of you? I'm guessing since you have a gun, you think you're big and bad, right?

Benny places the barrel of the shotgun to the window.

BENNY (CONT'D)

I bet that's the same gun you use to put food on your family's table. From the looks of it, you're not good at that either. It's black people like you I can't stand. You few and in between make it bad for the ones who actually try to do something for themselves.

Ricky gets frustrated and lets some shots off in the air. Hubert drops the gas pump, running over to Ricky grabbing him.

RICKY

You don't know me!

BENNY

You see how stupid you sound? That's the same thing---

RICKY

You---

BENNY

You repeated the same thing I said.

RICKY

You don't know what a struggle is! You don't know what it's like not having a dime to your name. All you know is you're over here taking the black man's money and women, and you're proud of it!

HUBERT

Rick, come on man before he calls the cops!

RICKY

Let him call the cops! He got 'em on his payroll anyway! I'm shocked they're not here now trying to take me to jail for standing for my rights, and being black!

BENNY

Standing for your rights, and being black?! You don't know what it's like being called an illegal alien! You don't know what it's like to sneak away from your own country because where you're from you have no rights! Going through years of paperwork to get an I.D. becoming legal! All you know is what a history book told you! You have no idea, nor will you ever know what my people had to go through to get here!

Hubert pulls Ricky back to the car. Benny gets on the phone calling the police.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Yes, I'm having a problem at my father's gas station. Two black men are outside harassing me, and I would like them off of this property immediately.

Benny hangs up and then makes his way outside with the shotgun.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Get away from my father's gas station he worked hard for, you monkey! I called you a monkey because nothing but ignorance comes from your mouth, yet you always have your hand out for a banana!

Hubert lets Ricky go, and they both look at Benny offended.

RICKY

What did you just say?!

BENNY

I'm not repeating myself! Just get off this property, and everybody can go back to what they were doing!

RICKY

Oh, hell no! You might as well finish what you started!

Hubert notices the spilled gas.

HUBERT

Rick man---

Ricky turns around shoving him.

RICKY

Oh, you down with this dirt mouth underhanded bastard, instead of your own brother?!

HUBERT

Rick, shut up! We need to get out of here before---

BENNY

That's right! Listen to your monkey, boy! Get away from here before something bad happens!

Hubert takes off running. Ricky and Benny draw down on each other.

RICKY

Do something!

BENNY

You do something, nigger!

The hate shown in both of their eyes is genuine as they open fire hitting each other, and a gas pump causing an explosion.

CUT TO:

INT. KYLE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

His room is in shambles after witnessing the woman he loved murdered in front of him.

Deep sobs can be heard from Kyle sitting at his desk wearing the same bloody clothes, looking through pictures on his

laptop of him and Maria. The door is heard opening. Elizabeth comes into the room.

He turns his head looking at her, sighing, disgusted. He turns back facing the laptop continuing to look at the pictures.

KYLE
(Sobbing)
I'm sure you're happy.

ELIZABETH
Why would you say that?

KYLE
The girl you hate so much is gone. You can go back to calling me your son.

She walks over trying to touch him, and he moves away.

KYLE (CONT'D)
Don't touch me.

ELIZABETH
I understand how you feel.

KYLE
You have no idea how I feel. You didn't like her, and basically disowned me as a son because I was in love. What happened to auntie has nothing to do with how I feel.

ELIZABETH
How do you---

KYLE
Dad told me.

ELIZABETH
It's more than that. My issue comes from---

He turns to look at her.

KYLE
You have no legitimate reason why you don't like black people. You know what? People like you would make me hate white people because of the ignorance that comes from your mouth.

But unlike you, I'm not closed-minded
blaming an entire race because of one
person's actions.

ELIZABETH

Kyle...

He turns his back to her.

KYLE

Leave. There's nothing else for us to
discuss until you realize the way you
think is ignorant.

It dawns on her the hate she has for no reason destroyed the
relationship with her son. Lowering her head, she walks out
the room.

Kyle continues looking at the photos. Closing the laptop,
sighing, wiping the tears from his eyes, he pulls out a
pocket knife and opens it, placing it on his heart.

KYLE (CONT'D)

There's no need to live without you.
Love no longer remains in my heart.
The only person who made me happy was
you. I love you, Maria. I'll be with
you soon.

He shoves the knife in his heart releasing a soft moan,
falling on the desk dead.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Hubert managed to get far enough away from the blast, but he
still sustained some serious damage.

Bandages cover Hubert's face as he lies on the hospital bed
hooked to machines.

MALE OFFICER and FEMALE OFFICER are in the room.

HUBERT

(Barely woke)
What...what happened?

MALE OFFICER

Be happy you're alive.

HUBERT

What happened? Where is Rick?

MALE OFFICER

You need to relax. What we need to know is---

HUBERT

Where is my friend?

FEMALE OFFICER

Your friend and that teenage boy fresh out of high school are dead. What do you think I should tell his father explaining his death.

HUBERT

...I tried to tell him to leave. Why wouldn't he listen?

FEMALE OFFICER

Why did you want him to leave?

Hubert lies silent as tears build up in his eyes, shaking his head.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Tears won't help the situation! When they brought you in here, your blood count was way above the limit of being drunk. You need to start talking.

The CHALDEAN DOCTOR comes in walking over to the bed. Hubert tries to inch away from him.

HUBERT

Keep him away from me.

CHALDEAN DOCTOR

Is there a problem?

HUBERT

Yeah, you're the problem.

MALE OFFICER

How is he the problem?

HUBERT

...He just is.

CHALDEAN DOCTOR

Excuse me. I'll come back when he's more settled.

The Chaldean doctor walks out the room.

HUBERT

Try not coming back at all.

FEMALE OFFICER

I know what this was all about now. This whole ordeal was racial.

HUBERT

I don't know what you're talking about.

FEMALE OFFICER

Oh, but you do. You two decided to pick on that boy because he wasn't the same color as you.

MALE OFFICER

Is that the situation?

Hubert lies silent.

FEMALE OFFICER

He knows that's what it is, that's why he's not responding. Thanks to you and your friend's ignorance, not only is an innocent person dead, he is too.

Hubert lies silent.

MALE OFFICER

Silence isn't going to bring your friend back.

HUBERT

I didn't want this to happen, okay. I tried to stop it, but---

FEMALE OFFICER

You let it get out of control. You probably thought it was funny!

HUBERT

I'm not saying I found it funny. I just---

FEMALE OFFICER

You're full of it! If it wasn't funny, I wouldn't be here because your dumbass friend would still be alive, along with that innocent boy. I'm guessing you ignorant niggers would still be out drinking, harassing people for no reason. Yes, I called you a nigger and I'm black. That's because you and your dumbass friend fit exactly what the word means. An ignorant person with no purpose in life!

She walks over to him leaning down in his face.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)

I wish I could find a way to pin all of this on you. But even if I could, I still wouldn't charge you with it. The death of that boy and your friend is enough guilt to punish you for the rest of your life. Just goes to show what you thought was funny is why people think black people are ignorant. You made sure that statement was true tonight.

She walks out the room.

MALE OFFICE

You're a racist, huh? The doctor that's been tending to you all night is the race you hate. It would be a shame if he didn't come and check on you.

Male officer walks out of the room. Hubert remains silent, sulking in his own grief as tears leak from his eyes.

INT. TIMOTHY ROOM - MORNING

Timothy is sitting on the bed watching rap videos, wearing a wife beater and shorts.

Mathew walks in the room bruised up with a limp, wearing something casual.

Timothy quickly turns the television off, staring at Mathew concerned.

TIMOTHY
What happened to you?

MATHEW
Don't worry about it. What are you
doing?

TIMOTHY
Nothing.

Mathew takes a seat next to him.

MATHEW
Watching those rap videos again?

TIMOTHY
Don't get mad.

MATHEW
I'm not about to get mad.

TIMOTHY
Why not?

MATHEW
I'm actually glad you're watching
them.

TIMOTHY
You told me not to listen to rap
music.

MATHEW
I know what I told you. But after my
experience yesterday, I realized
something.

TIMOTHY
What's that?

MATHEW
There's no difference in race, and you
never judge a book by the cover
because it makes you stupid.

TIMOTHY
So...black people are cool?

MATHEW
Everybody is cool as long as they
don't think they're better than anyone

else.

TIMOTHY
How cool is that?

MATHEW
(Laughs)
Turn the television on.

The two sit listening to music, imitating what they see.

FADE TO BLACK:

END CREDITS