

THE LOTUS
by
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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "HE WHO PUTS AN END TO FORMER CRIMES BY TAKING UP THE WAY OF PEACE, ILLUMINATES THE WORLD, LIKE THE MOON FREED FROM A VEIL OF CLOUDS - ANGULIMALA SUTTA"

The sound of a prison cell gate CREAKS open. Chains RATTLE as we

FADE IN:

INT. EASTBROOK PRISON - VISITOR'S ROOM - DAY

REGINA JOHNSON, a middle-aged, petite, African-American woman, sits alone among the pale and ceramic confines. Her arms are folded rigidly over the counter.

There is an empty chair on the other side of a glass partition that awaits its occupant.

A loud, steel CLANK resonates through the walls, causes her to flinch, shakes loose any confidence she once held.

A door on the other side of the glass partition opens. LAZARUS enters in handcuffs and belly chains, dressed in an orange prison jump-suit.

He is a man, but one could hardly call him human. His eyes are distant and cold. His arms are littered with Aryan and pagan prison ink. His body is prison tone. His demeanor, prison tough.

OFFICER MASON, a reedy, 50-year-old guard, follows.

Lazarus waits as officer Mason unlocks his cuffs.

He sits across from Regina. His hands come to rest on the counter, each finger marked with a letter of the acronym: "E W M N" (Evil Wicked Mean Nasty).

Officer Mason takes his place by the door.

Lazarus picks up the phone, brings it to his ear. Regina gathers herself and does the same.

REGINA JOHNSON

No -- no one wanted me to come here today. But, here I am.

Lazarus sits stoic, looks through her as if she were not even there.

She plants a photograph against the glass partition for Lazarus to see: a smiling young boy, eyes wide with wonder, wearing a shirt displaying two hands reaching for each other among clouds and Sun.

REGINA JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(stammering)

His -- his name was Reggie. He had a brother and two sisters who will never see him again. He played football. His favorite movie... was Transformers. He wanted to be a fireman when he grew up --

She erupts with inconsolable emotion.

Lazarus stares at the photo matter-of-factly. He exhales as if contemplating a Chess move; her attempt to get through has failed.

Lazarus hangs up the phone. He glances up at officer Mason; done here.

OFFICER MASON (O.S.)

Okay. That's it.

Lazarus pops up from the chair. Officer Mason re-locks his handcuffs and belly chains. He makes his way toward the door, officer Mason in tow.

Regina drops the phone receiver and slams the palm of her hand against the glass partition over the photograph.

REGINA JOHNSON

Say something!

Lazarus stops, stands motionless for a moment... calmly paces out from the room.

Officer Mason passes a despondent look at Regina, slams the door shut.

Regina is left alone, sobbing. Her hand pressed against the glass and photograph of her son. The image dissolves into

DARKNESS

We continue to hear her weep until it weakens into silence.

SUPER: "THE MUD"

EXT. EASTBROOK PRISON - RECREATION YARD - DAY

A prison yard emanates out from the darkness.

GROUPS OF INMATES separated by race, gather into their respective groups throughout the yard: The Mexican Pancho Villas, Aryan Knights, and the African-American, Vice Lords.

Many are covered in prison house ink; humanity at its worst. Some look almost inhuman.

Lazarus shuffles through, shackled. He passes by an outside toilet enclosure as inmates inside do their business.

A small group of inmates stands outside the enclosure. One of them snickers and points up to a pigeon nest high above the toilets.

INMATE

Watch yo' step. Double shit zone.

The group instinctively clears a path for Lazarus as he passes through.

PRISON GARDEN

60-year-old ELIJAH, African-American, looks up from tending the garden; a battle-hardened face with quiet eyes and a grayed beard that bears the reverence of a lion's mane.

He watches Lazarus make his way through the yard, a clipped Aloe Vera leaf tight in his grip.

A stone, nineteenth-century era perimeter observation tower presides over him. A mounted sign reads:

"DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS. EASTBROOK
PENITENTIARY. WARDEN STANLEY PAIGE JR."

INT. PERIMETER OBSERVATION TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Watching the activity below is Prison Warden, STANLEY PAIGE, 55, well-groomed, dressed in a suit and tie worn like a cheap coat of paint. We can almost smell the chintzy cologne.

His eyes zero-in to a point in the yard.

WARDEN PAIGE

(to self)

Lazarus.

He turns to OFFICER LOCHHEAD, 45, who stands beside him. His face weathered with years of distilling the warden's barbarous doctrine.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

After it's done, have him ready in the Hamper.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Yes, sir.

Lochhead exits, the warden's attention returns to the yard.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - CONTINUOUS

Lazarus enters into a sea of noise, steps up the steel stairway. INMATES yell at each other from inside their metal cages.

A GUARD stands in "The Bubble," a control room encased in plexiglass that overlooks the wing. In his hands, he grips a shotgun.

He gives a wave to officer Mason escorting Lazarus. Mason gestures back.

LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus enters his cell, an eight by six-foot utilitarian metal box containing two bed trays bolted to the wall, a sink, a small desk, and a toilet.

A narrow, arched window allows light to leak in from outside.

The cell is littered with drawings; fire-breathing dragons, demons, weeping angels, and pagan symbols.

Lazarus waits for officer Mason to shut the cell gate. He turns around, slides his chained hands through the food tray port. Officer Mason unlocks his cuffs.

Lazarus paces to the sink and washes his hands. He sneers at his reflection in the scratched, metallic mirror.

REAPER (O.S.)

Don't stare too long.

LAZARUS

(in jest)

Mirror, mirror...

REAPER, 50's, Caucasian, gazes out of the narrow cell window. Sunlight washes over his face and gray goatee. A swastika and bluebird stand out among the litter of tattoos that cover his torso.

His hand clutches a rolled-up piece of canvas.

REAPER
How'd it go?

LAZARUS
(scoffs)
Didn't.

Reaper looks down, disappointed.

REAPER
Look, you don't have to hear this from me. But, everything catches up. Like a shadow... it'll never leave. All the shit we've done --

He takes notice of Lazarus staring at the wall, emotionless. Reaper gets the hint. He bounces a nod -- dismissive.

REAPER (CONT'D)
Yeah...

LAZARUS
You know how it goes, brother. Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.

Keys jingle. Officer Lochhead steps up to the cell gate.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (O.S.)
Reap! Field trip!

Reaper hands Lazarus the rolled-up piece of canvas paper.

REAPER
Something that's been in my head. Dream...

Lazarus takes hold of it, but Reaper doesn't let go.

REAPER (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Find the light, Lazarus.

Reaper lets go of the canvas. He looks around the cell, exhales as if to dispel the wretchedness of the cell's confines.

LAZARUS

You okay?

REAPER

Yeah -- yeah, fine. I'll be seeing
you soon.

Officer Lochhead pulls the gate open for Reaper to exit. Reaper steps out and walks from view, followed closely by Officer Lochhead.

Lazarus, now alone, steps to his bed tray and slowly unravels the rolled-up piece of canvas paper. He smooths it out over his bed tray mattress.

INSERT - REAPER'S SKETCH

A pencil-thin figure sits, his face expels radiant rays of light toward the sky.

A macabre scene of dark, bestial figures billows in the background as if Dante's seventh circle manifested.

BACK TO LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus rolls the sketch back up, opens a small drawer to his desk, drops the sketch inside, slides the drawer closed.

A loud steel CLANK snaps him back; flushing toilets and loud talking blare back into existence.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - CORRIDOR - DAY

Officer Lochhead leads Reaper through the dimly lit confines lined with oxidized, polycarbonate windows that view the prison recreation yard.

Jose "RHINO" Lopez, 27, whose nick-name fits him like a glove, approaches from the opposite direction. His neck and arms covered with prison ink.

TWO PANCHO VILLAS pace out in front of Rhino as his eyes fix directly on Reaper.

The two Pancho Villas suddenly step in front of Officer Lochhead. Rhino pulls a shank and rapidly jabs multiple stabs into Reaper's abdomen.

Lochhead coldly observes -- complicit.

Reaper takes on the assault, drops like a heap to the ground.

The cellblock erupts with shouts and howls.

Rhino and the two Pancho Villas disappear into the confusion.

LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus steps to the cell gate and looks in the direction of the commotion.

Officer Mason approaches and peers down the corridor.

OFFICER MASON
(dismayed)
They got Reaper, man.

Lazarus pounds the cell gate bars.

LAZARUS
Pop the gate! Pop the fuckin' gate!

Lazarus' voice lowers... impuissant.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)
Mason? Please, man.

Officer Mason takes a moment -- sighs.

He CLANKS the cell gate open. Lazarus runs out.

CORRIDOR

Lazarus pushes through the small crowd. Officer Lochhead coldly watches Reaper lie in a pool of blood. Lazarus pushes past officer Lochhead, kneels, tightly grips Reaper's hand.

He checks over Reaper's wounds. Peers into Reaper's eyes; realization takes hold.

Reaper's eyes flutter as he tries to hold on.

LAZARUS
(weakly)
Reap?

A sudden calmness overtakes Reaper. His eyes dissolve into a lifeless haze.

Lazarus tightens his grip over Reaper's hand, stunned.

Officer Lochhead pries Lazarus away from Reaper's lifeless body.

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Lazarus stands inside the concrete-encased room, hands cuffed to belly chains. Muted light seeps in from a small vision panel on the steel-framed door.

The cell door CLANKS and slowly swings open. Warden Paige enters accompanied by Officer Lochhead. He steps in front of Lazarus with a posture of superiority.

WARDEN PAIGE
Sorry about Reaper.

Lazarus responds with a slight nod.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
I heard you met with the mother again. Reaper's idea?

Lazarus stays quiet.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Your new cellie arrives tomorrow.

LAZARUS
Who?

WARDEN PAIGE
Dark Side. Coming over from Quentin.

LAZARUS
Shot-Caller for the Quentin Vice Lords? Why --

WARDEN PAIGE
He's off the count, checked in. Went born again, or something. They're moving him here for safety and security. VL wants him dead, so I'm placing him with you.

LAZARUS
Nowhere's safe for an X'd shot caller! Put `em in PC!

WARDEN PAIGE
No... no. I need him with you. You wait, Lazarus. And you do as I say when I say.

The warden motions Officer Lochhead to leave.

Obediently, Lochhead exits, slams the cell door shut. Darkness ominously spreads through the confines, drapes the warden in sinister shadow.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

I have something for you.

He hands Lazarus an envelope. Lazarus opens it, pulls out...

... a mugshot of Rhino, the inmate who shanked Reaper.

Lazarus slides the mugshot back inside the envelope, exhales.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

You clearing this with Rowan? With
Reaper gone, war within your rank
is ripe for a new Rex.

Lazarus hands the envelope back to the warden.

LAZARUS

Reaper was my cellie. Not Rowan's.
Knight Rex belongs to me.

The warden nods -- quickly paces to the cell door.

He pounds his fist over the heavy steel. Officer Lochhead pulls the door open.

The warden looks back.

WARDEN PAIGE

Lazarus!

Lazarus turns to the warden, his eyes squint into the invading light.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

Who is your king?

Lazarus is silent for a moment, then forces out the response the warden is waiting to hear.

LAZARUS

You... are my king.

The warden smiles, satisfied. He paces out the cell door, disappears into the outside light.

The cell door SLAMS into darkness.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

A sea of INMATES dressed in orange prison jumpsuits, sit on steel benches, eating.

The confines of the cafeteria are cold and barren. This includes the hearts and souls of the inmates and the guards who hold watch over them.

Television screens placed throughout the cafeteria display UFC fighting.

Lazarus carries his tray from the serving line, walks toward a group of menacing-looking inmates seated at the

ARYAN KNIGHT'S TABLE

where ROOSTER, 33, nervous and lanky, strokes his handle-bar mustache fresh from the '70s. He is in the middle of one of his daily rants; a preacher of prison injustice, as if there ever was any.

ROOSTER

... we shovel this crap in our
body, don't even know what the hell
it is.

He scoops up a spoon-full of a slimy substance.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

This shit look like fish to you?

ROWAN, 30's, towering and muscular physique that saddles a feeble soul, growls. Shamrocks and demons stain his burly arms.

ROWAN

Not gonna give a bunch of L-Whops
filet mignon, fuck-tard.

Rowan scoops a spoon full into his mouth.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

(muttering)
Eat your fuckin' food!

ROOSTER

I've seen the boxes, Rowan.

Rooster floats a look over the others.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
Yeah, any of you know what's
printed on 'em?

No one answers -- all wait for Rooster to answer.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
"Not. Meant. For. Human
consumption."

Rowan shakes his head -- grumbles.

ROWAN
Fuck-tard --

The others force snickers.

ROOSTER
They peel that shit off before they
bring it in!

ROWAN
Who the fuck is "they"?

ROOSTER
(sighs)
Assholes runnin' this shit farm!

Rowan slams his fist on the table.

ROWAN
We run this "shit farm!"

Lazarus sits down at the table.

Rooster looks at Lazarus, assesses.

ROOSTER
Hey, Lazarus. Sorry 'bout Reaper,
man. We all are.

Lazarus shovels food into his mouth, offers no response.

He pins a look at Rowan.

LAZARUS
Why would the Villas X Reaper out?
They wouldn't do that shit without
an OK!

Rowan stops eating, locks eyes with Lazarus.

ROWAN

Reaper became a fuckin' stain. Went
lotus. Open game, brother. By
accord of the creed.

(beat)

Knights live and breathe through
the brethren. Blood in, blood out.
Dissension must and will be
expelled by natural order, like a
virus.

Rowan goes back to his plate.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

Reaper chose his fate.

LAZARUS

Knights stay pure by takin' care of
our own, handlin' our own! We don't
allow the fuckin' Villas to do it!

Lazarus shakes his head with disdain.

ROWAN

Reaper's gone, brother. By Rank,
I'm Rex.

Lazarus' face pinches with contempt.

LAZARUS

You?

He passes a look down the table.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

Li'l Red!

LI'L RED, 27, bald with a reddish goatee and penetrating blue
eyes, turns to Lazarus, grins. Tattoos lace down his arms; a
swirling array of Aryan and pagan art. A jagged "SS" paints
over his neck.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

Game tomorrow! Our side of the
fence! Rooster 'ill walk you
through! Time to earn your salt!

Li'l Red smiles.

LI'L RED

Fuckin'-- a -- twitty!

Lazarus glares at Rowan, his voice deadly calm.

LAZARUS

Once I take care of the fuckin'
Villa that X'd Reaper. I'm comin'
for the virus that sold him out.
Then, we'll see who's Rex.

Rowan looks Lazarus in the eye.

ROWAN

Goin' against Rank? Tread
carefully, brother!

LAZARUS

Fuck Rank! I tread for the
Knights... and the Knights alone!

Lazarus lifts his eyes to the

TELEVISION SCREEN

as two UFC fighters are going at it. One is thrown on the
ground, as the other plants on top of him and pounds him in
the face.

The referee wedges his way between them, throws up his hands.
The defeated fighter lies motionless and bloodied.

BACK TO PRISON CAFETERIA

Scant cheers and claps erupt.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - NIGHT

Drifting down the corridor, the sound of rhythmic breathing
resonates through the quietly lit cellblock...

... now moving past "The Bubble," where a guard sits, writes
something on a clipboard...

... going further down, past the multitude of darkened
cells...

... the breathing grows more intense as we come upon

LAZARUS' CELL

where Lazarus is doing sit-ups in front of the arched window.
After several reps, he relaxes down on his back.

He surveys Reaper's now empty bed tray. His gaze moves out of the cell window.

FROM THE WINDOW

Stars majestically shimmer.

BACK TO LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus watches, deep in thought.

He gets up and steps to the desk. He pulls open the drawer, takes out Reaper's sketch. He looks it over, gently glides his thumb over the pencil-thin figure.

He looks down at a newspaper clipping with a picture of Regina Johnson, the headline reads: "MOTHER SEEKS CLOSURE AFTER SON'S DEATH"

Lazarus places the sketch back into the drawer atop the newspaper clipping, slides the drawer closed.

He passes a look around the cell's unkept confines.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

The morning Sun shafts through the cellblock windows and paints over the walls.

Two shadowy figures step up the stairway, one of them cradles a box.

LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus rolls up his bed mattress -- presses it against the wall. He sits on his bed tray, plants his back firmly against the rolled mattress. He grabs his sketch pad and pencil.

The confines of the cell are immaculate.

The cell gate abruptly CLANKS, swings open. Officer Lochhead and a medium-built, tattoo-laden African-American man, DARK SIDE, 42, enters, cradling a box of belongings. His hair is in dreads. A thick scar intertwined with tattoos circles his neck.

Dark Side greets Lazarus with a nod.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
Your new "cellie."

Dark Side turns toward officer Lochhead, who responds with a smirk.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)
I'll let you two get acquainted.

Officer Lochhead SLAMS the cell gate shut.

Lazarus and Dark Side stare at each other for a long moment. Dark Side breaks away and browses over the drawings on the cell walls.

He smiles at Lazarus.

DARK SIDE
Artist?

Lazarus turns his attention back to his sketch.

LAZARUS
Set your shit over there.

Dark Side sets down his box and calmly unpacks his belongings.

Lazarus' eyes veer up, watches Dark Side like a guard-dog.

Dark Side pulls out two small, crudely carved wood statuettes; one of a standing Buddha, the other of a kneeling Angulimala.

He carefully places them in front of the arched window and turns to Lazarus.

DARK SIDE
I keep these for meditation --

LAZARUS
Let's get this shit clear!

Lazarus slams his sketch pad and pencil on his bed tray.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)
When you wash, shit, piss...
whatever, you clean up! You use the
sink, you wipe it dry! Those little
action figures... you put 'em where
I can't see 'em! Every morning, you
roll up your mattress against the
wall and keep your side clean! My
house, my rules! You fuckin' got
it?

Dark Side surveys the cell, takes in all that was explained. His focus back on Lazarus.

DARK SIDE

I got it, man. Your house, your rules.

Lazarus stares contentiously at Dark Side.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Look, I don't like this any more than you. Let's just get through it. Okay?

LAZARUS

(scoffs)

Fuck!

Dark Side gathers the statuettes and places them into the box as Lazarus watches intently.

Lazarus picks up his sketch pad and pencil, focuses back on his work.

INT. EASTBROOK PRISON - BULLPEN - DAY

BOOTSIE, 29, tall, African-American, leans against the wall. His dangerous and careless eyes glower at a WHITE INMATE who sits alone; his face innocent as unstained cotton.

Bootsie glances over at another African-American inmate...

... DREAD, 37, muscular ripped, and severe, voice imposing as his physique, who nods back at him.

Bootsie tosses his cigarette and picks up a small box of cereal and a donut -- approaches the white inmate.

He hands him the two items.

Other inmates watch in uncomfortable silence as the white inmate cautiously takes the offering and smiles.

WHITE INMATE

What's this?

BOOTSIE

Yours, man. Take it.

WHITE INMATE

Sure?

BOOTSIE
(smiles)
Yeah.

The white inmate carefully unwraps the donut and takes a bite.

WHITE INMATE
Thanks.

He puts the box of cereal into his pocket, delivers a nod to Bootsie.

BOOTSIE
How you gonna pay me back?

The white inmate smiles. Nervously glances around.

WHITE INMATE
What -- what do you mean?

BOOTSIE
Food motherfucka'! How you gonna pay me back?

WHITE INMATE
I -- I thought --

Bootsie steps close to him, massages his crotch.

BOOTSIE
I got a way you can repay me!

Other African-American inmates sidle closer.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN INMATE
Yeah, nothin' in prison is free motherfucka'! Pay up!

Sporadic laughter erupts.

The white inmate shrinks into his skin, terrified.

Bootsie suddenly grabs him in a choke-hold. The white inmate becomes frantic, flails his arms. His face turns blue.

His movements become weak and feeble.

He passes out.

Bootsie tosses him to the floor like a sack of trash, rolls him over on his stomach.

Other inmates back away as they watch in stunned silence while Bootsie yanks the inmate's pants down.

INT. WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - DAY

The warden sits at his desk, watches adoringly as his African Grey Parrot, PEPPER, devours a piece of mango while perched on his hand. His head sways to Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C Major.

There is a knock at the door. The warden sighs.

He SMACKS a kiss at Pepper -- Pepper mimics the sound back, clamps the piece of mango, flaps back into her cage.

WARDEN PAIGE

Come in.

The door opens -- Officer Lochhead enters.

INT. PRISON INFIRMARY - DAY

The warden storms through the corridor, officer Lochhead a few steps behind, tries to keep up.

WARDEN PAIGE

Jesus! Why wasn't he in PC?

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

He just arrived! It was in the Bullpen for Chrissakes!

WARDEN PAIGE

Fuck!

They enter the viewing area. A large glass partition separates them from the ravaged inmate lying in an infirmary bed.

The warden and Lochhead look him over.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Bootsie's responsible.

Officer Lochhead glares at the warden.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)

Happened right after Dark Side was admitted. Vice Lords are sending a message.

Warden Paige gives a thoughtful nod.

WARDEN PAIGE

I want a chat with Dread.
 "Bootsie"... just earned a stay
 down in The Chamber.

Lochhead's mouth tightens, his eyes sink.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Yes... sir.

The warden takes a deep breath, assimilates.

WARDEN PAIGE

This poor fuck transfers out soon
 as he's able to open his eyes.
 Can't afford this stain on our
 authority.

Officer Lochhead nods, paces down the corridor. The warden is
 left alone -- simmering.

INT. THE CAGE - DAY

Officers Lochhead and Mason muscle Bootsie into the steel
 latticed confines of an old rod-controlled elevator. Lochhead
 SLAMS the door closed; the sound echoing down the shaft, into
 the belly of

INT. THE CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

where The Cage comes to a violent stop. The latticed door
 SCREECHES open.

Bootsie is pushed out into the nineteenth-century old, stone
 masonry corridor in belly chains toward two thick iron doors.
 It is dank. It is dark; inhuman torture of a man's soul.

They step to one of the doors and JAM the wrought iron slide
 latch open with a loud, unnerving CLANK.

Bootsie anxiously peers inside.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Inside your den! Move!

Bootsie steps inside, officer Lochhead and officer Mason
 follow. We hear the jingle of belly chains.

Lochhead and Mason step out holding the belly chains and shut
 the iron door -- its heavy THUD slams away any morsel of
 hope.

They pace back down the dimly lit corridor, enter The Cage, and SLAM the door with another authoritative CLANK.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Dread is escorted through the darkened confines, cuffed and shackled, to inside a gated enclosure.

The guards disappear into the shadows of the corridor.

Dread is alone.

WARDEN PAIGE (O.S.)

Was it you, Dread?

Dread turns toward the voice... the face of the warden appears from the shadows.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

You order the rape of that kid?

DREAD

VL don't ride the caboose. This cat
Bootsie, just a hound sniffin'
'round. Ain't one of mine.

WARDEN PAIGE

Which makes him willing to do
anything to join your rank.

DREAD

Whatever the case, y'all took in a
fallen king.

WARDEN PAIGE

What are you talking about?

DREAD

Moment Dark Side strolled through
those gates... match was lit.
Talkin' nationwide vendetta. Whole
family lookin' in on this one.

Dread gives a subtle nod, beams straight into the warden's eyes.

DREAD (CONT'D)

Y'all thought throwin 'em in with
the white-boy assassin 'ill calm
the storm?

WARDEN PAIGE
I could bleed your soul dry, throw
your ass in The Chamber like --

DREAD
Bootsie?

Dread gives a heavy chuckle, amused.

DREAD (CONT'D)
Put me in there, volcano erupts.
Scales tilt.

Dread leans in close to the warden.

DREAD (CONT'D)
Y'all want Bootsie? There's
conditions, strings.

WARDEN PAIGE
(confirming)
Dark Side.

DREAD
Catch and release, baby. No brutha'
gets handled without equal pay.
That's how shit goes down.

WARDEN PAIGE
Eyes are on him, Dread. Can't go
down looking like some premeditated
hit. Things need to be put in
motion. At the proper time.

DREAD
Time... is two weeks. After that...
Rome burns. Dark Side...

Dread blows a kiss into the air.

WARDEN PAIGE
You think you can call the shots,
now? Here? In my fucking --

DREAD
Ain't 'bout power. It's 'bout
balance.

The warden nods.

WARDEN PAIGE
Long as we understand who holds
what.

The warden motions Officer Lochhead, who steps out from the shadows. He CLANKS open the enclosure gate for Dread to exit.

DREAD'S CELL

The sound of a cell gate CLANKS shut. Dread walks into the dim light.

TREK, 27, lean and toned, Leans out from his bed tray. His face is chiseled, almost stony; a quiet desperateness lurks inside.

TREK
Everythin' a'ight?

DREAD
Yeah, Trek. Sup knows what's up.
'Bout to show you how shit's
played.

Trek nods and slides back into the shadows.

EXT. PRISON GARDEN - DAY

Lazarus, Li'l Red, and Rooster, walk by Elijah, an African American, as he tills the soil.

They stop and watch Elijah's work.

LI'L RED
Now, this... this is fuckin'
bonnie!

Li'l Red leans toward Elijah.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)
What's your crop, boy?

ROOSTER (O.S.)
It's Aloe Vera.

Elijah looks up at Rooster, moves his eyes on Lazarus.

ELIJAH
A plant for healin'.

LAZARUS
No shit?

Lazarus steps close, reaches down, and uproots an Aloe Vera plant from the dirt. He stares at Elijah, breaks the plant apart.

He tosses the mangled plant onto the pavement.

LI'L RED
Can it heal that?

Elijah's eyes widen, peer up wounded at Lazarus. Lazarus scowls right back at him, defiant.

Rooster and Li'l Red laugh.

OFFICER MASON (O.S.)
Hey!

They turn to face officer Mason standing nearby -- watching.

LAZARUS
Fuck this! C'mon! We got shit to do!

All three walk away.

Lazarus turns back toward Elijah...

... as officer Mason steps over and carefully picks up the mangled plant, hands it to Elijah. Both turn and look at Lazarus.

Elijah replants the Aloe Vera's roots back into the soil.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

INMATES go about their daily routines; weightlifting, basketball, talking in small groups. All separated by ethnicity and gang affiliation.

RECREATION YARD FIELD

The prison baseball team stretches out by a makeshift dugout. The opposing team does quick sprints across the all-dirt field.

A large group of inmates mill about in the shade on a gravelly walking track in front of a chain-link fence topped with razor wire.

GRAVELLY WALKING TRACK

Li'l Red strolls over to a spot by the chain-link fence and casually sits down, watches the teams prepare. He moves his hands behind his back, digs up an object from the dirt. He cups the object into his hands.

Li'l Red stands and walks to Rooster, hands off the object in a brisk handshake. Rooster walks off toward...

... Lazarus. The two brush by each other, engage in a

QUICK HAND EXCHANGE

Lazarus grabs hold of the object wrapped in cloth from Rooster's hand.

BACK TO SCENE

Lazarus walks to the fence, hands relax at his side. Rooster takes his place a short distance away, watches the game begin. He CLAPS, signaling

RECREATION YARD

Li'l Red, who walks up to a Pancho Villa member and strikes him in the face. Pancho Villas rush Li'l Red as chaos quickly spins out through the yard.

Among the turmoil, Lazarus and Rooster spread out in deliberate, pre-planned fashion like lions on the savanna.

We stay with Lazarus as he weaves his way through the yard, fixed and determined. Inmates clear from his path, everyone knowing something is about to go down.

Rhino is promptly isolated and cornered like a wildebeest separated from the herd.

Lazarus and Rhino grab each other. Rhino attempts to throw Lazarus to the ground, but to no avail.

Blood spatters over Lazarus as he viciously pounds his fist into Rhino's face. Rhino helplessly flails in desperate self-defense.

Rhino drops to his knees. Lazarus brandishes a shank out from the cloth, readies it to stab into Rhino's throat.

Sounds of the yard bleed into silence as Lazarus stares into Rhino's eyes. They morph into

QUICK FLASHBACK

Reaper's eyes -- the life draining away.

BACK TO SCENE

Lazarus lets go of Rhino's throat, watches him collapse like a bludgeoned heap to the ground. The shank -- clean and unbloodied in Lazarus' hand.

Rooster grabs Lazarus, pushes him away.

ROOSTER

Go!

Hissing tear gas canisters fly into the yard. The lockdown alarm blares.

Lazarus and Rooster dash away in opposite directions, Rhino left beaten and bloodied on the pavement.

Warning shots echo as prison guards spill into the yard, shotguns at the ready.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

The lockdown alarm blares! Guards stride through the cellblock shouting demands at inmates.

LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus enters -- makes way to the sink.

He washes the blood from his hands, studies his distorted reflection in the scratched, metallic mirror.

His eyes land on Dark Side's silhouetted image reflected off the metallic mirror, sitting in Lotus.

Lazarus grabs a towel, dries his hands.

He scowls at Dark Side's reflection, looks down at the bloodied towel gripped in his hand. He tosses it at the cell's trash can.

The bloody towel inadvertently knocks over Dark Side's wooden statuette of the kneeling Angulimala.

Dark Side snaps from meditation and looks at the felled statuette. He calmly reaches over and places it back to its upright position. He returns to meditation.

Lazarus plants himself firmly into his rolled-up mattress.

Dark Side quietly recites a mantra.

The scene goes to

DARKNESS

The prison alarm blares out over Dark Side's serene chanting. It fades into silence...

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - NIGHT (LOCKDOWN)

Lazarus is doing push-ups.

Dark Side is crossed-legged in front of the arched window, mala in hand, meditating.

Lazarus tries his best to disrupt Dark Side, counts his reps in forced breaths.

He gets up, grabs hold of pull-up bars above Dark Side's head. Lazarus pumps pull-ups, counts them in labored breaths.

DARK SIDE

We don't have to play these roles.

Lazarus stops. Lets himself drop free.

He grabs a towel, wipes his hands... stares like a raptor at Dark Side.

LAZARUS

You seriously lookin' for redemption?

Dark Side sits still in thought. He looks at Lazarus.

DARK SIDE

Place like this... miracles can arise.

LAZARUS

Only miracle is your ass still breathin'! Look around! Forget where you are?

DARK SIDE

Fully aware of where I am. Role I'm s'pposed to play.

Lazarus looks Dark Side over like prey.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Warden put me here --

LAZARUS

That's 'bout to be remedied!

DARK SIDE

Followin' orders, huh? I'm the bargainin' chip. You... the dutiful soldier.

Dark Side shakes his head. Smirks.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Just make it quick. When the time comes.

LAZARUS

Not up to you!

DARK SIDE

You got no say in this either.

LAZARUS

Shut that fuckin' mouth!

Dark Side smiles, turns, and gazes out the arched window.

LATER

Officer Lochhead appears at the cell gate, peers in. Lazarus and dark Side rise from their bed trays.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

On the count! Ending lockdown!

LAZARUS

Midnight?

The cell gate CLANKS and pulls open.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Pair it up on the porch! Let's go!

Lazarus and Dark Side step out onto the railing -- prison chatter amplifies.

They step next to each other and stare stoically ahead.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Shakedown! Let's move it to the Pound!

CELLBLOCK SEVEN

Inmates shuffle down the walk railing, toward the yard.

CORRIDOR

A group of Pancho Villas walks together.

Their leader, SMILEY, 45, with a neatly trimmed salt and pepper goatee and penetrating eyes, strides in the middle of the pack. A large tattoo of Pancho Villa stretches down his right forearm.

Another PANCHO VILLA GANG MEMBER leans into Smiley.

PANCHO VILLA GANG MEMBER
Fucking Lazarus behind us. Molly
whopped Rhino.

Smiley turns to the back of the line -- at Lazarus.

EXT. RECREATION YARD ENTRANCE - CHAINLINK WALKWAY - NIGHT

Lazarus stands in line next to Rooster. Down the line, Smiley watches him in the pallid glow of the recreation yard lights.

Lazarus and Smiley lock eyes.

Smiley steps out of line, eyes pinned on Lazarus. He extends his arms -- flaunts his ink.

Lazarus steps out of line. He extends his arms -- brandishes his ink.

Everyone around them steps back as these two lions engage in a stare-down.

Officer Lochhead strolls out from the building, takes notice of the showdown, grips his baton.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
Hey! Back in line! Let's go!

Lazarus and Smiley carry on their death stare.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)
I said back in line!

Lochhead stomps to Lazarus. Leans in.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)
Plenty of room in The Chamber!

Lazarus moves his eyes on officer Lochhead, smiles.

LAZARUS
Maybe we're in love?

He steps back into line.

Officer Lochhead advances toward Smiley. Smiley steps back into line.

SMILEY
It's all good, homes. All good.

Officer Lochhead passes a look down the line, spits. He calmly strolls back into the building.

RECREATION YARD

Lazarus and Rooster walk up to Li'l Red. They give each other a slight nod. All three look at Rowan stand with two other KNIGHTS.

Both parties give each other a quick nod.

LI'L RED
What's goin' on with the toad
cellie?

Lazarus perfunctorily looks away.

LAZARUS
Warden's call.

Li'l Red stares at Lazarus -- sighs. Lowers his voice.

LI'L RED
Should've taken his ass out when he
set foot in your house. Sends a
fuckin' message.

Lazarus scowls at Li'l Red.

LAZARUS
What message is that? Fuckin'
educate me!

Li'l Red backs away, raises his palms. He turns and heads over to Rowan and the others.

Rooster shakes his head, smirks.

ROOSTER
Rowan's spewin' shit.

LAZARUS

Fuck `em! My house and it'll be handled!

Lazarus turns his attention back to Li'l Red and Rowan. They both look at Lazarus.

ROOSTER

Yeah, I know. But, it ain't that toad, Dark Side, tentin' up in your house. Rowan thinks you willowed out on Rhino. Let `em slip.

Lazarus scoffs.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)

He's pushin' for Knight Rex. Clock's tickin', Lazarus. It's slippin' through your fingers, right to his fuckin' lap. Talk to me, brother. The hell is goin' on?

LAZARUS

Nothin'! I'll steer it where it needs to go! Clear?

Rooster gives a resolved nod.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - NIGHT

Guards herd the inmates back into the cellblock like cattle.

LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus and Dark Side look down at their contents strewn about in front of the cell into a heaping mess.

Dark Side kneels, picks up his broken statuettes. His eyes soften.

He looks up at Lazarus.

LAZARUS

(aside)

What'd you expect?

Lazarus gathers his bedding and steps inside the cell.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

Lazarus stands with his Aryan brothers, scans the yard.

Dark Side walks with two other inmates. They are approached by Dread and his crew. They surround Dark Side. The inmates with Dark Side quickly disburse.

Dread suddenly strikes Dark Side in the face.

Everyone around Lazarus cheers.

LI'L RED
Yeah! Black on black crime, bitch!

ROWAN
Beat his black-ass!

Lazarus watches the beat down, silent, as his fellow Knights cheer.

He passes a look at Rowan and Li'l Red laughing together.

Dark Side throws up his hands, disengages. One by one, Vice Lords take their turn beating him; blood coats his face.

Dread gives a vicious blow to the gut. Dark Side keels over and falls to his knees. Dread spits on him.

The alarm sounds!

The Vice Lords dissipate like smoke into the surrounding crowd.

Guards approach, lift Dark Side to his feet.

Dark Side's eyes somehow find Lazarus. The two lock in a stare.

The guards move Dark Side off the yard. Everyone in Lazarus' group claps and cheers.

INT. CHAMBER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We move down the dimly lit, stone masonry corridor, to the sound of someone pounding on an iron door...

... coming upon the door to Bootsie's den. The pounding stops.

A muffled voice pleads from behind the door.

BOOTSIE (O.S.)
Lemme out! Can't keep me up in here
like this, man! Lemme out!
Somethin's... here! I ain't alone!

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Was terrified. Couldn't fuckin' move.

Dark Side gets up from his bed tray, steps to the arched window. His eyes squint into the moonlight.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Light cut through my cell window... like a sword. That moment, I saw how frail the darkness was. Had no power. No authority. Only what came from me.

Dark Side closes his eyes, broods.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

It's like a shadow... always there. No matter how far you run. It's right there behind you.

Lazarus shakes his head. He joins Dark Side's gaze out of the arched window.

LAZARUS

You look long enough, you'll see stars. Their world no different than ours... surrounded by darkness. But, it's darkness that gives 'em shape. Form. Gives 'em purpose. Place like this, darkness keeps you alive. An ally. You let go of it... you end up like Reaper.

Dark Side takes a moment... opens his eyes. Grins.

DARK SIDE

Is it an ally?

He turns to face Lazarus.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Or, your master?

Lazarus stares out the cell window, silent. He shakes his head, lies down on his bed tray.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

The sunrise widens through the cellblock, pours over the walls... shafts through the cell gates.

LAZARUS' CELL

Dark Side sits by the window. The morning light breathes over him as he polishes off the dried glue on his restored statuettes.

Lazarus rises from his bed tray mattress, wipes the sleep from his eyes. He looks over at Dark Side.

DARK SIDE
Doin' meditation in the chapel.
Prayer. Come by, man.

Lazarus laughs.

LAZARUS
Someone named Dark Side, givin'...

Dark Side turns toward Lazarus.

DARK SIDE
Not who I am. Not anymore.

LAZARUS
Right.

Lazarus mockingly nods his head in thought.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)
Murderer. Shot-Caller of the Vice
Lords... course not.

Dark Side sets his statuettes on the window seal, turns to face Lazarus.

DARK SIDE
My name is Jayvyn.

Lazarus' eyes flare.

LAZARUS
Your name... is Dark Side.

DARK SIDE
That's what you need me to be,
right?

Lazarus bottles his retort.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)
Thursday. Two 'o clock. We gonna
build somethin' special. C'mon.
Join us.

LAZARUS
The hell is "we"?

DARK SIDE
There's others.

Dark Side drops his eyes to the floor -- raises them up to meet Lazarus'.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)
Reaper... he was one.

LAZARUS
And it got 'em X'd! Just like it's
gonna get you and someone else X'd!
No way... can't!

DARK SIDE
Can't, or won't.

LAZARUS
You wanna live, or fuckin' die?
That's what this is!

DARK SIDE
I've already died, Lazarus. I want
to live now. So should you.

Lazarus scoffs, lies down on his bed tray mattress.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Dread is led through in belly chains by Officer Lochhead and another GUARD. They move him into the gated enclosure.

Warden Paige appears from the shadows.

WARDEN PAIGE
Dark Side will be taken care of. I
need you to make an example of
Bootsie.

Dread stretches a grin.

The warden takes a step closer to Dread, speaks in a low tone.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Understand this clearly. When
someone decides to act on their
own, there is a price. A price you
impose, Dread, and I collect.

DREAD
 Soon as Dark Side is dealt... shit
 won't come ashore.

Warden Paige and Dread look each other square in the eye.

WARDEN PAIGE
 (smirks)
 Okay... Dread.

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Lazarus stands, chained.

The cell door CLANKS, swings open. The warden enters, alone.
 He steps up to Lazarus. Hands him a photograph. Lazarus takes
 it, looks over...

... a mugshot of Dark Side.

Lazarus hands the warden back the photograph without
 expression.

WARDEN PAIGE
 You take care of Dark Side, they'll
 take care of Bootsie. Tide
 subsides.

Lazarus moves his eyes away from the warden.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
 We good?

LAZARUS
 Yeah.

The warden turns, heads out the cell door, slams it shut.

Lazarus stares at the door, conflicted.

INT. CHAPEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Lazarus and Li'l Red wait. Lazarus' face is stone. Eyes
 distant -- death stare in full effect.

He paces, eyes locked on the chapel door.

Sounds build from the chapel as inmates inside prepare to
 leave. Lazarus glares at Li'l Red, who bounces a nod.

The chapel door opens. Lazarus charges the door...

... Elijah steps out. Lazarus stops in his tracks, stymied.
Dark Side appears behind Elijah, smiles.

DARK SIDE
Changed your mind?

Dark Side steps to Lazarus -- looks at Elijah.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)
This my cellie, Lazarus.

Elijah curls a smile.

ELIJAH
Yes. We've met.

Dark Side looks at Li'l Red, then back at Lazarus. His smile evaporates.

Elijah puts a hand on Lazarus' shoulder.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
Come by next Saturday.

Lazarus beams daggers into Elijah's eyes.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
Maybe another time.

Elijah smiles, walks away.

DARK SIDE
So... what's it gonna be,
"Lazarus"?

Lazarus exhales, befuddled. He turns from Dark Side and walks away. Li'l Red looks on.

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - NIGHT

Lazarus and Dark Side sit on their bed trays, silent... faces draped in shadow.

Dark Side leans into the soft light.

DARK SIDE
Why didn't you do it?

Lazarus gets up from his bed tray and steps to the sink. He grips the steel rim, wrestles with something deep inside.

LAZARUS

What does it do for you? The
meditation?

Dark Side gazes at the floor, heavy in thought. He responds
in a careful tone.

DARK SIDE

Silences the beast.

Lazarus stares into his distorted reflection off the metallic
mirror.

LAZARUS

Dark Side.

DARK SIDE

(nods)
Yeah.

Dark Side takes a moment. Reflects.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

There's a price. Findin' light.
Embracin' it. But, there's also
redemption. Forgiveness.

Lazarus quietly laughs.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Yesterday, I saw it, Lazarus... in
your eyes. You've killed. But, you
ain't a killer.

Lazarus exhales with disapproval.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

Just lost in darkness. Like I was.

Lazarus picks up an empty can and throws it at Dark Side. It
strikes the wall near Dark Side's head.

Dark Side throws a hostile look at Lazarus. The two stare at
each other in the whispering darkness.

INT. LAZARUS CELL - DAY

A guard slides an envelope through the food tray port.
Lazarus retrieves it, opens the envelope, and pulls out

INSERT - VISITATION QUESTIONNAIRE, top portion which reads:

"NAME OF INMATE YOU WANT TO VISIT: LAZARUS MCGALL
YOUR NAME: REGINA JOHNSON"

BACK TO SCENE

Lazarus moves to his bed tray, sits down -- sighs; sorrowful and heavy.

LAZARUS
(to self)
I'm sorry, Reap. But, I -- I
can't...

He folds the questionnaire and places it back into the envelope.

Lazarus steps to the desk, opens the drawer, drops the visitation questionnaire atop Reaper's sketch and the newspaper clipping.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

Lazarus walks with Rowan. They stop by the work-out area.

ROWAN
I don't know what the fuck is goin'
on, brother. Loyalty is bein'
questioned --

LAZARUS
Loyalty brought me here! Put me in
chains! Don't question my loyalty!

Rowan scoffs, shakes his head.

ROWAN
You know what I think?

LAZARUS
Don't give a shit --

ROWAN
Think too much Reaper rubbed off on
ya. You've lost it, brother. So
have the Knights... trust in you.

Rowan delivers a sinister smile.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

Look around, Lazarus. You're alone
in this ocean. Sharks are circlin'.

Lazarus stares at Rowan, emotionless.

LAZARUS

I know you green-lit Reaper.

ROWAN

Whatever, brother. But, know this.
Rhino and your willow cellie --
they're still breathin'. That's
reality.

Lazarus scowls and angrily strides away.

Rowan's eyes veer up to the perimeter observation tower...

... where Warden Paige peers down on him.

INT. CHAPEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Dark Side steps to the chapel door. Suddenly Lazarus appears,
lurches toward him, gripping a shank. He stops short of
stabbing Dark Side, looks him in the eye.

Dark Side takes hold of Lazarus' hand that grips the shank,
pulls it closer.

DARK SIDE

Do it. Right here, Lazarus. Can't
outrun the shadow. Neither of us
can.

Lazarus looks into Dark Side's eyes; he can't do it.

Dark Side gives a slight nod.

DARK SIDE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Okay. Then come inside. Step out of
the darkness. Sit with me.

Lazarus lowers the shank.

Elijah approaches them. Dark Side opens the chapel door and
steps inside.

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Lazarus stands, chained to the floor.

The cell door CLANKS, swings open. Warden Paige strolls in, steps in front of Lazarus. He leans in face-to-face.

WARDEN PAIGE
Meditation?

He lets this sink in as he waits for Lazarus to respond -- he doesn't.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Either you take him out, or I'll
have you ass-fucked in the shower
by a bunch of your fellow
Peckerwoods. I make myself clear?

Lazarus doesn't respond.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
You have until tomorrow's
Headcount. I don't care how it's
done.

Warden Paige peers right into Lazarus' soul, his face almost touching him.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Who is your king?

Lazarus moves his eyes from the warden's.

LAZARUS
You.

WARDEN PAIGE
Look me in the eye and say it!

Lazarus moves his eyes back on the warden.

LAZARUS
You... are my king.

WARDEN PAIGE
(seething)
Swear to God that always gives me a
hard-on!

Lazarus' eyes narrow, needles into the warden's. It's a brief stand-off until Warden Paige turns away and heads to the cell door.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

Bands of sunlight stretch through the cellblock as guards go through their morning count.

The sound of toilets flushing and loud talking echo through the cellblock.

LAZARUS' CELL

Officer Lochhead raps his baton on the bars. He looks around, strikes the bar again.

Out from the shadows steps Lazarus. He makes eye contact with Officer Lochhead. The two hold their stare for a moment. Lochhead stretches a smile.

Dark Side appears out from the shadows behind Lazarus.

Officer Lochhead's smile morphs into an incensed glare.

He glares into Lazarus' eyes. Without a blink, Lazarus leans closer -- his message clear!

Officer Lochhead shakes his head, steps to the next cell.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

The warden walks with officer Lochhead. Inmates watch as the two progress through the yard.

WARDEN PAIGE

We need to turn up the heat. Get
this pot boiling again. Remind
these animals who they are.

Warden Paige looks at Dread and his crew stand nearby. Dread stares back at the warden, curls a grin.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

Bring that creepy shit, Li'l Red,
and Rowan to the Hamper tomorrow.
Recess is fucking over.

Commotion erupts from across the yard; two inmates push at each other.

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - DAY

Dark Side wakes up, turns toward the cell gate. Dread stands staring at him through the cell gate. He throws up the Vice Lord's gang sign.

Dark Side leaps up, his face contorted with anger. He quickly composes himself, turns to face the cell window.

Dark Side steps into the glow of the morning Sun. He closes his eyes and kneels into Lotus.

Lazarus lurches up from his bed tray, steps to Dread.

LAZARUS

Get the hell outta here!

Dread smiles.

DREAD

Ain't goin' anywhere!

Lazarus' eyes narrow, zeroes into Dread. His voice becomes deadly calm and direct.

LAZARUS

Count your fuckin' blessings bars
are between us!

DREAD

Bars 'ill always be between us,
boy! You of all should know!

Dread leans in.

DREAD (CONT'D)

Problem is... brothers like Dark
Side, want to believe bars don't
exist.

LAZARUS

I'm not saying it again!

Dread's eyes widen, shakes his head.

DREAD

Time's up! Tribe's cuttin' you
loose! Warden takin' over y'all's
little... concord! Choosin' his own
"Rex!"

Dread moves his eyes on Dark Side, his voice rises.

DREAD (CONT'D)
 You think sittin' in de light 'ill
 change you? You're Dark Side!
 Always be Dark Side!

Lazarus strikes the cell gate with his fist.

DREAD (CONT'D)
 Should've clocked his ass out!
 Now... doors of hell gonna open!

LAZARUS
 They already have!

Dread steps away, throws up the Vice Lord's hand sign.

Lazarus looks back at Dark Side, who remains seated in
 tranquil repose, blanketed in sunlight.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 Jayvyn.

Dark Side doesn't respond, remains motionless.

Lazarus watches him, nonplussed.

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Li'l Red stands, chained to the floor, eyes fixated on the
 wall.

The cell door CLANKS open. The warden walks in with officer
 Lochhead and two other guards, followed by Rowan.

The warden stares at Li'l Red... reads him over. He steps to
 his face. Li'l Red stands his ground, defiantly glares into
 the warden's eyes.

Rowan steps to the warden's side. The warden looks at them
 both, basking in his authority.

He puts a hand on Li'l Red's shoulder.

WARDEN PAIGE
 I can look into someone's eyes, see
 if they're cowering like some
 scared little girl...

The warden's eyes narrow, needling deep into Li'l Red's eyes.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

... or, if there's something else. Something untapped. You see, power can be a glorious... and dangerous thing. Once you taste its nectar... well, it's just like fucking. You have to have more.

The warden motions officer Lochhead. Lochhead and the two guards grab Rowan, force him to his knees. They chain him to a floor clamp.

The warden plants his hand on Li'l Red's back, nudges him closer to Rowan.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

When I look into your eyes, I see hunger. Rage. I see... a leader.

Li'l Red stretches a grin.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

You see, I don't judge. I simply create an environment for growth. Like the Sun. But, just as the Sun can give life, it can also scorch that life away.

He moves Li'l Red in front of Rowan. Li'l Red's grin morphs into a scowl. His eyes narrow on Rowan, who kneels before him.

The warden steps back into the shadows.

Li'l Red slugs Rowan in the face.

ROWAN

Fuck you!

Li'l Red smiles. His eyes widen in a lustful craze. He strikes Rowan again! Blood spatters! Then again and again!

The warden watches like a vile lord as we hear blow-after-blow.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

Inmates make their way out to the recreation yard entrance, Lazarus among them.

Officer Lochhead steps next to Lazarus.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
Warden wants to see you! Now!

Another guard appears behind Lazarus.

INT. WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Warden Paige gazes out his office window, down to the recreation yard. Officer Lochhead takes his place next to him.

Lazarus is brought in, shackled.

Pepper anxiously flaps her wings, SQUAWKS. Lazarus glares at Pepper -- then at the warden.

Warden Paige smiles -- turns his attention back to the yard.

WARDEN PAIGE
There was a ruler named King
Leopold the 2nd. Some say he was a
man blinded by his lust for wealth.
Greed.
(beat)
I believe he was a man of purpose.

LAZARUS
You called me up here for a history
lesson?

The warden grins.

WARDEN PAIGE
When a man finds his purpose, he
has found his true calling in life.
He separates himself from the
chaff. He has the potential to
become more than just a man. When
King Leopold gained control of the
Congo, he realized to bring
civility to people who knew no such
thing, he would be forced to use
tactics these people would
understand. Some would call these
tactics barbaric, cruel. Heinous.
However, I see them as practical.
How else does one motivate savages,
but through savagery?

Warden Paige moves his eyes to a specific point in the yard.
Lazarus follows his gaze...

... to Dark Side and his SMALL GROUP sitting on a bench on the far side of the yard.

Lazarus plants a hardened look back at the warden.

LAZARUS

You got something to settle, you
settle it with me!

Warden Paige scowls at Lazarus.

WARDEN PAIGE

King Leopold made sure everyone
understood what the consequences
were if they didn't abide.
Mutilation, rape... murder.

LAZARUS

You motherfucker!

Officer Lochhead punches Lazarus hard in the back. Lazarus drops to his knees.

PEPPER (O.S.)

Motherfucker!

The warden raises a finger at Pepper... nods to officer Lochhead. Lochhead steps to the window and motions below with a subtle wave of the hand to...

... Li'l Red who is in the rec yard, peering up toward the warden's office.

Lazarus struggles to his feet, tries to break free from his chains.

Another guard muscles Lazarus to the window and grabs hold of his head; forces him to watch

EXT. RECREATION YARD - CONTINUOUS

where a small band of ink-laden Knights, Li'l Red among them, surround Dark Side and his group. They grab Dark Side and throw him to the ground.

Li'l Red stabs him repeatedly in the abdomen, quick as blinks of an eye.

Dark Side gets up and instinctively runs away, but suddenly stops. He looks up at Lazarus, raises his arms in cruciform.

The last fatal blows are unleashed. Dark Side falls to the ground.

Gunshots echo! Li'l Red and his group scatter like leaves in the wind.

INT. WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - SAME

Lazarus YELLS with rage. He glares at the warden, eyes ablaze!

Pepper SQUAWKS!

The warden stretches a reptilian smile.

WARDEN PAIGE

There he is! Welcome back! I knew you were in there! And like those that served Leopold, you will do for me what is needed!

LAZARUS

Fuck you!

WARDEN PAIGE

We'll see about that! Sometimes all we need is an enemy to remind us of who we are! I intend to remind you who you are...

Warden Paige leans in close to Lazarus' ear, speaks softly.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

... and that is darkness. Darkness that spreads fear into those that dare defy me. I'll make sure you know your purpose.

He looks at officer Lochhead.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

Throw his ass in the Hamper!

They club Lazarus with their batons... drag him out from the warden's office.

PEPPER (O.S.)

Hamper!

Warden Paige smiles at Pepper -- SMACKS a kiss. Pepper mimics it back.

INT. HAMPER CELL - NIGHT

The cell door opens. The warden steps inside, alone. The door SLAMS behind him.

He stays a safe distance from Lazarus. Lazarus stares him down, cold and emotionless.

WARDEN PAIGE

This world you and I live in
requires brutality. Necessary
brutality. This...

The warden stretches out his arms, gestures the entirety of the prison.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

... is truth. You choose to deny
that truth, you end up like Reaper.
Dark Side.

Lazarus gives no response.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

Li'l Red did what had to be done.

LAZARUS

Li'l Red is a tool! That was your
hand stabbin' Jayvyn!

WARDEN PAIGE

(smirks)

Jayvyn? That what he wanted you to
call 'em? Do you know who "Jayvyn"
was? They didn't call him Dark Side
for nothing! The man killed! Killed
your brethren and his own! Raped!

LAZARUS

He changed his path!

Warden Paige mockingly places his hand over his chest.

WARDEN PAIGE

Oh... my heart breaks from this
tremendous loss!

The warden turns and steps to the cell door, pounds his fist over the steel. It unlatches, swings open.

The warden glances back at Lazarus.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
 You want the keys back? Take 'em
 from Li'l Red! Reclaim it!

The warden steps out, SLAMS the door shut.

INT. CHAPEL ROOM - DAY

Lazarus sits alone. A painting of a Sun-yellow cross adorns
 over a wooden lectern in the front of the room.

Elijah enters, walks to the Sun-yellow cross. He rests his
 hand on the lectern.

ELIJAH
 He knew. Knew the time was near. He
 went out... right. Dignified.

LAZARUS
 (scoffs)
 There was no dignity in that.

ELIJAH
 Oh, but there was. Our sins will
 find a way back to us. You can face
 `em with acceptance... courage, or
 be a coward -- run. But, rest
 assured... they'll catch up. When
 they do, only thing we control is
 how to face `em.

LAZARUS
 I came here to be alone.

ELIJAH
 Bein' alone ain't a place to be. We
 all need each other.

LAZARUS
 No! I don't! I never did!

Elijah surveys the empty chapel.

ELIJAH
 Yeah. Neither did I... until I
 needed someone.

LAZARUS
 What is it you want?

ELIJAH
 Ain't what I want. What I can give.
 (sighs)
 (MORE)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Mud's a terrible place to be. But,
without it, there can be no
miracle. No hope. No beauty. All
that is good and wonderful is born
from it.

Elijah smiles, beams at Lazarus.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

It can be transformed!

Lazarus glares at Elijah.

LAZARUS

You know who believed that? Reaper.
Dark Side. Look where it got `em.

Elijah surrenders a nod... drops his hand from the lectern.
He paces out from the chapel.

INT. LAZARUS'S CELL - NIGHT

Lazarus enters. A box containing Dark Side's belongings rests
cold on the bed tray.

Lazarus steps to the box and does a quick take of its
contents. He pulls out the two wooden statuettes of Buddha
and Angulimala. He gently glides his thumb over Buddha.

Lazarus steps to the desk and pulls open the drawer. He
places the statuettes inside; atop the newspaper clipping and
Reaper's sketch.

He carefully slides the drawer closed.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

The usual routine of inmates in their daily rituals. All
separated by race and gang affiliation.

Lazarus walks into the yard, alone. He looks around until his
eyes fall on Li'l Red...

... who sits with TWO ARYAN KNIGHTS.

Lazarus walks toward Li'l Red. Everyone clears from his path,
knowing something is about to go down.

The two Aryan Knights see Lazarus approach. They step away
from Li'l Red.

Li'l Red's eyes veer to Lazarus as...

... he walks past him and steps to the nearby pull-up bars. Lazarus grips the bars and starts doing pull-ups.

INT. THE CHAMBER - CORRIDOR - DAY

Bootsie is escorted in belly chains. He is thinned and weak. His eyes are sunken in and hollow.

He is led through a doorway, into a

CONCRETE ROOM

where the walls and floor are tinged with blood and spit.

The guards unlock his belly chains and cuffs, then leave. Bootsie stands confused, looks around the defiled room.

The door opens. Dread enters with Trek and another African-American inmate, RYDER, who looks mid 20's, chubby with a face of a twelve-year-old.

Bootsie manages a smile, relieved. He hobbles toward Dread. Trek grabs him by the arm, holds him back.

BOOTSIE

(whimpering)

I -- I did what y'all wanted.

Dread reaches out and places his hand to the side of Bootsie's face.

DREAD

Now? The reward.

Dread drops his hand away and steps back.

Bootsie's eyes sink into despair. Trek and Ryder step toward him.

INT. THE CHAMBER - CORRIDOR - DAY

Dread walks with Trek and Ryder.

At the end of the corridor stands Warden Paige with Officer Lochhead and a small assembly of guards, two of them grip shotguns.

Dread steps to them -- stops. He smiles. The warden doesn't return the gesture. Dread looks at officer Lochhead, then back at the warden.

DREAD
Balance. We even.

WARDEN PAIGE
Never was about balance, Dread.

DREAD
We had an agreement!

WARDEN PAIGE
Yes. A price you impose... and I collect.

Lochhead strikes Dread across the face with his baton.

Trek and Ryder lurch toward Lochhead, only to be held at bay by the other guards' readied shotguns.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Let's remind your "crew" who runs this show.

Officer Lochhead strikes Dread in the stomach with the baton. Dread falls to one knee.

The warden leans down to his ear... whispers.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Kneeling will do you no good.

The warden straightens up -- gestures a guard. He turns and starts down the corridor, motions Trek and Ryder to follow.

Trek and Ryder step away from Dread and follow the warden.

DREAD
Fuck y'all! Can't break me! Hell naw! Balance motherfucka'! I am de balance!

Officer Lochhead and the guards grab Dread as he struggles in a fit of rage.

The door to the Chamber corridor SLAMS shut with an unforgiving THUD.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Lazarus sits alone, eating. The cafeteria is calm and eerily quiet; an uncomfortable pall hangs in the air.

He stands and makes his way to a cafeteria trash can. Rhino and TWO OTHER PANCHO VILLAS step in front of him.

Lazarus stops.

Rhino and Lazarus stare each other down. Rhino and the two Villas charge Lazarus. Lazarus strikes Rhino in the face, knocks him to the ground.

The other two Villas grab hold of Lazarus' arms. Lazarus struggles violently to free himself. Rhino staggers up and pummels Lazarus with blows to the stomach and face.

Everyone in the cafeteria surrounds them -- cheering.

Rhino grabs hold of Lazarus' drooped, bloodied head... raises it.

RHINO

How does that shit taste?

Rhino moves to deliver another blow when... Elijah, seemingly out of nowhere, grabs hold of his arm -- eyes piercing.

ELIJAH

Enough!

Officer Lochhead and a BAND OF GUARDS abruptly file into the cafeteria.

Rhino YANKS his arm away and storms off. Everyone clears away except Lazarus and Elijah.

Officer Lochhead shoots Elijah a hardened look.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Step away!

Elijah holds his ground.

Lochhead steps closer -- face-to-face.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)

Step. Away.

Elijah steps back. One of the guards lands a hard blow to Lazarus' gut. Another hammers one into his back.

They swarm Lazarus, pin him down. One of them cuffs him. They hoist Lazarus to his feet, trudge him out from the cafeteria.

INT. THE CHAMBER - CORRIDOR - DAY

Lazarus is jostled through the dark, stony confines hands cuffed to belly chains. His face is bloodied and beaten.

Warden Paige steps in front of Lazarus and shakes his head in disappointment.

WARDEN PAIGE

Gave you every opportunity.

(sighs)

It's just you and these walls now.

Ironic, isn't it? "Lazarus" rotting away in a tomb.

The warden motions officer Mason and the guards. They force Lazarus to one of the two steel doors.

LAZARUS' DEN

Light drains in from the corridor exposing pestilent walls and a urine-stained floor.

Officer Mason and another guard unlock and yank free Lazarus' cuffs and belly chains. They step outside.

The muffled, indistinct voice of Dread bleeds through the walls from the neighboring den.

Lazarus breathes heavily in near panic.

The thick steel door SLAMS the confines into

DARKNESS

We hear Dread's voice over Lazarus' breathing. They weaken into silence.

SUPER: "WEEK TWO"

The food tray port at the bottom of the steel door SNAPS open, a blade of light pierces inside. A guard slides a plate of rancid food through.

The food tray port SLAMS shut. We hear Lazarus shuffle over. He scarfs down the food -- the sounds are animalistic.

SUPER: "WEEK SIX"

The food tray port SNAPS open. Lazarus appears in the blade of light. His face is ashen. Body thinned and weak; a shell of who he once was.

His hands tremble. He tries to cram them through the food tray port to absorb the outside light.

The guard SMACKS his fingers with a baton. Lazarus screams out in pain, pulls his hands back inside.

LAZARUS

Please. Water.

The guard slides another plate of rancid food inside.

Lazarus takes the plate and throws it against the wall, shattering it.

The food tray port SLAMS shut.

SUPER: "WEEK TEN"

The food tray port opens. Bright light pierces in. Lazarus sits in the corner against a scratch-infested wall. He has a mangled beard with the gleam in his eyes sunken deep in their sockets.

An Aloe Vera leaf is pushed through the food tray port.

Lazarus takes a moment, crawls over. He picks it up, examines the leaf. He squints through the food-tray port. Officer Mason's eyes appear on the other side.

OFFICER MASON

(quietly)

Eat, Lazarus.

Lazarus attempts to peel the outer skin off of the leaf... cuts his finger on a thorn. He looks to the food-tray port...

... into officer Mason's eyes.

OFFICER MASON (CONT'D)

Careful of the thorns.

Lazarus breaks the leaf in half, carefully avoids the thorns... tremulously his hands peel away the outer skin.

The food tray port SHUTS. We hear Lazarus consume the Aloe Vera leaf.

SUPER: "WEEK TWELVE"

The food tray port SNAPS open, delivering light. Lazarus sits huddled and frail.

Out of the darkness appears an apparition of Reaper. He is the same as the day Lazarus watched him die.

He stares at Lazarus, emotionless.

Lazarus's voice is weak.

LAZARUS

Reap.

Reaper's hand reaches out. Lazarus tries to reach out and touch it, but Reaper is suddenly too far away.

Lazarus watches Reaper dissolve back into the darkness.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

Please...

The food tray port SNAPS shut.

LATER

Lazarus' EYES blink open.

A soft light looms in the opposite corner of the cell. A YOUNG BOY sits in Lotus with his back to Lazarus...

... his shirt displays two hands reaching for each other among clouds and Sun; we recognize this shirt from the photograph of Reggie Johnson.

Stars faintly materialize above him.

Lazarus crawls over to Reggie, who suddenly transforms into a man -- JAYVYN. No longer the tattoo-laden Dark Side.

Dark Side/Jayvyn gazes up toward the glittering stars. Lazarus follows his gaze.

DARK SIDE/JAYVYN

You once told me darkness gives `em shape. Gives `em purpose.

LAZARUS

Yes.

DARK SIDE/JAYVYN

But morning will always come and consume `em with radiance.

The stars disappear into the widening light.

Lazarus watches with Dark Side/Jayvyn -- awestruck.

DARK SIDE/JAYVYN (CONT'D)

We're like the stars, waiting to
dissolve back into the light. We
just have to let go of the
darkness, Lazarus.

A GROWL sounds. Dark Side/Jayvyn looks off... his eyes grow
weary. He looks back at Lazarus.

DARK SIDE/JAYVYN (CONT'D)

It's time!

A blinding light ignites, lands Lazarus back into the
darkness, alone.

SHADOWS creep out from every crack, every crevasse; predators
stalking their prey. They encircle him.

Lazarus shivers in terror -- vomits! Guttural sneers and
snickers resonate.

Then... a voice quietly reaches out from the darkness, like
the flicker of stars. A child's voice...

REGGIE JOHNSON (V.O.)

Lazarus.

Lazarus curls his knees to his chest -- recoils. Tears well
in his eyes.

REGGIE JOHNSON (V.O.)

(soothing)

Lazarus.

At the sound of Reggie's voice, the bestial apparitions
suddenly thin-out, weaken. Their growls and sneers subside.

LAZARUS

Pl -- please. I'm sorry... I'm so
sorry...

Lazarus collapses to the floor in his vomit, and sobs
uncontrollably. The demonic apparitions no longer there. It
is just Lazarus alone, crying.

His cries carry off... absorb into...

DARKNESS

SUPER: "THE BLOOMING"

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - RHINO'S CELL - DAY

Rhino sits on his bed tray mattress. Footsteps approach from outside the cell. A shadow looms.

Rhino turns to face officer Lochhead.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
You're being moved.

RHINO
Where?

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
Lazarus' cell. You'll provide the
homecoming party.

Lochhead winks and walks from view, his steps echo down the corridor.

Rhino stands from his bed tray. His face tightens, he raises a fist; yes!

INT. THE CHAMBER - CORRIDOR - DAY

Officer Mason strolls through bands of dingy light, keys jingling. He comes to one of the two steel doors. He slides open the food tray port, peers inside

INTERCUT - LAZARUS' DEN / DREAD'S DEN

Lazarus' mangled hair appears in the murky beam of light.

After a few loud CLANKS -- the door pulls open. Outside light pours in --

Dread scampers from the light, thin and haggard. His face haunted by unspeakable horrors.

He curls into a fetal position in the corner of the dank confines. A shadow pours over Dread like a menacing ghost --

And washes over Lazarus... sitting in Lotus. He has a slight smile on his face. A glow to his being.

The shadow kneels, SNAPS its finger --

Dread shrieks, his eyes wide and demented. Drool oozes from his mouth. He sobs; weak and beaten --

Lazarus' inhales a deep breath. His face is serene. He slowly opens his eyes.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DREAD'S CELL - DAY

Trek lies on his bed tray, thumbs through a magazine. The cell gate CLANKS, swings open. Two guards enter supporting Dread and toss him onto his bed mattress. They walk out of the cell. The gate SLAMS shut.

Trek steps to Dread's bed tray. Dread lies motionless, mumbles incoherently. His eyes are wide and lifeless as glass.

LAZARUS' CELL

Rhino sits on Dark Side's old bed tray. The cell gate CLANKS open. TWO GUARDS enter hauling Lazarus who is thinned-out and ragged.

Rhino watches in stunned disbelief.

The guards let Lazarus fall onto his bed tray like a sack of trash, pace out from the cell, SLAM the gate closed.

Rhino steps to Lazarus and looks over his thin and ghostly appearance.

LATER

Lazarus sits by the arched window. Daylight washes over him. He is dangerously thin. His skin flush and pale.

Rhino sits on his bed tray, stares at Lazarus. He gets up and steps to the sink.

The sound of the faucet turns on, then off.

Rhino steps to Lazarus... offers a cup of water. Lazarus does not move. He is too weak.

Rhino kneels, helps Lazarus guide the cup of water to his mouth. Lazarus takes a few swallows before the water overflows from his mouth, spills down over his chin.

Rhino pulls the cup away, wipes Lazarus' chin dry.

RHINO

(quietly)

You didn't kill me that day? Why,
esé?

Rhino weighs in thought -- sighs.

RHINO (CONT'D)

You know I'm gonna take heavy shit
for this, right?

Lazarus weakly nods. Smiles.

RHINO (CONT'D)

(aside)

Qué mierda me pasa?

Rhino takes a moment, returns to his bed tray.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

Trek stands with Ryder and other Vice Lord members. He looks up toward Lazarus' cell window.

Ryder studies Trek over. He reaches out and nudges Trek on the arm.

RYDER

What's the deal with Dread, man?
Been a slug. Ain't seen the
motherfucka' since he got out de
Chamber.

TREK

Don't know. Won't talk. Won't come
out the house. Somethin' snapped in
'em. Chatted out.

RYDER

You holdin' rank?

Trek glares over at the Aryan Knights and Li'l Red across the yard. He looks back at Ryder.

TREK

Yeah, man. Can't let these ghouls
move in on us.

The two lock arms -- deliver a forceful nod.

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - DAY

Lazarus clasps his hands around the cell gate bars, gazes out into the corridor. His strength returning.

Elijah walks up pushing a cart stacked with books. He looks at Lazarus... hands him a book. Lazarus takes it, looks over the cover. The title reads: "INTO THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION"

ELIJAH

You know, the other day they took me out to my hearin'. Drove for what seemed hours. I thought, "shit, takin' me out into this free air, just to lock my chapped-ass back up?" It's a cruel thing, man. Allowin' you to see freedom. Taste it... knowin' it's goin' to be taken away. Teasin' that shit beyond your reach.

Elijah kneels, sidles close to Lazarus -- lowers his voice.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

We walked by this pond at the courthouse. They had those Koi swimmin' 'round. Different kinds. Some white with red spots. Some red with white spots. But, there they were, just swimmin' 'round like nothin'. All of `em trapped in that filthy-ass water. Then, I saw it...

LAZARUS

What?

ELIJAH

(smiles)

Lotus. Floatin' on top. I started thinkin'... "now, how can anythin' grow in that dirty-ass shit?" Its roots in the muck below, but, somehow, it managed to rise up, become somethin'... somethin' wonderful. They say miracles are walkin' on water, levitatin'. If that little flower ain't a miracle, I don't know what the hell is.

Lazarus' hands tighten around the book. He and Elijah share a smile.

Footsteps sound. Officer Mason strolls by. Elijah rises and pushes the cart to the next cell.

Officer Mason smiles and gives Lazarus a nod.

EXT. REC YARD - DAY

Rhino sits on a bench, looks over the yard. A group of Pancho Villas approach -- Smiley in the middle of the pack.

He and Rhino make eye contact. Smiley steps to him.

SMILEY

So... I hear you're actin' like his fuckin' nurse. That shit true?

RHINO

He can barely stand, walk. Think I'm gonna take out some wet-dog, ghoul like that?

SMILEY

Oh. So, it's 'bout honor. That what you're tellin' me, esé? Comin' from the vato that shanked Reaper down, cold? I wonder if you're goin' lotus? Turnin' willow, like his other cellies.

Rhino bounces a look off of all of them... stops on Smiley.

RHINO

Don't sweat me, Smiley. It ain't like that.

Rhino slides off the bench, strolls off as Smiley and the others watch.

DREAD'S CELL

Dread lies on his bed tray, curled in a fetal position.

Trek sits on his bed tray, staring at Dread. The cell gate CLANKS... pulls open.

The warden steps in. He looks at Trek, then Dread and shakes his head.

WARDEN PAIGE

Shame.

The warden looks back at Trek.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

Order is important. Don't you think so... Trek?

Trek cautiously nods.

TREK

Yeah.

WARDEN PAIGE
Step off your bed tray when
speaking to me, son.

Trek slides off from his bed tray mattress, steps in front of the warden.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
So much better when everyone's on
the same page. If there is anything
to remind you of that...

The warden gestures toward Dread.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
... it's that lump of crap.

Trek looks over at Dread, turns back to the warden. The warden leans in close.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Who is your king?

Trek stares into the warden's eyes for a tense moment. He looks back at Dread.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Look at me!

Trek jolts his eyes back on the warden -- the two lock into a gaze.

Trek relinquishes.

TREK
You... my king.

The warden curls a grin.

WARDEN PAIGE
You and I are going to get along
just fine.

He pats Trek on the cheek.

The warden turns and paces out from the cell. The gate SLAMS shut.

Trek's steps to the closed cell gate, strikes it with his bare fist, gives a wrathful YELL.

He glares at Dread from the corner of his eye.

We move in close to Dread... seeing he is scribbling something on a piece of paper...

LAZARUS' CELL

Reaper's sketch unravels in Rhino's hands.

He looks over at Lazarus, who sits on his bed tray, reading from the book Elijah passed to him: "INTO THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION."

LAZARUS

Listen to this; "The world is in darkness. Few have eyes to see. As few birds escape the net and fly away free."

Lazarus nods his head in contemplation, flips the book closed. He turns to Rhino.

Rhino stares at Lazarus in reflective thought. His eyes well with tears.

Lazarus takes notice of the sketch in Rhino's hand.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

Reaper.. drew that.

Rhino glances at the sketch... eyes back on Lazarus. His lips tighten.

RHINO

Wasn't Rowan. He didn't green light Reaper. Warden Paige... told me to X Reaper.

Rhino looks out the arched window in shame.

RHINO (CONT'D)

It's the truth, esé. You should know.

Lazarus gives a disheartened nod.

Rhino steps to the wall opposite his bed tray. A piece of paper falls loose from the sketch.

Lazarus looks down at the paper, steps off his bed tray. He picks it up -- looks it over.

INSERT - VISITATION QUESTIONNAIRE, top portion reading:

"NAME OF INMATE YOU WANT TO VISIT: LAZARUS MCGALL

YOUR NAME: REGINA JOHNSON"

Then skimming down to the bottom portion, which reads:

"INMATE VERIFICATION AND APPROVAL

SIGNATURE/CDC NUMBER"

BACK TO SCENE

Lazarus steps to the desk and picks up a pen. He inhales a deep breath -- signs the questionnaire.

Rhino tapes Reaper's sketch to the wall... turns to Lazarus for approval.

Lazarus looks at Rhino -- nods.

Both gaze at Reaper's sketch in silence.

INT. VISITOR'S ROOM - DAY

Regina Johnson sits alone, arms folded over the visiting booth's counter.

An empty chair on the other side of the glass partition awaits its occupant.

A loud, steel CLANK resonates through the walls causing her to flinch.

A door on the other side of the glass partition opens.

Lazarus enters, cuffed, followed by officer Mason.

Regina is surprised by Lazarus' appearance. He still has the prison ink, but his face is different; eyes no longer lifeless and empty. He is nearly bone-thin with a beard.

Officer Mason unlocks the cuffs. Lazarus sits down on the other side of the glass partition. They both pick up the phone.

Regina places Reggie's photo on the counter in front of Lazarus.

They both stare at the photograph. Regina fights back tears.

REGINA JOHNSON

I am sitting here as a Christian
and a mother.

She studies over Lazarus' sullen face, his feeble stature. Lazarus briefly makes eye contact, quickly turns away ashamed. He grips the counter and pushes his chair back to leave.

Regina takes in a deep breath.

REGINA JOHNSON (CONT'D)

In -- in the Bible, Lazarus is the story of Jesus bringing a man back from the dead. Resurrecting that which has died.

Lazarus freezes still in his seat -- listens.

REGINA JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Reggie will never come back. But, maybe... maybe he can bring life to what has died in you. It would bring some solace, knowing Reggie hasn't completely disappeared from this world. That a part of him... lives in the man that took his life. This... is my hope. My prayer. What ever fate may become you...

She looks Lazarus square in the eye.

REGINA JOHNSON (CONT'D)

... I forgive you.

Lazarus sits frozen.

Regina stands, picks up Reggie's photo, and briskly walks toward the exit.

Lazarus stands up!

LAZARUS

Ms. Johnson?

Regina stops -- stands motionless for a moment. She turns to face Lazarus.

Lazarus places the palm of his hand against the glass partition.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... for what I've done to you. What I've done to your family.

Regina paces over to him. She places Reggie's photo on the glass partition against Lazarus' hand. She presses the palm of her hand over the photograph -- joins Lazarus.

Both gaze at their joined hands.

Regina slowly pulls her hand away, places Reggie's photo on the counter.

She gives a sorrowful smile, mouths the words: "THANK YOU"
Regina turns and walks out of the room.

Lazarus stares at the photograph, hand pressed against the glass partition.

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - NIGHT

Lazarus lies on his bed tray.

The darkness breaks open, moonlight drains into the cell through the arched window. Its pale radiance coats over the cell's interior... over Reaper's sketch.

Lazarus sits up, slides out of bed, and steps to the window...

... the moon breaks free from the clouds. Its light peacefully settles over the prison grounds, pours over its rooftops.

Rhino wakes up and watches Lazarus peer out into the vast night, his body silhouetted against the fervent glow.

EXT. PRISON GARDEN - DAY

Elijah tills the soil. He stops to catch his breath, watches the sweat drip from his brow into the dirt.

Hands appear and work the soil where Elijah left off. Elijah raises his eyes to...

... Lazarus kneeled beside him, eyes focused on the dirt. He doesn't look at Elijah. Just works the soil.

Elijah gives a faint smile... joins Lazarus.

Both carry on in silence.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Lazarus sits with Rhino, Elijah, and others at a table. They receive hostile looks from former gang members.

Elijah sneaks a look at Lazarus.

ELIJAH
You're a target now.

Rhino spies the Pancho Villa table... looks back at Lazarus.

RHINO
I got your back, esé.

Others at the table nod to Rhino's assertion.

LAZARUS
It needs to go beyond this table.
Beyond us.

RHINO
What do you mean?

ELIJAH
He means the yard.

Lazarus' eyes meet everyone else's.

LAZARUS
We can't be afraid. Every day...
we'll walk the yard. Together.

Some in the group drop their heads, others lower their eyes.

Lazarus looks at Elijah.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)
I want to start something in the
chapel. Meditation. Prayer.

ELIJAH
You think anyone 'ill show?

Rhino scoffs, shakes his head.

RHINO
Bunch of Pancho Villas, Knights,
Vice Lords sittin' in a room? Road
doggin' it? Lazarus? C'mon, esé.
Even at this table...

Rhino looks around the table at everyone.

RHINO (CONT'D)

Politics!

LAZARUS

But, we're sittin' here, together.
How'd that happen?

Rhino shifts back in his chair, assimilates.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

It was in me.

He nods at Rhino.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

It's in you. It's in all of us. We
show our presence? Take our place
out there? Walk the yard?

Lazarus looks at Elijah.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

They'll show. Just need to give `em
a time and place.

Elijah takes a moment, looks at Lazarus... delivers a nod.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

Lazarus and his group walk together in front of the
bleachers. Inmates on the bleachers heckle them. Some throw
trash.

Lazarus looks over to a group of Vice Lords...

... Trek stands among them. Both lock in a stare.

A group of Aryan Knights approach. Li'l Red leads the pack.

LI'L RED

Lazarus! Judas! You chose your
fate, like Reaper!

Lazarus turns to face Li'l Red. Li'l Red steps close, his
eyes wide -- demented. His voice lowers into a growl.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)

You lookin' into the eyes of the
Rex!

A small crowd forms around them. Li'l Red looks around,
sermonizes to all that can hear.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)

Knights live and breathe through
the brethren! Blood in, blood out!
Dissension must and will be
expelled by natural order, like a
virus!

Lazarus looks over the gathered group of inmates...

... tours the faces of Vice Lords, Pancho Villas, and Aryan
Knights.

Lazarus raises his arms, displays his ink.

LAZARUS

This is not who I am! Not who you
are! We're much more!

He lowers his arms.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

There's a path! A way out... from
this!

Lazarus' eyes scan the crowd.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

The chapel, two days from now --

Li'l Red has had enough!

LI'L RED

This fuckin' worm doesn't deserve
the breath --

LAZARUS

All of you... have been my temple!
Now... I'll be yours!

Mumbling swells through the crowd of inmates. Most are
silent.

Li'l Red and Lazarus lock-stare on each other.

Rooster tugs at Li'l Red's arm.

ROOSTER

(whispering)

Chill it. Now's not the time.

Li'l Red turns toward Rooster. Rooster reenforces with a
shake of the head.

Li'l Red and the group of Knights walk away.

RHINO

Well... showed our presence. But,
anyone showin' up at the chapel...

Lazarus keeps his eyes on Li'l Red and his posse.

RHINO (CONT'D)

Don't know, esé.

Rhino moves his eyes up to the

INT. PRISON YARD OBSERVATION TOWER - DAY

where officer Lochhead and another guard watch Lazarus and his group.

PRISON GUARD

Been walking the yard like this the
past couple of days. Mixed bag.
Knights, Pancho Villas... Vice
Lords.

Officer Lochhead moves his eyes to Li'l Red and his group meet with other Aryan Knights in the yard. He looks back at Lazarus' group, intrigued.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

What have we here?

INT. WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - DAY

The warden sits at his desk -- guards assembled. His fingers are steepled, his gaze pointed at the floor. He is not happy.

WARDEN PAIGE

Anyone know what September 9th,
1971 is?

No one answers. Pepper SQUAWKS!

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

The Attica Prison Riot.

The guards share uncomfortable glances.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

Who occupies this facility?
Criminals! What does our job here
entail? Order! And how do we
maintain that order?

(MORE)

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

By understanding social cohesion
leads to task cohesion in a prison
populace! Bad roots bear bad fruit!
Gangs... racial brotherhoods?
Why... that's all fine!

Everyone sifts in their seats as the warden carries on.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)

But, when I see Pancho Villas,
walking with Vice Lords, who I see
lallygagging with Knights... alarm
bells are going off! A storm is
brewing people! If we don't want
another Attica, we better get a
handle on this... now!

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (O.S.)

Excuse me... sir.

Officer Lochhead gestures to the warden, gingerly stands.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)

It's the message that's dangerous.
Not the man. I've watched Lazarus
and his group. It's how he's
perceived.

Lochhead passes a look to the others, zeroes back in on the warden.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)

We... humiliate him? The message
dies with his reputation.

Warden Paige stretches a grin, points a finger at Officer Lochhead.

WARDEN PAIGE

Poisoning the roots. I like it.
(beat)
You put together a small team...
shake Lazarus and his little
village posse down. I'll take care
of cleaning up what's left.

Officer Lochhead sits back down. He looks over to Officer Mason who glares back at him.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

Trek, Li'l Red, and Smiley watch as Lazarus walks through the cellblock with other ink-branded inmates; each one belongs to a different ethnic prison gang.

The three of them look at each other, uneasy.

EXT. PRISON CANTEEN - DAY

Trek stands with two other Vice Lords in front of empty ordering windows. The canteen is empty, populated with concrete columns patched with painted-over graffiti.

Smiley approaches with two PANCHO VILLAS. Li'l Red arrives with his small band of Aryan Knights.

All stop and examine the other. Trek points at Li'l Red.

TREK

We need to talk. Ya boy checked in.
Walkin' 'round like he's Gandhi or
some shit.

Trek looks at Smiley.

TREK (CONT'D)

Y'all motherfucka's want to play
kumbaya, that's y'all business,
a'ight! But, this can't spread to
my crew! No way, no how!

SMILEY

Your crew?

Smiley shakes his head.

SMILEY (CONT'D)

Where the fuck is Dread?

TREK

Dread ain't here! I am! Talk to me!

Smiley smirks.

SMILEY

I'd advise, stay in your fucking
lanes, esé. These walls belong to
El Diablo. All of you puppets in
his little show.

LI'L RED

So are you, "esé."

SMILEY

How long you been here John Boy?

Smiley looks at Trek.

SMILEY (CONT'D)

Until your time is a dime, you
ain't shit!

Li'l Red and Trek glance at each other, unimpressed with Smiley's lecturing.

SMILEY (CONT'D)

I know how shit's played and I see
what's comin'.

LIL' RED

And what's that?

Smiley glares at Li'l Red.

SMILEY

Look 'round! One thing rises inside
these walls! Hell! And the hounds
of hell 'ill always eat their own!

Li'l Red chuckles... waves Smiley off.

LI'L RED

Okay grandpa.

(beat)

We all stay in our lane. Clean up
our own shit. Get it back to the
way it was. Agree?

Smiley looks over his group. Nods.

SMILEY

We're cool with that.

TREK

Yeah. Whatever, man. VL's cool.

Li'l Red looks back at Rooster and Rowan, smiles. He looks back at Smiley and Trek.

LI'L RED

Fuckin' -- a -- twitty!

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - DAY

Lazarus sits lotus by the arched window. Rhino is seated next to him. Both are locked in meditation.

A guard comes to the cell, peers inside...

... Lazarus and Rhino don't move.

The guard delivers a menacing whistle.

Footsteps sound... the guard paces away. Lazarus and Rhino remain motionless -- locked in meditation.

MONTAGE - LAZARUS AND RHINO LOCKED IN CONTINUOUS MEDITATION

-- OUTSIDE ARCHED WINDOW -- Lazarus and Rhino sit in deep meditation. Shadows stretch, progress from the morning, to afternoon, through the evening. Through it all, Lazarus and Rhino remain still as stone.

-- PRISON REC. YARD -- Prisoners go about the daily ritual; playing basketball, weight lifting, etc.

-- A PRISONER -- looks up at Lazarus' cell window. He motions another to look. Both watch Lazarus and Rhino sit in deep meditation.

END MONTAGE

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Li'l Red is chained to the floor. Warden Paige and Officer Lochhead enter. The door SLAMS shut behind them.

The warden steps to Li'l Red. He hands him an envelope.

Li'l Red opens the envelope, pulls out...

... a mugshot of Lazarus. Li'l Red smirks.

WARDEN PAIGE

Who... is your king?

Li'l Red's smirk dissolves, his eyes drift up to meet the warden's.

INT. CHAPEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Two tattoo-laden PANTO VILLAS stand outside the entrance. They watch as Lazarus, Rhino, and Elijah approach.

The Pancho Villas' faces are cold and lifeless. Their eyes zero-in on Rhino.

PANCHO VILLA GANG MEMBER
You go in, ain't no turnin' back.

Rhino glares at them.

PANCHO VILLA GANG MEMBER (CONT'D)
Think 'bout what you're doin',
homes.

RHINO
It's gotta' end, esé. The madness
gotta' end.

Lazarus, Rhino, and Elijah make their way around the
steadfast Pancho Villa gang members and enter the

CHAPEL ROOM

that is to capacity. Gang members of every race and gang
affiliation stand as the three make their way to the front of
the room.

Lazarus, Rhino, and Elijah look over the crowd -- stunned.
Rhino turns to Lazarus.

RHINO
I don't believe it. It's a fuc --

Rhino catches himself.

RHINO (CONT'D)
... freakin' miracle!

LAZARUS
Jayvyn. Reaper. They made this
happen.

Elijah puts a hand on Lazarus' shoulder, squeezes.

ELIJAH
Now it's you.

Everyone takes their seat.

LAZARUS
Appreciate all you comin' here.

Tension is heavy -- all eyes lock on Lazarus. He takes a deep
breath.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)
You -- you are all my brothers,
now.

Everyone looks over each other -- nod.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

So... bear with me. Close your
eyes. Focus. Breathe...

We back out of the chapel entrance, into the

CORRIDOR

the door closes as only the muffled voice of Lazarus manages
to seep out...

... moving out into

CELLBLOCK SEVEN

as other inmates play cards in the sea of prison noise.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

Li'l Red sits on a bench by the basketball courts, watches
members of the Vice Lords play; their shirts off as they bask
in the blazing sun.

One of the players swats the ball from another, causes it to
bounce off the court... to Li'l Red, who catches it.

He cradles the ball as Ryder trots over.

RYDER

Gimmie' the ball!

Li'l Red rocks the basketball like an infant.

LI'L RED

Mine.

RYDER

What? Man, fuck you! Gimmie the
ball!

Li'l Red's eyes narrow.

LI'L RED

No! Fuck! You!

Ryder gives him a venomous snarl. He surges toward Li'l Red,
ready to go at it.

RYDER
Motherfucka' --

TREK (O.S.)
Ryder!

Ryder turns to Trek standing behind him.

TREK (CONT'D)
I got this!

Ryder scoffs, reluctantly walks back onto the court with the others.

Trek steps up to Li'l Red, puts his hand out for the ball.

Li'l Red smiles... tosses it to him.

LI'L RED
We gotta talk.

TREK
Not interested.

LI'L RED
Uh, that's a mistake. Opportunity may be ripe for the pickin'.

TREK
The fuck you talkin' 'bout?

LI'L RED
Look around, Eastbrook will need new authority. A new "king." Soon.

TREK
(scoffs)
Assumin' that's you?

LI'L RED
Me? Naw, man. I'm thinkin' somethin' to build together. A "governin' ourselves" type of thing. Sure your black-ass can relate to that.

Trek glares at Li'l Red.

TREK
Fuck you!

He turns to walk away.

LI'L RED
Your choice... brutha'!

Trek stops, bounces the ball. His posse grows anxious. Trek throws them the ball.

He turns back to face Li'l Red, intrigued.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)
I've been given a green light to X Lazarus.

TREK
Wow! Turnin' on your own?

LI'L RED
Knights first. Lazarus made his choice.

TREK
Why you bringin' it to me?

LI'L RED
I know how shit works. After Lazarus is X'd, whoever pushed the drama follows.

TREK
Not my mess.

LI'L RED
Matter of time, Trek, before the warden comes for you.
(grins)
Look at Dread.

Trek inhales a deep breath, sustains.

LI'L RED
Warden decides who lives, dies. When we eat, shit. I'm offerin' a way we both exist under our terms.

TREK
Why should I partner up wit you?

LI'L RED
Cause I can get to the warden. Take 'em out.

Trek looks off, mulls... looks back at Li'l Red.

TREK
What's my end?

LI'L RED
 "Trifecta!" Lazarus... and his
 crew.

Trek nods confirmation.

TREK
 Elijah and Rhino.

LI'L RED
 Eastbrook 'ill be ours. Our hold
 iced before a new warden slides in.
 Me and you run the interior. Guards
 run the perimeter. Everyone gettin'
 their shake.

TREK
 How ya gonna take out the warden?

LI'L RED
 Don't fuckin' worry 'bout that.

Trek's eyes narrow.

TREK
 You don't deliver, your ass is
 dead! That's how this shit goes
 down!

LI'L RED
 That mean you in?

TREK
 Oh yeah. I'm in. What 'bout Smiley?

Li'l Red smiles.

LI'L RED
 What about 'em? He's old guard.

TREK
 Fuck it! I'll take Smiley! You
 focus on the warden and his goons.

LI'L RED
 Our cars stayin' in their lanes!
 Fuckin' -- a -- twitty! I like it!
 But, it's far as this little
 association goes.

TREK
 (scoffs)
 No argument there.

Li'l Red nods, assimilates.

LI'L RED
I'll get back to ya.

Li'l Red walks away.

Trek looks at Ryder, motions him over.

TREK
Shits 'bout to go down. When it
does, we clean house.

RYDER
Dread?

Trek looks him square in the eye and nods.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - DAY

Li'l Red stands with Rooster and Rowan. They pass looks at
other Aryan Knights throughout the yard.

Rooster shakes his head, steps back.

ROOSTER
We'll burn for this, man!

LI'L RED
How long you gonna be a dog on a
leash? Tell you one thing, warden
ain't my fuckin' king!

ROOSTER
It's reckless!

LI'L RED
It's time he feels the steel!
Knights bow to no one! Not while
I'm Rex!

Li'l Red beams at Rooster, stretches a grin.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)
Cock-a-doodle-doo, bird boy!
Whatcha gonna do?

He steps close to Rooster -- face-to-face.

Rooster takes a moment, nods.

Li'l Red glares at Rowan; face colored with bruises.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)
I need to be concerned, brother?

ROWAN
Blood in, blood out! I'm in!

Li'l Red and Rowan nod agreement.

INT. LAZARUS CELL - NIGHT

Inmates process by, Rooster among them. He stops at Lazarus' cell gate.

Lazarus steps from the shadows. They look each other over.

ROOSTER
Storm's comin'.

Lazarus nods. Rooster looks down.

ROOSTER (CONT'D)
Think -- think this might be it,
you know. I ain't ready.

LAZARUS
No one is, Roo'.

Rooster chuckles, shakes his head.

ROOSTER
That's it? I mean... I thought...
(sighs)
I don't wanna go out like this,
man. I -- I wanna be... something
good... for once.

LAZARUS
Cherish life. We've spent far too
long destroyin' it.

Rooster gives a pained smile. Nods.

Both look deeply at one another.

ROOSTER
Goodnight, Lazarus.

LAZARUS
Goodnight, Roo'.

Rooster steps away. Lazarus watches him disappear into the shadows of the corridor.

Lazarus looks back at Rhino -- they share a resigned nod.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

SHOUTS erupt! Guards pour into the cellblock with the morning light.

LAZARUS'S CELL

Lazarus and Rhino calmly get up from their bed trays, step to the cell gate.

The shouts grow closer!

Guards appear and throw open the cell gate. They force Lazarus and Rhino to the ground. Both are pinned down and cuffed.

Lazarus and Rhino are yanked up and pushed out onto the railing.

CELLBLOCK SEVEN

Shouts amplify down the cellblock as others are pulled from their cells.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - CORRIDOR - DAY

Inmates from Lazarus' group stand clothed in their prison jumpsuits against the stained, ceramic walls. Except for Lazarus. He has been stripped naked, forced to face the wall.

Officer Lochhead strolls past them.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
Stop looking at me! Look at him!
Feast your eyes!

He stops at Lazarus. Leans in close.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)
Time to see you for what you are!

Officer Lochhead motions another guard. They force Lazarus into a

DETENTION CELL

Officer Lochhead slams the door. He draws his baton and nails Lazarus in the stomach.

CORRIDOR

The inmates stand silent as the sounds of Lazarus' beating seep through the walls.

DETENTION CELL

Lazarus falls to the ground, coughs up blood. Officer Lochhead hammers a blow into his back.

Lochhead catches his breath, looks down at Lazarus...

... who peers up at Officer Lochhead, eye-to-eye. Lochhead's face softens. He lowers his baton, steps to the cell door.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Open!

The door pulls open. Two guards enter and pull Lazarus to his feet and drag him out from the cell, into the

CORRIDOR

and press him against the ceramic wall. Blood oozes from Lazarus' mouth. The inmates look him over. Some show anger, others sympathy.

Lazarus' hands struggle to cover his crotch. He turns away in shame.

Lochhead surveys the inmates, then Lazarus. He lifts his baton... ruefully lowers it.

He turns to another guard.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Get 'em outta' here.

GUARD

You heard the man! Move!

Lazarus starts past Officer Lochhead, hunched over, hands tightly pressed over his crotch.

Lochhead stretches out his baton, blocks Lazarus' path.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD
Get dressed. You'll go back with
me.

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Rhino stands chained to the floor. A loud BANG sounds from outside.

Rhino carefully peers through the door's vision panel...

... sees Elijah handcuffed to belly chains. The two look at each other. Elijah is pushed away.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

Officer Mason and guards herd Rowan, Rooster, and a group of Aryan Knights down the walk railing. Rooster coughs and falls to his knees.

Mason steps to him and grabs hold of his jumpsuit.

OFFICER MASON
What the fuck, Rooster?

Rooster looks up at him, hands clench his stomach.

ROOSTER
(quietly)
Need to talk to you... private!

Mason takes note of the seriousness in Rooster's face. He motions the other guards.

OFFICER MASON
Go on. I'll take him to the
infirmary.

Rowan and the others glare at Rooster -- sneering.

INT. OUTSIDE WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - DAY

A guard pats Li'l Red down, runs his hands down his leg, up to his growing.

Li'l Red GIGGLES.

LI'L RED
Tickles.

The guard glares at him. The door buzzes open to

WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE

Li'l Red is escorted in, arms crossed over his abdomen. The guard steps out... closes the door.

The warden looks up from papers on his desk. He takes off his glasses, leers at Li'l Red.

WARDEN PAIGE

He's being led back in. I want you
to do it in front of everyone.
Clear?

Li'l sighs.

LI'L RED

Crystal.

WARDEN PAIGE

Something wrong?

LI'L RED

Wrong? No. Everythin's just right.

The warden's eyes narrow.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - CORRIDOR - SAME

Officer Mason has Rooster pinned against the wall.

ROOSTER

Red... fuckin' lost it. Went J-cat.
Goin' for the warden. Wants to
start an uprisin'.

Mason takes a step back, reaches for his radio.

OFFICER MASON

The hell you talking about?

INT. WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - SAME

The warden glares at Li'l Red.

WARDEN PAIGE

The hell is with you?

Warden Paige looks at the door, presses the unlock button. The door buzzes open. A guard steps inside, closes the door behind him.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
He's ready! Get him outta' here!

Li'l Red grins, beams at the warden.

The warden looks him over -- sighs.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
Look. I'm not one of your minions.
I am --

LI'L RED
The fuckin' king! Got it!

PEPPER (O.S.)
Fucking king!

Warden Paige scowls at Li'l Red -- incensed.

WARDEN PAIGE
You get your no good, white-trash
ass outta' here... do what you're
told!

Li'l Red steps toward the guard as if leaving. Suddenly,
quick as a fox, he pulls a shank from his sleeve, jabs it
into the guard's throat.

The warden freezes in shock -- reaches for the phone.

Li'l Red has the guard's gun pulled loose from its holster,
pointed directly at the warden.

Warden Paige stares at Li'l Red -- defiant. He picks up the
phone receiver. Li'l Red jousts the gun at Pepper...

... the Warden's face morphs helpless. He freezes still.

WARDEN PAIGE (CONT'D)
No -- no. Please. Not... Pepper...

LI'L RED
I'll turn that fuckin' bird into a
duster!

Pepper SQUAWKS!

LI'L RED (CONT'D)
Be a good ol' boy and put that
down.

Guards pound the other side of the office door.

The warden returns the phone receiver. His smug resolve gone... eyes beam pleadingly at Li'l Red like a frightened child.

WARDEN PAIGE

You -- you hear that? No way to get away with this. You got any idea --

Li'l Red steps to the warden with a sunny grin.

LI'L RED

Goddamn right I do!

Li'l Red drops the gun and stabs the shank into the warden's throat. His eyes revel in the shocked look on the warden's face.

He pulls the shank free.

Li'l Red kneels, watches the warden bleed out; the warden's hands feebly try to stop the blood from pouring out his carotid artery.

Li'l Red's eyes widen, pairs with the warden's eyes.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)

What do you see, now?

Warden Paige drops to the floor.

Li'l Red stands. He passes a look between the warden and the guard's dead bodies, admires his work.

Pepper frantically bustles about her cage.

Li'l Red yells at the guards on the other side of the door.

LI'L RED

My kingdom now, bitches!

He grotesquely licks blood from his hand.

Li'l Red steps to the window, defiant. He picks up the warden's desk chair and hurls it through the glass. He watches the chair break apart on the rec yard.

Li'l Red ransacks the office; throws paper and furniture everywhere. He takes a lighter from the warden's desk, sets a mass of papers on fire.

EXT. RECREATION YARD - CONTINUOUS

Trek and his crew watch smoke pour out from the warden's office window.

TREK
Crazy hillbilly did it.

Pandemonium takes hold throughout the yard. Trek looks at Ryder standing beside him.

TREK (CONT'D)
You know what to do!

Ryder nods and walks off with a sense of urgency. TWO OTHER VICE LORDS follow.

Smoke from the window thickens. Alarms sound!

INT. WARDEN PAIGE'S OFFICE - SAME

Li'l Red watches the fire engulf the warden's desk.

Shouts from behind the office door intensify. Li'l Red picks up and aims the guard's gun -- waits.

The office door burst open! Three guards enter. Li'l Red opens fire. Two guards are hit and fall. The third backs away for cover and returns fire.

Pepper SQUAWKS -- flutters frantically.

Li'l Red laughs like a crazy man, aimlessly fires the gun until it clicks empty. He looks at the gun, then at Pepper. He tosses the gun away, steps to Pepper's cage.

LI'L RED
(aside)
Fly away... free, little bird.

He unlatches the cage door, opens it. Pepper darts out and flutters out the window -- liberated!

Li'l Red turns to the burning doorway, closes his eyes. He inhales a deep breath.

LI'L RED (CONT'D)
Fuck all! Better to burn out!

He rushes through the flaming doorway. The guard shoots him multiple times. Li'l Red falls to the floor.

The guard steps over him... aims his gun. Li'l Red looks up at him -- crazed look in his eyes. Blood leaps from his mouth. Li'l Red smiles.

The guard fires his gun!

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - DAY

The cellblock is calm beside the blaring of the alarm. Frantic, indistinct chatter filters through the Prison guards' radios.

Rowan and his group of Aryan Knights glance at each other. They move into positions around the guards, who grow tense.

Rowan steps dangerously close to one of the guards.

GUARD

Lock-in! Move your asses into your cells!

The guards stir in a light panic. Their radios air panic and disarray.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Clear the block!

The guards take out their pepper spray canisters and spray Rowan and his group.

The inflicted fall to the ground and claw at their eyes.

The guards scamper toward the exit, but some are tackled and viciously beaten.

SHOWERS

Naked inmates stand under the steaming water, soaping themselves.

Gunshots and shouts grow near.

Aryan Knights stampede into the showers in PANDEMONIUM. Some blindly tumble over the partition wall.

They frantically claw at their eyes under the streaming water. The showering inmates rush out in a panic.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - CORRIDOR - DAY

Lochhead and another guard escort Lazarus -- frantic chatter streams from their radios.

They look out the polycarbonate windows that view the recreation yard...

... as chaos spreads with silent movie effect throughout the prison grounds.

Officer Lochhead turns to Lazarus -- eyes horrified.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

Jesus!

Howls erupt from down the corridor -- Rowan and his raging group of Aryan Knights charge in their direction.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)

Back! Go back!

Officer Lochhead, the guard, and Lazarus turn and head back down of the corridor.

The cluster of Knights overtakes them in a scourge of violent disarray.

Lazarus stumbles against the wall -- watches Officer Lochhead and the guard is brutally beaten.

Officer Lochhead is thrown against the wall next to Lazarus. Rowan charges him, shank in hand, when...

... Lazarus steps in front of Lochhead, takes the assaulting blade into his gut.

Rowan looks Lazarus over, zeroes into the stab wound; the orange prison jumpsuit darkens with blood.

Rowan stretches a grin, spears Lazarus in the stomach, gleefully watches Lazarus fall to his knees.

Rowan spits on Lazarus in disgust.

ROWAN

Fuckin' virus!

Rowan readies the shank to drive into Lazarus' neck -- stares directly into his eyes. Sounds of the riot bleed into silence, when...

... a gunshot!

Rowan staggers back... falls to the ground mortally wounded.

Lazarus locks eyes with officer Lochhead, who stands bloodied and beaten beside him, hand gripping a gun.

A KNIGHT lunges at Lochhead -- stabs him in the chest. Lochhead falls to the ground. The gun slides free across the floor.

A KNIGHT grabs the gun and runs off with the raging horde.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - DAY

Security staff watch monitors as Cellblock Seven falls into complete chaos: fire billows out from the warden's office. Another monitor shows inmates overtake the recreation yard.

The HEAD SECURITY GUARD stands.

HEAD SECURITY GUARD
Lock everything down! Get a team to
the armory!

INT. ARMORY - DAY

Guards pour in and throw open the storage racks. Their hands grab Ruger Mini-14s and shotguns before filing out into the Control Center corridor.

INT. HAMPER CELL - DAY

Elijah sits against the wall. Bangs and shouts echo in under the blare of the alarm.

The cell door CLANKS and pulls open. Officer Mason steps inside with Rooster. Both in a panic.

OFFICER MASON
They're taking the prison! Need to
get you outta' here!

Officer Mason unlocks Elijah's cuffs and belly chains.

Rhino steps in the doorway, unchained.

OFFICER MASON (CONT'D)
Go! All of you! Find Lazarus!

Elijah paces out from the cell, joins Rhino and Rooster.

INT. DREAD'S CELL - DAY

Dread sits on his bed tray, alone, huddled against the wall. His eyes are planted on the open cell gate. Shouts and howls carry in from outside.

A guttural growl sounds from within the cell.

Dread lurches off his bed tray; his eyes wide as the moon. A fire ignites outside the cell, casting ghostly shadows over the walls and demonic drawings.

The growl sounds again -- closer!

Ryder and another VICE LORD enter the cell. Their faces covered in garb. They approach Dread.

Dread backs into the corner, buries his face into his hands and falls to his knees.

We move out of the cell as they rush in on him.

CORRIDOR

Lazarus crawls toward Officer Lochhead who lies helpless and bleeding. Lochhead looks at Lazarus, tries to pull himself away.

Lazarus struggles to his feet, grabs hold of Lochhead's arms, and drags him across the floor.

Lazarus grimaces in pain as officer Lochhead fights to free himself.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD

No -- no!

He heaves Lochhead into an empty cell.

Lazarus steps to the sink and grabs a towel -- plants it over Lochhead's wound. Officer Lochhead cries out in agony.

Lazarus stumbles out from the cell, slams the gate shut. He falls to his knees in exhaustion.

Lochhead surveys Lazarus' jumpsuit coated with blood.

OFFICER LOCHHEAD (CONT'D)

Let me out, Lazarus. I deserve...
for it to end like this.

Lazarus looks at Lochhead... smiles; *live!*

Lochhead hesitates... smiles back.

Lazarus grips the cell gate, pulls himself to his feet.
Lochhead watches Lazarus lumber away down the corridor.

CELLBLOCK SEVEN - NIGHT

Trek and his crew stride through the cellblock like General McAuthor coming ashore, their faces wrapped in garb. Chaos rages all around them.

Trek turns to a VICE LORD beside him.

TREK
Find Lazarus!

The Vice Lord motions TWO OTHERS. They stride down the cellblock. Burning paper and debris fall from the upper rafters like a ticker-tape parade from hell.

Trek and his remaining crew turn to enter the

CORRIDOR

It grows hauntingly quiet. Trek and his crew stop.

Trek's eyes scan the ceiling...

... ghostly shadows dance ominously in the glare of the fires.

TREK
Go back!

They backpedal, turn -- and head back out the corridor. Multiple men converge and block their path.

Trek and his crew desperately turn in the opposite direction only to face the same barrier. One of the men steps into the gleam of the fire -- Smiley!

Trek calmly unwraps the garb from around his face.

SMILEY (O.S.)
Seems we weren't invited to the party.

Trek stretches a weary smile.

SMILEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
So, we decided to crash.

Trek STOMPS toward Smiley -- defiant.

TREK

You think you can take what's mine?
Who do you think brought this shit
down?

SMILEY

Not about power, esé. It's about
balance. Thought you knew that.

Smiley motions his crew behind him. They step forward. Faces emerge -- all Pancho Villas. They stride undeterred toward Trek and his doomed crew.

INT. LAZARUS' CELL - NIGHT

Lazarus sits alone in his cell, his hand planted over his bleeding wounds. Sounds of the prison riot rage throughout the cellblock.

Rhino, Elijah, and Rooster appear at the cell gate. Rhino enters, notices Lazarus' wounds. He kneels to make eye contact.

The sounds of chaos become distant as the two lock into the moment.

RHINO

We have to get you outta' here!

Lazarus looks down at his fatal injuries.

RHINO (CONT'D)

I'll protect you!

Rhino looks at Elijah and Rooster, asserts a nod.

RHINO (CONT'D)

We'll... protect you!

Lazarus looks at Elijah and Rooster, both nod to Rhino's assertion.

LAZARUS

What we've started must go on...
grow. My path ends here. Can't
outrun our shadow.

Loud bangs and shouts blare back to life.

Lazarus leans in close to Rhino. He hands him the book "INTO THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION," its cover smeared with Lazarus' blood.

Lazarus catches his breath.

LAZARUS (CONT'D)

"The world is in darkness. Few have eyes to see..."

Rhino drops his head, tears trace down his face. He reluctantly takes hold of the book; Lazarus doesn't let go.

RHINO

... few birds escape the net and fly away free."

Lazarus lets go of the book. Smiles.

Rhino stands. Lazarus rises with him, takes Rhino into his arms. They hug.

Rhino examines the book's cover, nods. He looks back at Lazarus -- eyes bid farewell. He steps out from the cell to join Elijah and Rooster. The three of them step from view.

Lazarus, alone and terrified, stares outside his cell. Dark smoke billows and swirls into bestial-like forms.

He steps to the desk, pulls the drawer open. His hands tremble as he takes out the photo of Reggie Johnson and Dark Side's carved wooden statuettes...

... then the newspaper clipping with the photograph of Regina Johnson, the headline: "MOTHER SEEKS CLOSURE AFTER SON'S DEATH"

Lazarus takes a moment, places the clipping back in the drawer -- slides it gently closed.

He steps to the arched window, surveys the yard as chaos rages. He settles into Lotus, carefully places Reggie's photograph on the window seal. Next to it, Dark Side's carved statuettes.

EXT. PRISON YARD - NIGHT

Rhino, Elijah, and Rooster make their way through the turmoil. Rhino notices a prison guard struggle to crawl to safety.

He surveys the yard-- a beaten and bloodied Vice Lord lies curled on the ground. Rhino looks at Elijah and Rooster.

RHINO

They need our help! Move `em to the garden!

Elijah grabs the guard. Rooster takes hold of the wounded Vice Lord. Both help them toward the prison garden.

Inmates we recognize from the chapel meditation session approach and spread out to help other wounded; Knights help Vice Lords. Pancho Villas assist Knights.

INT. CELLBLOCK SEVEN - NIGHT

Rioting inmates run past burning debris and chairs that lay strewn. THREE FIGURES bleed out from the smoke, their faces wrapped in garb; Trek's assassins heading to

LAZARUS' CELL

Lazarus sits by the window in Lotus, watching Rhino and the others help the wounded.

He lifts his gaze to the sky

FROM THE WINDOW

Stars faintly shimmer in the pre-dawn light.

BACK TO LAZARUS' CELL

The waking sun fills the cell with radiance... slowly pours over his face.

Lazarus closes his eyes in meditative prayer.

The three assassins appear behind him, their faces wrapped in garb. We recognize this image as...

... Reaper's sketch. The image DISSOLVES into radiant light.

EXT. GRAVELLY WALKING TRACK - DAY

A triage sits in the shade behind the chain-link fence topped with razor wire.

Among those being treated is officer Lochhead, who is wheeled on a gurney into a waiting ambulance.

PRISON GROUNDS

Inmates kneel throughout the dirt field, their hands clasped behind their heads as armed police officers look on. Gradually, the dirt field transforms...

... into a field of cultivated Aloe Vera plants. Inmates of different ethnicity and color till the soil. Many are the wounded rescued during the riot.

SUPER: "SIX MONTHS LATER"

Officer Lochhead steps into view, observes the inmates' work. He turns to look behind him...

... at Officer Mason who watches other inmates apply the finishing touches to a mural, vibrant in color, on the rec-yard wall emulating Reaper's sketch.

The title below the mural reads: "THE LOTUS"

Elijah, Rhino, and Rooster oversee it all nearby.

Elijah kneels and cuts away pieces of an Aloe Vera plant, offers them to Rhino and Rooster. Both take the cut pieces of Aloe Vera as we

FADE TO BLACK