

Karma High

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FADE IN:

An electric guitar plays surf music, the notes building in intensity like a wave speeding along the shore. The music takes us into...

EXT. AFFLUENT BEACH COMMUNITY - DAY - AERIAL VIEW

The Pacific Ocean parallels majestic cliffs lined with upscale beach homes above and SURFERS on top of colorful boards, catching waves in the water below.

WE ZOOM IN on a residential street and follow a sun-faded SUZUKI SAMURAI on the road - the source of the surf music.

EXT. AFFLUENT BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD - RESIDENTIAL STREET

The Suzuki pulls over to the curb, parks.

INT. SUZUKI SAMURAI

BENNETT WILSON, (17), downplays his good looks with scruffy blond hair, and faded vintage rock band t-shirt.

He switches off the surf music on his cell phone, hits the record button, speaks into the microphone.

BENNETT

The reverb is still too high. Discuss
with Cain at our next rehearsal.

Bennett plays another song, listens intently, satisfied, takes off down the street.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET - STOP SIGN

A 1980's banger station wagon stops at the corner, its loose exhaust pipe rattling.

INT. STATION WAGON

CAIN, (18), vintage rock band t-shirt, Drutsa script 'freedom' tattooed his arm, listens to cool jazz from a speaker rigged through the gutted dashboard. A Fender Jazzmaster rests on the passenger seat.

Cain glances both ways, steps on the gas.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET - STOP SIGN

A Lifted F-150 truck with blacked-out windows and a dozen Monster drink decals passes the station wagon at the corner without stopping, speeds through the intersection.

INT. STATION WAGON

Cain slams on the brake to avoid hitting the truck, HEARS A SIREN, grins.

CAIN

He caught you this time, asshole.

IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, Cain sees a police cruiser pull up behind him, lights flashing.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET - STOP SIGN

OFFICER MILLER, (mid-40's), heavy-set, bald, raps on the station wagon's driver-side window, removes a ticket pad.

The window screeches as the glass rolls down the track, gets stuck halfway.

CAIN

(inside the car)

Jason ran the stop sign and cut me off.

OFFICER MILLER

Driver's license and registration.

CAIN

I didn't break any laws, Miller.

OFFICER MILLER

You're missing your license plate. That's a violation, Cain. And it's Officer Miller to you.

CAIN

It's not missing. Someone at school took it. I'm waiting for a replacement in the mail.

OFFICER MILLER

You also have a rear brake light that's out. Now, let's see that license.

Cain switches the radio station to heavy metal, blasts it, hands his license through the window.

EXT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - FRONT ENTRANCE

The curb is packed with parked cars. A maintenance truck pulls away, leaves two open spaces in front of the KARMAN HIGH SCHOOL sign. The letter N in KARMAN has been erased with spray paint, reading 'Karma' High School.

Behind the school sign, TWO STUDENTS hang a 2010 DREAM'S ALIVE CONTEST banner on a building.

A luxury SUV pulls into the open curb space.

INT. LUXURY SUV

SHILOH, (17) sits in the passenger seat, annoyed. She wears a gray knit beanie and sweatshirt over a bright yellow and blue varsity cheer uniform.

MRS. SULLIVAN, (45), diet-pill thin under expensive clothes is equally annoyed. She jams the SUV gearshift into park.

MATT SULLIVAN, (16), Jr. exec vibe, wearing a button down shirt and Dickies slacks, sits in the back seat, texting.

MRS. SULLIVAN

(to Shiloh)

You need to figure out your major so you can get those college applications in before the cut-off date.

SHILOH

I told you I want to study choreography.

MRS. SULLIVAN

Your father isn't going to pay fifty-thousand a year for a hobby.

Shiloh reaches for the door handle. Mrs. Sullivan presses the automatic door lock, blocks her exit.

MRS. SULLIVAN (cont'd)

Now that we're on the subject, you need these.

Mrs. Sullivan hands Shiloh a small shopping bag from the center console. Shiloh removes lip gloss and mascara from the bag, glares at her mother.

MRS. SULLIVAN
 You look washed out under the stadium
 lights compared to the other girls.

Shiloh dumps the items into the bag, tosses it in the back
 seat. Matt dodges the bag, continues to text.

MRS. SULLIVAN (cont'd)
 Would it kill you to wear a touch of
 makeup once in a while?

SHILOH
 Would it kill you to stop wearing it?

Shiloh manually unlocks the car door. Mrs. Sullivan reaches
 over, removes Shiloh's beanie, releasing silky blonde hair.

MRS. SULLIVAN
 The least you could do is take off
 that ridiculous hat. It hides your
 best feature.

EXT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - FRONT ENTRANCE

Shiloh, short with a curvaceous figure, and Matt, tall,
 average build, exit the SUV.

SHILOH
 Goodbye, Vanessa.

MRS. SULLIVAN
 You know I don't like it when you---

Shiloh slams the passenger door. The Luxury SUV peels away,
 opening up the two parking spaces.

MATT
 Mom wants you to be popular.

SHILOH
 Why?

Matt motions toward AMBER, (16), in cheer uniform, cute,
 bubbly, walking past with a FOOTBALL JOCK.

MATT
 It has its perks.

SHILOH
 Maybe for you.

Matt crosses his fingers with a hopeful expression, heads
 toward campus.

Shiloh watches PASSING STUDENTS gather into WELCOMING GROUPS with waves and smiles. She frowns, zips up her sweatshirt with a yank, heads towards campus.

A TOWHEADED SKATEBOARDER, (16), glides in front of Shiloh, delays her departure.

WE HEAR a turbocharged engine accelerate.

Shiloh looks toward the street, sees the F-150 Truck barreling down on the Suzuki Samurai.

INT. F-150 TRUCK

JASON, (18), driving, and TROY, (18), both athletic, wear Letterman jackets, chug energy drinks.

JASON

That fumble wasn't my fault, Troy.
You saw it. Craig screwed up the
pass.

TROY

(can't bring himself
to agree))
Must suck having a dad who took
Karman all the way to State in his
glory days.

Jason floors it.

EXT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - FRONT ENTRANCE

The F-150 cuts off the Suzuki, parks, takes up both empty spaces. Jason and Troy exit the truck. The Suzuki idles in the street next to the parked truck.

INT. IDLING SUZUKI

THROUGH DRIVER SIDE WINDOW, Bennett looks at a neat row of mansions with boxed borders of grass lining an empty curb, posted with NO SCHOOL PARKING signs.

SHILOH (O.S)

Don't be a douche, Jason. Move your
truck up so Ben can park.

JASON (O.S.)

That emo dweeb can fuck off. We got
here first.

Bennett presses the clutch, yanks on the stick shift, grinds the gears. Shiloh walks up, speaks through passenger window.

SHILOH

There's usually an open spot under the willow tree at the one-way exit. It's a last resort because of the birds.

BENNETT

Thanks. I'll check it out.

SHILOH

I've had to park there a few times and got totally bombed. Club Soda takes off the pigeon shit.

JASON

(from sidewalk)

So does a baseball bat.

TROY

(from sidewalk)

And it's faster.

PASSING BELL SOUNDS.

EXT. ONE-WAY EXIT LEADING OFF CAMPUS PROPERTY

The Suzuki tires are barely visible under the willow tree. Bennett fights his way out of the low-hanging leaves.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE HALLWAY - BULLETIN BOARD

The halls are empty except for LILY WONG, (17), petite, delicate features. She stands in front of a bulletin board full of fliers and school announcements.

Bennett walks up. A branch sticks out of his backpack.

BENNETT

Hey, Lily. Anything interesting?

LILY

The Dreams Alive Contest is happening again this year. Submission slips are in the office.

BENNETT

Your mom can't say no to photography if you win.

LILY
That's my plan.

Bennett studies a flier advertising; *Hyde Park's Annual Battle of the Bands*. Lily studies Bennett, is pained.

LILY (cont'd)
Sorry you didn't make the cut for
Battle of the Bands again this year.

BENNETT
What?! Who told you that?

LILY
Cain told me last night after he
checked out the park website to see
which bands were selected. Didn't he
call you?

BENNETT
He did, but my phone was on silent
mode because I was working on a song
until late. Damn it. The only way
we're going to make it is if we get
our songs in front people who can
promote us.

LILY
Like the record scout that showed up
last year?

BENNETT
Yeah. He signed on the winner to
record a solo. The flier says he's
coming back this year.

LILY
There are other ways to get noticed.
Once we make your demo after school,
you can start reaching out to all
kinds of people in the music
industry.

Bennett doesn't look convinced.

LILY (cont'd)
Talent finds a way to make itself
known.

BENNETT
(still not
convinced)
Yeah.

INT. PHILOSOPHY CLASSROOM

PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS talk, text, yawn. The philosophy teacher, MR. BREUER, (38), easy-going Humboldt graduate, switches on a wall-mounted TV monitor.

DISPLAYED ON THE TV SCREEN, above a Karman High News logo, BRIANNA HENNESSY, (17), in cheer uniform, smiles incisively while speaking. The harsh studio lighting emphasizes her liberal use of make-up.

BRIANNA (TV SCREEN)

Good morning, Karman High. Brianna Hennessy here, reminding my fellow grads that your senior project is due in three weeks.

Bennett enters, takes a seat in the front row, his desk-chair in front of Jason. Jason, oblivious to Bennett's arrival, plays a game on his cellphone. Shiloh sits across from Bennett, motions to the branch sticking out of his backpack.

SHILOH

Looks like the spot was open.

BENNETT

Oh, Yeah.

(removes branch)

Thanks for the tip. Good to know.

BRIANNA (TV SCREEN)

College essay workshops will be held in the library today at three o'clock and A.P seminars---

Mr. Breuer turns off the TV, faces the class.

MR. BREUER

Raise your hand if you already know what career you want to pursue?

Shiloh crosses her arms. A few students, including Bennett, raise their hands. Mr. Breuer nods in approval. Jason continues to play the game.

MR. BREUER

What about the rest of you? You're seniors. What are you waiting for?

(holds up text book)

Chapter six. Aristotle. I'll give you ten minutes to review, then we'll discuss why people procrastinate, starting with his quote on the board.

QUOTE ON BOARD READS: 'You will never do anything in this world without courage.'

Philosophy Students remove textbooks, including MAYA, (17), cropped bleach blonde hair, diamond nose stud, sitting behind Jason.

Bennett studies the quote, glances at Shiloh. Maya notices, sits up straighter.

MAYA

Hey, Shiloh. I think Ben has something to ask you.

The comment attracts Jason's attention. Shiloh looks at Bennett, curious. Bennett shakes his head, opens his book.

JASON

Pussy.

MAYA

I thought maybe you wanted to invite her to one of your rehearsals. I hear you after school when I drive by your house. You're really good.

JASON

(to Bennett)

You're delusional if you think a nobody like you has a shot in the music industry, Wilson.

The comment bothers Bennett. Shiloh notices.

SHILOH

(to Jason)

Talk about delusional. Less than one percent of high school football players make it into the NFL.

Nearby Philosophy Students pick up cellphones, sensing video-worthy footage.

JASON

What's your plan? Marrying some poor bastard for his money?

SHILOH

Sounds like a version of your future, Jason.

Jason sees the raised cellphones videotaping. He pushes Bennett's desk-chair forward a few feet with his sneaker.

JASON

Loser.

Philosophy Students laugh.

MAYA

Not cool, Jason.

Jason turns around, looks at Maya. They check each other out, write each other off.

INT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - RESOURCE PORTABLE

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS and STONERS draw on, ignore, or read their books.

DEREK, (17), on the spectrum, small for his age, stares out the window with an open book on his desk. Cain stands by the door, reads a book on ANARCHY.

MRS. MARCH, (63), fed up with teaching and ready to retire, approaches Cain, sniffs.

MRS. MARCH

Is that marijuana I smell?

CAIN

Yeah, but it's not coming from me.

MRS. MARCH

Then why are your eyes bloodshot?

CAIN

Must be allergies.

B.G. Derek turns his head to watch the exchange between Mrs. March and Cain.

DEREK

What's happening?

MRS. MARCH

This doesn't concern you, Derek. Read your book.

B.G. Derek continues to watch the exchange. Mrs. March removes the book from Cain's hand, reads title.

MRS. MARCH (cont'd)

Are you planning a rebellion?

CAIN

Not today.