

MENACE TO SOCIETY

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THE AMERICAN SOLDIER HAD A BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING ONE
TOUR OF DUTY IN VIETNAM..., THAN THE AVERAGE CHILD HAS OF
SURVIVING TO THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN IN AMERICAS INNERCITIES...

FADE IN:

INT. GROCERY MART - NIGHT

Two, young, African - American teens step into the mart. A small KOREAN BOY aims his toy gun at them and makes a shooting noise. The boys' father stands behind the counter, watching the guys.

Heading towards the cooler is KAYDEE "CAINE" LAWSON, (18), an exceptionally average-looking teen-ager. His face still shows signs of not-to-long-gone acne, and early signs of stubble growth around his mouth. His dark eyes give him a noble impression. The kind of eyes that can see right through you, and also the kind of eyes that you can never see into.

In the corner, a KOREAN WOMAN watches him closely. Feeling her stare, Caine looks over at her. She looks away, moves off to another aisle.

Caine calls back to his friend.

CAINE

What you want man?

KEVIN "O-DOG" ODUM, (16), is a fairly short guy, with a brown perm, pulled back into a pony-tail. For his height, he has a very solid build, which could be evidence of having been incarcerated at some point and time.

He starts towards the cooler, being tracked by the eyes of the Korean Woman. He turns to her.

O-DOG

Look, I ain't tryin' to steal none
'a this shit.

KOREAN WOMAN

You hurry up and buy.

O-Dog pokes his head into the cooler.

O-DOG

What they got tonight?

CAINE

Get the Ides, nigga.

O-DOG

Fuck that, I'm from the old school.

He reaches in, grabs a 40oz. bottle of Olde English Malt Liquor. Caine pulls a 40oz. bottle of St. Ides out of the cooler and cracks it open.

He notices the KOREAN MAN behind the counter watching him in the mirror. Caine turns around and tilts the bottle up.

KOREAN MAN
You not to drink beer in store.

CAINE
Don't worry, I'm a pay you.

Caine and O-Dog head up an aisle towards the counter. The Korean Woman lags behind them, two aisles over.

The little boy stands by the door, playing with a yo-yo.

As Caine tilts his bottle up again, O-Dog points at the Korean Woman.

O-DOG
Look bitch! Stop following me
around this muthafucka!

The woman doesn't say anything but her husband does.

KOREAN MAN
You buy now and leave!

Caine and O-Dog step to the counter, throw their money down and scoop up the change.

O-DOG
Thank you!

The guys turn and heads towards the door. Before they leave, they catch the grocers last remark.

KOREAN MAN
Black bastards.

O-Dog stops cold, grabs Caine.

CAINE
Fuck it man, let's go.

O-Dog turns back to the grocer, heads towards him.

O-DOG
(to grocer)
I'm sick 'a yo ass...

Used to O-Dog's hot temper, Caine turns back to the exit. He tilts the bottle up to his mouth, takes a long swi --

BOOOM!!!

Caine turns, looks.

O-Dog stands opposite the counter, arm straight out, gun smoking. He takes a pull from his bottle.

CRASH!! Caine's 40oz. bottle hits the floor, splashing his shoes with beer.

The Korean Woman and her son are screaming. O-Dog turns the gun on them.

O-DOG

(continuing)

Where's the fuckin' videotape?!
Where is it?!!

The Korean Woman points to the back room. O-Dog sits his bottle on the counter, goes over to her and with gun to head, makes her lead him to the back room.

The little boy runs up to O-Dog, beating on his legs.

Caine steps around the open side of the counter, sees the Korean Man bent over, on his knees, his body slumped forward. He looks propped up against the bottom of the counter as his arms hang loosely in front of him.

He took the bullet in the face.

CAINE

Yo, let's get the fuck outta here!

At that point, O-Dog runs out of the back room, gun still in hand, videotape in the other. Thinking twice about it, he steps around the counter and punches open the register. He sticks the videotape in the front of his pants, then snatches up the cash.

CAINE

(continuing)

Nigga, hurry up!!

O-Dog kneels down, rummages through the grocers pockets for more cash. Next, he slips the man's shoes and socks off and searches for more money. That's where he finds most of it.

Caine can't believe what the hell is happening. Why is this happening. He just wants to the get away from the whole thing.

CAINE

(continuing)

Nigga, I'm gone!

O-Dog pops up, grabs his bottle of beer and hops the counter. He makes for the exit with Caine leading the way.

CAINE (V.O.)

I knew it was gonna be a long summer... Went into the store just to get a brew, came out the muthafucka an accessory to murder and armed robbery... I'd been into shit before... Growin' up out here, you can't help but not get into some shit but... Damn...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The two boys run off through the night. The SOUND OF THE SIRENS can be heard far off in the distance. There are so many sirens, we're not sure whether they are for this crime or not.

The darkness of the night seems infinite...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

START MAIN TITLES:

INSERT - NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

RIOT IN WATTS

The Los Angeles Times. April, 15. 1965.

Right in the middle of the front page is a scene from the riot. A building in flames. Scores of black people running by.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WATTS STREET - (1965) - DAY - (STOCK)

A storefront in flames. The windows are blown out and the structure is being consumed by the fire.

People. Black people. Lots of black people are running through the streets. This is the riot.

Storefront windows and cars are exploding all around. LOUD BLASTS are HEARD. SCREAMS and YELLS.

People are looting stores, taking with them all of the goods that they could not afford to buy on a normal occasion.

Motorists are being snatched from their cars. Debris and fires line the streets.

Coming up the middle of the drag, are a line of tanks. The National Guard. The scene is reminiscent of a police state in Eastern Europe. A commander barks orders to the civilians involved in the riot.

Troopers march bravely alongside the tanks, rifles in arms. For the most part, they alone are the only non-black people in the area. They're afraid of the rioters, and it shows.

The police are busy trying to detain people. Beatings are taking place, but the residents of the community are fighting back.

All of the anger, rage, frustration, fury, and embitterment, that has been bottled up for so long seems to be coming to a head on this hot day. This day, one in five, during which 10,000 people, predominately African - Americans will unleash their wrath upon a small community.

The short term result: 34 people dead. The long term result: A socio-economically depressed, drug and crime ravaged community, that in many ways still burns.

Another building goes up in flames, high, high into the sky. Burning...

END MAIN TITLES.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT (1979)

A CLOSE-UP of a FLAME. It's orange-ish glow illuminating nearly the whole screen.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal a twenty-something black man lighting a joint. TAT LAWSON is a tall, narrow man, with a lazy eye, and an inch long scar on his chin. Tat takes a long hit from the joint and passes it to another man.

ANDRE, mid-twenties, takes the joint gladly. He takes a hit, his eyes already smoky and red.

The MUSIC plays and a party is in progress. The house is smoke filled and funky, as people jam to the tunes.

Hidden behind the legs of the party-goers, a little boy is sneaking out of his bedroom. A FIVE-YEAR OLD CAINE sports the pajamas with the feet in them and looks completely mischievous as he makes his way through the crowd.

EXT. HOUSE -BACKYARD - NIGHT

Two teenage boys sit on the porch drinking some hard liquor. They take turns tossing the small bottle up.

PERNELL, (17), is a big guy, still sporting the remains of an afro. He twirls a gun in his hand, spinning the chamber every other or so turn.

CLYDE, (15), is trying to steal a long pull from the bottle when the screen door opens. They both turn back to look.

Caine steps out onto the porch in his pajamas.

YOUNG CAINE

What's goin' on Pernell, Clyde?

Pernell grabs Caine and sits him on his lap.

PERNELL

What you doin' out here?

CLYDE

Yeah, this is a party for grown folks.

YOUNG CAINE

Y'all ain't grown.

PERNELL

We older than yo li'l ass. Does Tat know you out here?

YOUNG CAINE

Nope, I snuck out.

PERNELL

Li'l bad fucka'.

The bottle catches Caine's attention and he reaches for it. Pernell snatches it away from him.

CLYDE

Go 'head, give the little nigga a drink.

Caine snatches the bottle from Pernell and takes a drink. It certainly doesn't taste like apple juice. The little boy spits and gags, fanning his mouth with his hand.

Pernell and Clyde laugh at him as he eventually stops.

YOUNG CAINE

What the fuck is that?!

The boys laugh even harder at Caine's language.

Caine grabs Pernell's gun off of the porch, but it is taken from him quick.

PERNELL

What the hell's wrong with you boy?
Fuck around and shoot all of us...

YOUNG CAINE

Lemme see it!

Pernell pushes Caine off of him. He lands hard on the floor, and it looks as if tears are going to drop.

PERNELL

Alright, c'mere you li'l punk.

Pernell holds the gun out. Clyde finishes up the last of the bottle and flings it out into the yard.

Caine runs up to Pernell, tries to pry the gun from his hands.

PERNELL

(continuing)

Wait fool, lemme show you how to hold it.

Pernell places the gun in Caine's hands and shows him how to hold it.

The screen door opens again and a woman pokes her head out. KAREN LAWSON, (20's), is a worn-looking woman, her head decorated in Afro braids. The assorted beads fly about her face as she calls outside.

KAREN

Caine! What are you doin' out that room?!

Caine turns, pointing the gun at his mother. She doesn't flinch. She's too stoned to even realize what he's doing.

Pernell snatches the gun from Caine's hands.

YOUNG CAINE

I'm just out here playin' mama.

KAREN

Boy you better get yo li'l tail in that room 'fore ya daddy catches you.

Reluctantly, Caine steps up onto the porch. He waves to Pernell and Clyde as he goes inside.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The party is still jumping as Caine makes his way back to his room underneath the cloud of smoke.

His mother motions for him to go as she rejoins the action.

Tat is in the middle of the floor dancing with some under-age girl from the neighborhood. He and Andre pass another joint back and forth. Karen comes up behind Tat and joins in the dance.

Hands in the air, booties flying, braids and mini-afros, silk shirts and pleather sport coats. This is the old jam.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Only a few people are in the house now. Tat, as well as Andre, sit at the kitchen table across from two other guys. A few bags of illegal substances lay before them.

Karen sits on the couch by herself. She looks fidgety, flushed out, and overall not in good health.

INT. BEDROOM.

Lying in his bed, Caine stares at the ceiling. A spider walks across on its way to the closet. He can hear the adults VOICES from inside his room. The voices are muffled, but he can make them out. It sounds like arguing. They've been arguing for a while.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Karen calls to the men.

KAREN

Are you done yet.

MAN #1

Yeah.

She hops up from the couch, near running to the table. Her husband looks up at her with a scowful eye. He attempts to balance his weight on the table, trying to offset the one shortened leg.

Karen balls her fist up and stretches out her arm. The man ties her off with a tight rubber cord, tapping her arm to make sure it's secure.

Her eyes are bloodshot, and she looks like she hasn't slept in week. Her mouth is near watering as she awaits this injection of heroin. The man holds her arm and pumps the needle into her. Her fix is instant and within moments, the color has returned to her face and she appears much more relaxed.

Tat pounds his fist in the center of the table.

TAT

Now. Enough of that bullshit.
Let's do business.

MAN #2

Man, I told you I didn't have the
money!

TAT

Well you better find it quick!

INT. ROOM.

Tired of listening to the noise, Caine pulls the covers up over his head.

The noise is even louder now and there is just no way that he can sleep. This is the loudest it's ever been. Curious, he gets out of the bed and goes to the door. He pulls it open a little and peeks out.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

The second man, the one who doesn't have the money is yelling now.

MAN #2

What the hell do you expect me to
do?!! You ain't the Godfather! I
don't owe you anything!!

The man jumps from the table, snatching up two bags of dope with him. He heads for the front door. Just before he reaches it, Tat calls to him.

The man turns around.

Tat pulls a 38. Snubnose from the small of his back and lets off THREE SHOTS into the mans' chest.

The man falls flat against the door, his body drooping to the floor.

Karen is so high that she squints to comprehend what has happened.

Andre remains seated at the table, calm about everything.

Tat turns back to the other man still seated at the table.

TAT

Now. You better find my money for
him.

Feeling a strange stare, Tat turns to the bedroom.

Caine stands there staring at the dead man by the door. He can't take his eyes from the sight. There's something curious about it, something fascinating...

He is momentarily engulfed in his own imaginative world. As Tat calls to him, Caine tunes him out. Everything is silence around him. Caine would rather stare at the dead man.

As the CAMERA CLOSES ON his face, he continues to stare with those penetrating eyes..., observing..., understanding...

VOICE (V.O.)

... It is a time to reflect on what you have accomplished... Some of you have overcome great odds to get here, but you have made it...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JORDAN HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

CAMERA TIGHT ON Caine's face. He stares blankly ahead, drifting, daydreaming.

The Principal continues his speech.

PRINCIPAL (V.O.)

... You should be proud. Your parents should be proud. Your community should be proud...

The gymnasium has a very different look today. This is Jordan High's Class of 1992 graduation ceremony. A small senior class, of no more than two-hundred, are seated in the center of the court.

Caine sits amongst a group of students, clothed in cap and gown.

A BEEP, BEEP, BEEP is HEARD.

Caine reaches down under his robe, pulls out a pager, checks the number and stuffs it back into his pocket.

In the three rows directly in front of and behind him, about seven kids, guys and girls, pull out pager's and check to see if they're the ones being beeped.

Gradually the kids settle down and endure the rest of the principal's speech.

CAINE (V.O.)

For all the bullshit they try to teach you in high school, I walked away with maybe about half that shit.

(MORE)

CAINE (V.O.)

(cont'd)

But then I only went to school about half the time... Growing up out here, there was shit that couldn't be learned in no classroom.

CUT TO:

INT. JORDAN HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - LATER

A flash goes off in his eyes and Caine blinks several times trying to restore his vision.

GRANDMAMA is dressed in her "Sunday" best as she poses with Caine. She sports a little hat which rests on top of the black bun that is her hair. Very much reserved, but extremely optimistic, her smile is radiant.

GRANDPAPA is an old and worn man, but don't let him hear you saying that. His hair gone, and his face covered with white stubble, he's somewhere in the neighborhood of seventy. He's seen a lot in his lifetime, and is always more than willing to share details with a young person.

"RONNIE," (24), an attractive single mother of two, stands behind Grandpapa. Motherhood adds years, as evidenced by a face far older than most twenty-four-year-olds. She has somewhat of a smart look to her. Though street-wise and hardened by experience, she has a good heart.

Grandpapa looks through the viewfinder then motions with his arm for Ronnie to join the picture.

Wedged between Grandmama and Ronnie, the flash goes off. Caine is just about blind by now.

GRANDMAMA

We're so proud of you.

CAINE

Thanks Grandmama.

He gives her a big hug and a big kiss.

RONNIE

Congratulations Caine.

CAINE

Thanks Ronnie.

Ronnie hugs Caine and gives him a light kiss on the cheek. He plays it off like he doesn't notice, but it is obvious to us that he did. There just might be more to these two than they're showing here.

GRANDPAPA

Now if you could stop runnin' with them thugs, you might just be alright...

Caine gives his Grandpapa a big hug as well.

GRANDMAMA

If your mama and daddy were alive I know they'd be proud of you too son.

Caine sort of half smiles, not taking the comment seriously.

There are students and families all over the court. These kids are the lucky ones; they made it to age eighteen, or at least through high school. But you never know what can happen when school is out.

CAINE (V.O.)

Proud my ass... Pops was shot over a drug buy gone bad when I was ten. Mom's "O.D.'d" on heroin about a year ago... They never gave a damn about me or much else...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PROJECTS - DAY

A group of buildings are clustered together. Lined up in rows, the maintenance has obviously been neglected on these worn and dilapidated buildings. Old toys and junk are strewn about the yards. clothes hang from various lines, connected to posts scattered over the yards.

With architecture depicting a different time period than the present, it is obvious that these buildings have been here for some time.

These are the Jordan Downs Housing projects. One of a group of housing projects within the city of Watts, this is most certainly one of, if not, the worst.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Inside of a small apartment, the flickering images of a frosty t.v. screen illuminate the face of a young boy. Pulling his face away from the G.I. Joe cartoon for a minute, he calls to his mother.

BOY

Mama I'm hungry.

Hunched over the kitchen table, with her back to her child, Mama's answer comes in breathless gasps.

MAMA

Just a minute baby.

Fulfilling her mothering duty for the day, Mama relights the crack pipe and takes another hit.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Two little boys, no older than five or six, are playing with their toy cars in the front yard. They both make the little car noises, peeling out, burning rubber, a noisy engine, etc.

THE SOUND OF THREE GUNSHOTS erupt through the air.

The noise only distracts the kids. They both look up and around, curious and nothing more.

Moments later, they resume their playing, making more, louder, car noises.

CUT TO:

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

A group of men are working hard in the auto shop. This is a specialty shop. Low Riders, hydraulics -- anything to make the car fit the street profile.

A few kids are in the shop as well. Watching their fathers work. Solid role models for these kids. They're the lucky ones.

We catch sight of a Sheriff's cruiser as it passes on the street out in front of the garage.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - EVENING

Two officers drive along through the streets of the community, their heads on a swivel, looking for anything out of the ordinary. A routine patrol, or so they call it, just to make sure that everything is in order.

The cruiser rounds a corner and starts up a street lined with run-down houses. It passes three little girls jumping rope in front of one of the yards. The CAMERA HOLDS on the girls.

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

The girls are all young and full of energy. Two girls hold either ends of the rope as the one in the middle jumps furiously. A cute little girl, her single pony tail bounces up and down as she moves. The girls sing a little song, keeping each other to the beat.

The song of the girls is drowned out by the SOUND OF A HELICOPTER.

As the copter appears above the house, the CAMERA TILTS UP and FOLLOWS it across, continuing with it as the evening sky dissolves to night, then TILTS DOWN to...

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The SOUNDS OF LOUD MUSIC come from a small house, second from the corner, on this dark street. A bunch of cars are parked in front of the house, in the driveway and on the lawn. Cadillacs, Jeeps, and old Chevy Impalas.

Lots of people are walking back and forth from the house to the front yard. LOUD PARTYING VOICES can be heard coming from inside.

Across the street, a green BMW 525i pulls to a stop at the curb. Sparkling clean, with gold rims and trimming, this is definitely the car. The drivers side door opens and a young man steps out. HAROLD LAWSON, (22), is Caine's cousin. Bailing with the kakie's, slippers, and a gold link around his neck, he doesn't fit the profile of the average 525i owner.

Moments later, Caine's torso pops up on the other side of the car. He closes the door behind him and steps around the front end into the street.

An El Camino, rolling five brothers deep, passes by slowly. Harold stares as they cruise by, each of them peeping out the 525i. The El Camino continues on to the stop sign at the corner. The brothers in the car are still staring.

Harold and Caine make their stand in the middle of the street, unsure of what the other guys are up to.

Some curious party-goers watch from the yard.

The brake lights flash out and the El Camino turns the corner, disappearing into the night.

Caine and Harold head across the street to the party.

CAINE (V.O.)

We were never afraid of no shit startin' cause we always knew we was deep enough to back it up. All we had to do was call out the homies at the party and it would've been on...

Caine and Harold walk through the yard, giving their "wuz-up's?" to the people they know, and staring at the honey's they don't know.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Caine pulls open the dusty screen door and steps into the smoke filled house. Harold follows, closing the door behind him.

The living room is full of people, dancing to the old jams, the guys trying to jib to all the honey's. Forty ounce bottles are being tossed up in almost every corner, by the guys and the girls. Baseball caps, braids, extensions, fake nails, sagging dickies, bottles, and bud. This is an all-the-way-live ghetto jam.

Off to the right, in the den, a brother has a freak on the couch, trying to get his.

J-BONE, (22), a tall brother, with a whole lot of size comes walking out of the kitchen towards them. He holds his hand out, they all shake.

J-BONE

My man Harold! What's up Caine!
What y'all had some trouble
outside?!

HAROLD

Na, we straight. Just some fools
peepin' out the ride.

J-BONE

Cool. Yo, Caine, I saw the liquor
store tape. Nice acting.

CAINE.

What?! You saw what tape?

J-BONE

(laughing)

The rest 'a the nigga's is in the
garage.

Caine nods, looks around and begins to make his way through the crowd. He mumbles to himself as he goes.

CAINE (V.O.)

J-Bone made a fuckin' livin' at dealin'... Had a smooth crib, a steady bitch..., all that. Tryin' to be Tony Montana n'shit...

EXT. HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Caine walks down the back steps and crosses the driveway, heading for the garage. Some brother has a girl all pinned up against the side of the house knocking out much tongue.

Caine can see a group of people gathered in the garage playing craps. All of his homies are there. He yells as he walks up. This isn't the type of crowd that you sneak up on.

CAINE

Yo! What up!

Everyone turns; some mad because he distracted the game.

INT. GARAGE.

O-Dog rises up off an upside down garbage can. With a 40oz. bottle in one hand, he extends his other to Caine.

O-DOG

My nigga in the house...

CAINE

What up Dog?

O-DOG

Not a muthafuckin' thang. Just takin' these fools money, you know how that is.

CAINE

Lemme talk to you for a minute.

Caine pulls O-Dog aside, around the garage.

O-DOG

What's up?

CAINE

Nigga I know you ain't dumb enough to be showing niggas that robbery tape?

O-Dog laughs, punches Caine in the shoulder.

O-DOG

Don't sweat it, it's just for fun. Ain't nobody else gon' see it.

O-Dog steps back around to the front of the garage, watches the crap game.

A little guy, no bigger than about five feet, three inches tall, backs up out of the crowd. "A-WAX", (18) sporting the sagging dickies, with nearly all of his draws showing, looks like a little kid dressed up in his father's clothes.

A-WAX

You ain't winnin' shit muthafucka!

CAINE

What's up fool?

A-WAX

Nothin'. Watch me take this nigga's money.

(out loud)

All 'a y'all! Everybody up in here's 'bout to get they money took right muthafuckin' now!

A-wax rears back and tosses the dice.

When the bones hit the floor, A-wax comes up short. AD LIB laughter, jokes. Everybody in the garage is talking about him.

O-DOG

(to Caine)

Brew's in the cooler nigga.

Caine nods and steps around the crowd. There are more people in the garage than he thought. It's got to be a lot of people in a garage to get it funky, even with the door open. The sounds of some pre-1975 jams flow, barely heard, through the garage.

Sitting on the cooler is a guy in a sweatshirt, with the hood pulled up on his head. SHARIF, (19), with his brooding face, and dark eyes, looks like he is the guardian of some dark secret. A chiseled face, sitting on a stump of a neck, with wood block shoulders, he pulls his hand out of his pocket and shakes with Caine.

SHARIF

What up black man?

CAINE

Coolin'. Why you got that damn hood on your head, lookin' like Tyson...?

SHARIF

Shit, it's kinda cold out here. You know black folks don't like no cold. We the tropical people, let them Europeans fuck with that shit.

CAINE

Then why is yo tropical ass sittin'
on the goddamn cooler?!

SHARIF

To keep you fools from drinkin'
this poison.

Caine tries to edge Sharif aside, but the stocky man doesn't budge.

CAINE

Nigga, get yo ass up off this box
and gimme a bottle!

Sharif hesitantly steps aside. Caine opens the lid to see a chest-full of beer. All kinds of malt liquor. 40oz. bottles and cans. Olde English, St. Ides, Colt 45, Magnum..., etc., All of the strong stuff.

Someone calls from across the garage.

STACY

Yo Caine! Toss me three!

STACY, (18), readies his hands for three cans of beer. His near shaved head, and receding hairline make him look older than he really is. His red eyes, obviously bud induced, together with his dark complexion make him look like some sort of demon. The five earrings in each ear could be taken for gold horns.

Caine pulls three cans of Olde English out of the cooler and tosses them across the room. He grabs a 40oz. of the Magnum for himself and leans back against the wall. He turns the stereo next to him up a notch. He likes the old jams.

Across the room Stacy hands a can each to two girls, twins actually. JACKEE, (17), and TONJA, (17), are both super-fine. Still playing matching games, they're both dressed alike. They're the only two girls in the garage.

Caine leans up against the wall watching the crap game. He takes a long pull from the bottle. The first swig is always the sweetest. This is a nightly activity for the crew. Hanging out, shooting craps, playing domino's, bagging on each other, and just plain kickin' it.

O-DOG

steps in front of the crowd, and spreads his arms out, causing everyone behind him to back up. He crouches low, ready to toss the dice. Everybody waits. Seven. Collection time.

CAINE (V.O.)

O-Dog was the craziest nigga alive. He'd shoot a muthafucka just to see how the body would drop. One time he shot some fool for taking a sip of his beer without asking... Sometimes it was cool being around him, sometimes it was just dangerous. I just knew that muthafucka wasn't crazy enough to keep showing people that videotape...

SHARIF

has one of the brothers pulled off to the side by the door.. With one hand on the guys shoulder, and another finger pointed at his face, a black experience lecture is definitely in progress.

CAINE (V.O.)

Sharif was an ex-knucklehead turned Muslim... Thought Allah could save black people... Can't nobody save black people but black people. He was always quick to let you know what the "devil" was up to though...

STACY

is getting more buzzed by the minute. He takes a drag from a big, fat, joint, squints his eyes, letting his head tighten.

CAINE (V.O.)

Everybody thought Stacy's dick would fall off by the time he was thirteen. A regular ho with two bad ass kids from two different bitches... If that football thing don't work out for him, who knows what he'll do...

JACKEE

drops down onto Stacy's lap. She throws one arm around his neck and snatches the joint out of his mouth. She takes a small hit, hands to joint to

TONJA

who takes it and does likewise. She dances by herself to rhythm of the old jams.

CAINE (V.O.)

Jackee and Tonja. Them bad ass twins. Them ho's had bodies like goddesses, and knew it too. They was cool but I wouldn't trust 'em with shit...

A-WAX

takes his own roll of the dice. Three. Cool, now all he has to do is roll another three. He steps over to Tonja, holds the dice up to her face. She blows out a stream of smoke onto them. He steps back to the center of the garage and rolls. Seven. Crapped out.

CAINE (V.O.)

A-wax was quick than a muthafucka to try to wax somebody's ass. I never knew what for 'cause he was always gettin' his ass whipped... Little midget-ass nigga...

Caine takes another pull from the bottle. It's more than half gone now. He turns up the volume on the stereo some more and crosses the floor to dance with Tonja.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Out in front of the house, J-Bone stands on the curb talking to a couple of L.A.P.D. officers. One of the officers is shining his flashlight on various people in the yard. He looks sort of nervous. Both officers keep one hand each on their pieces.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is packed now, even more filled than before. One big, smoky, funky, jam, no one can hardly dance. People are all up on each other, bumping and grinding; some of them not even trying to. This is the type of shit where fights break out.

Caine and O-Dog are dancing with two girls, each of them trying to put their bid in. Trying to clear some space for himself, Caine backs into the guy behind him. Hard. The guy turns around with much attitude.

CAINE

Sorry homeboy.

DANCING GUY

Fuck you, I'm 'bout to get in yo ass!

Quicker than Caine can even say anything, O-Dog has his 9mm. Beretta pressed against the guys cheek.

O-DOG

I don't think so.

The guy raises his hands, backs off.

O-Dog and Caine, shake hands and laugh about it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. - LATER

The crowd is far less, but the room is still smoky. People are up and about, getting ready to make their way out. Only the die hard partiers are still here.

Harold, stands on the porch talking to J-Bone. Their filtered shapes can be seen faintly through the screen.

HAROLD

Y'all nigga's hurry up. I'm hungry than a muthafucka!

Stacy is the first to head for the door.

STACY

Shiiit... I got the munchies in a big muthafuckin' way!

A-WAX

Yo big ass eat too much as it is.

Caine and O-Dog step out of the den, done dragging to the two girls they were talking to earlier.

CAINE

So what y'all gon' do? Me and Harold's goin' to Jack's...

O-DOG

Y'all nigga's wanna go to Jack n' a Crack?

Stacy is already out the door. A-wax, Jackee, and Tonja all nod.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A group of people file out of the house. The front yard is littered with paper bags and bottles. Most of the cars are gone now. A-Wax's, white, Cadillac convertible sits alone in the driveway, on narrow tires and tru-spoke rims.

A-WAX

Y'all go ahead, I gotta get some gas.

Harold and Caine head across the street to the car.

JACKEE

Dumb ass. You shoulda filled up
before we got here.

A-wax throws her a look as he jumps behind the wheel.

Caine calls from across the street.

CAINE

Y'all gonna follow us, right?

O-DOG

Yeah nigga, we know where it is.

Harold and Caine hop into the 525i. They sit parked, waiting for the others to pile into the caddy. A-Wax, O-Dog, Stacy, Jackee, and Tonja all jump into the convertible. What would ordinarily be cramped in the average car, this one seats five easily.

The 525i starts and heads up the street. A-Wax backs out of the driveway and follows them.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

After following the 525i for a while, A-Wax, pulls over to a gas station. Harold and Caine continue on ahead of them.

INT. 525i - NIGHT

Caine watches the Caddy turn into the gas station through the sideview mirror. He moves his head to beat of the music.

In the driver's seat next to him Harold lights up a cigarette. With the push a button the driver's side window powers down. He takes a long drag and lets the smoke sift from his mouth.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The night attendant watches everyone in the Caddy closely from within his tiny glass retreat.

Inside the car, A-Wax hands O-Dog a five dollar bill and jumps out. O-Dog steps out to pay the attendant.

The attendant opens the metal cash chute without ever taking his eyes off of O-Dog. One of his hands hangs loosely out of sight underneath the counter. O-Dog puts the money in the chute and the attendant pulls it back in. He punches the number in quickly, trying to concentrate on O-Dog.

A-Wax takes the nozzle off of the tank and starts to pump.

A-WAX
Stacy, wake yo ass up!

Near slobbering in the back seat, his head leaned over to the side, Stacy is knocked out.

INT. 525i - NIGHT

The streets fairly empty, the car rolls to a red light. Smoke is wafting through the interior, even though the window is down.

CAINE
You kinda fucked up, huh?

HAROLD
Shiiit..., all I had was two forties.

CAINE
Of what?

Harold's face turns lazily to him, smiles.

HAROLD
(laughing)
St. Ides.

CAINE
(laughing)
Yeaaaaah, you real fucked up.

In the turning lane, next to the 525i, a Sidekick full of brothers pulls up. Five of them.

Just as Caine motions to Harold, one of the guys jumps out, a 44. Magnum pointed straight at them.

EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

JUNIOR, an average looking guy in his teens, sporting a sweatshirt and baseball cap, rushes up on the car. His gun is pointed directly at Harold.

JUNIOR
Leave the keys in and get the fuck out!!

Two of the other guys in the Sidekick have their guns drawn as well.

Junior opens the drivers door, his gun almost touching Harold's head now.

INT. 525i - NIGHT

HAROLD
 Alright nigga, chill! Caine get
 out the car.

Caine slowly opens the passenger door but doesn't step out yet.

Harold starts to slide out of the car, although his feet are still on the pedals.

JUNIOR
 Get the fuck out or I'm bustin' on
 yo ass!!

As he is being pulled out, Harold reaches underneath the dashboard and grabs his gun. Before he can fire, the other guy shoots first.

A SHOT GOES OFF and blood, and the back of Harold's head splash against the windshield like a burst melon.

Harold's limp body falls back against the dashboard, his feet leaving the pedals, causing the car to stall out.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

The Cadillac is rolling up to the intersection where the "jack" is taking place.

A GUN SHOT IS HEARD. O-Dog stands up in the front seat, looking out ahead. He sees the Sidekick take off, leaving the 525i stranded in the street.

A person, presumably Caine, scrambles from the passenger side.

He turns to A-Wax, pointing up ahead.

O-DOG
 Hurry up nigga! They gettin'
 "jacked!!"

The car surges in speed, causing O-Dog to totter for a second.

INT. 525i - NIGHT

The guy is in the driver's seat now. A crumpled up, and very bloody, Harold lies in the passenger seat.

The windshield is full of blood, bone, and tissue. It looks like one big crimson sunscreen.

The guy looks out of the passenger side, sees Caine stumbling off in the street. He reaches over and closes the door.

The keys turn, but the guy can't see out of the windshield. The blood already drying, he leans forward and wipes the windshield with his hand. The image is reminiscent of second grade fingerpainting, as the blood only smears.

EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Running half bent over, Caine looks back to see the 525i burning rubber through the intersection. He makes his way to the street corner, running past a homeless vagrant.

His legs giving out on him, Caine collapses onto a bus bench. His left arm hanging limp, as he looks down to see his shirt soaking with blood.

With a SCREECH OF TIRES, the Cadillac pulls to the curb in front of him. Everybody jumps out, the engine still running.

CAINE

I got bucked on nigga...

A-WAX

C'mon, get this nigga in the car!

STACY

Where's Harold?!

CAINE

They got his ass, he's dead...

The girls are already starting to cry.

JACKEE

Oh my god! Oh my god!

Stacy and O-Dog grab Caine and help him to the car.

O-DOG

Who was it nigga?! Who "jacked" you?!

CAINE

I don't know...

(a beat)

This shit hurts man...

Stacy maneuvers Caine into the back seat with he and the girls. A-Wax and O-Dog hop back into the car immediately. With the pedal to the floor, the Caddy is off again.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Caine lays on his back, stretched out across Jackee and Tonja, with Stacy supporting him in the middle.

TONJA
Caine don't die! Don't die
Caine...!

O-Dog turns to the back seat.

O-DOG
How bad is it...?

Caine is mumbling, reaches for his shoulder area.

Stacy unbuttons Caine's shirt to expose a gaping hole in the shoulder/upper-back region.

STACY
This shit is bad man.

TONJA
We have to get him to a hospital!

A-WAX
Which way is King?

STACY
Man, fuck King! You can die
waitin' off in that muthafucka!

O-DOG
Where else we gon' take the nigga?!

Caine is laying pretty still now, his eye closed, blacked out.

JACKEE
Caine?! Caine?!

Stacy shakes him, hard.

STACY
KayDee wake up!! Wake up nigga!!

Caine's eyes flutter, then open faintly.

CAINE
What...? I need a doctor...

STACY
You damn right! You bleedin' all
over my shirt, now keep yo ass up!

O-DOG
Y'all keep that nigga awake!

A-Wax concentrates on the driving, the Caddy speeding through one red light after another.

CAINE (V.O.)

It was funny to hear how nigga's was cryin' and fussin' over my ass... Everyday in hood, nigga's be tryin' to act hard..., then somebody gets shot and the same hard muthafucka's get all emotional...

EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The Cadillac zips through one intersection too many.

Cruising down a dark street is an L.A. County Sheriff's car. Lights up and siren on, the sheriff's are soon in hot pursuit.

The sheriff's catch the Caddy with amazing speed, calling over the loud speaker for the car to stop.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Everyone turns to the SOUND OF THE SIREN.

JACKEE

Damn! "One time!!"

STACY

Don't stop y'all! This nigga keep blackin' out on me back here.

O-DOG

(to A-Wax)

Keep goin' "G." We ain't but a few a few blocks from the hospital.

A-WAX

That muthafucka's probably callin' backup right now.

O-DOG

Fuck that! Nigga keep goin'!

(a beat)

Bust a left at the light!

EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The sheriff's car tails the Cadillac closely, keeping up with its every turn.

The Cadillac turns through an intersection, cutting off two cars. The Sheriff's car slows, a little at the intersection, then continues pursuit.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARTIN LUTHER KING HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The SOUND OF POLICE SIRENS can be heard faintly out over the parking lot. Sirens are nothing out of the ordinary for a hospital parking lot, but the chase ensuing on the street in front of it is.

The Cadillac comes into view and turns sharply, running up the curb into the parking lot.

The sheriff's car follows right behind it.

Also, coming in the opposite direction is an L.A.P.D. car.

The Cadillac blows through the parking lot until it reaches the emergency room entrance. A parking space not really viewed as important right now, the Caddy pulls up next to the red zone.

O-Dog and A-Wax jump out of the front seats, Jackee and Tonja climbing out behind them. Stacy stands up in the back seat and steps out of the car over the rear trunk. Caine is tossed over his right shoulder bouncing like a rag doll.

The sheriff's car pulls to a stop a few yards away. Two sheriffs get out of the car, guns drawn. The one coming out of the passenger side has the Ithaca shotgun pointed at them. The driver remains, shielded behind his door, yelling at them.

SHERIFF #1

Get your hands in the air now!!!

Jackee, Tonja, O-Dog, and A-Wax all raise their hands. Stacy lifts his free hand in the air.

The sheriff with the shotgun aims it at Stacy.

SHERIFF #2

You!! Both hands in the air!!

STACY

He's shot man...!!

SHERIFF #2

Fuck You!!! Get your hands up now!! I'll blow your fucking head off!!!

The sheriffs begin to move up on them now. The L.A.P.D. car SCREECHES to a stop behind them. Two more officers jump out, guns drawn.

Stacy still only has one hand in the air.

SHERIFF #1

Turn around!! Hands behind your
head and down on your knees!! Now,
damnit!!

Everyone follows the orders, knowing exactly what is required after years of run-ins with the police. Stacy tries to kneel down, letting Caine off of his shoulder slowly.

The sheriff with the shotgun rushes Stacy, shoving the barrel directly into his face.

SHERIFF #2

On your fucking stomach now!!!
Move!!! I'll pull this trigger!!!

Both sheriff's are on the group now. Caine falls hard on the pavement as the first sheriff forces Stacy down. He pulls out his handcuffs and with the gun aimed at the back of Stacy's head, he locks him.

Caine lays on the ground trying to move. The sheriff kicks his hands out from under him and forces him to face the ground. He pushes Caine's shoulder only to feel the dampness of his shirt.

Caine would probably be screaming in pain, if he wasn't blacked out again.

SHERIFF #1

This one's bleeding!

One of the L.A.P.D. cops is also on the group now. The other, standing back from the scene with his shotgun bearing down on them.

The first sheriff turns Caine over onto his back. He lifts back the shirt to see the open wound.

SHERIFF #1

(continuing)

I'm taking him inside!

The two other officers acknowledge and continue searching the others.

The sheriff scoops Caine up and heads for the emergency room entrance.

INT. MARTIN LUTHER KING HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Spectators are looking on from inside the hospital. Curious nurses and orderlies, more interested in the commotion than in the bunch of people "waiting" in the emergency room.

One of the nurses opens the door for the sheriff, who is already breathing heavy after carrying Caine a few yards. He hurries up the long hallway leading to the reception area.

The room is filled with African - Americans and Latino patrons to unfortunate to have decent medical coverage. Minor burn victims, abused women, people coughing and wheezing all sorts of unknown viruses through the air..., all of them are here.

A young Latino boy, no older than ten, sits on a chair in the corner, holding a piece of dark red gauze over his abdomen.

With all of the gang activity going on in the neighborhood, shootings and stabbings get some sort of demented priority. If the injury is bad enough, they can get you in to see a doctor after about fifteen or twenty minutes.

If they think you're dying, it takes about ten minutes; but only after all of the paperwork is completed.

With the sheriff carrying him, Caine is immediately placed upon a stretcher. A doctor rips open his shirt and looks at the wound. The blood has turned into a black-ish glob around the open flesh. Other assistants are helping the doctor now.

DOCTOR

(to Sheriff)

What was he shot with?

SHERIFF #1

I don't know. It looks like either a 44., 357., or 38. or 9mm. with hollowpoints. All at close range.

DOCTOR

(sarcastically)

Thanks for the ballistics report.

(to nurse)

Where's his paperwork?

NURSE

We didn't get any doctor.

The doctor holds his flashlight over Caine's eyes, motions to the nurse. She breaks a packet of smelling salts open over Caine's nose. He stirs.

DOCTOR

Did he have any friends with him that could give us his information?

SHERIFF #1

Uh..., yeah..., hold on.

The sheriff heads back down the hallway, as Caine is fed an i.v. and oxygen.

Responding to the treatment, Caine opens his eyes fully, staring around at all of the faces, the bodies. Everything is hazy. An old episode of Good Times plays on the television.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sunlight bathing the room in brightness, its sterile interior and peaceful atmosphere seem in quite contrast to the world outside.

Caine sits on the side of the bed, dressed in everything but his shoes. He leans over, painfully, to slip them on.

CAINE (V.O.)

Laying there in the hospital for two days gave me time to think. They had the mobster weekend showin' on cable... I watched everything from The Public Enemy, to The Godfathers, to Scarface... It was all right there..., a hundred years of American history told me the deal... Wasn't nobody gon' give me shit. I had to take what I wanted...

CUT TO:

EXT. MARTIN LUTHER KING HOSPITAL - DAY

Caine sits in a wheelchair being pushed by a nurse. He is flanked by both of his grandparents. Neither one of them says anything to him.

At the car, Caine rises from the chair and stands awkwardly while his grandparents open the car doors.

Inside the car, Grandpapa undoes the passenger door lock. Grandmama opens the door, reaches in and unlocks the back seat, then steps inside. Caine follows.

INT. CAR - DAY

Caine sits in the middle of the back seat, looking around at the streets as they drive. Grandmama and Grandpapa still haven't said anything. Grandpapa watches him through the rearview mirror.

GRANDPAPA

Mmmhmm..., them streets are what got you into this mess in the first place.

(MORE)

GRANDPAPA (cont'd)

I done told you about runnin' with
them thugs, boy. 1 Corinthians
15:33... Bad associations spoil
useful habits.

Grandmama reaches over and touches Grandpapa's arm in an effort to still any further sermon.

Caine sighs in the back seat. As soon as the scriptures start coming, he knows Grandpapa is mad at him. He slouches down and leans his head back.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grandmama steps into the apartment forcefully. The door sometimes sticks and you really have to push. It can be quite annoying, as evidenced by the look on Grandmama's face. The barred door hangs open outside of the regular door.

Caine steps in behind her, Grandpapa following him. Caine goes directly to the kitchen, where he finds a large pitcher of Kool-Aid inside the refrigerator.

Grandmama goes back to her bedroom, already shedding her sweater. She's the type of Grandmama that always wears a sweater, even in the summertime.

Grandpapa seats himself in his favorite, green vinyl, recliner. The plastic covered recliner squeaks when he sits down. All the furniture is covered in plastic.

Although, there are no children in the home, Grandmama and Grandpapa like to protect everything. When you don't have much, you learn to appreciate what you do have.

No one has said anything since they were in the car and it's beginning to feel sort of strange. As Caine puts the pitcher back into the refrigerator, he calls to his Grandpapa.

CAINE

You want some iced tea
Grandpapa...?

Caine holds the refrigerator open waiting for a reply. There isn't one.

As soon as Caine closes the refrigerator and grabs his cup, Grandpapa calls.

GRANDPAPA

Yes, bring me a glass, Caine.

Caine rolls his eyes, but reaches back into the refrigerator.

CAINE

Yes, sir.

Grandmama returns from the bedroom in a much lighter mood.

GRANDMAMA

Ronnie came by yesterday, Caine. She wanted to see how you were doing, but didn't know when you got out of the hospital so I told her you'd call over there.

CAINE

I'll call her, Grandmama.

Caine walks into the living room, a cup in his left hand, a glass in his right. Grandpapa always uses glasses.

A KNOCK at the door.

Caine hands the glass to Grandpapa then goes to the door. He looks out of the peephole, which is more of an involuntary action than a desire to be cautious.

He undoes the locks to the door, then to the bars.

O-Dog stands on the steps, his hand out. They shake.

O-DOG

What up "G"...?

CAINE

What up... hold on.

(to Grandparents)

I'm gonna be in the front if you need me.

His grandparents nod and return their attention to the television.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

O-DOG

How's the shoulder, nigga?

CAINE

Fucked up... but it ain't no thang.

O-DOG

Shit, that ain't what you was screamin' on the way to the hospital.

(mimicking)

"Ahh..., ahh, this shit hurts."

(MORE)

O-DOG (cont'd)
 "Where's the doctor...?" You was
 soundin' like a bitch!

CAINE
 Eat a dick, nigga! This shit did
 hurt. It ain't like t.v., believe
 me. And y'all niggas act like you
 don't know how to visit a
 muthafucka... Sharif's the only
 one that came by.

O-DOG
 Man, didn't nobody wanna see yo ass
 layed up in a hospital... Besides,
 the way we got gaffled up by the
 sheriff's at that muthafucka?!
 Shiiit, I wasn't about to go back
 off in there!

Caine laughs at the thought of everything.

O-DOG
 (continuing)
 ...And Stacy and them is mad at yo
 ass drippin' blood all on they
 clothes n'shit.

CAINE
 Fuck all y'all.

O-Dog sits in one of the chairs in front of the apartment.

O-DOG
 I got some shit for you, nigga...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Grandpapa stands at the window, peering out from between the
 curtains. He looks like he has been standing there for
 sometime.

He moves over to the door and calls outside.

GRANDPAPA
 KayDee, Kevin..., come inside here.

EXT./INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Caine and O-Dog look towards the apartment.
 Caine mouths for O-Dog to come inside with him.

Grandmama disappears back into the bedroom as the guys step
 inside.

CAINE
You called us Grandpapa?

GRANDPAPA
I did. Now the two of you sit down
over here on the couch.

Caine sighs to himself, he knows what's coming. Whenever his grandfather calls him by his real name, it's time to talk.

O-Dog moves hesitantly to the couch, unsure of how to act.

Grandpapa settles back into his recliner, flips the television off.

GRANDPAPA
(continuing)
I want to talk to the two of you
about the trouble you've been
getting into.

O-Dog lays back on the couch, not sure of what to expect.
Caine's head drops. He hates when this happens.

GRANDPAPA
(continuing)
Boys don't you know the Lord didn't
put you here to be killing and
shooting each other? It's right
there in the Bible. Exodus 20:13.
"Thou shalt not kill."

CAINE
Grandpapa, I ain't never killd
nobody.

GRANDPAPA
I doubt that, and Kevin..., I've
heard stories about you!

O-DOG
Sir, I don't think God cared too
much, else he wouldn't 'a put us
here... I mean look where we
live..., it's f-- It's messed up.

GRANDPAPA
You've no faith boy. The Lord
don't care about all this petty
stuff... Who got the bigger house,
or the car, or where you live!
What I'm sayin' is that you two are
on the wrong path. Romans 6:13.
"For the wages of sin is death; but
the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Caine slouches back into the couch.

CAINE

Grandpapa, you know I ain't never been much into no religion.

GRANDPAPA

Luke 4:8. "...Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

CAINE (V.O.)

After three scriptures, I knew we was in for it then.

Although we can no longer hear them, the conversation continues, Grandpapa laying into Caine and O-Dog.

CAINE (V.O.)

(continuing)

I don't know how O-Dog took to sermons but I hated 'em. God never did nothing for me or else I wouldn't be the way I was. Blacks spend all that time up in church waitin' for heaven; then they have to go home and live in hell... Just never made much sense to me...

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. APARTMENT - LATER

Caine and O-Dog are walking down the steps. Grandpapa stands in the doorway, holding the barred door open.

GRANDPAPA

Caine.

Caine turns back to his Grandpapa, annoyed, but always respectful.

CAINE

Yes sir?

GRANDPAPA

Do you care if you live or die?

Caine stares at him. The time seems to slow to forever.

Finally, he answers.

CAINE

I don't know...

Shaking his head, Grandpapa steps back inside, pulling the bars shut behind him.

Caine stares at the door as it CLANGS shut.

O-DOG (O.S.)

Yo, Caine... Caine...

Caine turns around to face O-Dog, who motions for him to join in a walk.

EXT. PROJECTS - DAY

Walking through the yards, they can see everything that goes on in the projects. Fortunately, not much is going on today. O-Dog stops, faces Caine.

CAINE

Sorry about that, nigga. Grandpops can get carried away with that Bible.

O-DOG

Hell yeah. He be in church every Sunday, huh?

CAINE

Faithfully. Sittin' up in there prayin' to "white" Jesus.

O-DOG

Shit, blacks people got too much religion as it is... But yo, check this out..., what I was gon' tell you 'fore we went in... Word got back about them niggas that jacked you and Harold. I know where they be kickin' it at...

Caine stares at him, just waiting to hear the words.

O-DOG

(continuing)

You down with the "187"....?

No need to think about it, Caine answers quickly.

CAINE

In a big muthafuckin' way.

O-DOG

Alright then, its on for tonight.

They shake on it, each holding the others hand just a little longer than normally.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A group of people are scattered about the living room, watching the television. The tape from O-Dog's liquor store robbery plays on the set. (This is the first time we as an audience actually see the shooting.)

Caine and O-Dog sit on the couch. They're the youngest ones in the room.

CAINE (V.O.)

Me and O-Dog didn't keep no big guns around the crib. We had to rush the O.G.'s for that... Gangsters. They was bangin' back when I was five years old... O-Dog's stupid ass was givin' out copies of that damn videotape... Laughin' about the shit. I just knew we was gon' get sweated.

The other guys in the room are laughing at the tape as O-Dog points out the action coming up in almost every frame.

ANDRE

An older guy, somewhere in his late thirties sits, in a recliner in the corner, a can of beer in his hand, a half-disposed of twelve-pack at his feet. A full beard covers his jaw, and a pot belly hangs onto his lap.

CAINE (V.O.)

Andre was the real O.G. Him and his nigga's started the hood back in the seventies sometime. Some big Afro wearin' gangsters... My dad used to run with 'em...

CLYDE, (27), lays on the living room floor arm wrestling with CHAUNCY, (23). Both of them are pretty big, although Clyde is the one with all the definition. They look like two whales going head to head. A big, fat joint rests in an ashtray next to them and they laugh at the scenes from the tape.

O-DOG

Yo Chauncy, let me get a hit.

CHAUNCY

waves O-Dog off. He's concentrating on the arm wrestling.

CAINE (V.O.)

Chauncy'd been shot and stabbed more times than anybody. Muthafucka almost couldn't toss up a bottle without turnin' into a sprinkler, he had so many holes in his ass.

Caine slides down the couch, reaches for the joint, but is grabbed by the free hand of

CLYDE

Clyde squeezes the hell out of Caine's arm, even as he starts to win the armwrestling match. Caine tries to pull his arm away but Clyde has a pit bull-like lock on him.

CAINE (V.O.)

Clyde stayed in the pen so damn much he didn't know how to do nothin' but lift weights and jack-off. Seemed like he got a new sentence every other year, gettin' twenty tatoo's every time he went in...

A tall, lanky, guy enters the living room from the hallway. He is dressed only in boxer shorts and a t-shirt. LEW-LOC, (22) carries a single pump, sawed off shotgun. He points the barrel directly at O-Dog.

O-Dog doesn't flinch. Is it because he doesn't think the gun is loaded, or because he thinks Lew-Loc won't pull the trigger? Neither. He's just the type of guy to stare a loaded gun in the face.

He hands the gun to Caine.

LEW-LOC

Now you ready to put a hole in a muthafucka.

Caine takes the rifle, and some extra shells.

CAINE (V.O.)

Lew-Loc was next craziest nigga in the hood. He was almost as bad as O-Dog. Shot one of his homies one time for shorting him \$20. Emptied the gun in him. He was a little part-time basehead though...

Caine grips the gun in his hands, holding it up to his eyes, looking down the barrel.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

O-Dog sits behind the wheel, comfortable and relaxed.

Caine sits in the back seat, the shotgun placed across his lap. The rear window is down, the hot summer wind blowing in his face.

CAINE (V.O.)

There wasn't really much to talk about. All I knew was we was gon' find some 'a them niggas, and peel they caps. I ain't never had to kill nobody before, but I knew it wasn't no thang to me.

O-Dog calls from the front seat.

O-DOG

Alright, we gon' roll up and smoke some 'a them fools...

CAINE

As long as it ain't no crowd, nigga. I ain't shootin' up no kids or no old folks.

O-DOG

Shiit, I'll smoke anybody. I don't give a fuck.

CAINE

Not me. I ain't killin' no kids.

A fast-food restaurant can be seen in the distance ahead. The car cruises along slowly, just scanning for some of the other guys.

CAINE

(continuing)

And nigga, I'm tellin' you. You keep showin' that fuckin' tape around and we gon' get sweated. I do not feel like goin' to the pen and gettin' my asshole tore out!

O-DOG

Fuck you, ain't nothin' gon' happen! Yo ass always paranoid about some shit. C'mon, let's find these fools, smoke 'em, and get on.

EXT. HOT DOG JOINT - NIGHT

Two guys stand at the drive-thru window talking to one of the employees inside. We recognize Junior as the guy that "jacked" Harold and Caine. LLOYD, the other one, looks familiar as well. These boys are at the wrong place at the wrong time.

JUNIOR

C'mon Deena, hook us up with a couple 'a them hot dogs

DEENA

Shhh..., you'll get me in trouble.

LLOYD

Well if you come up off the dogs, we'll be out ya way.

A raggedy, white, Toyota Tercel starts to pull into the drive-thru.

Only a few people are seated at the dining tables outside. All of them teen-agers or older.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Caine is crouched down in the back seat, the shotgun tight in his hand.

CAINE

You see any 'a them niggas?

O-DOG

Hold up.

(a beat)

Yeah..., its two of 'em right at the drive-up window. How you wanna do it nigga?

CAINE

Roll right up on 'em. I wanna blow a muthafucka's head off.

O-Dog pulls up to the speaker/menu.

O-DOG

Okay, I'm 'a act like I'm orderin' then we just drive up on 'em. I'll tell you when to blast.

CAINE

Bet. Let's do it nigga.

Caine reaches to the floor of the car, pulls up a black ski mask. He hastily pulls it over his head.

O-Dog rolls the driver's side window down and leans out.

A crackly VOICE comes over the speaker.

VOICE (V.O.)

Yes, can I take your order?

INT. HOT DOG JOINT - NIGHT

Deena stands in front of a computer with a head set on. O-Dog's distorted, and incoherent, voice comes over a loud speaker. He rattles off a long order.

The two guys stand at the window, munching on some french fries. Junior is actually more interest in Deena's behind than he is in the fries.

DEENA

That's two chili cheese dogs, a corn dog, an order of fries, one regular hot dog, and a large coke... Pull forward, I'll have your total at the window.

EXT. HOT DOG JOINT - NIGHT

The Tercel begins to pull forward slowly.

O-DOG (V.O.)

Get ready nigga...

The two guys are still at the window, trying to sneak off every last bit of food. They pay no mind to the car driving up.

Deena is walking towards the window with two corn dogs in her hands when the Tercel is upon them.

A silhouette figure and a shotgun barrel appears in the back seat.

Deena is about to hand the corn dogs to Junior.

The Tercel rolls slowly. A blaze of gunpowder and a SHOTGUN BLAST.

The buckshot exits through the front of Junior's neck, taking with it, most of his flesh, and a bit of his skull.

Deena is shocked by the BLAST, but terrified when sprayed with the remains of Junior's throat and spinal cord.

His body sinks to the ground, leaving a streak of blood on the window. Lloyd turns to make a break for it. He dashes out of the drive-thru, headed for the street.

The Tercel follows. Caine leans out of the window this time. A BLAST square in the back, he sends Lloyd flying to the pavement.

The crowd has since scattered, people running to their cars, screaming and yelling.

The Tercel hits the street and keeps rolling. Drive-by successful.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caine lays face up in bed, staring at the ceiling. With his shirt off and his hands folded behind his head, the white bandage from his gunshot wound contrasts his brown skin.

CAINE (V.O.)

The ride home was pretty quite...
I wasn't really thinkin' 'bout
nothin', 'cept I got hungry. O-Dog
calls 'em "killer-cramps." It was
a trip seein' the bodies drop like
that, blood everywhere n'shit...
Fuck it. It didn't bother me
none...

Caine raises his left arm and rotates his shoulder a couple of times. When done, he rolls over onto his right side and tucks his pillow under his head.

The SOUND OF A HELICOPTER is heard in the distance. The ghetto lullaby, chop-chop-chop-ing its restless children to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT./INT. HOUSE - DAY

Caine stands on the porch, pounding on bars. The inside door is open and a figure appears to be coming to the door.

Ronnie walks towards the door, recognizing Caine through the screen. She twists the key in the lock and holds the door open. He steps inside, the door closing behind him.

CAINE

How ya doin'?

Glad to see him, she smiles, steps forward and gives him a hug.

RONNIE

How're you? How's your shoulder,
or is it your back...?

Caine rotates his left shoulder, sampling his health for her.

CAINE

I'm cool, it went straight through.

Ronnie grimaces, moves towards the kitchen.

RONNIE

You want somethin' to eat?

CAINE

Na, I'm set.

Caine seats himself on the couch, looking around curiously.

CAINE

(continuing)

Where's Anthony and Kyla?

Ronnie calls from the kitchen.

RONNIE (O.S)

Kyla's at softball practice and
Ant's sleep.

Caine nods his head. He gets up and starts to walk through the living room.

CAINE

I'm gonna use your bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN.

Ronnie stands working over a stove.

RONNIE

Alright.

She turns from the stove and goes to the table, where she has a plate and bowl set. She grabs the bowl and turns back to the stove.

INT. BEDROOM.

Caine stands in front of a dresser in what must be Ronnie's room. Not that the room is covered in female decor, but the tray with all the make-up and perfume on the dresser sort of gives it away.

He pulls open the top right drawer, and clears some of the garments from the corner. Digging deep into his Levis, scraping his hand on his pager, he comes up with a fat wad of cash. He places the stash into the corner and closes the dresser.

Caine walks out of the bedroom, pulling the door closed behind him. Just as he comes out of the room, he is met in the hall by a wide-eyed five-year-old. ANTHONY, looks up at Caine, rubbing the sleep out of his little eyes.

(The little boy bears a peculiar resemblance to the five-year-old Caine, that we saw earlier.) Caine kneels down and scoops Anthony up, carrying him into the living room.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

A bunch of guys are gathered out on the corner. Among them are O-Dog, A-Wax, Lew-Loc, and Chauncy. Other, fucked up-looking people are there also. Men and women. 40 oz. bottles aren't the only things being held in hands, as evidenced by the interchange of money from certain people to others.

Dope is being sold by the minute and everyone, the dealers that is, are out here enjoying it.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

CAINE

What's wrong little man?

Ronnie sits Anthony in a chair, a phone book placed underneath. His lunch before him on the table.

ANTHONY

My head hurts.

RONNIE

He has an ear infection.

CAINE

D'you take him to the doctor.

RONNIE

Yeah..., who are you Marcus Welby?

For a sick kid, Anthony is devouring his meal. Trying to make as small a mess as he can, he sops up his soup, with a piece of bread.

ANTHONY

Caine...

Caine leans over to talk to Anthony. He laughs at the mess all over the little boy's shirt.

CAINE

Oh, what you feedin' the shirt now?

ANTHONY

No. You wanna play me in Genesis?

CAINE

Yeah. I'll play you. What you wanna play?

ANTHONY

Boxing. I'll whip ya ass --

RONNIE

Anthony!

Nothing escapes a mother's ears. Ronnie calls from the counter in disapproval of the child's choice of words.

Caine lifts him out of the chair, puts him down.

CAINE

What, you gon' wear him out now?

RONNIE

No, but listen to the way he talks. He's only four-years-old.

CAINE

Hey, you gotta be hard growin' up out here.

RONNIE

Yeah right, he gets it from you, Dog, and Stacy.

Anthony taps Caine on the leg and runs out of the kitchen, headed for his bedroom. Caine waves to him.

CAINE

Well his daddy's the one that looked after my ass so I'm 'a make sure this little nigga got what he needs to live out here.

Ronnie can only shake her head. At the tender age of twenty-four she is truly a loving and caring parent, raising two kids by herself.

RONNIE

Speakin' of his daddy, I got a letter from him today.

CAINE

Oh yeah, what's that nigga up to?

RONNIE

Liftin' and tryin' to read every book in the library. He asked about you in the letter. I'll get it when I'm through in here.

CAINE

Alright cool, I'm 'a be in the room, beatin' ya son up at this game.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Chauncy is perched on top of a fence, a bottle in his hand. Looking out over things, he does a double-take on a street, not sure of what he saw. He follows an imaginary line through the houses to where the street comes out next.

Turning out onto the larger street is an L.A. County Sheriff's car.

The car has definitely spotted them, as the lights instantly flash on.

A 40oz. bottle crashes to the pavement and Chauncy hops off the wall.

CHAUNCY

"One-time!!" Break!!

The crowd looks like a chinese fire drill, as everyone, dealers and baseheads, take off running.

The chase is on.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Caine sits on the floor, next to Anthony, a game pad in his hand. Anthony resets the game for two players and he and Caine go at it. The little kid is pretty good, as we see his man pummel Caine's with body shots.

Caine stops for a minute, reaches down and pulls a 9mm. automatic handgun from his waist. He places it down next to him and re-engages himself in the boxing match.

CAINE

Now I can wear you out you little punk.

Anthony is still winning. He spends a great deal more time playing this than Caine. Anthony's fighter jabs quickly and then comes with an uppercut that knocks Caine's fighter out. Caine puts his game pad down and stares at the little boy.

ANTHONY

Let me see that.

Caine looks around to see what Anthony is motioning at.

ANTHONY

(continuing)

The gun.

Caine looks down at the gun, then back at Anthony.

INT. BEDROOM.

Ronnie stands in front of the dresser searching for something. She lifts things up, sifts through papers, nothing.

RONNIE

(to herself)

Where'd I put that letter.

She starts pulling drawers open and looking under clothing. After going through three drawers, she opens the one on the top right.

Ronnie lifts a few shirts only to find a wad of cash in the corner. She picks up the money and stares at it.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM.

Caine is on his knees, behind Anthony. Anthony's arms, braced by Caine's are outstretched before him. His little hands hold the gun as best as they can.

CAINE

See that's all you do is hold it
out like that, pull the trigger and
smoke somebody.

Anthony closes one eye, aiming at some fictitious enemy. He pulls on the trigger as hard as he can, makes a gunshot sound with his mouth.

ANTHONY

Punk muthafucka.

Caine laughs to himself.

CAINE

Yeah see, you ain't goin' out like
ya pops. They got him up on a life
sentence. You gon' be different,
you gon' get over.

Ronnie swings open the door and is shocked at this picture. Little Anthony stands with the gun pointed directly at her.

She ducks back quickly out of the way.

CAINE
 (continuing)
 It ain't loaded!

Ronnie steps back into the room, furious. She snatches the gun out of Anthony's hand and thrusts it at Caine.

RONNIE
 What the fuck are you doin'?! I do not want my son learnin' how to pull drive-by's in the middle of the night!!

CAINE
 What?! I was just showing him how to shoot.

ANTHONY
 Yeah mama.

Ronnie reaches down, snatches Anthony up by the arm, and busts on his behind a few times.

RONNIE
 (to Anthony)
 If I ever catch you with a gun in your hand again, I'm a' wear yo little ass out till it's raw!! You got that?!!

She releases him, and the screaming child goes running off out of the room.

Ronnie stares at Caine unbelievably. She pulls the money out of her pocket and holds it up to his face.

RONNIE
 (continuing)
 And what is this?! I thought I told you to stop givin' us money.

CAINE
 Don't gimme that, you know y'all need it! I don't see you with no job around here!

RONNIE
 I don't want your money Caine.

CAINE
 Look, Pernell looked out for me or my punk ass probably woulda been dead by now. I'm just payin' him back.

RONNIE

You already payed him back! You finished high school and you're alive at eighteen. Why don't you do somethin' with yourself Caine...? 'Fore you end up like he did...

Caine stares at her. Just as he begins his response, the conversation is interrupted by the BEEP OF A PAGER. He reaches down, checks the number.

CAINE

...I gotta go.

Ronnie stares after him as he exits the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Anthony lies on the couch in tears. Caine rubs the little guys head as he walks past.

RONNIE (O.S.)

Caine. The letter...

He turns around to see Ronnie standing in the hallway. She tosses an envelope to him.

It lands on the floor at his feet. Caine kneels down, picks it up and steps out of the house into the sunlight.

As the screen door closes after him, Ronnie watches him walk off across the street, headed for who knows what sort of trouble.

CAINE (V.O.)

Ronnie wasn't like the rest of us. She was down, but she wanted out of this place bad... But as long as she was here wasn't no way in the world she coulda ever taught li'l Anthony to be a man in these streets. I know I wasn't no role model or no shit like that, but somebody had to look out for the little brother...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Caine is walking up the sidewalk to the apartment.

Grandpapa and his friend, Miles, are playing domino's out front.

CAINE

What up Grandpapa. Miles.

Grandpapa drops a bone, scores fifteen points, and checks the score.

GRANDPAPA

Hi Caine. Where've you been all morning?

CAINE

Just hangin' out a little.

GRANDPAPA

Mmmhmm. Well your aunt Betty called. The police finally found Harold's body.

CAINE

For real. Where'd they find it?

GRANDPAPA

I'm not sure. Something about an open field and shallow grave. I guess the smell got to be too much for the neighbors or something.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Caine doesn't bother to look down to check the number. Not that his grandfather doesn't know what he does, but out of respect for the man.

CAINE

So is there gonna be a funeral?

GRANDPAPA

I guess there'll be a service or something..., next week sometime.

Caine nods, starts to go on in the house.

GRANDPAPA

(continuing)

Your Grandmama's at the market. There's a little something on the stove though.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Caine steps inside, the barred door CLANGS shut behind him. He goes to the couch, sits down, and picks up the phone.

He starts to punch the numbers, but stops. He leans forward, reaches around, and removes the gun from his back. He puts it down by his leg, just in case Grandpapa walks in.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

The RINGING PHONE is lifted to O-Dog's face.

O-DOG

Yeah, what up...? Coolin'... Me, A-Wax, Lew-Loc, Andre, some bitches... Yeah, but, uh, Andre wanna know if you down to get a car tonight...? Alright... Out.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Andre and some white man, in a dress shirt and polyester slacks, stand in front of the door talking.

ANDRE

Okay, a black, Nissan Maxima, 1990.

The man takes a picture out of his breast pocket, hands it to Andre.

INSURANCE MAN

Yes, just like this one.

ANDRE

Alright..., come around tomorrow night and we'll hook you up.

INSURANCE MAN

At night...?

Andre stares at him.

INSURANCE MAN

(continuing)

... Okay, uh..., I'll be here tomorrow then.

The man turns around and starts out of the yard, walking somewhat timidly as he treads through the ghetto.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Cadillac turns off of the main street into a residential block. The neighborhood is markedly different than the one the guys live in. This block has the flavor of the Westside of Los Angeles.

CAINE (V.O.)

Sometimes insurance people or mechanics would pay us to go steal car parts, or a whole car. That way they could save money on good parts and still charge fools up the ass for repairs... We always stole the cars from "white" neighborhoods. You know nigga's don't be takin' care of shit. Steal a car from a "black" neighborhood and the muthafucka might not even start up, let alone run good...

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Six eyes scan the street looking for a black, 1990 Maxima. Caine, O-Dog, and A-Wax are laid back in the car. Caine is stretched out in the back seat, with a A-Wax driving and O-Dog sitting "shotgun."

O-Dog lounges deep in the seat, his right arm hanging out over the side of the car. The music is off and everything is pretty much quiet.

BOOM!! A LOUD NOISE is HEARD.

O-DOG

Aaaagghh!!

O-Dog slumps over onto A-Wax.

CAINE

Dog...!?

A-WAX

Oh shit!

A-Wax swerves, veering over to the side of the street when, O-Dog pops up laughing hysterically.

O-DOG

Got y'all niggas!

Caine lets out a sigh of relief, that is laced with anger.

CAINE

Nigga, damn! I thought you was hit!

A-WAX

Stupid fucka!

A-Wax is so mad, he just pulls back onto the street and drives. Silently. O-Dog is busting up with laughter. He raises his right hand, shows it to the guys, lowers it over the side of the car the POUNDS on the door. BOOM!! He busts up laughing again.

The shit that O-Dog finds amusing...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CADILLAC - LATER

The three of them rolling in the car, still looking for a Maxima.

CAINE

Man I wish muthafucka's would start tellin' nigga's where these cars are, 'stead of havin' us drive all over L.A. tryin' to find one.

O-DOG

You ain't lyin'...

A-WAX

Nigga, look...

A-Wax, who still looks mad, points to a house two lots up.

A black Maxima is parked in the driveway. They roll slowly towards the house.

O-DOG

It's about fuckin' time.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Rolling with the lights out, the Cadillac pulls up to the curb behind the driveway. The street lights are on, but the street is pretty quite.

Caine and O-Dog hop out of the car and creep up to the Maxima slowly, just in case there's a presence detecting alarm. Nothing sounds as Caine peers into the drivers side window, careful not to touch the car yet. He doesn't see any sign of an alarm.

CAINE

Yo. No alarm.

A-Wax reaches into the back seat, tosses O-Dog a duffle bag. He catches the bag, hands it to Caine.

Caine pulls out the "Slim Jim" while O-Dog stands by, with wire cutters, just in case an alarm is tripped. A-Wax looks on from inside the Caddy.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

With the lock popped and still no alarm, Caine hops into the front seat. He unlocks the passenger side. O-Dog runs around the front end of the car to the passenger side as Caine works on starting the car.

Boom! A couple of hard blows and he peels the steering column. Caine turns the ignition and is ready to roll.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A-Wax takes off when he sees the Maxima rolling out of the driveway. Lights out, through the darkness, the Caddy blasts down the street, the Maxima right behind it.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Caine sits behind the wheel with O-Dog next to him.

O-DOG

When you gon' get it out the shop?

CAINE

This weekend. Watch, I'm 'a roll up, and y'all nigga's gon' be jockin'.

O-DOG

Shiiit..., a dukey brown Iroc?! I don't think so.

Caine laughs, glances up into the rearview mirror.

CAINE

Hold up nigga. Somebody's rollin' up quick.

O-Dog checks the sideview mirror.

Red and Blue lights flash on, spinning round and round in troublesome spirals.

CAINE

(Continuing)

Fuck!!

O-DOG

Where'd that nigga A-Wax go?!

CAINE

He's way the hell up there!

O-Dog looks back, sees the CHP cruiser closing.

O-DOG
What you gon' do nigga?

CAINE
Fuck it. It's on!

Caine hammers down and the Maxima speeds for the nearest off-ramp.

EXT. OFF-RAMP - NIGHT

The Maxima takes the turn at near full speed, its wheels wobbling as it comes off the turn into traffic.

The CHP cruiser slows as it exits the freeway, then resumes the chase. The officer can be seen, with radio in hand, as he follows the Maxima.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

O-Dog now has his seat belt on, gripping the dash board, as best he can.

O-DOG
Damn nigga! Who taught you how to drive?! You see them red lights?!!

CAINE
Fuck you, its three in the mornin'!
I ain't gonna hit nobody!

O-DOG
Goddamn, nigga. Just check the muthafu --

O-Dog's sentence is cut off as Caine takes a hard right.

Speeding down another street, Caine's eyes search the road.

In the distance ahead, two more police cars turn onto the street, headed towards them.

CAINE
Shit, nigga. We gon' have to get out and break.

O-DOG
Stop the muthafucka then!

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

The CHP cruiser is close on their tail, and the two cars coming from the opposite direction are closing fast.

The Maxima dips into a school parking lot. Almost before the wheels stop turning, O-Dog's foot hits the pavement at a run.

The cruiser pulls up next to them, but Caine leaps from the car like Carl Lewis. The CHP officer attempts to give chase, but it's hard to run with twenty pounds of equipment on your waist.

Running through a dark field, Caine and O-Dog come up on a fence. They hit it in stride, scaling it as if they were the ones who'd had academy training. They land on the other side hard, the fence tearing Caine's jeans.

They sprint for the street, but another police car is headed towards them. With no place else to go, they break across to a residential block.

They can hear the VOICES of the cops and RADIO CHATTER as it draws closer. A new sound. BARKING. One of the cars must have been a K-9 unit.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Caine limps to a fence and pulls himself up. He grabs a pipe and swings his leg onto the roof. O-Dog follows his moves and does likewise.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The VOICES are drawing much closer now. The BARKING. The sweeping rays of several high-powered flashlights. The shine of the moon on the Colt 45., the Ithaca pump, the Glock 7. It kind of brings to mind images of an 18th century witch hunt.

Or slave hunt...

EXT. HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

Caine and O-Dog are laying flat on the roof, next to the chimney. Their breath comes in heavy gasps.

O-DOG

Nigga... What the fuck... we doin' up here on the roof...?

CAINE

I don't know... I couldn't think of no place else... to go...

The SOUND OF A HELICOPTER, and the sweep of the huge searchlight, tells them that the roof wasn't such a great hiding spot either.

One house away, the police, by aid of the dog, are nearing closer.

O-DOG

See, you fucked us, nigga!

CAINE

Fuck you! I'm the one over eighteen!

Caine watches the crowd draw nearer.

O-DOG

Fuck this, nigga. I ain't getting ate'n up by no dog.

O-Dog starts to crawl towards the edge of the roof. The searchlight from the copter swings closer.

CAINE

Fuck that shit. I'm 'a break.

Caine crouches up and slides to the other side of the roof.

O-Dog just watches him. The searchlight sweeps towards the roof again. O-Dog calls out.

O-DOG

Officers...!!

After a silence, one of them calls back.

COP #1

Give us your location, and keep your hands where we can see them!

O-DOG

I'm on the roof, next door to you!
I'm unarmed and I'm about to come down!

COP #1

Don't move! Keep your hands clear!

Three flashlights hit the roof. The officers all concentrate on O-Dog, who stands atop the roof hands up.

The searchlight from the copter lands on the roof and holds.

EXT. FRONT YARD.

Caine leaps from his crouch off of the roof.

His leg buckles as he hits the ground.

COP #2

There's the other one!

Caine tries to get up and run, but before he's taken even two steps, the dog is on him. Barking, gnawing, chewing.

Caine is screaming.

The CHP officer and one of the L.A.P.D. cops are still trained on O-Dog. The others are taking care of Caine.

COP #1

Get your fucking hands up! Get 'em up!

Caine is on the ground, bathed in the searchlight, his leg playing surrogate mother to the dog's mouth.

CAINE

I'm down, call it off!! Call it off!!

COP #3

Shut up!. Shut the fuck up !!

Caine squirms, trying to shake the dog.

O-DOG

Call the fuckin' dog off him !!

CHP OFFICER

You, shut up! Keep your hands in the air!

O-DOG

Fuck you! Call the dog off!!

CAINE

Ahhh...!! Call it off..., Shit!!

One of the cops moves towards Caine.

COP #2

Stop moving then!

CAINE

Get him off me!

Another cop moves forward with the handcuffs, as Caine lays flat on the ground, his hands in front of him, the dog wrestling with his right leg.

COP #2

Shut the fuck up before I blow your
black, gang-banging ass away.

CAINE

Fuck you!!

The cop stomps Caine in the head one time.

Just then, the front door of the house opens and the homeowner
walks out.

HOMEOWNER

What the hell is going on out
here?!

COP #3

Get back in your house sir! Get
inside, now!

The man sees the cop, pulling the dog off of Caine in the front
yard and dashes back inside.

Caine lays cuffed, his hands behind his back. The K-9 cop
rubbing the dog, congratulating it for a job well done.

AERIAL VIEW.

The searchlight turns the night into day. The whole scene laid
out before it. O-Dog; hands up, on the roof. Caine; cuffed
face down on the ground. Red and Blue lights flashing
everywhere.

CAINE (V.O.)

The highway patrol dude said it was
the most fun he'd had since his
academy days. Ain't' that a
bitch... The muthafucka's tried to
put a bandage on my leg n'shit,
like that was gon' help... Lettin'
Rin Tin Tin chew my ass up...

The whole scenario plays out before the copter. The white
searchlight seems to get brighter and brighter until we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A glowing bright, white light. The CAMERA PULLS BACK from the
window of the church to show a funeral in progress.

Caine (V.O.)

Grandpapa must 'a used a scripture
from every damn book in the Bible
that night... He and Grandmama was
gettin' to the end 'a they rope...

A woman is seated at the organ playing somber tunes.

Another woman, dressed in all black, her face covered by a veil,
sits limply on the bench. Her chest heaves up and down, heavy
with sobs.

At the front of the church, just short of the stage, is a
casket. It is closed and wreaths and roses surround it. A
framed, 8X10 picture of Harold sits on top of the casket.

MINISTER (O.S.)

This is by no means a happy
occasion... But while we are here
to pay tribute to the memory of
Harold Lawson, let us not forget
what the Lord sayeth regarding
death...

The woman with the veil, Harold's mother, is crying even more
now. A younger girl, presumably her daughter, attempts to
comfort her. As the minister says the words, the CAMERA DOLLIES
along the bench, catching the reactions of others.

All of the family members are seated together. The CAMERA
PASSES Grandmama, who sits calmly, fanning herself. Grandpapa
sits next to her, his concentration on the words being spoken.
The CAMERA comes to Caine and HOLDS on him.

MINISTER (O.S.)

(continuing)

... So before we take words from
others, let us have a moment of
silence...

Caine is leaned forward, his elbows resting on his knees. As he
leans back to look up, the CAMERA MOVES IN TIGHT on him. He
lets out a sigh, purses his lips.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Same Shot. CAMERA TIGHT ON Caine.

BAILIFF (O.S.)

Will the defendant please rise.

It is now a courtroom setting. Caine rises slowly. A court
appointed lawyer stands next to him.

JUDGE

KayDee, because you have pleaded guilty to "joy-riding" as a lesser charge to Grand Theft Auto, and because you are over eighteen years of age... I sentence you to one week in the Los Angeles County Jail.

Caine accepts the sentence somewhat laughingly. He shrugs his shoulders, coming to terms with the facts. His Grandparents look on as the bailiff comes to escort him away.

CAINE (V.O.)

Seemed like one minute I was at a funeral, the next, they was takin' my ass to jail. A week in the County wasn't s'pose to be shit, but I still didn't feel like takin' my ass up off in that muthafucka...

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Caine in dressed in the "County Blues;" that's the jumpsuit that they give all inmates. His hands are cuffed behind his back, as a young-looking sheriff leads him through a cell block. An older sheriff walks behind them.

OLDER SHERIFF

What gang are you in?

CAINE

What?

OLDER SHERIFF

Are you a Crip or a Blood?

Caine turns tries to turn to look at the older sheriff.

CAINE

I don't bang.

YOUNGER SHERIFF

Bullshit. All you brothers from Watts gang-bang.

CAINE

I told you man. I don't bang.

OLDER SHERIFF

(to Young Sheriff)

Put him in with the Blood's.

Caine stops walking, turns back to the older sheriff.

The sheriff stares back at him, enjoying the anxiety. An understanding passes between them.

OLDER SHERIFF

(continuing)

Wait... Throw him in the "blue block."

Caine turns and continues on walking between the two men.

CAINE (V.O.)

Sheriffs wasn't no fools... They kept the Bloods, Crips, and the Vatos separate. Put all them muthafucka's together and a damn riot'd probably break out...

The sheriff comes to a large cell, filled with African - American men. Mean faces, innocent faces. Who is to say who is a criminal and who is not... Across from this one is another cell, filled with African - American faces. And next to that, is one filled with Latino faces.

The young sheriff brings Caine in front of the door, turns him around and unlocks the handcuffs.

Caine rubs his wrists as the young sheriff unlocks the cell door. Some of the inmates are giving the young sheriff a hard time, AD LIB. Caine steps inside, putting off the tough exterior, those piercing eyes, cold and emotionless.

The door closes shut immediately behind him. He moves through the cell, looking to see who he knows.

CAINE (V.O.)

I never really considered myself as being in a gang, but I guess I was... None of us really thought of it as a gang..., I mean we didn't do no shit like pullin' a drive-by 'cause some muthafucka had the wrong color hat on... We just hung out and sold dope... Drank, smoke, and sold dope s'all we did... Shoot a muthafucka sometimes...

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A-Wax, Jackee, and Tonja stand at the mouth of a closed end alley. O-Dog stands in the alley with another guy, doing business. The BASEHEAD is completely smoked out. He looks like he'd sell his mother for a hit of the pipe.

He stands there holding a Burger King bag in one hand. O-Dog stands across from him, negotiating.

O-DOG

You got some money or not?

BASEHEAD

Na man, c'mon hook me up just this once.

O-DOG

Nigga, you crazy?!

BASEHEAD

Well I have this burger, Double Whopper with cheese. You can have it.

O-DOG

Nigga I just ate, I don't want that shit I want some money. Now if you ain't got none, you just assed out.

Tonja calls from the mouth of the alley.

TONJA

Yo Dog, hurry up!

O-Dog starts to step away.

O-DOG

Man fuck this, I'm outta here.

The Basehead grabs hold of his arm.

BASEHEAD

Wait...! Man, I'll suck ya dick...

O-Dog stops in his tracks, turns around very slowly.

O-DOG

What the fuck did you say.

BASEHEAD

I said I'll suck ya dick.

O-Dog has a look of non-comprehension on his face. He stares at the guy, not believing what he is hearing. Quicker than Billy The Kid, O-Dog lifts his shirt, draws his gun and blasts a hole in the guys chest.

O-DOG

Step off, faggot.

The Basehead is blown back against the wall. His body drops to the ground, leaving a smeared patch of blood.

O-Dog looks down at the body.

O-DOG
(continuing)
Them drugs ain't no good for you
anyway.

A-Wax, Jackee, and Tonja are looking into the alley wondering what the hell just happened.

A-WAX
Dog! What up!?

O-Dog reaches down, picks up the Burger King bag. He holds it up to them.

O-DOG
Any 'a y'all want a burger.

The three of them stare at O-Dog. They just can't believe the shit that this guy does.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - HOLDING CELL - DAY

The guys are up and about now. Some of them smoke cigarettes, others read magazines, still others are playing cards or sleeping.

Caine is one of the guys playing cards. He looks like he's hooked up with a few guys that he knows and is having himself a decent time. Or at least, he's trying to pass the time.

INT. HALL AREA.

Two rookie sheriffs stand around waiting to go on break. OFFICER SCHWARTZ and OFFICER JACOBSON.

SCHWARTZ
Are they going to meet us there?

JACOBSON
That's what she said, and man do I hope she has those tight jeans on. It'll beat looking at these homos all day long.

Schwartz checks his watch, his face lights up.

SCHWARTZ
Alright, let's go meet 'em.

Another officer brings in four new inmates. The desk officer calls to the rookie's.

DESK OFFICER
Yo, Schwartz. It's your turn to
lock 'em up.

SCHWARTZ
But "Jake" and I are going on break
right now.

DESK OFFICER
Your girls can wait Schwartz. You
two lock 'em up now!
(to himself)
Fucking rookies.

Schwartz and Jacobson move over to the new inmates; Four black, one mexican. Schwartz snatches one of them by the arm and pushes him toward the block. The guy protesting of course.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

A guy sits on a bottom bunk, a porn magazine in one hand, the other steadily rubbing his crotch over the jumpsuit.

At the card game, Caine is shuffling with the expertise of a Las Vegas dealer.

The cell door opens and everyone's heads turn to check out the new arrivals. The cell door slams behind them and the four guys stand against the bars looking at all the other faces.

INT. HALL AREA.

Schwartz and Jacobsen speed through the hall, eager to go on break.

DESK OFFICER
What block did you put 'em in?

They stop and look at each other.

JACOBSON
Oh shit...

The SOUND OF SCREAMS are heard from down the hall.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

A damn riot is breaking out in the cell! Blows are being thrown back and forth, primarily at the new guys.

Gang slogans are being yelled as blow after blow connects to somebodys face.

A fist hits an eye, pushing it back into the socket, the guy falling onto the ground, blood dripping from the corner of his eyes.

It's an all out fight now. Guys from different neighborhoods letting out their aggression. Feet fly, fists fly.

Other inmates are yelling from other cells.

Caine stands next to a bed, as a body flies past him. An elbow jolts him in the head. He throws back, catching the guy in the mouth, sending his face, and a stream of blood towards the wall.

INT. HALL.

Sheriffs are gathering outside of the cell now with riot gear on. Others stand by with shackles in their hands, ready to subdue to prisoners. The sheriffs are yelling at the prisoners as well as barking orders at each other.

They open the cell door and rush into the crowd beating the inmates with their batons. Not everyone is fighting, but most are. One of the sheriffs grabs a guy and tosses him out into the hall, where two more sheriffs await with the shackles. As soon as the guy hits the hall, his feet and hands are bound.

INT. HOLDING CELL.

The sheriffs continue to beat the inmates and the inmates continue to fight back. The guys are being tossed out and shackled up by the numbers. The fight is no longer amongst each other, but against the sheriffs.

EXT. HALL.

Another body comes flying out into the hall. Caine's face slides across the floor, as his feet are locked. He struggles, but his hands are quickly bound, and he is pushed aside.

Caine lays there amongst the other guys, shackled together, watching the fighting. Those piercing eyes watch the fighting. The image is haunting. The authorities beating on the inmates, who struggle to fight back, only to be dragged out, shackled up, and tossed aside in a pile. Hmmm... It looks familiar...

CAINE (V.O.)

A fight was a fight, but they had us locked up and stacked together like fuckin' slaves. Two guys was killed, a bunch 'a others damn near died... Nigga's beatin' on each other... Cop's beatin' on nigga's... I don't know what the fuck happened.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY JAIL - STAFF ROOM

Caine sits at a table with two sheriffs and a plain clothes detective seated around him. His hands cuffed together at the wrist, he lifts a dixie cup, filled with water to his mouth, washing it down in one gulp.

The detective's eyes drift in and out of the manilla folder, with Caine's file in it.

DETECTIVE

So let me get this right. You bought the bottle of beer?

CAINE

Yes, I bought the bottle of beer. I accidently dropped it, I went back and got another one, and then I left.

DETECTIVE

So why wasn't the bottle cleaned up? Why did we still find it laying there spilled on the floor after the shooting?

Caine crumples the dixie cup in his hand.

CAINE

I told you. There were a couple of guys going into the store as I was coming out.

DETECTIVE

But you don't remember what they --

CAINE

(interrupting)
What they look like!

The detective stops, irritated by Caine's attitude.

CAINE (V.O.)

They snatched me from the riot straight into that little room. I didn't have a record, but when they fingerprinted me, they matched my prints to the ones from the bottle I dropped in the grocery mart...

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Flanked by his grandparents, Caine walks out of the building into the warm summer sunlight.

He squints and shields his eyes with his hands. His face is covered with a thin, ungroomed beard, and he looks like shit.

Caine (V.O.)

...I was just waitin' for them to tell me they saw the damn videotape. For a minute I thought wasn't never gon' see daylight again... The Korean lady and her kid moved back out of the country so they couldn't press me... I guess they was tired of puttin' up with little bad ass fucka's like myself.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Caine is knelt down before the toilet bowl, his hands gripping the sides. Clothed only in his underwear, he looks like a tribal native praying to his porcelain God. His breath comes in spasmodic gasps as he dips his head back over the bowl. WE HEAR that sickening sound of splashing water and the mixture that fills it.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Grandmama and Grandpapa sit watching television. Grandpapa is comfortable in his recliner, when there is a KNOCK at the door. Grandmama is stretched out on the couch. He looks at her to see if she's going to answer the door. She doesn't move. Another KNOCK. He rises and goes to the door. He looks through the peephole then unlocks the door.

Stacy stands on the other side of the bars, smiling. Grandpapa unlocks the bars and welcomes him inside.

GRANDPAPA

Hi, how're you Stacy?

STACY

I'm alright, and you?

GRANDPAPA

Oh, I can't complain. Haven't seen you around much lately... since the funeral.

Stacy shrugs, steps further into the living room.

STACY

Hi Mrs. Lawson.

GRANDMAMA

Hi Stacy. Caine's feeling kind of sick right now, but you can wait for him.

She slides over and Stacy sits down next to her.

STACY

I don't wanna crowd you out here.

GRANDMAMA

No, it's no bother. Besides I was wondering if you could do me and Mr Lawson a favor?

Grandpapa crosses back over to his recliner and kicks his feet up.

STACY

Uh..., yeah... What y'all need?

GRANDMAMA

We were just wondering, since you're Caine's friend and all, if you could talk to him..., you know, about his life...

STACY

Yeah..., no problem. Me and Sharif was talkin' about gettin' him to go up to Kansas with us.

GRANDPAPA

He needs to. Some hard work'll do him good... I wonder what's holding that boy.

(out loud)

Caine, you have company!

Stacy motions back towards the bathroom and rises. He goes back to the bathroom door and takes a listen.

INT. HALLWAY.

STACY

Yo Caine. It's Stacy... You alright, man?

CAINE (O.S.)

Hell naw I ain't right. I ain't shitted in a week.

Stacy covers his mouth, wanting to laugh.

STACY

What's wrong? You wasn't in there long enough to catch the HIV...

CAINE (O.S.)

Eat... a dick, nigga.

INT. BATHROOM.

Caine sits on the stool, crumpled up and crouched over.

STACY (O.S.)

So you want me to take you up here and get this car or what?

CAINE

Yeah... Hold on.

Caine's body heaves one more time, as his face dips halfway into the toilet bowl.

CUT TO:

INT. SENTRA - DAY

Stacy and Caine sit in the car, grooving to the sounds. CAINE sports a new look, masked in a cap and glasses, with his beard shaved down into a trim goatee. Stacy tries to yell over the volume.

STACY

How'd you hear about this car?!

Caine looks at him crazily, reaches down and lowers the volume.

CAINE

What, nigga?

STACY

How'd you hear about this car?
What, yo ass goin' deaf muthafucka?

CAINE

Jackee turned me on to it.

STACY

It figures. You fuck that bitch yet?

CAINE

Nope. I ain't even been tryin' to fuck.

STACY

Yo ass be over there tryin' to fuck Ronnie, huh?

CAINE

Hell naw, nigga. Pernell would
kick my ass!

STACY

On life without parole? I don't
think so nigga. Shit, ya ass spend
enough time up over in that
muthafucka, you might as well fuck.

Caine slouches in his seat, looks out into the traffic. He starts to respond, then stops himself. On second thought he replys.

CAINE

Nigga, you don't know nothin' about
nothin!

Stacy smiles to himself, knowing that he's touched a nerve.

An auto repair shop is coming up on the right side of the street.

CAINE

(continuing)

Slow down, it's comin' up here on
the right.

EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - DAY

The Sentra slows, then turns up into the long driveway leading to the back of the garage. They park the car next to a brick wall and take a look around.

After a few minutes, two Latino men step out of the big garage and walk towards the car.

INT. SENTRA - DAY

Caine and Stacy watch them suspiciously.

CAINE

You gon' check it out with me?

STACY

Na, I gotta go pick up Sharif.
That nigga talkin' about goin' up
to Kansas with me.

CAINE

To play football?!

STACY

Him? Na, just to get away from this shit. Why don't you come with us? You ain't doin' shit here...

Caine laughs, starts to step out of the car.

CAINE

Man, fuck that. I ain't takin' my ass up to no Kansas. Wait till I see the car 'fore you leave.

Stacy nods, turns the stereo back up.

EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - DAY

One of the men walks towards Caine.

GUY #1

You're the one who knows Jackee?

CAINE

Yeah, that's me. Y'all got the car?

The first guy motions to the other, says a few words in spanish.

Caine watches both of them closely.

Stacy looks on from inside the car.

The other guy has walked to the small garage at the rear of the driveway. He pulls on the chain and raises the door. A car is parked in the garage, hidden by a cover. He walks into the shadows and moments later, the start of an engine is heard. It revs a couple of times.

Moments after, a brown, Iroc Z28 convertible, rolls out of the garage. Top down, and dusty, the car sits on some old worn wheels. Everything else looks good though.

Stacy calls from the car.

STACY

You straight, nigga? I gotta get outta here...

Caine turns back as he begins walking towards the Iroc.

CAINE

Yeah I'm good. See y'all later.

As Caine walks over to the car, the sentra pulls out of the driveway and backs into the street.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The PHONE RINGS. It RINGS again. And again.

Grandmama busts in through the front door, out of breath. She makes her way to the phone, answers.

GRANDMAMA

Yes...? Betty, how're you
doin'...? Huh...? What...? They
did... Where...? Well at least
they finally found his body...

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Caine sits behind the wheel of a car, his eyes scanning the streets like a searchlight. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the convertible top and the front end of the Iroc. The interior of the car is in perfect condition. The only thing missing is a stereo.

Finding a quality car stereo, with speakers, equalizer, and amps to match, is no problem for a kid like Caine. His eyes continue to scan the road, as if looking for someone, or something. Several cars pass him, but one in particular catches his eye.

Parked at an intersection, he continues to look, but now he even checks his rearview and sideview mirrors. He hasn't had the car long enough to get "jacked" for it.

A McDonald's restaurant is across the street to his left, but what catches his eye is the car making a right turn next to it.

A black, Volkswagen Jetta, sitting on "Lorenzo's" and bumping big sounds drive's past. A cool brother sits inside, both windows rolled down, trying to show out.

Caine watches the car as it passes him and turns into the McDonald's parking lot.

EXT. McDONALD'S RESTAURANT - DAY

As the Jetta pulls into the drive-thru line, the light out on the street turns green.

After yielding to a few cars, the Iroc makes a u-turn and pulls into the parking lot, still rolling on those old worn wheels.

The line in the drive-thru is sort of long. Four cars are ahead of the Jetta.

Caine stops short of the drive-thru, checks to see how long the line is. The Jetta is two cars away from the speaker/menu. Caine pulls the car over and lands a parking space.

CAINE (V.O.)

I had the dope ride but I had to get some wheels to go with it. I couldn't be sittin' on no bullshit... It was easy than a muthafucka to catch a nigga slippin' in the drive-thru... Shit, them was the good ones..., get you what you needed, plus a meal to go...

INT. JETTA - DAY

The COOL GUY sits behind the wheel enjoying his music. His head is bobbing and weaving to the sounds. One hand on the wheel and his other arm hanging on the door, he just swears he's the man. Well this man doesn't happen to see a quick flash of legs appear, then disappear, in his sideview mirror.

The passenger door is closed just as quickly as it was opened.

Caine sits in the passenger seat, 9mm. Beretta pointed at the guy's face.

CAINE

You gon' have to give up the ride, nigga.

The guy stares at him, not feeling so cool anymore.

CAINE

(continuing)

Now. When we get past the drive-thru you gots to get out. Any bullshit and I'll ventilate yo ass right here.

Regaining some confidence, or maybe some feeling of hope, the guy decides to talk.

COOL GUY

What the fuck do you want?

CAINE

Actually all I want is yo "renzo's" and stereo. But I'll take a Quarter Pounder with Cheese.

COOL GUY
What, muthafucka?

The car ahead of them has moved up and Caine motions for the guy to do likewise.

At the speaker, the guy has a bit of trouble ordering.

COOL GUY
(into speaker)
Uh..., uh, let me have a Big Mac, a large coke, and a Quarter Pounder.

Caine pins the gun to the guys neck.

CAINE
I said with cheese, nigga!

COOL GUY
(into speaker)
(nervous)
Uh..., that's a Quarter Pounder with cheese.

Caine leans back against the passenger door.

CAINE
See, you was 'bout to make me shoot yo stupid ass over nothin'.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Caine sits on his bed, cordless phone in hand. Another fat wad of money rests, next to him. Crisp, green bills, he picks them up and begins to count.

CAINE
(into phone)
What up...? Yeah, what y'all up tp ...? Nothin, just another "Big Mac Jack..." You damn right... But, uh, I'm gettin' kinda low on the money. I need to hook me up another "cookie..." Cool... Out.

Caine pulls the phone down and closes the antenna. He starts to head for the door then stops. He pulls his gun out from his waist and sticks it under a sweater, on the top shelf of the closet.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Grandmama sits on the couch watching her soaps.

Caine comes out of his bedroom and stands aside of her, watching the television for a moment.

GRANDMAMA

What are you up to boy?

CAINE

Nothin'. I'm 'a go up to the store, you want somethin' back?

GRANDMAMA

No, I'm fine. You be careful now.

Caine nods and heads for the door. No matter how much trouble he gets into out in the streets, he's still a good boy to his Grandmama.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Caine walks out of the liquor store, munching on a large pickle, a grape soda in the other hand. Even though he's in his own hood, he is still alert to everything going on. You don't walk with your head down in these streets. You keep your eyes moving.

Walking down the sidewalk, Caine turns late to see a sheriff's car rolling onto the street behind him. He glances at it and continues walking.

The car rolls by slowly, the officer's watching Caine. As the car gets a little ways ahead of him, it stops and reverses.

Caine stands still and rolls his eyes, mad that he can't even enjoy his snack without getting sweated for something. The car stops directly in front of him. The driver steps out of the car, hand on gun, and walks around to the other side.

CAINE

What y'all want now?

The sheriff chuckles to himself, steps over to Caine.

SHERIFF

You don't remember me do you?

CAINE

What?

SHERIFF

I'm the one that got you in to see the doctor when you were shot up and bleeding all over the place.

Caine stares at the cop, raises his pickle and munches a chunk.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

That looks pretty good. Where'd you get that, this store right here...?

Caine nods, not really in the mood to have a conversation with a cop.

CAINE

So y'all gon' bust me or what?

SHERIFF

Relax KayDee, I'm not here to bust you. I just thought I'd say "hi."

The sheriff pats him on the shoulder. The wound is healed but Caine still flinches. The sheriff steps back, motions to the pickle.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

I think I'll get myself one of those.

He turns and walks back around to the drivers side of the car. Just before he gets in he calls.

SHERIFF #2

(continuing)

And watch yourself next time KayDee. A little lower to the right and I wouldn't be talking to you right now.

The sheriff slides into the car, and drives off.

Caine stands on the sidewalk watching the car as it goes. He bites his pickle then takes a swig of the soda to wash it down.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Caine flops down in a chair at the kitchen table. He sits and waits.

Lew-Loc peers around the corner of the hallway.

LEW-LOC

How much you say you want, nigga?

CAINE

About a hun's worth.

Lew-Loc calls back down the hallway.

LEW-LOC

Give him a hundred.

Lew-Loc lounges into the living room and drops on the couch.

CAINE

How much y'all nigga's got back there?

LEW-LOC

Enough. You gon' make the shit up though.

A few minutes later, J-Bone walks from the hallway into the kitchen. He carries a small bag, filled with white powder.

Caine pulls a folded one hundred dollar bill out of his pocket and puts it on the table. J-Bone hands him the bag and scoops up the money.

J-BONE

All the shit's under the sink, just clean up when you're done.

CAINE

Alright, cool.

INT. KITCHEN.

Caine rises and goes to the sink. He kneels down, pulls open the cabinet and begins rummaging around.

Several objects are placed on the counter top beside the sink: a bowl, a box of baking soda, a dropper, a tablespoon, a set of measuring spoons and a set of scales.

Caine stands and begins to sort the objects.

CAINE (V.O.)

My dad taught me how to mix drugs when I was little. Heroin, cocaine, all of it... That was about the only thing he taught me 'fore he was killed... Cocaine had to be turned into what we called a "cookie." Then you could break it off and sell it as rocks.

He pulls open the bag of cocaine and dumps in into the bowl. Next, he dips into the box of baking soda with one of the measuring spoons. He comes up with a spoonful of baking soda, shakes some of it off, then dumps it in with the cocaine.

After this, he reaches over to the sink and runs the water for a second, after which he sticks the dropper into the sink and sucks up a few drops.

He shakes the dropper to feel for an appropriate amount. He squeezes a few drops of water into the bowl with the cocaine and the baking soda. The compound begins to bubble and melt down.

CAINE (V.O.)

(continuing)

A \$100 bag of "coke" could pull about \$500 in rocks... I never likeded no other nigga's makin' my shit for me. I wanted to make sure my ass never got cheated...

Caine stirs the mixture over and over until it is of a thick, paste-like, consistency. Once it is thick enough, he takes the spoon out, steps over to the microwave and puts the bowl inside. He pushes a few buttons and waits.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

People are milling around the front yard, waiting for a score. The music plays loud, giving the impression of a party, when everybody on the block knows that this is the rockhouse. O-Dog, Stacy, A-Wax, Jackee, Tonja, Chauncy, Lew-Loc, Clyde, J-Bone and a host of others are all kicking it outside.

The customers are starting to build up.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Caine sits at the kitchen table breaking the "cookie" off into rocks, some pieces worth \$50, but most of them worth \$25. With the scales in front of him, he cuts the pieces off with a knife, weighing them before dumping them into a bag.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Money is moving quickly and rocks are being sold by the minute to every smoked out fool that comes through. This house is not exclusive to the black folks either, as people of all colors drop by.

Even the big-shot, doctor and lawyer-types swing through to try their luck at the latest street drug, or to continue an old habit. I guess dope is for everybody.

Everybody takes their turns, stepping out to the corner to make their sales. In the summer, the house is rolling all night long, cars and people coming in and out. On a good night, like this one, each dealer could make anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000. If he, or she, stays out long enough.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A brown, Iroc Z28 convertible cruises through the parking lot.

Sitting on fat wheels and some sparkling "Lorenzo's," the car is pushed out. The THUMP of the SOUNDS vibrate through the parking lot, along with the THUMPS of several other cars.

CAINE (V.O.)

Fresh out of jail and I was right
back in the shit. Doin' dirt.
Gettin' paid, "jackin'" fools...
The usual...

INT. IROC Z28.

Caine's eyes search the park. As he looks, a girl is just getting into her car to pull out of a parking space. From what Caine saw of her, she looked damn good.

He stops the Iroc directly behind her, blocking her exit.

EXT. PARKING LOT.

The other car starts to back out, but brakes. Caine steps out of his car and walks over to the girl.

A very fine looking girl sits behind the wheel, her mouth put out by the time Caine reaches her. With auburn hair and a soft tan complexion, ILENA speaks with a thick street dialect.

ILENA

You're blocking my way, what the
hell are you doing?!

Caine, trying to be as cool as he can, throws his arm up onto the roof of the car and leans forward.

CAINE

Hi, how're you doin'?

ILENA

What?

CAINE

I'm Caine. What's your name?

She stares at him in disbelief, checks her rearview mirror. It's obvious she's not getting away from this one. She looks back, takes a more clinical observation of Caine.

ILENA

I'm Ilena.

Caine smiles, starts to go to work on her.

CAINE

Ilena..., that's a pretty name. It fits your face.

Ilena smiles, warming up to the come on.

EXT. PARK AREA.

A bunch of people occupy an area with a few tables and a barbecue grill. Four or five ice chests are placed around, and by the frequency of hands digging into them, one can guess that they're filled with with more than punch and soda.

All of the regulars and more are gathered here. A-Wax, Jackee, Tonja, O-Dog, Sharif, Stacy, Stacy's kids, Andre, Chauncy, Clyde, J-Bone, Lew-Loc, Ronnie and others. Ronnie keeps a loose eye on little Anthony, who runs around the area playing with Stacy's kids. Kyla sits up under her mother in a softball uniform. There's a baseball diamond only a short distance away.

The grill is smoking, white clouds escaping into the sky, as Andre barbecue's the meat.

The MUSIC is pumping and the place is filled with laughter and love. It may be hard to imagine all of these knuckleheads out here barbecuing, but it is happening.

A-Wax, who is crouched over the radio, looks out into the parking lot. He sees Caine talking to Ilena.

A-WAX

Yo, Stacy!

Stacy sits on a bench, bouncing one of his sons on his knee.

STACY

What up?

A-WAX

Is that that nigga Caine out there playin' Mack Daddy in the parking lot?

Stacy follows A-Wax's glance. They look hard.

STACY

Hell yeah! That's him. Man, call that nigga over here.

EXT. PARKING LOT.

Ilena's car door is open now, and she is openly conversing with Caine. She hands him a slip of paper with her number on it.

A-Wax's VOICE calls from the distance.

Caine turns to see A-Wax standing in the distance, his arms up. Caine throws his hand up acknowledging. Holding the slip of paper in his hand, he kneels down so that he is eye level with Ilena.

CAINE
I'll call you alright.

She nods. He leans his head slowly into the car. Somewhat shyly, she meets him with a half kiss on the lips. He pulls back, smiling.

EXT. PARK AREA.

Caine walks towards the guys.

A-WAX
Yo. What up Loc? What's up with that beard n'shit?

CAINE
Nothin' ya cock-blockin' ass nigga.

They laugh and shake hands. Stacy walks towards them, another son hanging on his leg. He and Caine shake hands.

STACY
Nigga think he hard, now that he's a convict.

CAINE
Fuck you. Which one 'a you fools put this "Cripnic" together anyway?

STACY
I don't know. I just wanna get my eat on.

(pointing down)
Say hi.

Caine kneels down and lifts up the little bushy headed two-year-old.

CAINE
What's up little man?

The child reaches for Caine's glasses, pulling them off of his face. Right about then, Andre calls from the grill.

ANDRE
Alright y'all. The meat's ready!

A sight to see, brothers and sisters just buffalo-ing their way to the grill.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK AREA - LATER

Caine, Stacy, Sharif, O-Dog, and A-Wax all sit at a card table. Dominos's are spilled out before them.

Anthony sits on Caine's lap, watching with curiosity. Caine takes a look around the area a few times, then lifts a joint up to his mouth and sneaks a hit.

SLAP! Stacy lays the domino down with force.

STACY

Fi'teen muthafucka!

(a beat)

... And let me get a hit 'a that joint while you at it.

Caine passes it to him under the table. O-Dog watches closely.

O-DOG

Let me get a hit when you done.

Sharif shakes his head, slaps down a domino.

SHARIF

Y'all are some pitiful black men.

Four VOICES answer in unison. FUCK YOU!!

A tiny voice answers late.

ANTHONY

Fuck you!

Sharif looks up at the little boy. The guys are laughing.

SHARIF

See..., look at the way y'all got this kid talkin'. Y'all is fallin' right into the "devil's" plan.

O-DOG

Which is?

(a beat)

Ten!

He SLAPS down a domino.

SHARIF

See, y'all don't get it. They tryin' to kill us. There wasn't really a whole lot of drugs n'shit in the innercities until the late sixties... Until the Civil Rights Bill passed.

(MORE)

SHARIF (cont'd)

They figured since they couldn't kill us no more, they'd let us kill ourselves. And we so dumb, we doin' the shit.

A-Wax takes a hit from the joint, passes it back to Caine.

STACY

Man, who told you that shit?

CAINE

Shit, it's common sense.

SHARIF

I read fool! And white boys, they buy houses and corporations with their shit. Blacks folks buy gold and tennis shoes with their money.

A-WAX

What the hell are you talkin' about?

SHARIF

Think about it. Black people don't have million dollar homes and private jets. We ain't gettin rich off the shit.

CAINE

Damn right!

O-DOG

Now that's some shit on the real.

A-Wax takes another hit. SLAPS down another domino.

A-WAX

Goin' out with ten muthafucka's.
Domino!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - LATER

A girls softball game is about to get underway. The girls, ranging in age from seven to nine years of age, are walking about swinging bats, kicking up dust, biting their nails, etc.

The stands are mostly empty. The only spectators are parents and close relatives. Caine sits on a bench, next to Ronnie, his legs outstretched, his arms back on another bench.

RONNIE

So'd you have fun in jail?

CAINE

Fun...?! Hell naw!

RONNIE

Let you tell it to the rest 'a the
guys, it was cool. Playing
cards..., gang riots...

Just then a VOICE comes over the loudspeaker.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Please rise for the playing of the
National Anthem.

It is almost as if none of the crowd heard the announcement because as the MUSIC begins to play, only a few people stand. The people standing also all happen to appear over forty years of age. People who had subscribed to the idea of "America; Land of the Free."

The playing of the National Anthem has no meaning for many of these people, as the lounge in the stands, not really paying it attention.

To many of them, the National Anthem is nothing more than a lyrical version of many years of empty promises.

As the song continues, so does Caine.

CAINE

Just 'cause I told the nigga's how
it was don't mean I likeded that
shit. I hated it! Somethin' about
the damn bars... Can't move...
Can't go no place... Trapped up in
there like a fuckin' animal.

RONNIE

Well get used to it 'cause you'll
probably be back in there before
long.

Caine raises up, stares at her.

Ronnie pays him no mind, instead concentrating on her daughter's game. Caine lays back down and watches the game, shaking his head to himself.

On the other side of the fence, across the sidewalk, and just past the sandpit, the barbecue is still going on. A bunch of knucklehead thugs having a good time on the weekend.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAFTING CLASSROOM - OFFICE - DAY

Sharif sits in a chair across the desk from his father. MR. BUTLER, (50's), is a big, black man, with imposing looks but a heart of gold. With the college sweatshirt, glasses and loafers. He is sifting through assignments and projects.

SHARIF

Why do you find that so funny?

MR. BUTLER

Because it is. I can see it now. You're gonna go up there and mess around and bring one of your "devil's" back to my house.

SHARIF

Pops... You crazy. I ought to punch you in yo eye right now.

MR. BUTLER

Hey! I dropped the seed, I got the power. I'll knock ya young ass out.

The two of them laugh together, their relationship a good one. Mr. Butler's presence obviously making a difference in his son's life.

There's a polite KNOCK and the door opens. Caine steps inside, munching on a pickle.

SHARIF

What up Caine, it took you long enough...

CAINE

Anyways...

Mr. Butler rises, crosses around the desk, goes to shake Caine's hand.

MR. BUTLER

KayDee, what's up young brother?

CAINE

I'm alright. How's work?

MR. BUTLER

Well you know, white man always on ya back, but what else is new. Have a seat.

Caine drops into a chair next to Sharif. Mr. Butler looks out of the window.

CAINE
So what y'all talkin' 'bout?

SHARIF
Not much.

MR. BUTLER
Just talkin' about the man's future here.

(a beat)
So what're you gonna do KayDee?
Fuck around out in the streets
'till you get killed...? Like your
cousin maybe...?

Caine is so stunned, he stops chewing. Mr. Butler has never broken it down on him like that.

CAINE
What's that, sir?

Mr. Butler crosses back to the desk and takes his seat.

MR. BUTLER
Sharif tells me him and Stacy have been trying to get you to leave with 'em.

CAINE
Yeah, but I don't know about no Kansas.

MR. BUTLER
I hear you there. I was teasing Sharif about it before you came in. But what are you gonna do if you stay? Sharif used to be into all kinds of shit 'till he found "The Nation..." Now I'm, no Muslim, but I do agree with some of the things they say regarding black people..., and if Allah helps make my son a better man, then I'm all for it.

CAINE
So what you sayin' Mr. Butler?

MR. BUTLER
Just think about your life young brother. Being a black man in America ain't easy. The hunt is on and you're the prey. All I'm saying is survive... Alright?

Caine nods, his mind in thought over Mr. Butler's words. Sharif elbows him in the ribs.

SHARIF

And y'all thought I could get down.

Mr. Butler raises up from his desk, walks around to the door.

MR. BUTLER

Sharif, I want to show you what I got your sister for her wedding. It's out in the car.

SHARIF

Alright.

MR. BUTLER

We'll be right back KayDee.

Sharif and his father step out of the office and walk through the classroom out into the sunlight.

Somewhat curious, a little bored, but mostly nosey, Caine pokes around at Mr. Butler's desk. An architect's rendering of a drawing catches his eye and he stares at it for a while.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Sharif and Mr. Butler stand out in the parking lot next to a car. Mr. Butler digs into the hatchback of the car, finally coming up with a large package covered in cloth.

SHARIF

Yo, thanks for talking to Caine for me man.

MR. BUTLER

No problem, anyway I can help.

SHARIF

(a beat)

You alright you know that. I used to didn't think so. I used to couldn't stand you, back when you and moms first got divorced. But, uh... You alright.

Mr Butler stares at his son. Neither one of them has ever been good at expressing themselves, and it shows.

MR. BUTLER

Regardless of what happened between me and your mother, I've always been your father Sharif.

SHARIF

I know.

Mr. Butler pulls the cloth off of the package and shows Sharif a painting of two people, a man and a woman dressed as African royalty.

Sharif's face spreads to "Ronald McDonald-like" smile.

SHARIF

She'll definately like this.

Sharif and Mr. Butler stare at each otther for a while, looking almost as if they're about to hug each other, but being the macho men they are, they shake hands instead.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAFTING CLASSROOM - OFFICE - DAY

The classroom door swings open, startling Caine. He pokes his head around the door, jumps, knocking a few papers off of the desk. Sharif and Mr. Butler step inside, looking at him strangely.

SHARIF

What's wrong with you, boy?

CAINE

Nothin', y'all just scared me.

MR. BUTLER

Boy if you scare that easy, maybe you'd better leave L.A.

Caine laughs, gets up, moving to the door.

SHARIF

Alright pops, were outta here.

MR. BUTLER

Okay, you boys take it easy.

Sharif and Caine step out of the classroom, leaving Mr. Butler to tend to the mess Caine made.

He watches them go before something on the desk draws his attention. He sorts through the papers, comes up with a small poster board with a sketching, an excellent sketching, of a building on it. He stares at the drawing a few moments, then picks up the architect's rendering. They're pretty much the same in comparison.

CUT TO:

INT. IROC Z28 - DAY

Caine sits behind the wheel, Sharif next to him, the two of them rolling down the street together.

CAINE (V.O.)

Sharif's pops had my ass to thinkin'. I didn't know what the fuck I wanted to do. I just wanted to stay alive and get paid. The easiest way possible...

SHARIF

Man, you know my pops, he'll speak his mind.

CAINE

I know. I may be a knucklehead, but I respect my elders.

SHARIF

So you gettin' with that ho you met at the barbecue yet?

CAINE

Yeah I jumped in her last night right after the barbecue.

SHARIF

Well I hope you wore a hat. I know a couple 'a niggas that done eased up in her.

CAINE

Oh, but you know me. I always pack the plastic. I ain't goin' out like Willy Lump-Lump.

Caine shakes his head, bumps the sounds up a notch. A police car appears in the rearview mirror. Caine takes note, but remains cool. He checks the sideview mirror to see what else is going on.

Sharif checks his own sideview mirror.

SHARIF

(continuing)

What's up with "one-time."

Caine shakes his head, checks the mirror again. The cop car turns off onto another street. Caine and Sharif roll on through the city movin' to the beat.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

A black hand places a 40oz. bottle of malt liquor on the counter and a non-black hand scoops it up and dumps it into a brown paper bag.

A black guy, in his mid-twenties, hands the asian clerk the money. She rings it up and gives him his change. The guy takes the bag and heads out of the store. In the back, by the door, is an asian man who watches what goes on while his wife works the register.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

The guy walks out of the liquor store and turns the corner. At the curb, a police car has its lights flashing and two, young, black guys are being questioned.

Caine and Sharif are the two guys being hassled by the cops on this quiet block. OFFICER FASSEL is a tall, blonde guy with a rail thin body and a butt so flat, it looks like he has a long back. OFFICER GADD is a balding, pudgy man, with a thick mustache and fat wad of chew in his mouth.

OFFICER FASSEL

Put your hands on the hood and spread your legs.

CAINE

Man, this hood is hot. I ain't burnin' my hands up.

The first cop steps around to Caine, throws him on the hood, kicks his legs apart. The cop frisks him roughly. Caine grimaces as he holds his palms flat on the hood.

The second cop decides he'll have some fun with it.

OFFICER GADD

Your hands burning? I thought all you guys liked barbecue?

SHARIF

Man, why don't y'all go pull somebody's cat out of a tree or somethin'...

OFFICER GADD

You've got a smart mouth you know that?

SHARIF

Yeah, and don't it just make you mad?

The first cop flips Caine's beeper out of his pocket. It crashes to the floor and "accidentally" lands underneath the cops shoe.

OFFICER FASSEL

Oops, I'm sorry.

Caine turns around but the cop pushes him in the chest with the nightstick.

OFFICER FASSEL

(continuing)

I didn't tell you to turn around yet!

CAINE

We didn't do nothin'!

The other cop pushes Sharif roughly, spins him around to face the hood.

SHARIF

Get ya damn hands off me!

The cop reaches for Sharif's neck, but his hand is slapped away. Infuriated by this display of resistance, the cop punches Sharif in the chest.

OFFICER GADD

You little fuck. You don't know who you're messing with!

CAINE

What the fuck you'd hit him for?!

The other cop punches Caine in the back of the head with the base of his hand.

OFFICER FASSEL

I'm tired of your smart ass mouth.

The cop reaches to his belt, pulls out his handcuffs and locks Caine. He opens the passenger door and jams him inside.

OFFICER FASSEL

(continuing)

Put these niggers in the car.

The other cop cuffs Sharif and forces him to the back seat. This action is immediately met with protest by both Caine and Sharif. The cop closes the door on them and jumps into the passenger seat.

INT. POLICE CAR.

CAINE

What the hell you got us in here for, we ain't even done shit!

OFFICER GADD

Shut up!

OFFICER FASSEL

You fucking little gang-bangers
always say that shit.

SHARIF

You weak, white, muthafucka's ain't
got nothin' better to do than beat
on a nigga!

As the car starts off, officer Gadd turns around and continually jams his club into the back seat at Sharif and Caine.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A party is taking place in the backyard. The back of the house faces out to an alley, surrounded by a fence. The backyard is filled with party-ing Latin American men, women, and kids.

The MUSIC pumps from the patio through the yard. A group of Vatos are pitching horseshoes in the back, by the fence. They groove to the music, nursing cans and bottles of Budweiser beer.

The girls have their own circle gathered. Cool and intimidating, they wear enough make-up to make picasso proud, and could probably knock another hole in the ozone layer with all of their hairspray.

This is how they chill in the barrio. Sporting the Dickies, creased Levi's, jerseys, sandals, and slippers, they definitely fit the street profile. People are talking, laughing, singing, dancing, playing, smoking, drinking, kissing, and just plain having a good time.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

A police car pulls to an abrupt stop at the mouth of the alley. Officer Gadd steps out, opens the rear passenger door and jerks Sharif out. He falls to the ground motionless.

Caine is thrown to the ground right next to him in the same battered state.

The cop jumps back into the police car and speeds off.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

As he goes to retrieve a msthrown horseshoe, one the guys notices Caine and Sharif lying in the alley.

VATO #1

Hey esse, check it out.

VATO #2

Who's that, esse?

Another guy walks to the fence, looks both ways down the alley.

VATO #3

I think they just got out the cop car, holmes. Let's go check 'em out.

VATO #1

What the fuck are they doin' over here, eh?

The third guy hops the fence into the alley. The others follow. The kid stands at the fence watching them.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The guys walk up on Caine and Sharif slowly. They are shocked by the sight of the two boys. Battered, beaten, barely breathing.

VATO #3

Chingow...

Sharif lays on his back, his face shiny and swollen. Blood drips from his mouth and he has assorted facial lacerations.

Caine is rolled to his side, blood oozing out of his right ear. His face is battered and his nose is bent at an extremely unnatural angle. Large knots and welts show on his arms.

The two boys are badly beaten, courtesy of the Los Angeles Police Department's unofficial policy of minority abuse.

As the three Latino guys stand over Caine and Sharif, a police car skids to a stop at the mouth of the alley.

Just then, Officer Fassel and Officer Gadd hop out of the car, their guns and flashlights drawn.

OFFICER GADD

Move away from the victims! Now!
Up against the fence!

Officer Gadd continues to move up on the three guys, in spite of the protest mounting in the backyard behind them.

Officer Fassel stands on the other side of the car, his radio in hand.

OFFICER FASSEL

(into radio)

That's affirmative. Two black males, early teens. They appear to be victims of a gang beating. Suspects are being detained.

With the cop holding the three Latino guys against the fence, and the protests of the guys's family and friends in the background, Caine and Sharif lay near motionless on the ground.

CAINE (V.O.)

The P.D. played it off smooth... Tried to act like the Mexicans beat our ass... Cops was good for beatin' up people just for the hell of it... Blacks, Mexicans, as long as you wasn't white, you was fair game.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MARTIN LUTHER KING HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Caine and Sharif each lay on a bed, next to each other. Sharif has a bandage encircling his head. His face is puffed up and a sickening purple color.

Caine's cheeks are covered with gauze, his nose has a cast on it and his right ear is completely wrapped up. His skin has the same purple-ish color as Sharif's.

The room is filled with flowers from their families and friends. The television is on as the latest music video plays on the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

At the neighborhood rockhouse, everyone is hanging out outside, as usual. The unusual thing is that an L.A. County Sheriff's car is parked in front of the house, it's lights spinning round and round. Two officers stand in the yard talking, prepared for anything.

OFFICER #1

We got a call of disturbing the peace, that's it.

A-WAX

We ain't disturbin' shit. You the ones disturbin' us.

OFFICER #2

Look, just keep it down okay.

O-DOG

Whatever you say.

Just then, Andre comes out of the house, with a palm size video recorder in hand. He walks towards the two sheriffs.

ANDRE

You mean you not gonna beat us officers? We can get it all on tape...

The two sheriffs look at Andre, who practically shoves the video recorder into their faces.

O-DOG

(to sheriffs)

What ya gonna do?

Without saying anything, the two sheriffs step back inside their car and head off up the street.

CUT TO:

INT. MARTIN LUTHER KING HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Sharif's bed is empty now, his release coming earlier than Caine's. Ronnie sits next to Caine, on the bed. The blinds are pulled back and the warm afternoon sunlight covers them both.

Caine looks much better now. Although he still has the cast on his nose, the bandage on his ear is gone and his complexion has returned to normal coloring. His face is dotted with several scars from where the wounds have healed. He no longer carries his boy-ish appearance, instead looking more like a war scarred young man. He sits up in the bed, his face solemn and cold. Those eyes seeming even deeper than before.

RONNIE

Why don't you smile for a change?

CAINE

I ain't got shit to smile about.

RONNIE

You're alive.

CAINE

Who says that's good.

Ronnie shakes her head, touches his shoulder and gets up. She goes to the window, looks outside.

RONNIE

Guess what... I got a job.

CAINE

For real?

RONNIE

Yep. My aunt hooked it up for me.
Decent money too, about thirty-one
a year.

CAINE

What the fuck you gon' be doin'?

RONNIE

Office stuff.

Caine tosses back the sheet and steps out of the bed. As he
does, the gown flaps open a little, exposing more welts and
bruises on his back and legs.

CAINE

Hey, that's cool. Somebody around
here needs to go legit, 'cause it
sure as hell ain't gon' be me.

He crosses around the bed and goes to the bathroom. Ronnie
stands up and walks closer to the bathroom door.

RONNIE

Caine...

CAINE (O.S.)

Yeah...

RONNIE

The job's in Atlanta.

Caine doesn't answer. A flush is heard, then running water.
After that, nothing. Ronnie leans her head closer to the door.

RONNIE

(continuing)

Caine...?

The door swings open and Caine comes out. He goes straight to
the bed, hops in and pulls the covers up. Ronnie walks over to
the bed, stands next to it.

RONNIE

(continuing)

Did you here me? I said my job is
in Atlanta.

CAINE

Hey, take it, you might as well get
the hell away from here.

Ronnie stares at him, trying to figure if he's really happy for her, or if there's something else in there. She sits down at his side.

RONNIE

Caine, why don't you come with me?

CAINE

Come with you...?

RONNIE

You're not doin' nothin' here.
Caine, you're gonna fuck around and
be dead or in jail before you turn
twenty-one...

CAINE

Don't worry about me.

RONNIE

Don't worry about you?! How can I
not worry about you...?! Caine...

Caine's eyes are roving somewhere on the floor. He hasn't made eye contact with her ever since she told him she was leaving.

In a surprise move, Ronnie leans over and kisses Caine softly on the mouth. This is more than a sympathy kiss. Caine pulls back. Ronnie attempts to follow his lips, but he recoils like a frightened animal.

Still unable to look at her, Caine's eyes remain on the ground.

Ronnie reaches down, squeezes his hand gently, then turns and heads for the exit. At the door, she stops and turns back to him.

RONNIE

(continuing)

Think about leaving, Caine...

As she walks through the door, Caine finally looks up. A scared and bewildered look on his face, he can do nothing but bury his head in his hands.

Caine sits like that for a while, his head in his hands. A frightened young man, scared to allow himself to dream. Surface, yet deep. Simple, but complex.

The transformation into adulthood has never been easy...
Especially when you thought you were already there.

The image of Caine sitting in his hospital bed DISSOLVES INTO A MONTAGE.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE:

The following is a collection of images from Caine's past to his most recent memory. (Some of these we have already seen, others we have not.) The various images DISSOLVE in and out of one another over the constant image of Caine sitting in bed.

- A) Pernell shows Young Caine how to shoot a gun.
- B) Karen ties off her arm for a heroin shot.
- C) Tat shoots a man.
- D) An Adolescent Caine beats a guy with a baseball bat.
- E) An Adolescent Caine tosses a football with Pernell.

The last image DISSOLVES into one of Caine standing in front of the mirror in his hospital bathroom. As he stares at himself, examining his inner-self, the MONTAGE CONTINUES...

- F) Caine blasts Lloyd in the back during the drive-by.
- G) Caine writhes in pain as the police dog chews his leg.
- H) Caine fucks Ilena, with no feeling or emotion.
- I) The jail cell door closes behind Caine.
- J) Caine and Sharif get beat by the cops.

The last image DISSOLVES into one of Caine in the hospital room, sitting on a dresser looking out of the window. The MONTAGE CONTINUES...

- K) Caine mixes drugs.
- L) Caine show Anthony how to shoot a gun.
- M) Ronnie hugs Caine at his high school graduation ceremony.
- N) Ronnie attempts to kiss Caine in the hospital room.
- O) Several CLOSE-UP'S of different gun barrels appear and disappear, firing one after the other.

The last image DISSOLVES into one of Caine laying face down on the bed. The room is dark, but we can see his eyes. They are bloodshot and red, but won't close. He stares straight ahead.

END MONTAGE.

CAINE (V.O.)
 I stayed awake for days and
 nights... Thinkin'. I figured I
 might as well go with Ronnie.
 There wasn't a whole lot I was
 gonna do around here... Sit around
 and wait for the police to arrest
 me on some murder charge and spend
 the rest of my life in prison
 maybe...

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A fairly small get together is going on at Ronnie's house. Caine and Sharif sit on the couch, looking weary, but trying to enjoy themselves. O-Dog is digging into the refrigerator for what can only be an alcoholic beverage. Jackee, Stacy, and Tonja sit in the den that was converted from the garage. They face off across from each other playing cards. J-Bone, Lew-Loc, and Ronnie kneel in front of the stereo, sorting through her tape collection. MUSIC is already playing, and the voices are beginning to rise.

There's a POUNDING on the iron door.

CAINE
 Who is it?!

A-WAX (O.S.)
 A-Wax, Chauncy, and some ho's.
 Nigga open up!

Caine gets up, goes to the door, turns the key and lets them in. He and A-Wax shake.

CAINE
 What up Wax.

A-WAX
 Cool, how you feelin' man?

CAINE
 I'm straight. What up Chauncy.
 What up ho's.

Chauncy steps inside toting a case of beer. The three girls walk in behind him.

CHAUNCY
 What up Caine.

GIRL #1
 (to Caine)
 Don't you be callin' me no ho.

CAINE

Well ain't you?

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM.

Anthony and Kyla sit on the floor in front of the television playing video games when the door opens and Ronnie pokes her head in.

RONNIE

What y'all up to?

KYLA

Just playin' games mama.

RONNIE

Okay. Now if y'all want somethin', I'm right out here in the living room, okay.

KYLA

Okay.

ANTHONY

I'm thirsty. Can I have some beer?

RONNIE

No. I'll bring you some Kool-Aid.

KYLA

Me too.

RONNIE

Alright. Is the music too loud?

The kids shake their heads, their attention drifting away from their mother and back to the video game. Ronnie backs out of the room, closing the door after her.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Everyone has settled into the party now and the music is pumping just loud enough to have a decent jam going. Caine and O-Dog stand across from each other at the entrance to the den. They each have a couple of beer cans in their hands and are competing to see who can get rid of them the fastest.

Chauncy grabs one of the girls he came with and starts dancing. A-Wax grabs another, Sharif grabs the other. They decide to turn it into a party.

As he tosses up a can, Caine notices that the girl dancing with Chauncy keeps looking over at him. It's the same girl that told him not to call her a ho earlier. The girl has a sexed-up outfit on and is definitely showing the body off.

From the card table, even Jackee can see the girl throwing herself at Caine.

JACKEE

Look at that bitch. If she don't get a dick soon, she's gon' drown all of us.

STACY

Yo Caine, bust the panties.

Caine tosses an empty beer can onto the table.

TONJA

Nigga, what's yo problem?

Caine looks back at the girl. She continues to look, dancing more with Caine, than with Chauncy.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Hidden behind the legs of the party-goers, a little boy is sneaking out of his bedroom. Anthony looks completely mischevious as he makes his way through the crowd. Leaning up against a wall in the living room, his eyes search the place.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

O-Dog, Stacy, Jackee, and Tonja sit on the front porch. They pass a joint between them, each trying hard to get his and her head tight. O-Dog pulls a small bottle of E & J Brandy from his jacket pocket and turns it up. The bottle is soon being passed among the others.

Anthony steps out onto the porch, waving the smoke away from his face.

ANTHONY

What's up.

Everyone turns around, surprised to see the little boy.

TONJA

Boy, you better get yo butt back in that house 'fore yo mother comes out here and kills us all.

ANTHONY

Forget her. Where's Caine?

O-DOG

I don't know little man. He's around here someplace.

ANTHONY

Can you go find him?

Just then, Ronnie opens the door and scoops Anthony into her arms.

RONNIE

What is he doin' out here...?

Stuttering and stumbling voices don't exactly get the answer across.

Ronnie just shakes her head and steps back inside.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ronnie puts Anthony down and sends him to his room. Chauncy grabs Ronnie's arm and wraps it around his waist.

CHAUNCY

You gon' let me get a dance?

She twists away quickly.

RONNIE

Later.

Sharif dances with one of the girls when Ronnie pulls him aside.

RONNIE

Can I talk to you for a minute?

SHARIF

Yeah, what's up?

RONNIE

You tell me. It's about Caine.
He's acting weird.

SHARIF

I don't know. He's been trippin'
since we been in the hospital.

At the back door, the flirtatious girl steps in first, Caine walks in behind her. She continues on to the living room, while he stops at the refrigerator. After all of the cans he has drank, he pulls out a 40oz. bottle and cracks that open.

Ronnie sees Caine in the kitchen, guzzling the bottle and catches him just as he steps into the living room.

RONNIE

Can I talk to you?

CAINE

Yeah.

From behind a crowd of people, Chauncy jumps up behind Ronnie and begins to "freak" her. She turns around, pushes him away.

RONNIE

(to Chauncy)

Will you get off me!

Sharif pulls Chauncy back and mixes back into the dance floor.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Caine sits on the bed holding his bottle with both hands. Ronnie paces back and forth in front of him.

RONNIE

Did you think about what I said...?

CAINE

What, about leavin' with you...?

Yeah, I thought about it.

RONNIE

See why won't you come?! You're not doin' shit here...

CAINE

I know but ain't nothin' gon' change in Atlanta. I'm still gon' be black. I'm always gonna be just another nigga from the ghetto.

RONNIE

Why do you say that?!

CAINE

'Cause it's true! No matter where I live. No matter how much money I got. Let me tell you somethin'. You can have they job, you can have they house, they car, they women, they men... Everything around you can change. The whole world could turn upside fuckin' down, but one fact's always gon' be the same. You ain't never gonna be nothin' to America but a black ass nigga...

Ronnie sits on the dresser, Caine's words hitting her hard. She crosses to the bed, sits down next to him. He takes a long pull from the bottle.

RONNIE

So are you gonna come with us or
not...?

CAINE

(a beat)

...Yeah, I'm 'a go.

A smile spreads across Ronnie's face. She leans over, kisses Caine tenderly on the lips. There's a chemistry here. The kiss continues. Ronnie holds Caine's face, pulls it into hers. Her hunger for him grows.

Abruptly, Caine pulls back. He stares at her only for a second, not allowing himself to dream. They both know what could happen. What they want to happen.

Caine gets up, goes to the door, but its not as simple as that.

Ronnie slips between him and the door. She presses her mouth to his. He responds. More. And more. And much more. The two of them fall to the bed and... well, you know...

CAINE (V.O.)

Ronnie was the first girl I'd been
with that I ever cared about. It
was so different, I almost didn't
know how to do it... It was one of
those things that just happened,
that shoulda' happened sooner.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEN - LATER

Caine, Sharif, O-Dog, and Stacy sit at the table playing domino's. Sharif is the only fully sober one there.

STACY

Lemme guess, you was in there
knockin' it out, huh?

CAINE

Get out my business Stace.

SHARIF

Dog.

O-DOG

That's the only way to be. I'll
take five.

Ronnie attempts to make her way through the living room but is once again grabbed by Chauncy. He holds her, begging for a dance.

STACY

Man, what's up with that nigga
Chauncy tonight?!

Chauncy has a good hold now and Ronnie is seriously trying to get away. His groping hands are traveling where they certainly aren't wanted.

Caine watches from his seat, no longer concentrating on the game.

CAINE

Dog, you strapped?

O-DOG

You know that.

CAINE

Give me your gun.

O-DOG

What for?

SHARIF

Caine, what are you doin'?

Caine looks at O-Dog, stares. O-Dog reaches to his back, pulls out the gun. Caine takes it, releases and hands the clip back to him.

Caine gets up from the table, crosses the floor quickly.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Caine pushes Chauncy away from Ronnie and, holding the gun like an axe, begins to beat the shit out of him. Chauncy staggers back into the wall. People are yelling, wondering what the hell is going on. Ronnie is screaming for Caine to stop.

Blow after blow, Caine pummels Chauncy's face with the gun butt. Blood splatters everywhere.

CAINE

What the fuck is wrong with you?!!
You gonna rape her in her own
house?!!

As the blood flies, people finally come to their senses and grab hold of Caine. O-Dog pulls the gun away from him. Stacy has him in a tight bear hug. Caine's eyes are wild, his breathing sporadic. His face is splattered with blood.

Standing in the hallway, Anthony stares with interest. That same cold, yet understanding, stare that Caine had as a child.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Caine lies flat on his back, looking up at the ceiling. His hands behind his head, his eyes stare wide.

CAINE (V.O.)

After that, everybody thought I was crazy... Gettin' beat in the head twenty times with a club can have a certain effect on your senses...

A VOICE breaks the spell.

GRANDMAMA (O.S.)

Caine! Telephone!

He reaches over to his dresser, grabs the phone.

CAINE

Got It!

(into phone)

Yeah...? Ilena...? Na, what's up...? What...?! Na, no haps. I ain't the one, baby!

INTERCUT CONVERSATION.

ILENA

Oh, so you just gon' dog me, huh?

CAINE

It ain't mine!

ILENA

You're the only one I was with!

CAINE

Bitch, stop lyin'! Besides, I had the "jimmy" on extra tight!

ILENA

That don't mean nothin'...!

CAINE

Bitch, step-off.

ILENA

It ain't goin' like that.

END INTERCUT.

CAINE

Look bitch! If you ever call my ass again tryin' to run some bullshit best guess story, I'm 'a smoke yo ass!

Caine hangs the phone up and lays back down.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

J-Bone sits on the couch watching a boxing match on the t.v.

Chauncy sits at the kitchen table, occupied with some sort of postal activity. The light from the window casts a bright glaze across his face.

J-Bone cracks open another brew and cheers on his fighter.

J-BONE

Yo Chaunce, this nigga here look
like Caine beatin' yo ass the other
night.

The CAMERA DOLLIES UP TO Chauncy's face. Bruised and battered, his nose is open and sullen. All of this is detectable underneath and around the thin wrapping of bandages on his face.

Chauncy glares at J-Bone, who sits laughing at him. Chauncy grabs the videotape in front of him and stuffs it into a medium sized, padded envelope. He seals it, then turns it face up.

INSERT - ENVELOPE

The mailing label on the envelope reads: LOS ANGELES POLICE
DEPARTMENT. HOMICIDE DIVISION.

CUT TO:

INT. M & M's SOUL FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Seated around a table are Caine, Stacy, Sharif, O-Dog, and A-Wax. They are loud, raucous, and busting up with laughter. O-Dog gets them to quiet for a second.

O-DOG

Hold up, hold up. So I tell him
she'll fuck him till his dick falls
on the floor... He says...

(mimicking)

Is that because of the pussy or the
disease?

The guys fall out laughing again.

CAINE (V.O.)

We'd hook up almost every Sunday
and go kick it at the soulfood
shop. Jokin', tellin' stories...
Sometimes we'd be serious...

The guys continue on eating and talking.

STACY

So what's up for tonight?

CAINE

I don't know. I'm goin' up to the pen to see Pernell later on.

O-DOG

Its about fuckin' time.

CAINE

Fuck you.

SHARIF

You ain't seen him since he been up, huh?

Caine shakes his head, plays with his food.

STACY

Does he know you fuckin' his girl?

A-WAX

Fuckin' her well too.

CAINE

Y'all niggas don't know shit.

A-WAX

You leavin' with her ain't you? Which brings me to what the fuck are all y'all niggas runnin' from?!

O-DOG

I ain't goin' no place.

STACY

I ain't runnin' from shit. I'm goin' to play ball.

A-WAX

Sharif, you s'pose to be all pro-black n'shit. Why you goin'?

SHARIF

Oh, don't get me wrong. You know I'm down. But when I get some money, I'm moving the hell outta the ghetto. I'm 'a still be around some black folks, but not in this damn ghetto.

A-WAX

What, you afraid or somethin'?

SHARIF

It's like a war zone out here.
 Brothers shootin' all the time. I
 ain't raisin' no family down here.
 The "ghetto lullaby" puttin' my
 kids to sleep. Copters and shit
 flyin' by all night...

CAINE

Boy's got a point there. "'Cause"
 I know if I had some money I'd bone
 the fuck out.

A-WAX

See, y'all some ole' sell-out
 niggas.

All utensils hit the silverware as A-Wax remains the only one
 still eating. He cuts up his food, lifts a sausage to his
 mouth, looks up to see eight angry eyes.

SHARIF

How you gonna call me a sell-out?!
 Yo dumb ass is sittin' over there
 chewin' on a sausage, got six
 strips of bacon sittin' on the
 plate, and salt all over the place!

O-DOG

Hell yeah, you stupid ass high-
 blood pressure-havin' muthafucka!

STACY

You's about an ignorant muthafucka!

The waitress walks over to the table, a pot of hot coffee in her
 hand. She leans over Caine's shoulder and refills his cup.

A-Wax picks up a strip of bacon, munches it down to his finger
 tips.

A-WAX

But I tell y'all what..., I'm 'a
 eat this bacon, and I'm a like it'
 and y'all can kiss my naturally
 black ass.

The bell on the front door jingles as two cops, one white, one
 black, walk in. They glance at the table where the guys are.
 The guys look back at them briefly. Caine's gaze lingers a bit
 longer.

O-DOG

What's up nigga, why you starin'?

CAINE

I don't know man, I done seen that whiteboy before.

STACY

Yo ass be havin nightmares about cops, huh...?

A-Wax turns to look. He watches the cop as the waitress shows them to a table. The cop notices his stares. A-Wax's eyes get wider.

A-WAX

Yo C, at the house man...

CAINE

What house?

A-WAX

The rock house nigga. We done served that fool before.

It all clicks now, Caine shaking his head in agreement.

CAINE

Hell yeah, I knew I'd seen his ass before.

Stacy, O-Dog, and Sharif start to laugh. The guys get to joking and talking again loudly.

BLACK COP (O.S.)

You guys want to hold it down some.

The guys turn to see the black cop staring at them. The white one has his face in the menu.

STACY

Man, let's get the fuck outta here.

SHARIF

Naw, we ain't got to leave 'cause of they stupid asses.

O-DOG

Should smoke they asses...

CAINE

Fuck it, let's go.

The guys start to slide out of the booth, each of them taking one last bite.

As they walk past the two cops, the black one looks up at them. A-Wax, who brings up the rear, gets bold.

A-WAX
(to black cop)
House nigga.

The cop starts to rise, but is quickly checked by his partner.

The guys laugh as they leave the restaurant.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON VISITING ROOM - DAY

A prison guard opens a door and Ronnie steps inside, with Caine trailing behind her.

The guard points them to the fourth partition.

Ronnie leads Caine to the partition, where a much older, and harder-looking, PERNELL, (38), sits behind the glass.

Ronnie sits down while Caine remains standing behind her. She picks up the phone. Pernell does likewise.

PERNELL

How you doin'?

RONNIE

I'm good. You?

PERNELL

Livin'. The kids?

Ronnie smiles, Pernell smiles back.

They stare at each other for a few moments. The conversation seems to stop, Ronnies searching for words.

Caine shifts nervously as Ronnie and Pernell stare at each other. His eyes searching the surroundings, taking in what it really means to be incarcerated.

A look to be taken for a smile, plays on Pernell's face.

PERNELL

Let me talk to Caine.

Slowly, Ronnie rises from the chair, still holding the phone in her hand. She gives it to Caine as he sits down.

Caine has a look on his face that we haven't seen before. The edge appears to be gone. No more coldness. Caine sits across from Pernell with all the anxiety of a child meeting his long-lost father. In a sense, that is exactly what is taking place here.

The two of them stare at each other for a long time before speaking a word.

PERNELL
It's been a long time "KayDee
Caine."

Caine smiles tightly, recalling the childhood nickname he hasn't heard in so long. He nods his reply.

PERNELL
(continuing)
How've you been, man...?

Caine nods his head, shrugs his shoulders.

Sensing uneasiness, Pernell looks up at Ronnie. She understands, and steps back away from the partition, allow for more privacy.

Pernell leans forward, closer to the glass.

Hesitantly, Caine does likewise.

PERNELL
(continuing)
Why ain't it you never came to see
me, man...?

CAINE
(a beat)
... 'Cause... 'Cause i didn't
wann se you caged up in here like
some fuckin' animal, man...

PERNELL
Do I look like an animal now? Is
that what you think, Caine? I'm an
animal...?

CAINE
Na, man! You...

Caine lets out a long breath, lloks up at the ceiling, closes his eyes. When his stare returns to Pernell's, his face is filled with emotion.

CAINE
(continuing)
...You.. Nigga, you was like my
dad... When I was growin' up...
You was like my dad, man...

Pernell's face glows with this new knowledge. His fist tightens around the receiver.

PERNELL

My first year in..., your letters,
man. They got me through, young
brotha... Away from my girl, my
kids... Away from you.

Caine looks down at the table, hanging his head in anguish.

PERNELL

(continuing)

Go with Ronnie, Caine.

Caine looks up slowly.

PERNELL

(continuing)

Whatever's up with you and Ronnie
is cool.

CAINE

Yo, "Nell, uh...

PERNELL

Take care of my little girl...
Take care of my son. I can only
guide him so much from a jail cell,
Caine. Teach him how to be a black
man in America.

Caine stares at Pernell. The conversation is over. Pernell
raises his left fist to the glass. Caine matches it with his
right.

CUT TO:

EXT. PROJECTS - DAY

The Iroc pulls to the curb and Caine steps out. He walks around
to front of the car when he catches sight of O-Dog crossing the
street towards him.

O-DOG

Yo! What up!?

CAINE

What up, Dog. Where you comin'
from?

O-DOG

Well, you know..., little 'a this,
little 'a that... How'd it go up
at the pen.

Caine and O-Dog begin walking up the sidewalk to the apartment.

CAINE

It went alright, man. 'Nell was cool about everything. I shoulda went to see him sooner.

An unfamiliar guy is hanging around the apartment. The guy lounges around like he doesn't know where he is, and like he certainly doesn't belong here.

Caine continues on to the apartment anyway. O-Dog watches the stranger closely. As Caine turns the keys to the door, the stranger calls.

VOICE (O.S.)

Which one 'a you is "Caine?"

Caine turns around slowly. O-Dog stands watching the guy. Caine steps forward, away from the door.

CAINE

Who wants to know?

GUY

A friend.

CAINE

Well you ain't from around here, and I know all of my friends.

GUY

I'm Ilena's cousin.

The guy steps forward, walking up on Caine.

GUY

(continuing)

She don't like how you doggin' her and neither do I.

Caine laughs out loud, looks back at O-Dog, who stands ready, his hand close to his side.

CAINE

(laughing)

Wait, wait, wait... So what, you come down here to kick my ass. Or kill me? What, we s'pose to fight over a bitch?!

GUY

I think you need to watch who you callin' a bitch.

CAINE

And I think you need to watch who the fuck you run up on.

Boom! Caine hammer-punches the guy smack in the middle of the face. He's a quick bleeder. The guy stumbles, thrown off guard by the blow. And since Caine isn't the type to let things die down, a few more blows follow. Vicious, heavy-weight, WBF, Golden Gloves, blows.

CAINE

(continuing)

That bitch is tryin' to run a game,
and I ain't havin' it!

The guy is on the ground now and Caine is stomping his head. The guy struggles to react, but he's too far gone.

A crowd is gathering, all the little kids in the neighborhood cheering Caine on. O-Dog stands by calmly, watching the fight like one would watch a tennis match.

The guy laying on the ground, Caine grabs hold of one of the clothes lines. He pulls it out of its pole and wraps it around the guy's neck, throttling him. The guy jerks to life instantly, fighting to hang on to whatever breaths haven't been kicked out of him yet.

Grandpapa has since come out of the apartment and stands in the front yard yelling.

GRANDPAPA

KayDee! KayDee!

O-Dog grabs hold of Caine, gets him to stop.

O-DOG

Yo cool out nigga. You can kill
him another time.

GRANDPAPA

KayDee, get yo ass in this house!!

Caine double-takes Grandpapa for a second. Profanity is an extremely rare occurrence.

Caine starts to turn away, but before he goes. Swift! A size ten right in the gut! The guy lays there on the sidewalk, spitting up blood, snot, and pockets of air.

As Caine heads for the apartment, O-Dog calls out.

O-DOG

Somebody help me get this
muthafucka outta here...

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Caine sits in the living room, his grandmother on one side of the couch, his grandfather pacing back and forth in front of him.

GRANDPAPA

Proverbs 22:10. "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out yea, strife and reproach shall cease."

Caine runs his hands over his face, lets out a long sigh.

CAINE

So what you tryin' to say Grandpapa?

GRANDPAPA

(a beat)

Son... You got to go. I can't have you around my house anymore.

CAINE

What?!

GRANDPAPA

I can't put up with it. All this fightin', shootin', drug sellin'. I want you out tomorrow.

CAINE

Where the hell am I s'pose to go?!

GRANDMAMA

We're sorry Caine.

CAINE

You ain't that sorry, you kickin' me out!

GRANDPAPA

Boy, I just can't do no more with you. We tried to raise you right, but you're just bad. You're a menace to society, boy...

Caine hops up from the couch, heads for the door.

CAINE

Fine, I'm outta here tonight. I'll be by sometime for my stuff.

CAINE (V.O.)

He'd finally had it with me. I couldn't blame him though. After grandpapa kicked me out, I didn't know what to do... Just wait until it was time to leave I guess.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Ronnie's house is empty now. All of the furniture and fixtures are gone. Several bags lay in the middle of the living room. Caine, O-Dog, Sharif, Stacy, and A-Wax all stand about idly.

STACY

Yo, Caine. You actually been sleepin' on this floor man?

CAINE

For about a week.

A-WAX

Hell naw, he been in that bedroom tryin' to bust them draws.

SHARIF

Yo wax, you better watch it. You saw what happened to Chauncy for messing with that girl.

CAINE

Y'all can all go straight to hell.

O-DOG

Shit, I thought we was already here.

CAINE

Hell yeah, charter members n'shit.

The fellas conversation dwindles as everyone sits in the living room thinking about the future.

SHARIF

So you ready to go, man...?

Slowly, Caine shakes his head repititively.

CAINE

Yeah, its time to get the hell up outta here.

Ronnie comes from the hallway with a few more bags of luggage. There's already enough there, Stacy wonders where she keeps getting more from.

STACY

Yo Ronnie. Is it just you and the kids moving or are you taking the house with you?

RONNIE

You're funny. Now why don't you take some of it outside and put it in the car.

The guys all grab something. A-Wax, the littlest man there, has to be the one to try and carry the biggest bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - EVENING

A grey sedan, the standard unmarked vehicle, cruises through the street. Two plain clothes officers in their usual discount center suits, are seated inside. A lone gumball sits perched atop the passenger side of the roof. Its red light spinning round and round, the SOUND OF A SIREN comes from behind it.

Blazing behind the sedan is an L.A.P.D. car, lights and SIRENS at full tilt. Two officers are seated side by side in the vehicle.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Stacy leads all of them out of the house, carrying two mid-size bags. A-Wax struggles with the big bag, almost dropping it down the steps.

Anthony rides around the yard in circles on an old Big Wheel.

The guys start loading the luggage into the rented mini-van.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Four guys are driving through the street in a raggedy, beat up, bucket of a car. One of the guys in the backseat is the one that Caine beat up in front of his apartment. The car rolls slow, the guys all scanning the streets. Their attitude is serious.

CUT TO:

INT. UNMARKED CAR - EVENING

The detective in the passenger seat is sifting through the file in his lap. In it are several documents, along with pictures of both Caine and O-Dog.

The detective digs into his coat and pulls an aresst warrant from his breast pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Stacy opens the front door and walks back to where Ronnie and Kyla are. He goes back to the kids empty bedroom, where Kyla is still packing things.

RONNIE

You think were gonna be able to get all this junk in the car.

STACY

You should, it is a van you know.

Stacy kneels down, helps Kyla with her clothes.

RONNIE

Are you already packed?

STACY

Yep. We leave tomorrow at six. Wish we didn't have to drive though.

RONNIE

Caine does. He hates flying.

STACY

At least you got him to go with you... Maybe we'll all get out of here one 'a these days.

CUT TO:

EXT. PROJECTS - EVENING

The unmarked car and the L.A.P.D. car pull to a quick stop at a curb in front of the Jordan Downs Housing Projects. As all of the officers hop out of the respective cars, they are met by the hateful eyes of several residents.

The officers head for the apartment at a quick pace. the detective gripping the aresst warrant in his hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Sharif and O-Dog are loading bags into the van. Caine stands back watching them. Anthony rams the Big Wheel into Caine's leg.

CAINE

Why you little punk you!

Anthony laughs, turns around and rides in the opposite direction. Caine watches him go before heading back up into the house to get another bag.

In the street, just two lots down, the raggedy-looking car is turning. It heads towards the house slowly.

O-Dog, Sharif, and A-Wax are heading back to the house.

The car rolls closer. All of the guys are wearing sunglasses to hide their faces now.

Caine walks out of the house carrying a suitcase.

Anthony speeds past him again.

A VOICE YELLS from the car.

VOICE

What up nigga's!!!

THE SOUND OF AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE rips through the air.

Taken off guard, the guys don't really have time to run, as Uzi machine gun fire is released upon them.

Sharif is hit. Two bullets dot his chest before he even knows what hit him. Directly into his heart. Everything seems to go silent as his body drops to the ground, flat on his back. His eyes wide open, blood bubbles pop from his mouth as his head bounces on the grass.

More gunfire fire. A SHOTGUN now.

The SOUND OF CRYING can be heard.

The car seems to take forever to pass by. Each shotgun blast, letting out a white cloud of smoke. The guy in the passenger seat with the uzi is smiling. His ivory grin contrasts his black hat and dark glasses to give him the impression of death materialized.

A-Wax tries to run for cover.

Caine drops the suitcase and immediately runs to shield Anthony.

Caine's body is racked with gunfire, his body responding in jerky, unnatural movements. It looks like some sort of morbid ballet.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Ronnie is running through the living room, Stacy close behind her.

RONNIE

My baby!! Anthony!!

Stacy catches her and pulls her to the ground. Frantically, she reaches for the door, but he won't let her go. She screams and screams, calling for her baby.

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

O-Dog is running for cover, but has his gun out returning the fire as best he can. He manages to dive underneath a bush, Uzi machine gun fire riddling the house right above his head.

Silence...

The car continues on up the street. The gunfire has ceased.

O-Dog gets up, his gun drawn, looking for any more trouble.

A-Wax lays dead on the ground, his white tee-shirt now a crimson pool. A shotgun blast took his stomach out.

O-Dog stands over him, staring. He looks over at Sharif, blood pooling from his mouth. Eyes open, head back.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT - EVENING

The detectives, flanked by the uniformed officers stand at the door of the apartment talking to Grandpapa. One of the detectives, is holding a snapshot of Caine to his face, while the other shows the arrest warrant.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Stacy hesitantly lets Ronnie up now. Kyla comes out of the hallway from where she was hiding. Her little face is red and puffy from crying. Stacy picks her up and holds her.

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Ronnie steps outside to the horror scene. She sees A-Wax dead. Sharif dead. O-Dog standing over them, his gun in hand.

Her attention immediately turns to the overturned Big Wheel which still has one wheel spinning.

Her eyes are glued, her expression turning to horror as she sees the blood streaming underneath, running down through the driveway.

Caine lays in the driveway, completely shot up. His body is slouched back on something.

Anthony crawls out from behind Caine, unharmed, but scared and drenched with Caine's blood. He runs to his mother, his face full of tears.

Stacy puts Kyla down and runs over to Caine. His chest is riddled with shots, almost as if someone was playing connect the dots with him. He has a few holes in his leg. One in his neck. Caine, remarkably is hanging on. His breath's are coming short and extremely fast.

STACY

O-Dog! Use the car phone, call
911!

Stacy kneels down, holds Caine in his arms. When he raises him, blood just pours from his mouth. He rocks Caine in his arms, his eyes filled with water.

STACY

(continuing)

Why you always wanna die on me, huh? Here you go, messin' up my shirt again... Yeah, just like last time, just messin' up my shirt again... You not gon' die, you not gon' die man...

CAINE (V.O.)

My grandpapa asked me one time if I cared if I lived or died... Yes, I do. I guess life in hell is better than no life at all... Maybe that's way I'm talkin' so damn much, lyin' here an inch from death...

Ronnie stands back, looking at Caine and A-Wax and Sharif. All she can do is cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Police cars and emergency vehicles are parked all around the house.

Sharif and A-Wax are wrapped in body bags and lying in the back of the County Coroner's car.

O-Dog is being lead, hands cuffed behind his back, to a patrol car. Several armed officers are gathered around him.

Caine is being loaded up onto a stretcher and put into an ambulance.

Cramped in the back seat of the patrol car, O-Dog looks out at the scene in the front yard. His attention is focused on his friend in the ambulance.

As the ambulance takes off, O-Dog twists his head to watch the vehicle drive away.

Ronnie, Stacy, Anthony, and Kyla all sit on the porch watching. Anthony's tears have since stopped and again, he watches things with that same cold, interested stare. He swings his legs back and forth on the porch.

ANTHONY

Payback time.

Everyone turns, looks at him.

Stacy buries his own head in his hands, shaking it from side to side.

Ronnie immediately grabs hold of her song. She holds him in her arms, squeezes tight. He cranes his neck to watch the ambulance as it turns the corner.

CUT TO:

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

The paramedics are hunched over Caine, tending to his injuries. The woman paramedic makes an honest observation.

PARAMEDIC #1

I don't think he's gonna make it.

PARAMEDIC #2

I surprised he's still alive.

CAINE'S P.O.V. - AMBULANCE

His vision cloudy, Caine can barely make out the faces staring down at him. His eyes flutter and in moments everything goes black.

PARAMEDIC #2(V.O.)

He's blacked out again. We're losin' him.

Caine can hear the voices but they sound almost as if they're coming from some far off distant place. He blinks a few times, regaining consciousness. He can hear the steady, continuous beep of the monitor.

CAINE (V.O.)

I didn't want to go out like this but... it don't look like I got a say in the matter. They been huntin' my ass since I was born... Now they finally got me. I guess people like my grandpapa can sleep better at night now, knowing that there's one less menace to society...

Everything goes black. The machine now has a steady tone, rather than a continuous beep.

Over a black screen, the SOUND OF THE TONE segues into Anthony's VOICE. It say's "payback" over and over again, in progression from the voice of a five-year-old, through the years, to the voice of an eighteen year old. It ends with "Payback muthafucka!," and the SOUND OF AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE.

FADE OUT.

THE END

MENACE TO SOCIETY

"YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM REALITY."