

Executive Producer: Lena D. Waithe
Executive Producer: Elwood Reid
Executive Producer: Aaron Kaplan
Executive Producer: Common
Executive Producer: Clark Johnson
Director: Clark Johnson

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"The Chi"

Show number: 1BEO01

Written by Lena D. Waithe

TVM Productions, Inc
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Suite 300
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"Gun violence is an addiction – not unlike drugs, alcohol or gambling – in which people feel compelled to deal with the madness of life and their own powerlessness by grabbing a gun and shooting someone."

- Ben Joravsky

Meet JASON. Caption reads: **Jason - 13**

Jason is the teenage version of Harry Belafonte. He's wearing a fresh pair of retro J's (The 11s if you give a shit). His line up is perfection, his jeans are sagging just enough, and a GOLD LION CHAIN hangs from his neck.

He's every teenage girl's wet dream. Perfect masturbation material.

When we meet Jason he's lying in a pool of his own blood. He's been shot three times. Twice in the stomach and once in the chest.

As we hover over his dead body we realize this kid must have been special. Because making death look this beautiful can't be easy, but he manages to do it effortlessly.

Welcome to the South Side of Chicago.

Meet COOGIE. Caption reads: **Coogie - 14**

Coogie, dark skinned with curly hair, is alive and well.

He's robbing Jason at the moment. He didn't kill him, but he figures why let a warm jacket and a new pair of J's go to waste.

COOGIE

Damn, man. Who you piss off?

Coogie digs through Jason's pockets and finds his wallet.

COOGIE (CONT'D)

Shit, you was probably fucking some dude's girl. Walking around looking like Trey Songz and shit.

He comes up on forty bucks.

COOGIE (CONT'D)

You lucky if you ask me.

Jason's unique chain catches Coogie's eye. He quickly takes it from Jason's neck and places it around his own.

COOGIE (CONT'D)

At least you ain't gotta pay yo phone bill next month.

And with that Coogie stands up and starts to walk away, but after two steps he hears a loud WOOP WOOP.

It's Chicago's Finest. Coogie starts RUNNING LIKE HIS LIFE DEPENDED ON IT. Probably because it does. He's got a few strikes.

The POLICE stop the car and chase after him on foot. Coogie cuts between houses, just barely escapes being bit by a dog, and jumps over a fence.

The Police are on his heels the whole time. But because they're out of shape they start to fall behind. And just when Coogie's about to lose them for good he SLAMS into an ELDERLY WOMAN, knocking her to the ground.

She FALLS HEAD FIRST onto the concrete. Scraping the entire left side of her face.

Coogie runs to her rescue and tries to help her up, but just when the Elderly Woman is about to take Coogie's hand one of the Police Officers GRABS him by the collar, throws him against the wall, cuffs him, frisks him, and forcefully PUSHES him into the backseat of the car.

As the door SLAMS SHUT, we --

CUT TO:

2

INT. EVEREST RESTAURANT - MORNING

2

We see BROWN hands cooking a SCALLOP.

It's evident that whoever these hands belong to is no stranger to this process. The technique still needs perfecting. But it's getting there.

Meet BRANDON. Caption: **Brandon - 19**

Brandon whistles to himself and dances to whatever song is playing in his head while he cooks.

And just as he starts to daydream about his promising future, MANNY (20s) comes BURSTING through the back door.

He's a handsome kid who doesn't fully grasp what his immigrant parents had to sacrifice in order for him to be here. Brandon tosses Manny his apron and he gets right to work.

BRANDON

Really, dude?

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MANNY

Lorenzo ain't gone die if I get here five minutes late.

BRANDON

Nah, but he ain't gone promote yo ass.

MANNY

So!? I ain't tryna get promoted. I'm just here tryna get my check.

BRANDON

These checks ain't big enough for me to come here just for that. I'm tryna learn something from these white folks.

Just as Brandon takes the scallop off the fire SARAH walks by. She has the kind of beauty that sneaks up on you when you least expect it. She's unusually thin and has a flare for making people feel small.

Manny takes her in. Brandon barely looks up.

MANNY

It's easy to learn when that's yo
teacher.

BRANDON

She aight.

As they both laugh, Sarah approaches.

SARAH

Do I have to separate you two?

Manny straightens up. Brandon leans back against a counter
and folds his arms.

BRANDON

(drinking her in)
Nah, we good.

SARAH

(to Manny)
Go polish the silverware.

Manny quickly exits.

Brandon and Sarah just stand there for a beat taking each
other in.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't just stand there.

Brandon plates the scallop and drizzles a buttery sauce on
top. Then he slides the plate toward Sarah with a smile...
looking for her approval.

She tries it.

SARAH (CONT'D)
It's overcooked.

BRANDON
Get the fuck outta here.

SARAH
Taste it.

He does.

BRANDON
(smiling)
You right. My bad.

SARAH
(not smiling)
You think this is funny?

BRANDON
A little bit.

Then --

SARAH
I'm sticking my neck out for you.
Don't make me look like an idiot.

BRANDON
(raises his voice
unintentionally)
Ain't nobody tryna make you look
like a idiot.

SARAH
Don't raise your voice at me.

She says that with a serious tone. So serious it makes
Brandon wonder if he should apologize. He doesn't.

Instead he asks --

BRANDON
So what'd you think of the sauce?

SARAH
I thought it was good.

He was hoping for great, but he'll take what he can get.

SARAH (CONT'D)
But no one's gonna walk out of this
restaurant saying, "Wow that
scallop was overcooked, but the
sauce was amazing."
(then)
I don't want you to be a dish
washer for the rest of your life.

BRANDON

I don't want that either. You know that.

SARAH

Then you need to start listening to me.

BRANDON

I do listen to you.

SARAH

(suggestive)

Not when we're cooking.

Brandon smirks.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Look, if you wanna be the new line cook you have to keep practicing.

BRANDON

I will.

Then --

SARAH

We're interviewing people on Friday.

BRANDON

But today's Wednesday.

SARAH

So. Keep practicing.

BRANDON

Aight.

SARAH

Don't fuck it up.

BRANDON

I ain't gone fuck it up. I got this. Calm down.

SARAH

I hate when you tell me to calm down.

BRANDON

I know.

She puts her arms around his waist. He doesn't hug her back.

In this moment they go from boss and employee to two people that really want to get off and they want to use each other to do it.

SARAH

Come on.

She grabs his hand and pulls him toward the pantry.

Once they reach the pantry they start kissing, passionately.

He tugs at her hair and she helps him take off his apron. The hand that was once clutching a dishrag is now pulling up Sarah's skirt, but before they get down to business -

SARAH (CONT'D)

We only have ten minutes, so no foreplay.

BRANDON

Since when do I need foreplay?

Brandon uses his foot to close the pantry door and on this, we --

3

OMITTED

3

4 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

4

Meet --

TEENAGE GIRL
(moaning with pleasure)
Emmett! Oh shit baby! Fuck, I'm
about to cum! Oh fuck!

Caption: **Emmett - 17**

When we meet Emmett he's fucking some naive-fatherless-girl, who thinks love and sex are the same thing.

Emmett looks like a teenage porn star. And he should. He's been fucking since he was thirteen years old. He reads at a sixth-grade level. He's never really been good at math. But he can make a girl cum just by looking at her.

Two small pictures are taped to his bedroom wall. Both of which have ATTRACTIVE TEENAGE GIRLS holding ADORABLE LITTLE BOYS on their laps. One Boy is three-years-old and the other is barely two. They're both carbon copies of Emmett.

While Emmett's fucking one girl, another one is blowing up his phone. Her name is TIFFANY. Her picture pops up. She's fair skinned with hazel eyes. Emmett leans over, sees her gorgeous face, promptly hits ignore, and gets in a few more pumps before he climaxes.

The Teenage Girl leans back. She's spent.

TEENAGE GIRL (CONT'D)
(catching her breath)
Damn, boy.

She kisses his chest. Emmett lights up a black and mild and exhales a huge cloud of smoke.

TEENAGE GIRL (CONT'D)
Who was calling you?

EMMETT
Don't worry about it.

TEENAGE GIRL
Don't make me look through your
phone, Emmett.

EMMETT
You ain't gone do shit.

TEENAGE GIRL
Who's blowing up your phone,
muthafucka?!

EMMETT
My boy, Darryl.

She doesn't believe him, but she's too exhausted to argue.

TEENAGE GIRL
Why you ain't pick up?

EMMETT
How I look answering some nigga's
call while I'm fucking you?

Emmett gets up and puts on his boxers.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
Come on, you gotta bounce before my
mom gets home.

The Teenage Girl gets out of his twin sized bed, naked and frail, and stands in front of him. Hormones raging, they start making out again. But just as they're about to embark on round two they hear the dreaded - KEYS JANGLING.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
Oh fuck! Get under the bed.

The Girl quickly puts on a T-shirt and scurries under the bed. Emmett hides her clothes and starts spraying Febreze everywhere.

Emmett's mother, JADA, KNOCKS on his door.

JADA
What'd I tell you about closing
doors in my house?

EMMETT

You said not to do it.

Jada is wearing floral scrubs and by the look on her face she's had a long day at work.

JADA

If you're only gonna use this room for fucking and getting high the least you could do is pay rent.

EMMETT

(exasperated)

I gave you money for the gas bill last week.

JADA

That ain't shit. Try paying the water bill or that high ass cable bill. Then we can talk.

She walks around his room like some sort of hood detective. Then Jada kneels down on his dirty floor and looks under his bed.

JADA (CONT'D)

What's your name?

TEENAGE GIRL

Kiesha.

JADA

Kiesha. You hungry, Kiesha?

She nods.

JADA (CONT'D)

Would you like to stay for dinner, Kiesha?

She nods again.

JADA (CONT'D)

You like shrimp, Kiesha?

KIESHA

Yes.

JADA

Well, too bad the salmon was on sale. So, that's what we having.

Emmett helps his mother up. Jada looks at her son, disappointed.

JADA (CONT'D)
Clean your room.

As Kiesha comes out of hiding, we -

CUT TO:

5

INT. TURNER DREW LANGUAGE ACADEMY - MORNING

5

We're in a rowdy, overcrowded classroom. MR. FEATHERSON, a young white teacher who's fresh out of grad school, tries to teach his students to be critical thinkers --

MR. FEATHERSON
I want someone to raise their hand
and tell me why Christopher
Columbus didn't discover America.

The kids aren't paying attention. So no one raises their hand.

MR. FEATHERSON (CONT'D)
Come on. We talked about this
yesterday. Why do historians now
say we can no longer give him
credit for "discovering" America?

As the kids continue to ignore him and run around he gives them a warning.

MR. FEATHERSON (CONT'D)
I'm going to count to ten if you
guys don't take your seats.

They don't listen.

MR. FEATHERSON (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Everybody, in your seats now!

That they understand.

MR. FEATHERSON (CONT'D)
Open your textbooks to page 73, and
read silently until I tell you to
stop.

He just took his power back.

We meet KEVIN.

Caption: **Kevin - 12**

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He sits in the back of the class flanked by his friends, JAKE and PAPA.

Jake and Papa fake read, while Kevin doesn't even bother pretending. He's too busy staring at ANDREA. A brown-skinned beauty with almond eyes and long braids.

JAKE

She look like that girl from
"Drumline".

KEVIN

What?

JAKE

You never seen that movie before?

KEVIN

No.

PAPA

She was in "Guardians of the Galaxy," too.

JAKE

Oh yeah.

KEVIN

What the fuck are y'all talking bout?

JAKE

Your woman.

KEVIN

She ain't my woman yet.

JAKE

When you gone ask her to the dance?

KEVIN

Today.

PAPA

That's what you said yesterday. And the day before that. And the day before that.

Jake and Papa cackle like the stereotypical hyenas in "The Lion King". Kevin stands up and pushes Papa out of his chair.

KEVIN

Man, shut yo fat ass up!

MR. FEATHERSON

Kevin, that's enough!

Mr. Featherson rushes over.

MR. FEATHERSON (CONT'D)

What part of "sit still and read silently" don't you understand?

KEVIN

I can read silently at home, Mr. Featherson. What I need you for?

MR. FEATHERSON

That's it. Go to the Principal's office and tell him I sent you.

Kevin grabs his bag. Papa keeps laughing. Kevin shoves him again.

MR. FEATHERSON (CONT'D)

And keep your hands to yourself on your way out.

Kevin has a choice. He can either leave the door open and exit the room quietly or slam it shut in one last act of rebellion.

He glances at Andrea. She smiles. His anger melts away.

Kevin chooses the former.

And on that we, -

CUT TO:

6 EXT. STREET CORNER - MORNING

6

Three BLACK MALES, chain smoking while standing in front of a corner store. They've all mastered the art of doing nothing.

Meet RONNIE. Caption: **Ronnie - 29**

He's frail, has a forced confidence that isn't fooling anyone, and is in desperate need of a haircut.

RONNIE

Don't you owe me five dollars?

BARRY

Nigga, I don't owe you shit.

RONNIE

Then let me borrow five dollars.

CURTIS

How you gone pay me back if you ain't got no job?

RONNIE

Alright, fuck it - let me have five dollars.

Everything stops when an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN walks by, especially their conversation.

CURTIS

Hey miss lady.

RONNIE
Where you going?

BARRY
You gotta man?

CURTIS
Want one?

RONNIE
(his best Jodeci
impression)
Baby won't you just stay
Baby won't you just stay
For a little while.

She just keeps walking. As if they don't exist. They're invisible. In more ways than one.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
Man, fuck that ho. My girl look better than her anyway.

BARRY
Tracy ain't your girl no more.

RONNIE
She got my baby, so she'll always be my girl.

CURTIS
He ain't even yours.

RONNIE
So! I take care of him like he mine.

CURTIS
Man, you stupid.

RONNIE
Can I at least get a dollar from one of you sorry muthafuckas?

BARRY
(trying not to laugh)
Ronnie, what you need a dollar for?

RONNIE
I'm tryna get something off the dollar menu. Come on man, I'm hungry than a motherfucka.

BARRY

Nigga, I ain't giving you shit.
What I look like giving another man
some money?

RONNIE

You'd look like a good samaritan.

CURTIS

Nah, nigga, you'd look gay as hell.

BARRY

And since I ain't gay, I ain't
giving you shit.

RONNIE

Man, fuck both y'all.

Just then, an UNMARKED POLICE CAR pulls up in front of them.
The window rolls down revealing, DETECTIVE NATHAN, an Older
White Guy that finally got that chip off his shoulder.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Ronnie.

RONNIE

What up, Nate?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Come take a ride with me.

RONNIE

For what? I ain't soliciting.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

I know.

(then)

Just get in the car.

RONNIE

What's wrong?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Just do me a favor and get in the
fucking car.

Ronnie, annoyed and confused, flicks away his cigarette and
gets in the fucking car. As he climbs into the backseat, we --

CUT TO:

7

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

7

Coogie sits at a table. Sans the jacket.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY, Irish and old fashioned, circles him like a lion in a cage. DETECTIVE WILLIAMS, aggressive and angry for no reason, leans against the wall with his arms folded.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS
That's a nice chain.

Coogie looks at it.

COOGIE
Oh, this old thing.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY
Looks expensive.

COOGIE
I got it on sale. Half price.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY
Wow. The next time my wife goes shopping I should send her with you. We'd save a lot of money.

COOGIE
Is she a Bloomingdales or a Nordstrom Rack kind of girl?

DETECTIVE O'DARBY
You think this is funny?

COOGIE
That was a serious question.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS
You shot and killed an innocent thirteen-year-old boy, for his sneakers, and now you're in here cracking jokes?

COOGIE
Just cause he dead don't make him innocent.

For some reason that sentence hits Detective Williams like a ton of bricks.

COOGIE (CONT'D)
And I would never kill nobody over no damn gym shoes.
(MORE)

COOGIE (CONT'D)

And on everything I was just walking to White Castle, minding my business, and I see dude over there looking like Ricky at the end of "Boyz In The Hood".

Detective O'Darby takes a seat in front of him.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY

So instead of calling the police
you decided to take his wallet?

COOGIE

Man, this the Chi. People die
everyday. We don't mourn the dead.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

No, you just rob 'em.

COOGIE

(leaning in)

If I killed that muthafucka there's
no way I'd be standing that close
to him. If it was me - I woulda
pulled up, merked his ass, and
peeled off.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Maybe the killer wanted to make
sure he was dead.

COOGIE

These niggas ain't hunters,
Detective. They ain't checking to
see if they hit they target or not.
They just wanna make sure people on
the block know not to fuck wit 'em.
They tryna make a name for
theyself.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Thank you for educating us.

COOGIE

You're welcome. Now, may I please
get another phone call?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

No.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY

No.

As Coogie puts his head on the table, we --

CUT TO:

8

INT. MORGUE - DAY

8

Ronnie and Detective Nathan are staring at a corpse covered
by a white sheet.

Officer Nathan pulls the sheet back to reveal that the body
belongs to Jason. The dead kid we met earlier.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

I know he wasn't your biological son, but I wanted --

RONNIE

I was with his mother for twelve years. I gave him his first haircut. I beat his ass when he got outta line. I taught him how to pee straight.

(then)

He was mine.

The reality of never hearing his son say the word "daddy" again hits him like a freight train. It's too much to take in.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

DETECTIVE NATHAN

I'm sorry.

RONNIE

Who did it?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

We don't know.

RONNIE

Of course not.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

But we do have a suspect in custody.

RONNIE

What's his name?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

I can't tell you that. But we found a gun near the body so we're hoping the fingerprints on the gun match the person we're talking to.

RONNIE

And what if they don't?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Then we'll keep looking.

Officer Nathan pulls the sheet over Jason's peaceful face.

DETECTIVE NATHAN (CONT'D)

I've been trying to get a hold of his mother. You know where I can find her?

RONNIE

Nah, we don't talk like that no more.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Okay. Well, if you see her - tell her to give me a call.

As Officer Nathan hands Ronnie his card, we --

CUT TO:

9

INT. TURNER DREW LANGUAGE ACADEMY - DAY

9

Kevin, Jake, and Papa sit at their respective lunch table.

Not only are Kevin and Papa cool again, but they're sharing a bag of FLAMING HOTS which are a hot commodity in this neighborhood. They're engaging in typical twelve-year-old boy behavior.

Kevin stares at Andrea who's sitting with her friends just a few feet away.

JAKE

What the principal say?

KEVIN

He said he's gone call my mom.

PAPA

Ah shit.

KEVIN

I'm good. My mom ain't paid her cell phone bill in months. That's why she always be on Facebook.

JAKE

Oh, then you straight.

Papa waves his hand in front of Kevin's face. He's been staring at Andrea this whole time.

PAPA

Just do it.

KEVIN

I'm not about to ask her out in front of all her friends.

JAKE

Well, it ain't like you gone catch her alone. You know these pretty bitches run in packs.

PAPA

Yeah, but they need to kick Rhonesha's ass out the group. Sitting over there looking like a fucking sea donkey.

Kevin and Jake chuckle at Papa's ridiculous observation.

Kevin gets the courage to stand up and slowly starts walking toward her table. Jake and Papa watch him with bated breath.

He finally makes it to the table and just stands there. Andrea and her friends look at him, confused.

ANDREA

Can I help you?

Kevin barely looks at Andrea.

KEVIN

Can I borrow your ketchup?

She thinks about it for a moment. And then --

ANDREA

No.

All the girls look at each other and start laughing at someone else's expense, like little school girls are prone to do.

And with that, Kevin nods and walks back to his table. Jake and Papa shake their heads with disappointment.

Kevin sits down, feeling defeated, and starts stuffing his face with Hot Cheetos. Papa opens his mouth to speak, but before he can say anything --

KEVIN

I fucked up.

PAPA

I'm embarrassed to call you my friend.

JAKE

Let it go.

KEVIN

Nope. I'm gonna try again.

PAPA

Are you a gluten for punishment?

KEVIN

It's glutton.

PAPA

Whatever.

KEVIN

If I can just get the words out, I think she'll say yes.

JAKE

I think that's a lie you're telling yourself, but keep hope alive.

CUT TO:

10

INT. FORD CITY MALL - FOOT LOCKER - AFTERNOON

10

Emmett is trying on a pair of LeBron's when Tiffany (the girl who's call he ignored earlier) comes storming into the establishment with EMMETT JUNIOR, a precocious two-year-old boy bouncing on her hip.

She stands right in front of him. He proceeds to lace up the shoes as if she doesn't exist. Emmett gets up and walks around in the shoes to see how they feel. Then he stares at them in the mirror. Unsure of whether or not they're worth the two hundred dollars.

TIFFANY

Really, Nigga?

EMMETT

I'm not doing this with you today.

TIFFANY

I really don't want my brothers to have to come fuck you up. I don't. You need to take care of your responsibilities.

EMMETT

I do. And their names are Davante and Cassius.

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(MORE)

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Those are my two responsibilities.
I can't afford no more.

TIFFANY

Well, you gone have to start
borrowing some money from your mama
or something 'cause Emmett Junior
is your responsibility too.

EMMETT

Just 'cause you named him after me,
don't make him mine.

Emmett takes off the LeBron's. And grabs a pair of Air Force Ones. He shouts after a white EMPLOYEE.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Hey homie, you got these in a size
thirteen?

EMPLOYEE

Let me check.

And off he goes to make a high commission off of the inner city youth's low self esteem.

TIFFANY

Fuck you, Emmett!

EMMETT

Yeah, you did. You also fucked your
way through the South Side of
Chicago.

She SLAPS him so hard saliva flies out of his mouth. Tiffany stands back, and plants her feet, bracing herself for some sort of retaliation. But it never comes.

Even at two-years-old Emmett Junior knows he's been dealt a shitty hand and starts screaming at the top of his lungs. Why God, why?

EMMETT (CONT'D)

You lucky you did that shit to me.
'Cause a lesser dude would've
punched you in yo fuckin' mouth.

SECURITY rushes over.

SECURITY

Either calm down or take it
outside.

EMMETT

I'm a paying customer. I ain't going nowhere.

SECURITY

Ma'am, if you're not gonna purchase anything I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

EMMETT

She ain't got no money.

TIFFANY

I'd have some if you paid child support.

EMMETT

I'm not gone support a child that ain't mine.

TIFFANY

I want a paternity test.

EMMETT

Fine.

Tiffany's so stunned by his answer she doesn't know what to do with herself.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Now get the fuck out my face.

She raises her hand to hit him again, but Security grabs her arm before she can make contact and escorts her out of the store.

11 INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

11

Brandon walks in and immediately starts taking off his clothes. He looks exhausted.

JERRIKA, his tightly wound girlfriend, is half asleep. He turns on the bathroom light, which gives us a glimpse of her face. She's got cheekbones for days and a scowl she can't shake.

JERRIKA

Hey.

She startles him.

BRANDON

Hey Babe. What you doing up?

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JERRIKA
I wanted to see you.

BRANDON
You good?

JERRIKA
Yeah.

Yeah, right.

BRANDON
What?

JERRIKA
Your mom called here earlier
looking for some money.

BRANDON
Ah shit. How much she want?

JERRIKA
Five hundred.

BRANDON
Ah hell nah, fuck that.
(then)
What you tell her?

JERRIKA
I was like uh, I can do one fifty.

BRANDON
Shit, you better than me.

JERRIKA
And when I asked her why she needed
it, she wouldn't tell me.

BRANDON
How she gone call up here looking
for some money and not say what
it's for?

JERRIKA
She's trifling.

BRANDON
Who you calling trifling?

JERRIKA
Your trifling-ass mother.

BRANDON

Don't think you all that just
'cause you work at The Olive
Garden.

JERRIKA

I'm a manager.

He laughs at that while he gets undressed.

BRANDON

I don't give a fuck.

Jerrika throws a pillow at his crotch. He throws it right
back. Only it hits her a little too hard in the face.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Oh shit, my bad.

JERRIKA

You play too much.

He rushes over to kiss her. On the mouth not her forehead.

JERRIKA (CONT'D)

Brandon, can you just call your mom
tomorrow and see what's going on?

BRANDON

Jerrika, I gotta practice my --

JERRIKA

She sounded weird on the phone.

He climbs into bed with her.

BRANDON

She's an alcoholic. She always
sounds weird.

She kisses him softly on the lips.

JERRIKA

Just call her back and see what she
wants.

BRANDON

Fine, but next time she calls let
that shit go to voicemail and don't
offer up no money.

Brandon pulls Jerrika close to him. He hugs her with all his might.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Hey.

JERRIKA

What?

BRANDON

I love you.

A big smile comes over her face.

JERRIKA

I love you too, babe.

As she starts to drift away. He just lies there. Wide awake. Too stressed to sleep.

CUT TO:

12 INT. HOUSE JUST OFF OF 79TH STREET - NIGHT

12

We're in a house that was decorated in 1976 and hasn't been touched since. The furniture is covered in plastic, because who wouldn't want to preserve a brown suede couch.

Ronnie sits across from TRACY, a petite woman with her hair pulled back into a ponytail.

Her eyes are swollen from crying and she's still trying to catch her breath as she rocks back and forth.

TRACY

How you know it was him?

RONNIE

I know what my son looks like.

A beat.

TRACY

Thank you.

(then)

For loving him so much.

RONNIE

I would've loved anything that came out of you.

Ronnie gets up and starts for the door.

And in the two minutes it takes Ronnie to go from the chair to the door Tracy goes from the second stage of grief to the third. Her pain and guilt transforms into anger and bargaining. Her voice stops trembling and she becomes still.

TRACY

(tears in her eyes)

If you really loved him you'd get
the fools that did this.

RONNIE

That's not gone bring him back,
Tracy.

TRACY

That ain't never stopped you
before.

He turns back to look at her --

TRACY (CONT'D)

I'm not asking you to bring him
back. I'm asking you to kill the
muthafuckas that killed him.

They lock eyes for a beat. Her eyes are filled with
desperation.

Ronnie just looks down and says -

RONNIE

I'll check on you tomorrow.

CUT TO:

13 INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING 13

Kevin is brushing his teeth. We can hear multiple children
SCREAMING and RUNNING AROUND THE HOUSE. This apartment, not
unlike his homeroom, is overcrowded.

Then Kevin hears a faint RINGTONE. He's a little confused by
it at first. Then he turns off the faucet, spits out the
toothpaste and runs out of the bathroom.

14 INT. APARTMENT - HIS MOTHER'S BEDROOM - MORNING 14

Kevin sifts through a huge pile of dirty clothes, until he
finally strikes gold. A ringing cell phone.

His older sister, Kiesha, (the same girl Emmett was fucking
earlier) stands in the doorway. Kevin looks at her in
disbelief.

KIESHA

I guess she paid the bill.

Kiesha walks into the kitchen. Kevin lets whoever's calling
go to voicemail. Then he pulls out a crumpled piece of paper
and starts dialing.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. BUS STOP - MORNING

15

Andrea is in a bright yellow coat, standing at a bus stop, listening to Beyonce. All of a sudden her music turns into a RINGTONE. It's a number she doesn't recognize, but answers it anyway.

ANDREA

Hello?

KEVIN

Hey Andrea.

ANDREA

Kevin?

KEVIN

Yeah, how are you?

ANDREA

Uh, I'm good. How you get this number?

KEVIN

Rhonesha gave it to me.

Andrea rolls her eyes. Typical Rhonesha.

ANDREA

What's up?

KEVIN

Um, I was just wondering if you wanted to go to the dance with me?

ANDREA

Jake already asked me.

KEVIN

Jake? My friend Jake?

ANDREA

Yeah.

KEVIN

Man, that's bogus. What you say?

ANDREA

I said, yeah.

Kevin is devastated.

KEVIN

Well, okay. That's all I wanted to ask you.

ANDREA

Okay, well, I guess I'll see you later.

KEVIN

Yeah, okay. I'll see you later.

ANDREA

Bye.

KEVIN

Bye.

Heartbreak is hard at any age, but at twelve it's catastrophic.

As Kevin sits there not knowing what to do with himself - he spots Kiesha standing in the doorway. She knows what her brother is going through.

She used to be Andrea.

KIESHA

You aight?

KEVIN

(no)

Yeah, I'm cool.

As she shakes her head, we --

CUT TO:

16 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

16

Emmett and Emmett Junior sit next to each other. They're both being swabbed by DR. RUSTIN, an older black man who still remembers where he was when Malcolm X got shot.

Tiffany looks on - arms folded.

DR. RUSTIN

Emmett, we should have the results for you in a day or two.

TIFFANY

Great.

EMMETT

(to Tiffany)

Stay the fuck away from me until then.

TIFFANY

You used to always come crying to me, talking bout how yo daddy ain't shit. Well, you sitting here acting just like his ass.

This hits Emmett like a ton of bricks. Tiffany just embarrassed the shit out of him in front of some old dude he doesn't even know.

But instead of lashing out at her Emmett internalizes what she just said. It doesn't feel good. But then again, the truth rarely does.

An awkward silence fills the room.

After a beat Dr. Rustin takes pity on him and says --

DR. RUSTIN

Tiffany, you're done. You can go.

Tiffany grabs her purse and her son and storms out of the office.

Emmett watches her leave, shaking his head the whole time. He puts his coat on and grabs his snap back.

DR. RUSTIN (CONT'D)

It's boys like you that make me wonder if your namesake died in vain.

Emmett looks at him for a moment, unsure of what to say. He can't think of anything. It's too early for this shit.

So he puts on his headphones, turns up his music - as high as it will go, and leaves.

CUT TO:

17

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - MORNING

17

Coogie talks to Detective Williams through the bars.

COOGIE

Man, if my mom could afford bail money you think I'd be out there stealing from a dead body?

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

I don't know why you muthafuckas do half the shit you do.

COOGIE

And since I don't feel like taking the time to explain it to yo ass - I guess you ain't gone never know.

Detective O'Darby approaches.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY

(looking at a document)

The lab came back with multiple partial prints on the gun. And none of them match yours. And since you don't have any gun powder on your hands we can't hold you.

COOGIE

Told you.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Congratulations, it's your lucky day.

COOGIE

I think I'll go out and celebrate.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY

Don't party too hard.

Detective Williams opens the cell door and hands Coogie his belongings in a big ENVELOPE. They took his belongings away from him since they held him overnight.

Coogie opens the envelope and takes out the GOLD CHAIN and proudly puts it back on.

DETECTIVE O'DARBY (CONT'D)

I know you stole that chain.

COOGIE

Yeah, but you didn't see me steal it.

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS

Next time we will.

CUT TO:

18

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

18

Brandon has six small plates lined up on the counter. All of which have a small cooked piece of meat with a tiny garnish.

Jerrika is currently tasting the lamb.

JERRIKA

It's good, babe. It's not as flavorful as the chicken, but it's cooked perfectly.

BRANDON

Well, that's all that matters.

JERRIKA

Yeah, but you don't want it to be bland.

BRANDON

It's not my job to season it. All I gotta do is cook it and pass it off to the next guy.

JERRIKA

I know, but it can't hurt to put a little salt and pepper on it.

BRANDON

Alright.

Brandon takes a bite of a salad doused in Ranch dressing. After one bite he gets the dressing all over his mouth.

Jerrika looks at him, disgusted.

JERRIKA

Can you try chewing with your mouth closed? That's disgusting, it's endearing, but it's disgusting.

While Brandon concentrates on chewing with his mouth closed - his phone BUZZES. An image of his MOTHER pops up on the screen. He glances at his phone and his whole demeanor changes. Jerrika can tell by the tired look on his face he's not going to answer it.

JERRIKA (CONT'D)

I think something's wrong.

BRANDON

Something's always wrong with her.

She takes a moment and drinks him in.

JERRIKA

I still don't understand how such a fucked up woman could produce such a decent man.

Brandon doesn't know either.

BRANDON

I'mma call her after I get this job tomorrow.

JERRIKA

That's fine. Just make sure you get it though, cause I ain't tryna be working at The Olive Garden forever.

BRANDON

Well, don't quit just yet. We still got a long way to go before you're the manager at my restaurant.

JERRIKA

I'm sorry - what you say? What you mean your restaurant?

BRANDON

My bad. Our restaurant.

JERRIKA

Yeah. Get it right.

She gives him a quick kiss.

BRANDON

We gone be the first restaurant on the south side of Chicago to get a Michelin star, babe.

JERRIKA

Yeah, we are. But let's try to get two. We gotta aim high.

BRANDON

You right.

He knows their future depends on what he does in the kitchen tomorrow.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Try the steak.

She does.

JERRIKA

(chewing)

Ugh. This shit is raw as hell.

BRANDON

It's supposed to be. That's how rich white folks like their meat.

Jerrika spits it out. Brandon can't help but chuckle at her scrunched up face. Pretty soon she starts laughing too.

As they continue to laugh and throw verbal jabs at each other, we --

CUT TO:

19

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

19

Ronnie stands near the spot where Jason was killed. He looks around. It's unusually quiet.

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Then he looks up. He realizes there are two windows that have a perfect view of the alley down below. He notices a light glimmering from one of the windows.

Jason's blood is still on the ground. Ronnie stares at it for a moment. Then Ronnie hears a loud SCREECH.

The sound comes from one of the windows above him. Ronnie looks up and sees a YOUNG BLACK BOY leaning on the window sill. As soon as Ronnie sees him the Boy disappears.

Ronnie runs over to the stairwell and tries to catch him.

20 INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

20

While running, down the stairs The Boy spots Ronnie and immediately starts running the other way. Ronnie chases after him. The boy runs all the way up to the roof. Ronnie catches up to him and knocks him to the ground.

RONNIE
Stop muthafucka!

YOUNG BLACK BOY
Get off me.

The Boy wrestles Ronnie for a few minutes, but Ronnie finally pins him down.

RONNIE
Man, calm your little ass down.

Ronnie pulls him up and throws him against the brick wall.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
Did you see the muthafucka that
shot my son?

YOUNG BLACK BOY
Who the fuck is your son?

Ronnie grabs the kid by his collar and drags him over the ledge of the building so he can see all the way down to the alley where Jason's blood still remains.

YOUNG BLACK BOY (CONT'D)
Oh shit! Come on, man!

RONNIE
The kid that got shot down there.

YOUNG BLACK BOY
Nah, man. I ain't see nothing.

Ronnie pushes his forearm against the kid's windpipe.

YOUNG BLACK BOY (CONT'D)
(gasping for air)
Fuck.

RONNIE
I don't believe you.

The Boy struggles to get free, but it's no use.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
You wanna die today?

YOUNG BLACK BOY

Okay - okay. I heard gun shots.

Ronnie lets him breathe. Just a little.

YOUNG BLACK BOY (CONT'D)

So I ran over to the window.

RONNIE

Who'd you see?

YOUNG BLACK BOY

I saw a dude jacking some dead kid
for his shit.

RONNIE

What he look like?

YOUNG BLACK BOY

All I know is he was dark skinned-
ed and he had that good hair.
That's all I know. I swear.

Ronnie sets the kid free. He runs for his life.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. TURNER DREW LANGUAGE ACADEMY - BEHIND THE SCHOOL - DAY 21

Kevin and Jake are rolling on the ground scrapping. Kevin is losing at first. Jake has him in a headlock and Kevin's unable to block Jake's punches because his arms are stuck behind his back.

KEVIN

Fuck you, Jake!

JAKE

Shut up!

Kevin finally breaks free and kicks Jake in the stomach. Jake goes down. Kevin jumps on top of him and tries to get a few licks in because a crowd is starting to form and he doesn't want to face the embarrassment.

Papa finally runs up and pulls Kevin off of Jake. A few kids help him break it up.

PAPA

Here's the deal. If you suckas get
suspended, I gotta go to the dance
dolo.

(MORE)

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PAPA (CONT'D)

And I ain't tryna be sitting at a
table by myself looking like who
shot John.

KEVIN
 Why you ask Andrea to the dance
 when you knew I was gone ask her!?

JAKE
 'Cause you was taking too long!

PAPA
 That's foul, man. You living foul.

JAKE
 Shut up, Papa.

PAPA
 Don't tell me to shut up.

Andrea and two of her friends walk up.

ANDREA
 I hope y'all wasn't fighting over
 me.

PAPA
 Everything ain't about you, Andrea.

JAKE
 Andrea, just go to the dance with
 Kevin. He liked you first.

KEVIN
 Nah, fuck it. Y'all can go
 together.

ANDREA
 Why don't I just take the both of
 ya'll?

JAKE
 Works for me.

PAPA
 (whispers to Jake)
 It's only cool for a dude to take
 two dates. Girls can't do that
 shit.

ANDREA
 Come on, Kevin.

KEVIN
 Nah, I don't share.

Kevin grabs his bookbag and starts making his way through the crowd.

The fact that he was kicking Jake's ass and won't settle for sloppy seconds makes him a little more attractive in Andrea's eyes.

As she watches him go back inside, we --

CUT TO:

22

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

22

Coogie holds a small bouquet of flowers as he walks through the halls of a rundown retirement home.

The NURSES are exhausted and the RESIDENTS mostly keep to themselves.

After turning a few corners and peeking into a few empty rooms, he finally finds the person he's looking for.

From afar we see an Elderly Woman sitting in a rocking chair, looking out the window.

As Coogie moves in closer we see that it's the woman he knocked over the day before. Half her face is still black and blue because of the fall.

Coogie holds out the flowers as a peace offering.

She doesn't take them.

COOGIE

I'm sorry I knocked you down
yesterday. I was trying to help you
up, but the police --

ELDERLY WOMAN

Wouldn't let you. I know.

(then)

Can you put those in a vase and set
'em on the window seal?

COOGIE

Yes, ma'am.

Coogie does as he's told.

ELDERLY WOMAN

What's your name?

COOGIE

Coogie.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Now you know good and well your mother didn't name you that. What's your name, child?

COOGIE

Charles.

He grabs a seat and sits down in front of her.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Why were you running, Charles?

COOGIE

Because I stole from somebody.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Did you ever stop to think about the person you were stealing from?

COOGIE

He ain't gone need it.

ELDERLY WOMAN

How do you know?

COOGIE

'Cause he's dead.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh my Lord. Did you kill him?

COOGIE

No, ma'am. I'm a thief not a murderer.

ELDERLY WOMAN

All sins are created equal in my book.

COOGIE

Not in the court of law.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Well, I serve a higher judge.

Coogie doesn't have a witty comeback to that. Older black women can always shut you down when they bring the Bible into it.

COOGIE

I just wanted to say I was sorry.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I won't accept it.

COOGIE

Why not?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Because I'd rather you make me a promise.

COOGIE

Depends on what it is.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You already knocked me down and messed up the right side of my face, and now you gone come up in here and act disrespectful?

COOGIE

I'm sorry. What's the promise?

ELDERLY WOMAN

I want you to promise me you'll never knock another old woman down because you won't be running from the police anymore.

Coogie takes a deep breath.

COOGIE

I don't like making promises I can't keep.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Then make it your business to keep it, young man.

COOGIE

Okay, I'll try.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Try is an ugly word.

Coogie chuckles at her relentlessness.

COOGIE
Fine. I promise.

She smiles.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Now you can go.

As he starts for the door, she calls out --

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)
Thank you for the flowers, Charles.

He turns to look at her and gives her a quick nod.

Then he keeps walking. And for the first time in his life he walks with a sense of purpose.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. STREET - DAY

23

Kevin, Papa, and Jake are walking home from school.

As a result from their fight earlier: Jake has a small cut above his left eye and Kevin's clothes are dirtier than usual.

Papa walks between them. He's the buffer.

JAKE
You fucked up my eye, man.

KEVIN
You fucked up my day.

PAPA
Can I just keep it all the way trill.

Jake and Kevin cut their eyes at Papa.

KEVIN
What nigga?

PAPA
Andrea ain't no Beyonce.

KEVIN
She a Kelly though.

PAPA

Uh uh, she a Michelle.

(beat)

And that's on her best day.

JAKE

She ain't no Michelle.

KEVIN

She's definitely Kelly-ish.
Come on, man.

PAPA (CONT'D)

I'm just keeping it trill wit
ya'll.

JAKE

See, that's why you ain't got no
woman.

PAPA

So! At least I ain't fighting over
one. Shit, I'm a pimp by blood.

KEVIN

(his best Neno Brown)

Man, sit yo five dollar ass down
before I make change.

The boys reconcile through laughter. They playfully shove each other and start roughhousing as if nothing ever happened.

As the boys keep walking we see that the retirement home Coogie is walking out of is just a block ahead of them.

The corner store Ronnie is currently hanging out in front of is across the street from the retirement home.

Coogie locks eyes with Ronnie from across the street. He doesn't recognize Ronnie. They've never met. Coogie just stands there, wondering why this stranger is staring at him.

Ronnie isn't focused on Coogie, he's focused on the chain dangling from his neck.

Ronnie walks across the street and approaches Coogie.

COOGIE

You know me, nigga?

RONNIE

Where'd you get the chain,
muthafucka?

COOGIE

I found it.

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Coogie tries to walk away, but Ronnie blocks his path.

RONNIE
That's my son's chain.

COOGIE
Maybe we got it from the same
place.

Ronnie pulls out a gun and holds it to Coogie's head.

RONNIE
I think you robbed my son for it.

Coogie holds up his hands, still keeping his cool.

COOGIE
Look, man. I ain't kill yo son,
alright?

RONNIE
Fuck you.

COOGIE
He was dead when I found him.

Ronnie cocks the gun.

COOGIE (CONT'D)
Somebody shot that muthafucka, but
it wasn't me!

RONNIE
Then why you walking around with
his chain around your neck, nigga?

COOGIE
I don't know, man! You can have it
back, shit! I swear I ain't kill
nobody. I ain't like that, man.

Kevin and his friends are now only a few feet away. They're too busy goofing around to take notice of the altercation happening in front of them.

RONNIE
I don't believe you.

COOGIE
Well you can either believe me or
shoot me, but I wish you'd hurry up
'cause I got shit to do.

Ronnie steps back and SHOOTs COOGIE THREE TIMES in the chest. TV Calling - For educational purposes only

Coogie's body falls to the pavement.

Kevin and his friends drop to the ground when they hear the gunshots.

PAPA

Oh shit.

KEVIN

Shut up!

Jake starts crying. Kevin shoves him.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Stop crying! Get outta here! Hurry up!

Jake and Papa do what Kevin tells them. They get outta there quick.

As Coogie's dead body lays sprawled out on the sidewalk, Ronnie kneels down and takes his son's chain from around his neck.

Then he looks up and LOCKS EYES with Kevin.

Kevin's scared shit-less, but he doesn't show it. He just stands there. He knows better than to make any sudden moves.

After a tense moment, Ronnie shoves the gun in his pants, steps over Coogie's lifeless body, and walks away.

As soon as Ronnie is out of Kevin's sight he stands up and runs the rest of the way home.

24

INT. EVEREST RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

24

Brandon is wearing a crisp white chef's coat. The light from the ceiling is currently bouncing off the stainless steel table in front of him and creates a halo around his face which makes him look even more angelic than he already is.

Four pieces of raw meat are placed in front of him.

At first glance he seems calm, but his hands are shaking.

Sarah and the EXECUTIVE CHEF, a short man of Italian descent, stand in front of him.

SARAH

You know the drill. Everything should be cooked medium - except the steak.

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(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

That's always medium rare unless
the diner asks for something
different.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

You'll plate them, add a complimentary sauce, and present them to us when you're done.

(then)

And remember to clean your area as you go.

EXECUTIVE CHEF

Any questions?

BRANDON

No, Chef.

SARAH

Okay, you have twelve minutes.

Sarah sets the timer and Brandon immediately starts grabbing frying pans and utensils.

As he tries to focus he feels his phone BUZZING in his back pocket. Brandon ignores it. It BUZZES again. He's pissed at whoever's calling him right now.

The phone BUZZES once more, he gives in and looks at the phone. It's his mother. He hits ignore. She calls back. He hits ignore again.

Then Jerrika calls. Her call he takes -

BRANDON

Let me hit you right back -

But before he can hang up, bad news is blurted out on the other end.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

What?

Brandon gasps for air.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Wait, what? When?

After a moment he hangs up the phone and puts it back in his pocket.

He just stands there. Unable to move. The news on the other end of that phone call has made the world around him go silent. Colors aren't as bright. And life as he knows it will never be the same.

Sarah sees him and rushes over.

SARAH
What the fuck are you doing?

BRANDON
(voice trembling)
Somebody shot my brother.

SARAH
Is he gonna be okay?

BRANDON
He's dead.

Sarah takes a deep breath.

SARAH
Oh my God. I'm so sorry.

She tries to embrace him, but he wants no part of it. Her touch won't make this problem go away. Even the world's most satisfying quickie couldn't fix this.

BRANDON
I gotta get outta here. I gotta
call my mom. I gotta -- I don't --
I gotta go home.

Sarah stands directly in front of him.

SARAH
Take a breath.

He can't.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna pretend to understand
what you're going through right
now, because I don't. But I want
you to -
(stern)
Look at me!

He doesn't.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Brandon, I need you to look at me.

He looks up, finally. Holding back tears.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about your brother. I
really am.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

But if you don't take advantage of this opportunity right now you'll regret it for the rest of your life.

BRANDON

Are you serious? Bitch, my brother just got killed. Fuck you and fuck this stupid restaurant.

SARAH

If you're serious about being a chef - this is your chance. This is the opportunity you've been waiting for.

Brandon takes off his chef's coat and starts for the door.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Is this what your brother would've wanted?

This stops him in his tracks. He turns around and gets within an inch of her face.

BRANDON

Don't talk about my brother. You don't know him. Shit, you barely know me.

SARAH

That's bullshit. I know you, Brandon.

(then)

I do.

There's an uncomfortable silence between them, because he knows she's telling the truth.

Just then the Executive Chef walks over.

EXECUTIVE CHEF

Is everything okay?

SARAH

Brandon has a family emergency he has to deal with, is there any way -

EXECUTIVE CHEF

No, no. We have to make a decision.
I'm hiring somebody tonight.

Brandon and Sarah lock eyes. No words are exchanged, but he knows what she's thinking.

BRANDON

Fine. I can stay.

EXECUTIVE CHEF

Excellent.

As soon as the Executive Chef walks away, Sarah hands Brandon his chef's coat. He snatches it from her.

SARAH

I'll restart the clock.

Brandon puts the coat back on and tries to compose himself. Which is hard to do when there's no one there to comfort him. No one there to listen. No one there to hold his hand.

Brandon turns on the stove and picks up where he left off. His hands aren't shaking anymore. The test is no longer that important. His nerves have melted away.

As he prepares the first piece of meat tears start streaming down his face. He quickly wipes them away, pushes through the pain, and keeps cooking.

And on this, we --

CUT TO:

25 INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

25

Emmett is sleeping soundly while the TV blares in the background.

NEWS REPORTER

Fourteen-year-old Charles Fredrick Johnson was shot and killed in front of a local corner store after leaving a retirement home this afternoon. Officials say his death brings the number of Chicago homicides this year to 359.

Emmett is mid-nap when he hears a loud BANGING on his door.

JADA (O.C.)
(shouting)
Emmett! Wake your ass up, right
now! Get up!

Not only is his door closed, but it's locked. Needless to say, Jada is pissed.

JADA (CONT'D)
Open the damn door, boy!

Emmett rubs his eyes and slowly gets out of bed. He's actually sleeping alone... for once.

EMMETT
I'm coming!

When he finally opens his bedroom door he finds his mother and Emmett Junior standing there.

Emmett Junior is holding onto Jada's pants with one hand and sucking his thumb on the other.

JADA
Look what I found sitting on the
front steps.

EMMETT
What the fuck!?

JADA
Watch your mouth.

She hands him an envelope.

JADA (CONT'D)
This was pinned to his shirt.

Emmett opens the envelope and reads the document inside. It's the results from the paternity test.

JADA (CONT'D)
I don't know why you reading that,
he look just like you.
(re: Emmett Jr.)
Look at his nose.

EMMETT
Fuck!

JADA
Yeah. That's exactly what you did.
And for some reason you keep doing
it without a condom. TV Calling - For educational purposes only

EMMETT
Where's Tiffany?

JADA
I have no idea.

EMMETT
So she just gone leave him here?

JADA
Mmm hmm.

Emmett grabs his jacket and tries to leave, but Jada blocks the doorway.

JADA (CONT'D)
Where do you think you're going?

EMMETT
I'mma try to find her.

JADA
Well, wherever you go you're taking him with you.

EMMETT
Ma, I can't take him with me. I'mma be driving all over town. I ain't got no car seat.

JADA
Then I suggest you go buy one.

EMMETT
Ma --

JADA
That girl is long gone, okay. This boy is your responsibility now. Cause I'm done raising nappy-headed little boys. Now if you need a baby-sitter here and there I got you, but other than that you gone have to figure it out.

EMMETT
Ma, she can't just leave the baby with me like that. This is crazy.

JADA
She didn't leave him with a stranger, she left him with his father.

And with that Jada exits the room - leaving Emmett all alone with his son. Emmett Junior looks at his father and laughs. As if he knew what just happened.

EMMETT

What you laughing at? You think this is funny? This shit ain't funny, dude. Your mama crazy as hell. And so is your grandma. I don't know what you'd do if it wasn't for me.

Emmett sits down on his bed and bounces his infant son on his lap. Emmett Junior smiles at his teenage father. Emmett Senior can't help but smile back at him.

And on this we, --

CUT TO:

26

INT. HOUSE JUST OFF OF 79TH STREET - AFTERNOON

26

Ronnie knocks on the door. No one answers. He knocks again. Only this time he knocks as if he were the police.

Tracy opens the door. She was obviously in a deep sleep.

TRACY

What nigga?!

Ronnie doesn't say a word. He just holds out Jason's chain.

She looks at it for a moment. Tracy knows what this means. She reaches out for the chain with both hands. Tracy holds it close to her chest as if it were her dead son's body.

She gazes up at Ronnie and pulls him into a warm embrace. They haven't hugged like this since they were teenagers.

Ronnie knows this won't last long so he savors every second. He even squeezes Tracy a little tighter before letting her go.

For the first time in a long time Ronnie takes a deep breath. He always felt like a man in her arms. And this time is no different. Tracy gives him a quick kiss on the cheek and doesn't bother saying "thank you" because the grateful look in her eyes does it for her.

Tracy looks as if she wants to invite Ronnie inside, but before she can extend the invitation Ronnie starts making his way down the stairs.

He got what he came for.

CUT TO:

27 INT. EVEREST RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

27

Brandon is wiping down the counters when Sarah approaches.

SARAH
Congratulations, you're officially
a line cook.

He isn't sure if he should say "thank you" or "fuck you".
After a quick beat he decides...

BRANDON
Fuck you.

SARAH
I deserve that.

BRANDON
I should've left as soon as I got
the news.

SARAH
If you had you'd still be washing
dishes.

BRANDON
Yes, but at least I wouldn't feel
like shit.

SARAH
Trust me, you'd feel like shit
either way.

28 INT. L TRAIN - NIGHT 28

Brandon sits on the train looking out the window. He's still distraught and broken up about the recent news.

29 INT. TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT 29

TONY, a young man covered in tattoos, is tattooing Jason's name on Ronnie's forearm.

Jason's name takes up the last bit of free space close to his wrist. Ronnie's arm is a tribute to the friends and family members that he's lost over the years.

TONY

You're running out of room.

RONNIE

I know.

TONY

We gotta stop killing each other.

Ronnie catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

RONNIE

I know.

Then he puts his head down and endures the pain while Tony finishes the tattoo.

CUT TO:

30 INT. TURNER DREW LANGUAGE ACADEMY - GYM - NIGHT 30

There's a sixth grade dance in session. The decorations are cheap and the flickering gym lights aren't doing a great job at setting the mood.

Because it's 2015 or 2016 the girls and the boys are not standing on opposite sides of the gym. They're all bumping and grinding to whatever the latest hot song is that's not too expensive.

Kevin and Papa sit by themselves drinking fruit punch, still shaken from what they witnessed earlier, while Jake and Andrea look like a young Will and Jada on the dance floor.

PAPA
Stop staring.

KEVIN
I'm not.

PAPA
Yeah, you are.

KEVIN
She looking at me.

PAPA
Ain't nobody looking at you.

Kevin looks up and locks eyes with Andrea. As she dances with Jake she smiles at Kevin. He smiles back.

Just then, the DJ decides to slow it down and goes from an up tempo song to Miguel. As "Adorn" starts to play Andrea approaches Kevin and Papa.

PAPA (CONT'D)
Ah shit, here she come.

She stands directly in front of Kevin.

ANDREA
You wanna dance?

PAPA
Nah, I don't like this song.

ANDREA
I wasn't talking to you, Papa.

PAPA
Oh, I'm sorry I thought you were looking at me.

ANDREA
Kevin, do you want to dance?

KEVIN
Nah, I'm good.

ANDREA
(perplexed)
So, you don't wanna dance with me?

KEVIN
That's what I said.

Kevin looks through Andrea and spots Rhonesha standing by herself.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Hey Rhonesha! You wanna dance?

Rhonesha nods with excitement. Kevin gets up and walks right by Andrea and grabs Rhonesha's hand. They start slow grooving to Miguel's melodic song.

Andrea shakes her head while she watches Kevin dance with her ugly friend. She's consumed with envy. Kevin might be young, but his pimp game is strong.

Papa lets out a huge belly laugh.

As Andrea cuts her eyes at him, we --

CUT TO:

31 INT. CHURCH - TWO DAYS LATER - MORNING 31

We're in an old church. The pews have seen better days. And the stained windows are being held together by silver duct tape.

But in this moment, Coogie's family could care less about their surroundings.

Coogie's MOTHER, Brandon, Jerrika, and a few FRIENDS listen intently while a CHURCH MEMBER sings the last few bars of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand".

The ORGANIST has performed this song so many times in the last month he could play it with his eyes closed.

Coogie lays in his casket in a white suit and a fresh haircut. If the circumstances were different he probably would have worn this to prom, but instead it's what he wears to make his transition.

The REVEREND stands up.

REVEREND
And now Charles' older brother will
come up and say a few words.

Coogie's Mother is overcome with grief as Brandon slowly makes his way up to the pulpit. TV Calling - For educational purposes only

Brandon takes a deep breath as he looks out at his little brother's poorly attended funeral.

BRANDON

I'd like to make a correction. In the program it says, "Charles Fredrick Johnson is survived by his mother and his half older brother". It is true, we had different fathers, but I loved him with my whole body so I don't know how he could be my half brother. We shared a whole room, he got on all of my nerves, and I loved him -

Brandon tries to keep it together.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I loved him a whole lot. He was my whole brother. He was my responsibility.

Brandon looks at his brother in the casket.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I'm not ready to say goodbye to him. I don't know how. This shit don't even feel real to me. I'm sorry for cursing, but -- I guess I'm just mad. I'm mad at him for being a product of his environment. I'm mad he didn't realize there's a world out there beyond our backyard. I'm mad I wasn't there for him the way I should've been. And I'm mad at him for being so damn pretty.

Brandon laughs uncomfortably.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Look at him, he was a pretty muthafucka --

The Reverend clears his throat.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

My bad, I'm sorry.
(then)
Look, Coogie wasn't perfect, but he was charismatic and funny. And he'd be pissed if I told y'all this, but he was a virgin.

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A few of Coogie's friends chuckle.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Don't laugh. I'm mad we live in a world where being a fourteen year old virgin is funny.

(then)

I'm mad at this city. I'm mad at our existence. This ain't no way to live, man. It's just not. You know what, I'm kind of glad he's gone -- 'cause now he ain't gotta live like this no more. Last night I thought, God took him because --

Brandon tries to compose himself again.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

He took him, 'cause He knew -- Coogie deserved better. He deserved better than this.

Brandon leaves the podium and sits down next to Jerrika. She's crying uncontrollably.

CUT TO:

32 INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

32

Brandon, Jerrika, and his Mother are sitting in the back of a limo. Unfortunately, the seats force them to look at each other.

MOTHER

If I knew you were gonna do that I wouldn't have let you get up there and talk.

BRANDON

I can say what I want.

MOTHER

You're the reason he's gone.

BRANDON

This ain't my fault.

MOTHER

You were so busy working at that bougie ass restaurant you didn't have no time for us. You think you the shit cause you got a job with good benefits?

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(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It seem like all you do is sit around and eat fancy food and watch boring ass documentaries with your little girlfriend.

JERRIKA

Please don't start with that.

BRANDON

I'm trying to do something with my life.

MOTHER

Yeah, well, while you were doing that your brother lost his.

JERRIKA

Will you stop?

Brandon's mother ignores Jerrika and stares daggers at her son.

MOTHER

You just like Jackie Kennedy.

JERRIKA

(really confused)
What?

MOTHER

You out here living the good life while me and your brother living in squalor.

BRANDON

Section 8 ain't hardly squalor.

MOTHER

When was the last time you saw your brother?

Brandon cuts his eyes at her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You can't remember can you?

JERRIKA

That's not fair and you know it.
Coogie knew Brandon loved him.

Brandon's mother doesn't respond to that. Because she knows Jerrika is telling the truth.

BRANDON

After this I don't want to hear
from you. Ever again.

MOTHER

Oh you don't have to worry about that.

Brandon's Mother pours herself a drink.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

That one may be dead to me in body, but you dead to me in spirit.

She takes a huge swig of brown liquor, no chaser.

The limousine comes to a complete stop. Brandon's Mom gets out of the car and SLAMS the door behind her.

Brandon just looks out the window. Devastated. Jerrika tries to hold him, but he won't let her. There isn't enough love in the world to make this kind of pain go away.

33

INT. CORNER STORE - DAY

33

Brandon stands in front of HAKMEED, the Middle Eastern version of Sal from "Do The Right Thing". There aren't any brothers on his wall either. Which is weird, because "brothers" make up ninety percent of his clientele.

Hakmeed is protected by bullet proof glass. And for good reason.

HAKMEED

Sorry about your brother.

BRANDON

Are you? You used to chase him out of your store all the time.

HAKMEED

That's because he was a thief. You know that.

BRANDON

Yeah, he was.

Referring to his brother in the past tense causes Brandon to lose his train of thought. Hakmeed snaps him out of it.

HAKMEED

How can I help you, man?

BRANDON

Did you see the dude that shot him?

HAKMEED

I don't want any trouble.

BRANDON

Can you just tell me who was standing outside when it happened?

HAKMEED

I know nothing.

BRANDON

Come on, Hakmeed!

A line behind Brandon starts to form.

HAKMEED

Are you going to buy something or what? I got customers waiting.

Brandon turns around and looks at the line. Emmett is standing in it. He's doing a decent job at balancing formula, diapers, and a fussy two-year-old, but it's apparent his patience is wearing thin.

BRANDON

Look, I know Coogie used to steal from you all the time.

HAKMEED

Yes, he stole a lot of Doritos and a lot of grape pops.

BRANDON

Yeah, but he also cursed muthafuckas out for making fun of your accent. Remember? He's the reason people stopped calling you Aladdin.

HAKMEED

That is true. That was very offensive to me.

BRANDON

Please. Just tell me who was out there when he got shot.

EMMETT

Would ya'll muthafuckas hurry up? I'm tryna get to the check/cashing place before they close, damn!

BRANDON
Why don't you be a grown up and get
a fucking bank account?

EMMETT
Fuck you, nigga.

BRANDON
Man, shut up!

HAKMEED
Everybody shut the fuck up!

Brandon counts to ten in his head. He loathes this neighborhood.

HAKMEED (CONT'D)
There were some kids goofing around
outside when it happened. One of
the boys got a good look at him.

CUT TO:

34 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

34

Brandon knocks on a door. We hear the sounds of kids RUNNING and SCREAMING inside. Hence, no one hearing his knock.

He knocks again. This time someone answers. It's Kiesha. Yup, that Kiesha.

KIESHA
Can I help you?

BRANDON
Yeah, is your little brother here?

KIESHA
Which one?

BRANDON
Um, I don't know.

KIESHA
Well, one of 'em can barely talk so
I'm guessing you want the big
headed one.

Kiesha walks away.

KIESHA (O.C.) (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Kevin! It's for you! TV Calling - For educational purposes only

Kevin walks to the door. Brandon looks down at him. Taking in his innocent face. Then --

KEVIN
Who the fuck are you?

BRANDON
Don't worry about it.

KEVIN
What you want?

BRANDON
I want you to tell me who killed my little brother.

KEVIN
Snitches get stitches.

BRANDON
Really, dude?

KEVIN
If I tell you who killed your brother. You gone kill him. Then his brother gone kill me 'cause I told you where to find him at.

Kevin tries to close the door on him, but Brandon holds it open.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Damn, you strong.

BRANDON
You gone show me where he at.

KEVIN
Man, I ain't showing you shit!

Brandon grabs Kevin's small arm and Kevin SCREAMS at the top of his lungs.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Let me go muthafucka!

BRANDON
Look, little man - I'll give you whatever you want if you just take me to him.

Brandon and Kevin lock eyes for a beat.

Kevin can see in Brandon's eyes that he's not some stick up kid. He's not even that intimidating. He's just a guy from the neighborhood that wants to know who killed his brother.

KEVIN

Can I point him out from a distance?

BRANDON

Yeah.

KEVIN

Give me some money and then I'll do it.

BRANDON

How much you want?

KEVIN

Give me 324.

Brandon's puzzled by his specificity.

BRANDON

Okay so you either got a girl pregnant or you tryna get some new J's.

Kevin just shrugs. Unfortunately, in this neighborhood it could be either one.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Look, I ain't got that much.

KEVIN

You can go to a cash station.

BRANDON

How 'bout I just get you some chips and something to drink?

KEVIN

What kind of chips?

BRANDON

(annoyed as hell)

I don't know. What kind you want?

KEVIN

Flaming Hots.

BRANDON

Okay fine. Let's go. TV Calling - For educational purposes only

KEVIN

Hold on.

He goes inside, grabs his jacket, and comes right back out.

Kevin takes Brandon by the arm and leads him down the corridor.

35 INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

35

Brandon follows behind Kevin. They say "the children will lead them."

KEVIN

Ya'll was half brothers?

BRANDON

Yeah.

KEVIN

I can tell.

Brandon shakes his head as they make their way out of the building.

36 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

36

Brandon and Kevin look more like brothers than accomplices as they make their way down a busy Chicago street.

Kevin drapes his hood over his head - not as a tribute to Trayvon Martin - but as an effort to cover his face.

They pass abandoned buildings, small liquor stores, and pregnant teenage girls that carry their unborn children with pride.

In this neighborhood getting pregnant at sixteen is an accomplishment, not something to be ashamed of.

KEVIN

What's your name?

BRANDON

I can't tell you.

KEVIN

I get it.

Kevin looks up at Brandon. He's never seen a man like him before. Quiet and calm.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
You tall as hell.

Brandon chuckles.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
You play basketball?

BRANDON
Nah, man.

KEVIN
Why not?

BRANDON
Just 'cause you tall don't mean you good.

KEVIN
True.
(then)
You sell drugs?

BRANDON
No.

KEVIN
I can tell.

BRANDON
How can you tell?

Kevin shrugs.

KEVIN
'Cause you just look like you got a regular job.

BRANDON
There's nothing wrong with having a regular job.

KEVIN
Nigga, you ain't gotta preach to me. This ain't no after school special.

Brandon yanks Kevin by his jacket and looks him dead in the eye.

BRANDON
Don't call me that.

Kevin's never been reprimanded by a man before. But something about a stern deep voice filled with good intentions shakes him to his core.

KEVIN

I only called you that 'cause I don't know your name.

BRANDON

It's Brandon.

They lock eyes for a moment.

KEVIN

Okay.

Kevin looks across the street.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

(in a soft voice)

There he go. That's the dude that killed your brother.

Brandon and Kevin look at Ronnie standing on the corner smoking a black and mild, with Barry and Curtis flaking him per usual. *
*
*

He checks out fine women as they walk by. And gives the obligatory head nod to dudes he used to gang bang with. The playfulness we saw when we first met him is no longer there. It's long gone.

On the south side of Chicago this is what the grieving process looks like.

Kevin looks up to Brandon - now both literally and figuratively.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Brandon?

BRANDON

Yeah.

KEVIN

Are you gonna kill him?

Brandon looks down at Kevin for a moment. Then he glares at Ronnie.

His heart beats faster than normal. His hands are shaking.

He gives the question some serious thought, but before he makes his decision we --

FADE TO BLACK.