

"BLOOD BROTHERS"

*"And the words of the prophets are written on the subway walls,
and tenement halls..."*

Paul Simon

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREETS -- DAY

Various shots of inner city Los Angeles. Graffiti, a new metro stop, kids on the corner smoking. A woman pushing a basket of food home from the market. A typical day in the city.

EXT. BAR -- DAY

Just inside the open door are two teenagers laughing while they play a video game.

INT. BAR -- DAY

INSERT - VIDEO GAME

Various video bank robbers are getting blown away by an unseen gunman. Occasionally, a computer-generated cop jumps in the screen and immediately gets shot in the back. Each time, the sound of HOWLING and LAUGHING kids drowns out the noise from the game.

BAR

Playing the game are CLAY and POPEYE. About 18, Clay has slicked down black hair with a dark complexion. He wears a white tee-shirt clinging to his muscular, but thin, tanned chest and arms. A blue bandanna is tied around his head. His left biceps bears a tattoo of a rose with little daggers in place of thorns.

He holds a plastic gun attached to the video game by a wire.

Popeye looks like he's eaten a few too many times at Popeye's. Sloppy-looking, he wears a stained grey T-shirt that may have once been white.

POPEYE

Man, you keep blowin' away the cops.
You supposed to be shootin' the bad
guys.

Clay keeps blasting away.

CLAY

The cops is the bad guys.

Popeye gets a laugh out of that as Clay targets another computer cop, ending the game. He drops the plastic gun and pounds his fists on both sides of the machine.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Piece of shit!

He gives the machine one final kick for good measure.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I almost beat my record. Fuckin' cops
get in the way no matter what I'm doin'.

Clay pulls a mashed pack of cigarettes from his pocket and heads for the door. Popeye follows, glancing at the machine as he passes.

POPEYE
250,000? That's the highest score I
ever seen.

CLAY
It ain't bad.

EXT. BAR -- DAY

Clay lights the cigarette as he walks onto the sidewalk, Popeye a few steps behind.

POPEYE
You kiddin'? You sure is good with a
gun.

CLAY
I had lots of practice.

Clay takes a long drag on his cigarette. Adjusting his bandanna, he glances up and down the street - surveying his turf.

POPEYE
Damn, it's hot. You sure is lucky, I'd
give anything to get out of the city.

CLAY
I told you not to talk about that.
Besides, I don't think my Mama is...

Something attracts Clay's attention. He stops in mid sentence and tenses up, like a wolf who has just spotted his prey.

Popeye doesn't notice.

POPEYE
All I know is, your Momma's movin',
that mean's you're movin'.

CLAY
Shut up.

POPEYE

What?

CLAY

Shut up. Look.

Popeye follows Clay's glare. Across the street and down about half a block, a guy about 16 is walking towards them. He wears jeans, a black T-shirt and a bright orange baseball cap.

POPEYE

What the hell's he doin' here?

CLAY

I'm gonna find out.

Clay takes the cigarette from his mouth and throws it on the sidewalk. He heads straight for the walking guy.

POPEYE

(sounding nervous)

Be careful, man.

CLAY

Don't worry.

(quieter, to himself)

I've had lots of practice.

Clay is walking straight at the other guy - a member of a rival gang. Moving quickly, Clay never takes his eyes off of him.

He travels half the distance to his opponent before the guy even notices. The rival guy stops for a moment, unsure what to do. Finally, he turns and runs, quickly turning a corner.

Instead of following, Clay takes off in the other direction. Running hard, he cuts into a narrow alley. Running full speed, he hops the fence at the end of the alley and lands a few yards in front of his prey.

Stunned, the rival guy tries to stop. He trips, falls, then gets up again, this time heading across the street. Clay is close behind.

Limping from his fall and already out of breath, the rival guy heads down another alley.

Clay slows down. He knows the alley is a dead end. He has his him. He turns the corner slowly, deliberately.

EXT. ALLEY -- DAY

Rival Guy is leaning against the far wall of the alley. Scared, out of breath and injured, he watches Clay approach.

Clay, who isn't even winded, doesn't say a word. He just stares straight at the other youth as he walks. Stopping about six feet in front of him.

He waits for the rival guy to speak.

RIVAL GUY
(breathing hard)
Listen, man. I don't want no trouble.

Clay speaks with a clam, frightening confidence.

CLAY
You know this is Caruso territory?

RIVAL GUY
I know it. I was just tryin' to meet
my girlfriend - at the bar.

CLAY
If she lives in Caruso territory, she
ain't your girlfriend.

RIVAL GUY
Huh?

CLAY
You Volc's ain't's got nothing around
here. The only thing of yours we want
on our streets is blood.

RIVAL GUY
I said I don't want no trouble. But if
you try anything--

Clay cuts him off.

CLAY
What?

RIVAL GUY
(nervous)
I got lots of homeboys.

In one swift motion, Clay takes a step forward, draws a small automatic he had hidden in his belt, holds it to the side of Rival Guy's head and pulls the trigger.

Rival Guy takes a step back, unsure of what's just happened. Confused, he laughs a little. Then, blinking his eyes several times, he turns to see blood rushing down his shoulder and arm from the gaping exit wound in his head. He starts to cry like a baby.

RIVAL GUY (CONT'D)
(crying)
Mama! Mama!

Clay just stares coldly.

RIVAL GUY (CONT'D)
Help me!

He reaches towards Clay, takes a step, then falls.

Clay doesn't move. He puts the gun back in his shirt and starts to turn around when he sees something poking out of Rival Guy's pocket. He reaches down and takes a key ring with a single key.

INT. BAR -- DAY

Popeye is back playing the shooting game when Clay returns.

POPEYE
Hey! Did you catch him?

CLAY
I got him.

POPEYE
I bet we won't be seeing him around here again.

CLAY
I'd count on it.

Clay spots a GIRL in one corner of the bar, sitting alone at a table. Dressed in short shorts and a tank top, she looks around, as if waiting for someone.

He walks over to her.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Hi.

GIRL
Hi.

CLAY
I ain't never seen you around here before.

GIRL
I'm meeting my boyfriend here.

Sirens are heard in the distance, growing louder.

CLAY
Looks like he's late.

Clay sits down at her table. She smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. OVERFLIGHT BURLINGTON, VERMONT -- SPRING DAY

ROLL CREDITS

Flyby shot of this scenic New England Community. Historic brick buildings sail by below. Green parks, lots of trees and the shore of Lake Champlain.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Small children with a crossing guard near their school.

A downtown storekeeper sweeping the sidewalk in front of his business.

A mailman walking his route through the long shadows of the morning sun.

This is typical rural New England. Quiet, peaceful, serene. As far from the inner city as you can get.

EXT. ARCADE -- DAY

A few bicycles are lined up neatly in front of this arcade. Through the window, teenagers can be seen crowded around the various game machines.

INT. ARCADE -- DAY

Groups of teens playing the video games. A few others playing air hockey.

INSERT - VIDEO GAME

It's the same game we saw Clay playing in the city, and again the video robbers are getting shot one at a time.

TEENS PLAYING

Playing the game is PAUL THORTON. About 17, tall, trim with bushy black hair.

By his side, egging him on, are JUSTIN MCCLAIN and STEVE MILLER.

Justin, slightly overweight, hair messed, tugs at his shirt, which never seems to fit right. He carries a few books and a plastic bag.

Steve is a little shorter than Paul and a lot thinner than Justin. He wears sunglasses with his jeans and T-shirt.

Paul is blasting away at bank robbers, only he is very careful not to shoot the cops. Every time a cop appears, Paul points his electronic gun skyward.

PAUL

C'mon, get out of the way, get out of the way.

INSERT - VIDEO GAME

The video cop moves and Paul plugs a bad guy.

He shoots again, just as another cop jumps on-screen and takes the video bullet in the back, falling over into a pool of "cyber-blood".

The game screen flashes "Game Over"

PAUL AND FRIENDS

PAUL (CONT'D)

Damn.

JUSTIN

Why'd he have to get in the way for?
You were doing a better job stopping
the robbers than the police were anyway.

Disgusted, Paul replaces the plastic gun in the video machine holster.

Justin looks at Paul's score.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Oh, man, oh, wow. Paul, you broke the
record. Steve, Paul broke the record.

STEVE

(to Paul)

Great, that's just what your college
resume was missing - "video game
marksman."

The three friends head for the door when Justin drops his books and his bag.

PAUL

Can you tell me why you lugged all those
books in here?

STEVE

He's afraid Tully will take 'em if he
leaves them outside.

JUSTIN

Yeah, remember last time?

PAUL
Tully's an idiot.

JUSTIN
You want to tell him that?

Justin reaches for his bag and a G.I. JOE spills out onto the floor. He quickly puts it back in the bag, looking around to see if anyone else noticed.

STEVE
A G.I. Joe?

JUSTIN
I'm going to trade him in for a new one
at Kelso's after school.

STEVE
A G.I. Joe. Aren't you a little old
for that?

JUSTIN
I don't play with them, I collect them.
I collect action figures.

PAUL
Sure, man. Whatever.

JUSTIN
I do. They're collectibles!

PAUL
Let's get to school.

EXT. ARCADE -- DAY

The guys leave the arcade and start the short walk to school.

Their trip is interrupted by a commotion across the street.
Three tough-looking kids are harassing an underclassman.

STEVE
(disgusted)
Tully. Speak of the devil.

PAUL
C'mon.

He runs across the street, dodging cars along the way.

Justin and Steve follow, Justin still juggling his books.

EXT. STREET - DAY

TULLY, decked out in a worn leather jacket, leads his TWO FRIENDS in making life tough on nerdie ARTIE "THE WART" FLEMMING. A few years younger than Paul and his friends, "The Wart" gets his name from an unfortunately large birthmark on his right cheek. To make matters worse, he's thin, frail and wears very thick glasses.

Wart tries to ignore the abuse and move on, but the trio won't give up. Tully knocks Wart's books to the ground, then he knocks Wart down too, right into a patch of wet grass.

Paul, Justin and Steve arrive in time to see Wart go down.

TULLY

(to Wart)

What's the matter with you? Don't you know they got sprinklers that come on here every morning? You shouldn't be playing in the wet grass, and in your school clothes, no less.

Paul is sickened watching this. The anger starting to build in his face.

JUSTIN

(to Paul)

Let's get out of here.

STEVE

Yeah, we don't want no part of this.

PAUL

That guy is such an asshole.

STEVE

(sarcastic)

Really? You think?

Wart is still struggling to get up, but he slips on the wet grass and his books go flying again, much to the enjoyment of Tully and his friends.

TULLY

Hey, Flemming. Here's some phlegm for you Flemming.

He coughs up a wad of spit, hitting the poor kid in the glasses.

Tully and his toadies are loving every minute of it and they don't see Paul approaching.

PAUL

Leave him alone.

Tully turns, startled.

He sizes Paul up and quickly realizes he has nothing to fear.

TULLY
What did you say?

Paul stands his ground, but he's noticeably shaken.

PAUL
I said, leave him alone.

TULLY
And if I don't?

Paul doesn't back down.

TULLY (CONT'D)
I said, if I don't?

Paul is silent.

His friends watch from a safe distance.

Wart is still on the ground, Tully's spit running down the lens of his glasses.

TULLY (CONT'D)
I don't like people who don't mind their own business. I don't like them at all.

Tully shoves Paul in the chest. Paul steps back as Tully and his friends close in.

PAUL
I just don't know why you have to give him such a hard time. He wasn't bothering anybody.

TULLY
You're wrong, asshole. He was bothering me.

PAUL
How?

TULLY
Same as you. He was breathing.

Tully shoves him again and Paul falls to the ground.

He gets to his feet fast, but Tully is ready and punches him hard in the face. Paul goes down and stays there.

Tully and his toadies enjoy a good laugh.

TOADIE 1
(to Tully)
Hey man, you forget something.

TULLY
Oh, yeah.

He spits on Paul.

TULLY (CONT'D)
Next time, mind your own God-damn
business.

From nowhere...

CLAY
What if I don't?

Tully and his henchmen freeze.

Out of nowhere, Clay, wearing a blue hooded sweatshirt, jeans
and wrap-around sunglasses, is right in Tully's face.

TULLY
Who the hell are you?

CLAY
None of your business, motherfucker.

Clay is cold as ice. He takes off the sunglasses, his eyes
never leaving Tully. He stares him down in one second flat.

The toadies back up.

Tully tries to play it cool.

He fails.

TULLY
I ain't never seen you around here
before.

CLAY
Well, you're seeing me now.

TULLY
What'd you want?

CLAY
I'm just curious, real curious to know
if my "breathing" is pissing you off?

Tully doesn't answer.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I asked you a question, shithead.

Tully looks to his toadies for support. He doesn't get it.

TULLY

Listen, I ain't got no problem with you.

CLAY

You ever think maybe I got a problem with you?

Tully's brain can't work fast enough to process Clay's quick answer.

The toadies have had enough. They abandon Tully and take off down the street.

Tully doesn't know what to do. He looks after them, then back at Clay.

TULLY

I...I gotta go.

He turns and, not quite running, follows his friends, looking back a few times as he goes.

Justin and Steve are speechless as they help Paul to his feet.

Wart gets up, trying to gather his books and wipe the spit off of his glasses at the same time.

Clay puts his sunglasses back on, turns and walks away.

STEVE

Who is that guy?

PAUL

(to Clay)

Hey.

Clay stops, turns.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Clay doesn't move, almost as if he's sizing Paul up for a moment. Then he turns and walks off. Like ice.

STEVE

Who is that guy?

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Lunchtime and the place is buzzing. Paul and Justin, both with trays of food, join Steve and a girl, ABBEY, at a table.

Paul has a very noticeable bruise on his jaw.

ABBEY

(to Paul)

Hey, what happened to you?

JUSTIN

You don't want to know.

An attractive girl walks by the table. Paul's tongue almost drops out of his mouth as he watches her go by in a very short skirt. She sits at table filled with jocks and other would-be models.

STEVE

Don't torture yourself man. How many times did you ask her out?

PAUL

Seven.

ABBEY

She rejected you seven times? And you still like her?

PAUL

Well, yeah.

ABBEY

Men.

PAUL

Anyway, it looks like it's my day for rejection.

(beat)

I got booted out of the Honor Society.

ABBEY

Why?

PAUL

Because I got a "C" in Shop. In Shop.

STEVE

That's rough, man.

PAUL

I think I've been thrown out of every club in school.

JUSTIN

That's not true. You quit the math club.

Paul just rolls his eyes.

STEVE

Hey, you want to come over after school?
Get your mind off your day?

PAUL

Can't, got to work. Besides, it's
payday.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Paul is doing his homework in front of the TV. His younger brother, MARTY, five, runs around the house in foot pajamas, a plastic airplane held high over his head.

PAUL

Marty, I'm trying to finish my homework.

No reply. Just more airplane noises.

Paul gives up. He drops his pencil, fishes into his pocket and pulls out his half-crumpled paycheck. He looks at it in disbelief

INSERT

PAYCHECK

The total is \$35.42

PAUL

PAUL (CONT'D)

Shit.

He throws the check on the table just as airplane Marty comes flying by.

PAUL (CONT'D)

That's it, guy. Time for bed.

MARTY

No! You can't. I'm an airplane and
I'll fly away.

He runs around the living room laughing his head off as his older brother chases him.

Paul finally grabs the boy, much to Marty's delight, and carries him off to bed, both of them laughing now.

PAUL

Looks like you're coming in for a
landing.

MARTY

Will you read me a story?

PAUL

How about the one about the little
airplane that crashed?

Marty squeals again.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- LATER

His brother asleep, Paul returns to his homework. A few moments later, the headlights of a car reflect off of the window.

Paul goes to the window and spots a pickup in the driveway. He turns off the TV and the light and watches through the window.

FROM THE WINDOW

The truck's headlights are on, but we can't see who is in the cab. A man and a woman are heard ARGUING.

A woman gets out of the passenger side, shouts something and slams the door, heading for the house. The driver shouts something back, but she ignores it and storms towards the front door.

The truck pulls away fast, throwing up some rocks and sand as it goes.

PAUL

He jumps from the window and waits on the couch.

Moments later the front door opens and his MOTHER (Doris), about 40, enters, her face concealed in shadows.

DORIS

Hey, kiddo. What are you up to?

PAUL

Just doing my homework.

DORIS

In the dark?

She reaches to switch on the light and we see a large ugly bruise above one eye.

PAUL

What happened to you?

DORIS

I could ask you the same question.

She grabs Paul's chin to have a better look at the bruise Tully gave him.

Paul moves away.

PAUL

It's nothing.

(beat)

He hit you again, didn't he?

DORIS

Who, Eric? No, silly, he didn't hit me. It was the funniest thing really. You know at the restaurant how we have swinging doors to the kitchen? Well, I went out the "in" and Carol was coming the other way...

Paul isn't believing a word of it.

His mother reaches into her purse for a cigarette and lighter.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Actually, I think Carol got the worst of it. She was carrying a plate of nachos, and, you know.

She lights the cigarette.

PAUL

Why do you protect him?

She takes a long drag.

DORIS

Eric's a good man. It's just that he's been under a lot of stress lately.

PAUL

Bullshit.

DORIS

Paul, you know I don't like that kind of language in this house.

PAUL

And I don't like you lying to me.

(beat)

It's just like Dad.

DORIS

Paul, Eric is nothing like your father.

PAUL

Isn't he?

They are interrupted by the sound of a car pulling into the driveway. Doris goes to the curtain and looks outside.

DORIS

Eric's back. Now, Paul, try to be nice.

Paul doesn't answer, instead he gathers his school books and leaves the room just as the doorbell RINGS.

Doris opens the door and ERIC walks in. Dressed in jeans, work boots, a flannel shirt and a John Deere hat, he gives his lover a big smile and a hug.

ERIC
Sorry, honey. I know I get a little
too excited sometimes, it's just that I
love you so much.

The two embrace again just as Paul, wearing a jacket now, walks back into the room.

Doris tries to break the embrace, but Eric holds tight.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Hey, sport.

Paul ignores him. He opens the front door.

DORIS
And where do you think you're going on
a school night?

Paul doesn't slow down.

PAUL
I need some air.

He's gone.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Paul is walking alone, disgusted - hands deep in his pockets. The residential streets are nearly deserted as Paul approaches a main road with a 7-Eleven on the far corner.

From across the street, Paul notices Clay. He's talking to two men, both older and both clearly jumpy. Their heads dart, trying to look in every direction at once as Clay talks.

One shakes hands with Clay, who hands them both small packages. In return they each hand Clay something - money perhaps? The two men walk away, heading for a nearby SUV. Clay heads for the 7-Eleven door and enters the store.

Paul hesitates, then decides against crossing the street and instead walks on.

The SUV pulls away, but Paul's attention is caught by the arrival of Tully and his ever-present toadies. He stops and watches as one of the toadies sneaks to the 7-Eleven door, as if to keep an eye on Clay.

Tully and the second toadie hang back, near the corner of the building.

A few moments pass and the first toadie runs to join his partners. Paul sees why - Clay comes out of the store, pauses to light a smoke, and walks towards the shadows where Tully and friends await.

Paul watches, unsure whether to shout a warning or not.

Clay walks along and the three thugs spring. The toadies strike first, but Clay sidesteps one easily, turns and punches him hard in the stomach. The toadie goes down on the asphalt, curled up in pain.

The second toadie freezes now, looking nervously between his fallen friend, Tully and Clay. Tully screams something at him, but the toadie doesn't move.

Clay, taking the cigarette out of his mouth and tossing to the ground, takes a step towards Tully. With the other hand, he reaches towards his ankle. Even from this distance, Paul sees the reflection of a blade.

The second toadie takes one look at the knife and is gone. Abandoned by one, with the second still stunned and in pain on the ground, Tully won't give up. He swings his fist and Clay blocks the blow, slashing the knife in front of him.

A sound like RIPPING FABRIC is heard and Tully looks down, examining his chest.

From across the street, Paul hears his screams.

TULLY

You stabbed me! You fucking stabbed me!

Tully looks back at Clay, thinks for a second then runs like hell.

The fallen toadie finally manages to get to his feet and limps away. Clay never takes his eyes off of them. Only when they are out of sight does he resheath the knife. Acting like nothing has happened, he looks around and picks his still-burning smoke up off of the ground.

Paul can't believe his eyes. The episode couldn't have been more than thirty seconds, but Tully and friends, who have been terrorizing his classmates since the third grade, have finally met their match.

Clay walks away, as cool as ever.

Paul follows.

Clay walks slowly, occasionally looking from side-to-side.
Paul stays close behind.

Clay rounds a corner.

Paul follows...and stops.

Clay is gone!

Without a sound, the blade of a knife is at Paul's throat, the tip just pricking his skin.

CLAY

You guys don't know when to quit, do you?

Paul struggles to breath.

PAUL

I'm, I'm not with them.

Clay faces Paul, and, after a moment, seems to recognize him. He slowly lowers the blade, looking around, checking to see if Paul really is alone.

CLAY

You're the dude got his face all messed up today.

PAUL

(still struggling to talk)

Yeah.

CLAY

Why the fuck you following me?

PAUL

I...I just wanted to talk to you.

CLAY

Where I come from, that kind of behavior can get you killed.

Paul sees an opening and takes it, rubbing his throat as he speaks.

PAUL

Where do you come from?

CLAY

That ain't important.

PAUL

Did you kill Tully?

CLAY
'Fuck's Tully?

PAUL
The guy you stabbed.

CLAY
That asshole? Hell no, I didn't even
break the skin. Did mess up his jacket
a little bit, though. I think he pissed
his pants.

Clay smiles at that, and Paul can't help laughing at the thought
too.

Clay walks off, but Paul doesn't give up.

PAUL
I just wanted to thank you for saving
my ass this morning.

Clay stops, turns.

CLAY
Oh, yeah, this Tully, he's the same
shithead smacked you around this morning,
ain't he?

PAUL
Yeah.

He rubs his still-bruised chin.

CLAY
I saw what you did, that was cool.

PAUL
What?

CLAY
Comin' to the aid of your homeboy and
all. You know, the skinny kid with the
big wart or whatever on his face.

PAUL
Flemming.

CLAY
Man go through life with shit like that
on his face, he gotta take some abuse.

Paul nods in agreement.

PAUL
The wart, it's gotten bigger.

CLAY

No shit?

PAUL

Figure by the time he's thirty, it's gonna cover most of his face.

Clay likes the thought of that.

CLAY

Man be a walkin' talkin' Halloween mask.

PAUL

(laughing)

Yeah, I guess so.

CLAY

Anyway, that was cool, the way you stood up for your homeboy, no matter what kind shit he got on his face.

PAUL

All it got me was a sore jaw.

CLAY

That's because you lack the proper attitude.

PAUL

Attitude?

CLAY

Yeah, man, it's all in the attitude. Guys like this Tully, all you got to do is scare them. You give 'em the right attitude, they run like mice.

PAUL

Seems like you had to give him more than attitude tonight.

CLAY

I was just messin' with the man, havin' some fun. I didn't need to cut up his jacket like that, but it was a fuckin' ugly jacket.

Paul laughs again.

CLAY (CONT'D)

So, what'd' you doing tonight?

Paul just shrugs.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Typical squad room, uniformed officers mix with plain-clothes detectives and a handful of drunks and other minor criminal types.

At a desk sits DETECTIVE BILL ARCHER, about 35. He's approached by LIEUTENANT DICK FOGARTY, 55, carrying a report.

FOGARTY

What's this about a stabbing last night?

ARCHER

Attempted stabbing. Chris Tully, local troublemaker. History of underage drinking, some shoplifting. Claims he was "attacked" by a Hispanic gang on 14th.

FOGARTY

You don't believe him?

ARCHER

I told you, the kid's got a history of trouble. Comes in here with a ripped jacket, says a mob did it. Probably came out on the losing end of a fight and wants to get even.

FOGARTY

You see this?

He hands Archer the report.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

Heads up from the LAPD.

ARCHER

Ricardo Lukas?

FOGARTY

Reputed L.A. gang member. Goes by the name "Clay," don't ask me why. Was questioned in the murder of a rival gang member last month.

ARCHER

He's here?

FOGARTY

Yup. Relocated with his mother, Rita, two weeks ago.

ARCHER

You think there's anything to it?

FOGARTY
I think it's bullshit.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

The teacher, CASSANDRA HAYWOOD, late 20's, dark skin and hair, is returning a graded assignment to her students.

Paul sits here, doodling in a notebook. Steve and Justin are here too.

HAYWOOD
In general, I was very pleased.
(beat)
Justin, your comments about the Spinning
Jenny just brought the Industrial
Revolution to life.

The bell RINGS and the kids get up and make for the door, Paul lagging behind a bit.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
(to Paul)
Mr. Thorton, would you hang back for a
moment, please.

Paul stops. Haywood waits for the rest of the class to leave.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
Paul, I wasn't exactly thrilled with
you homework assignment. This was far
from your best work.

Paul doesn't answer.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
And your class participation is way
down too. I was looking forward to a
spirited debate on the age-old question
of man versus the machines, circa 1880.

Paul is silent.

Haywood waits for a response.

PAUL
I don't know, I guess the Industrial
Revolution just doesn't float my boat.

HAYWOOD
Paul, is something bothering you? You
can talk to me.

PAUL
No, I'm fine. Can I go now?

Haywood nods.

Paul walks toward the door.

HAYWOOD

If you change your mind, you know where
to find me.

Paul hesitates, then leaves the classroom.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Justin and Steve are waiting for Paul, who doesn't even slow down when he sees them. His friends walk with him, never-the-less.

STEVE

Hey, man. Where you been hiding?

JUSTIN

Yeah, we haven't seen you at lunch all week.

PAUL

I've been busy.

STEVE

We came by your house last night, you weren't home. Your mother said you've been out every night this week.

JUSTIN

Is it a girl? I bet it's a girl.

Paul stops, aggravated.

PAUL

Look, what do you want from me?

STEVE

Chill out. We just want to know what's going on. We thought you might be in trouble or something.

Paul sighs.

PAUL

I've been hanging out with Clay, okay?

JUSTIN

Who's Clay?

PAUL

The guy who took Tully on. Remember, at the arcade?

STEVE

The guy who stabbed Tully? I heard all about that. Tully said that guy tried to kill him with a switchblade. He had to fight him off.

PAUL

That's a good one.

JUSTIN

Why?

PAUL

Clay just scared him, tore up his jacket a little. Tully ran like hell.

STEVE

How do you know so much?

PAUL

I was there.

Paul starts walking again. His friends follow.

STEVE

Listen, man, that guy - Clay? He's no good. I saw him down by the lake spray painting some kind of weird symbol on the wall. I think it was some gang name.

PAUL

He's cool, all right? He's not from around here and it's cool just to hang out with him. He's, I don't know, different.

(beat)

I gotta go.

Paul takes off. This time, his friends don't follow.

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

A small beat-up car approaches a clearing near a junkyard. The car stops and Paul and Clay exit. Clay is carrying some large sheets of paper and a few tacks.

CLAY

This is perfect. Here, you go hang one of these on that tree - the big one there.

Paul takes the paper and runs to the tree, attaching it with a tack. On the paper is a crudely drawn human torso.

He runs back to Clay, who unzips his jacket and removes a .22 from his belt.

He loads the gun and hands it to Paul.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Now line up the guy's chest, that's it.
Take a deep breath and squeeze the
trigger slow.

Paul takes aim.

CLAY (CONT'D)
That's it, that's it.

Paul fires, then jumps, surprised by the kick.

There's a bullet hole near the center of the target, right in the middle of the "torso's" chest.

It's hard to tell who looks more surprised, Clay or Paul.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Whoa, look at Jesse James here.

Paul is giddy.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Go ahead, give it another try.

He fires and again hits the target dead on. The third shot hits the target's head "right between the eyes."

CLAY (CONT'D)
Where the fuck you learn to shoot like
that?

Paul is loving it.

PAUL
I don't know. I'm a natural, I guess.

CLAY
Let's try some more.

He takes the gun back from Paul and spots a few five-gallon paint cans.

CLAY (CONT'D)
C'mon.

He grabs a paint can - it's heavy.

CLAY (CONT'D)
It's almost filled, this is perfect.
(to Paul)
Here, Grab one of these.

They lug the paint cans over to an old bench and put them down side by side.

Clay runs back to the car and returns with another, bigger gun.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Let's try this one.

He hands Paul the .45 and Paul examines the weapon.

PAUL
Where did you get this?

CLAY
It was a gift. Some guy I knew. He
didn't need it no more. Now, see if
you can hit those cans.

From their angle, the paint cans are lined up one in front of the other.

CLAY (CONT'D)
See if you can get both of them.

Paul looks at him like he doesn't understand.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Just aim for the front one and see what
happens.

Paul takes aim and fires.

The first paint can nearly explodes, black paint everywhere.

PAUL
Holy shit.

They run to the cans. The front one is nearly cut in two. The bullet also traveled through the second can, leaving a large gaping hole. Dark red paint still flows from the second can.

Paul just looks at the cans, the gun still in his hand.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Jesus.

CLAY
It packs a punch, a .45 does.

Clay takes the gun and aims for the torso Paul hit earlier.

PAUL

You ever shoot anybody?

Clay flinches for an instant, but squeezes off a few rounds, hitting the target square in the chest.

CLAY

No, I never shot nobody.

He fires the rest of the rounds, shredding the target.

CLAY (CONT'D)

C'mon, we need a new "victim."

Paul walks with him.

PAUL

That night at the 7-Eleven, you know,
with Tully. What did you sell those
guys?

Clay doesn't answer.

As Clay hangs the new target, Paul catches a glimpse of his
rose tattoo.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I like your tattoo.

CLAY

Thanks.

PAUL

I've seen it before. Downtown. Somebody
painted some graffiti on a few old
buildings.

CLAY

Ain't that wonderful.

Clay finishes hanging the target.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And I suppose there is some point to
the story you're telling me.

Paul doesn't answer.

Clay heads back to fire a few more rounds, reloading the gun as
he goes. Satisfied he's far enough away, he stops, plants his
feet and takes aim at the target.

PAUL

You're in a gang, aren't you?

Clay lowers the gun.

CLAY

Well, well. You're pretty smart, for a hick.

PAUL

You're in a gang, and you're here selling drugs, am I right?

CLAY

I didn't know I was hangin' with Regis Fuckin' Philbin. I answer your questions, you gonna give me a million bucks?

PAUL

Just wondering, that's all.

CLAY

Let's suppose for a minute that all these nasty things you sayin' about me bangin' and dealin', let's say they're true. If that be the case, I must be one bad motherfucker. Not somebody that you'd want to mess with, is that right?

Clay is waving the .45 around as he talks.

Paul just listens.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Now here you are with this "armed and dangerous" motherfucker - way out in the sticks, no less - there nobody around to help you. Hell man, I as bad as you say, I should shoot you right here and shut you up for good. Nobody would ever know.

He walks close to Paul, pointing the gun at his head.

CLAY (CONT'D)

There any reason you can think of I shouldn't waste you right now?

Paul returns the stare. Is Clay serious? For a few moments, they glare at each other, the gun still at Paul's head.

PAUL

Fuck you. You can't kill me.

CLAY

And why's that?

PAUL
Because you'd never find your way back
to town.

Clay is startled, he grins, then breaks into laughter, lowering the gun.

Paul laughs, too. He tries not to show his relief.

CLAY
This is what it's all about, you know.

PAUL
What?

CLAY
Hangin', hangin' with the homeboys.

PAUL
Are we homeboys?

CLAY
That depends on you.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

As Paul approaches the front door, he hears a CRASH from inside.
He rushes into the house.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Paul bursts into the living room.

PAUL
Mom?

From the next room, he hears CRYING and voices screaming.

DORIS
Stay away from him!

Paul runs to his mother's bedroom

INT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Paul's mother is on the floor, Marty is nearby, hysterical.
Eric is there too, nearly empty beer bottle in one hand.

ERIC
(to Marty)
Shut the fuck up, I said. Stop your
god-damned screaming or I'll shut you
up for good.

He raises his hand to Marty.

PAUL

Don't you touch him, motherfucker.

Eric stops, looks at Paul and laughs.

ERIC

Well, well, if it isn't hero boy, comin' in just in time to save his whore of a Momma and his little bastard of a brother.

PAUL

Get the hell out of my house.

ERIC

Your house? Your house? This is my house now, you faggot. I'm moving in, isn't that right, Momma?

He looks at Doris, still on the floor, clutching her arm.

Marty continues to cry. Paul picks him up and rushes from the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

PAUL

(to Marty)

I want you to go into your room and close the door. Okay.

Marty nods, and still crying, runs for his room.

Paul, determined, opens a closet, throws some junk aside and finds a worn baseball bat.

He storms back to his mother's bedroom.

INT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

ERIC

(to Doris)

Seems your kid's got more sense than you. He knows not to question me. Time you learn that too.

With rage in his eyes, Paul confronts Eric.

PAUL

Get out of my house, motherfucker.

Eric turns, eyes the bat and laughs a little.

ERIC

What the fuck you gonna do with that?

Drunk, laughing, he holds the beer bottle out in a mock salute.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Batter up!

In an instant, Paul swings the bat, shattering the bottle and sending glass across the room.

On the floor, his mother screams and shields her eyes as glass rains down.

Eric is stunned. Blood drips from his hand.

PAUL

I said, get the fuck out of my house!
Now!

Eric, numb from both the alcohol and Paul's rage, shuffles to the door.

ERIC

This ain't over. Look what you did to
my hand, you crazy bastard.

Eric turns and leaves. Paul watches him from the door. From the next room, the front door SLAMS shut. He's gone.

Paul drops the bat and helps his mother.

DORIS

Paul, what are you doing?

PAUL

What I should have done all along.

EXT. L.A. STREET - DAY

Popeye is walking with a HOMEBOY.

HOMEBOY

I hear Carlos spotted some Volcs by
the park this morning.

POPEYE

Volcs? What the fuck would Volcs be
doin' around here?

HOMEBOY

Maybe they're still pissed about Clay
bangin' their homeboy.

(beat)

Where is Clay these days, anyway?
Haven't seen him around in a while.

POPEYE

Don't matter, Volcs ain't got no
business around here. You wanna' go
check it out?

HOMEBOY

Nah, got to be in for supper or my
Momma's gonna kill me.

Homeboy enters an apartment building.

Popeye thinks about it, then heads back down the street.

EXT. CITY PARK -- DAY

A small park with a large concrete fountain. Popeye looks
around a little, but sees nothing suspicious. Few people are
in sight.

He picks up an empty wine bottle and tosses it into the
fountain, watching the splash.

From nowhere a voice...

TWEETER

Don't you know it ain't nice to litter?

Popeye turns and is confronted by TWEETER, about 19 or 20, he
wears an orange T-shirt with torn-off sleeves exposing his
thick muscular arms. His hair is buzzed close to his head.

POPEYE

What'd you doin' here? This is Caruso
territory.

TWEETER

That would explain all the shit I've
been steppin' in.

Several more Volcs appear, some wearing orange baseball caps,
others with orange T-shirts. Popeye turns, there are more
behind him. He's starting to get nervous as they close in.

POPEYE

What do you want?

TWEETER

You know what we want.

Tweeter pulls a large switchblade. Popeye tries to run but
the others grab him.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

Now is that nice? You supposed to be
our host. Very impolite.

He holds the blade close to Popeye's throat.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

Where's your homeboy? And where's our
shit?

Popeye seems honestly confused.

POPEYE

What shit? I don't know nothin' about
no...

INSERT

GANG MEMBERS SURROUNDING POPEYE

We can't see him, but a momentary SCREAM is heard.

C.U.

KNIFE CUTTING SKIN.

Blood.

CUT TO:

INT. TATTOO PARLOR -- DAY

C.U.

TATTOO NEEDLE ON SKIN.

Red Ink.

TATTOO PARLOR

Paul is in the chair, a big biker-type guy working on his arm
with a needle.

Clay stands close by, laughing.

PAUL

Shit, that hurts.

CLAY

You'll get over it.

Tattoo guy finishes up.

TATTOO GUY

He's done.

Paul gets up, rubbing his arm gingerly.

CLAY

Here, let me have a look.

Paul extends his arm to show a rose tattoo, identical to Clay's.

CLAY (CONT'D)

That's nice work. Nicer than mine.

TATTOO GUY

Thanks.

EXT. TATTOO PARLOR -- DAY

Paul and Clay exit, Paul still protecting his sore arm.

CLAY

Welcome to the Carusoes.

PAUL

Thanks.

(beat)

Was that really necessary?

CLAY

No.

Paul stops.

PAUL

What do you mean, "no?"

CLAY

(laughing)

It looks good on you, though.

PAUL

I thought getting a tattoo was part of the initiation.

CLAY

Initiation? What do you think this is, Gamma, Gamma, F.U.?

PAUL

Now that I got the damned thing, can you tell me what the rose and daggers mean.

CLAY

Means we Carusoes may look kinda sweet, but you get too close and you're gonna get cut.

Clay walks away. Paul follows.

PAUL

Great. Is that all this is about?

Now it's Clay's turn to stop.

CLAY

No man, that's not what it's about.
Give me your hand.

Paul, hesitant, extends his hand.

Clay takes it in a vice-like grip.

CLAY (CONT'D)

This is what it's about. You understand?
You my homeboy now and there's nothin',
and I mean nothin', that I wouldn't do
for you. We watch out for each other,
no matter what. Carusoes are brothers,
man, brothers.

Clay releases his hand and walks on.

CLAY (CONT'D)

C'mon, let's get busy.

PAUL

Whatever you say, Arsenio.

EXT. SEEDY APARTMENT COMPLEX PARKING LOT -- EVENING

Paul and Clay arrive in Paul's beat-up old car.

INT. PAUL'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

PAUL

What are we doing here?

CLAY

Be patient, my man. Be patient.

Clay reaches into a duffel bag on the floor and pulls out
several small plastic bags filled with white powder.

He hands them to Paul.

PAUL

Drugs?

CLAY

Product. Now, listen. You get out
here and wait. I'll pull the car up
behind those buildings over there.

PAUL

What am I waiting for?

CLAY

You'll see.

He gets out of the car and Paul follows.

EXT. SEEDY APARTMENT COMPLEX PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

Paul looks around, nervous. He hides the drugs in his pockets.

Clay acts like he's done this a thousand time before, which he has. He crosses to the driver's side and hops in. He closes the door and rolls down the window.

CLAY

Be cool, man. There ain't nothin' to this.

PAUL

Sure.

Clay drives off.

Paul waits, looking around, fumbling for the sunglasses in his pocket. In the distance, a SIREN is heard. Paul almost jumps out of his socks. He calms down when the siren fades.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Nothing to it, he says.

A car pulls up, late model Infiniti. The car slows and approaches Paul.

The driver's side window comes down. The driver is white, about 30, wearing a shirt and tie.

BUYER

Hey.

PAUL

Hey.

BUYER

You got it?

PAUL

Huh?

The driver is getting nervous.

BUYER

Are you...never mind.

The window starts to go up when Paul realizes what the guy is talking about.

PAUL

Hey, I mean wait. Yeah, I'm...I'm the guy. I got it, the...the shit. The good shit. I got the real good shit.

He tries to get the bags out of his pocket, dropping several on the pavement in the process. He picks them up and tries to wipe them off. Finally, he hands the drugs to the driver, who passes him an envelope in return.

BUYER

Thanks.

He drives off, leaving Paul standing there, holding the envelope.

After a few moments, Clay returns and Paul hops into the car.

INT. PAUL'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

CLAY

(laughing)

All right, you did it. You still need a little work, but you did it.

PAUL

I can't believe I just sold somebody drugs.

Clay takes the envelope, counting one-hundred dollar bills. He takes some of the money and hands the rest to Paul.

CLAY

Here's your commission.

Clay puts the car in gear and drives off.

Paul is still numb, he takes the envelope and opens it half-heartedly. He looks at the money, then looks at it again, not believing what he sees.

PAUL

There's five hundred dollars in here.

CLAY

Yes there is.

PAUL

Five hundred dollars? For that?

CLAY

That's right.

Paul counts the money again and again.

PAUL

Holy shit.

CLAY

Man, that ain't nothin'.

Suddenly, Paul sees the world in a whole new light.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Oh, and by the way. That was your initiation.

INT. DINER -- A COUPLE WEEKS LATER -- DAY

Clay is sitting at a booth studying a menu. Through the window he sees a new bright red sports car pull up. Paul gets out of the car, hits the alarm on his key ring and enters the diner. He wears what looks like a tailored sport jacket and pants with a T-shirt. He joins Clay at the booth, taking off his designer sunglasses.

CLAY

Nice wheels.

PAUL

Thanks. Business is really picking up.

CLAY

We're just giving the public what it wants.

A waitress appears and smiles at Paul.

WAITRESS

Hi.

Paul smiles back.

INT. DINER -- LATER

The remains of their dinners sit on two nearly cleared plates in front of Paul and Clay.

CLAY

We still on for tonight?

PAUL

You know it. It's time that asshole paid.

CLAY

I hear you. From what you say, your Momma deserves a lot better. Speaking of, when we're done, I gotta go see my Mama.

PAUL

You've got a mother?

CLAY

What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

PAUL

Just kidding.

CLAY

She's livin' with my aunt across town. I stayed with them for a while, but had to get out of there. She gets pissed I don't come and see her, though.

PAUL

I hear you.

Paul takes a last sip of soda.

PAUL (CONT'D)

There's something I've been wanting to ask you. Why "Clay" I assume it's not short for Clayton.

CLAY

Damn straight. It's short for Claymore.

PAUL

Claymore?

CLAY

Yeah, it's a big-ass sword. They used them in the middle ages. These guys would stand in front of the other troops and just swing these big swords with both hands. Motherfucker get too close and they cut him right in two.

PAUL

You got a thing for knives, my friend.

Clay just shrugs.

CLAY

That's what my homeboys used to say.

PAUL

Then why not just call yourself "blade" or "cutter" or something like that.

CLAY

Shit, man, all those names taken long ago. You know how long the Carusoes been around? More than 20 years now.

PAUL

So, you can't use the name again?

CLAY

Yeah, you can, but sometimes you got to add "baby" or "boy" to it, but I don't want to be called no "boy."

PAUL

"Blade-Boy?" It sounds like some twisted version of the Waltons.

CLAY

'Fuck's the Waltons?

PAUL

You know, John-Boy? Big family?

CLAY

They from the South Side?

Paul gives up.

PAUL

You, know, Claymore is also a kind of land mine.

CLAY

Really? No shit?

(thinking)

You try to step on me, I blow up in your face. I think I like that more than the sword shit. Thanks, man.

As they eat, the same blonde cheerleader that Paul drooled over earlier in the school cafeteria enters with a few friends. Paul can't take her eyes off of her. Clay notices his interest.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Go talk to her.

PAUL

I've tried that before.

CLAY

The attitude, remember? You're a Caruso now, you take what you want. And that wad in your pants ain't gonna hurt either.

PAUL

What?

CLAY

The money? Buy her a milk shake.

Paul smiles and gets up. He adjusts his sunglasses and walks up to the girl. He stops next to her, smiling. She gives a little grin back.

PAUL

Can I buy that for you?

He pulls out a wad of hundreds and her eyes bug out.

BLONDE

Sure.

She's a lot friendlier now.

Clay watches as Paul and the girl talk. She smiles and nods and Paul puts his arm around her as they head for the door. Paul smiles back at Clay before opening the door and leaving.

EXT. TRAILER PARK -- NIGHT

This is the seediest part of town. Paul and Clay sit in Paul's new car, engine and lights off, waiting.

A pick-up pulls up - it's Eric's truck. Eric gets out and walks slowly for his trailer. He stumbles slightly - drunk.

INT. PAUL'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

PAUL

That's him.

CLAY

Let's move.

EXT. TRAILER PARK -- CONTINUOUS

They both exit the car and approach Eric.

ERIC

What the fuck is this?

PAUL

I warned you to stay away from my mother.

Eric laughs a little, he looks at Clay.

ERIC

And who's this spit? A faggot friend of yours?

CLAY

If you're going to insult a man, at least get it right. The word is "spic," and only my mother is Hispanic. My father, who raped her, was white. Just like you.

Eric's getting nervous.

ERIC

What are you going to do?

CLAY

Same thing I did to my father, when I was old enough.

He pulls out his switchblade.

ERIC

Oh, shit--

He turns to run, but Paul and Clay are on him.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Paul comes in the front door, quietly. As he heads for his room, his mother appears from the shadows.

DORIS

Where have you been?

PAUL

Out.

DORIS

Sit down, Paul. We have to talk.

PAUL

I'm tired. Can't it wait?

DORIS

Sit down.

He sits on the couch.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Paul, what's going on?

PAUL

What do you mean?

His mother is getting pissed.

DORIS

Don't play games with me, I'm really not in the mood. The clothes, the money you've been throwing around, the God-damn sports car in our driveway.

PAUL

Yeah, pretty nice, isn't it?

DORIS

And what about this?

She produces a jewelry box, opening it to reveal a diamond bracelet.

PAUL

What's the matter, don't you like it?

DORIS

It's beautiful. But I want to know where you got it and how did you pay for it?

Paul gets up.

PAUL

Hey, it's a gift. You're not supposed to ask those kinds of questions.

She closes the box.

DORIS

Paul, what have you gotten yourself involved in?

PAUL

I told you, I was able to sell my old car for more than I thought. I got a raise at work so I leased a new car. It's a special deal they have for first-time customers. No money down, you know?

DORIS

You're not working anymore.

PAUL

What?

DORIS

Mr. Stewart called. Said you quit last week. Said you still haven't turned in your key.

Paul thinks.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Where are you getting this kind of money?

Seeing she's not getting anywhere, she softens her approach.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Paul, honey, I'm very worried about you.

PAUL

There's nothing to be worried about, I just got a new job, that's all.

DORIS

Doing what?

PAUL

I'm working for a friend.

DORIS

It's not just the money, Paul. I got a letter from your school, your grades are really slipping. And what about your friends? Justin and Steve never call anymore. Then there's Marty.

The mention of his brother gets Paul's attention.

PAUL

What about Marty?

DORIS

He was waiting for you. For hours he was waiting for you. Did you forget? You promised to take him to the park this afternoon.

PAUL

Shit. I'll make it up to him. I'll take him to the park tomorrow, and to the mall. I'll buy him a new bicycle.

His mother's getting pissed again.

DORIS

I don't want you buying him anything, not until you tell me where you're getting this money.

PAUL

Why are you getting so upset? I'm finally able to take care of you. Buy you nice things and protect you from that jerk.

DORIS

If you're talking about Eric, he called. I'm not going to be seeing him anymore.

PAUL

(to himself)

I'm not surprised.

DORIS

What?

Paul walks to his bedroom, ignoring his mother.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Paul, I want some answers. Paul!

He closes his bedroom door without answering.

INT. CLAY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Music blaring in the background, Clay punches a number into his phone.

CLAY

G-Funk? Yeah, it's me. What's up homeboy? How's the 'hood?

The music is too loud for him to hear.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hold on, hold on.

He fumbles for the remote and finally manages to lower the sound.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What'd you saying?...Yeah, well it's the fuckin' sticks man, the fuckin' sticks...Yeah, I miss that too. Listen, I need your help with something.

Clay walks to a closet while he talks. Opening the door reveals several large coolers stacked one on top of another.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I got my hands on a load of shit, I mean a regular fuckin' pharmacy.

He opens the lid of the top cooler, it's filled to the brim with large bags of drugs.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I'm bein' serious, but I need help dealin' it. I'm nickel and diming it, but at this rate I'll be here 100 fuckin' years. I just want to sell it all in one drop, get the fuck rid of it. You know, take the money and run... What I need is a distributor, someone who will take the whole...No man, I told you, the sticks. I don't know nobody, that's why I'm callin' you...No I ain't heard shit from him. What's the problem?

Clay is silent as he listens.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Fuck. Popeye was a good homeboy, but they slit his throat you got to assume he talked...No, I didn't tell him nothin', but that don't mean he didn't find out anyway...Yeah? Well, I appreciate that. When can you be here?

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- DAY

Paul's walking with his arm around the blonde he'd been chasing. They're stopped by a JOCK, the blonde's ex-boyfriend.

JOCK

Rachel? What the hell are you doing with this dweeb?

Paul stops, smiles at the girl and confronts the jock, getting right in his face.

PAUL

You got a problem, asshole?

The jock is taken aback, he wasn't expecting Paul to stand up to him.

JOCK

I just want to know what you're doing with my girlfriend.

PAUL

She traded up. You got a problem with that?

The jock thinks about it, then he backs down. He turns away

JOCK

(to himself)

Bitch, he can have her.

PAUL

Did you say something?

The jock keeps moving.

Paul laughs and puts his arm back around the girl, pulling her close and kissing her hard.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What did you ever see in that guy?

She just laughs.

Paul doesn't notice Ms. Haywood approaching.

HAYWOOD

Paul, can I talk to you?

Paul motions for the girl to leave, then he follows Haywood into an empty classroom. The teacher closes the door.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

You've got good taste.

Paul doesn't understand.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Rachel, isn't it?

PAUL

Yeah.

HAYWOOD

That's some ring she was wearing. Real diamond, wasn't it?

PAUL

I guess so.

HAYWOOD

Looked like a full carat, at least.

Paul just shrugs.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Nice gift.

PAUL

Yeah, so what?

HAYWOOD

Nothing, that's your business. Ring like that, though. Must cost an awful lot. I'd love to have one. On my salary, it's not going to happen.

PAUL

Is that what you wanted to talk to me about, a ring?

Haywood waits, takes a deep breath.

HAYWOOD

I think I know what's going on here, Paul.

PAUL

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

HAYWOOD

Don't you? The fancy clothes the expensive gifts? Your grades are going in the toilet, even your attitude is different. Maybe nobody else around here would recognize it, but where I come from - you're bangin'.

Paul is speechless.

PAUL

I gotta go.

He makes for the door, but Haywood is surprisingly fast and cuts him off.

HAYWOOD

I'm not going to lecture you, but this is some dangerous shit you're playing with. You want to talk about it, you come and see me.

(beat)

Paul, you may be surprised by what I have to say.

Paul goes around Haywood, opens the door and walks out.

EXT. PARK -- DAY

Paul is standing by his sports car. Clay pulls up in a model-year BMW and gets out. Seconds later, a second, much cheaper car pulls up and FOUR GUYS, mid to late teens, get out.

CLAY

(to Paul)

Hey, my man, I want you to meet our newest homeboys, they gonna help with business.

(to new guys)

Now you listen up, you run into problems, you can't locate me, you go to my man Paulie here, that understood? Paul speaks for me.

The new guys nod.

CLAY (CONT'D)

All right, all right, then get out of here and unload your shit.

The guys get back in their car and drive off.

PAUL

What was that all about?

CLAY

We're expanding, expanding like fuckin' Wal-Mart. The more homeboys we get, the stronger we get. I told you, give us a month and we'll be runnin' this town.

PAUL

What about us? We dealing today?

CLAY

No, we got us more important work to do.

Clay reaches into his car and pulls out two cans of spray paint.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Since this is our town now, it's time we let people know it.

Paul laughs as he takes a can.

EXT. L.A. STREET -- NIGHT

Tweeter waits on a street corner, watching everything and everybody that goes by.

After a few moments, he's approached by another youth, 14 or so.

TWEETER

Take it nice and easy now, and nobody gets hurt.

SNITCH

Fuck you, any of my homeboys see me talking with you and I'm dead.

TWEETER

Relax, this is fuckin' Switzerland, man.

SNITCH

Huh?

TWEETER

Neutral ground...

Tweeter sees he's wasting his time.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

Never mind. You got what I want?

SNITCH

Let's just get this over with.

Tweeter reaches into his pocket and pulls out a wad of bills. He hands them to snitch.

TWEETER

Now, where the fuck is he?

Snitch smiles as he counts his money.

EXT. L.A. STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Snitch is walking fast. One hand in his pocket, feeling the money.

From nowhere a car roars past and machine gun bullets rip into Snitch and several INNOCENTS nearby. They all fall to the ground while other people scream and run for cover.

A second car screeches to a stop and Tweeter jumps out. He runs to Snitch, finds the money in his pocket and takes it.

Snitch is still moaning. Tweeter pulls out an automatic, shoots him once, then turns and calmly walks back to his ride. He gets in the car and it pulls away.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul, just out of the shower, is shirtless as he dries and combs his hair in front of the mirror.

Marty, still dressed in pajamas comes in.

PAUL

Morning, monster breath.

Marty finds the comment hilarious.

MARTY

You're monster breath.

Paul turns and "roars" like a monster right in Marty's face. The little kid cracks up again.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Pee-you, you do have monster breath.

Paul gives his brother a sideways look, smiles and shakes his head.

As Paul works on his hair, Marty notices the tattoo on his arm.

MARTY (CONT'D)
What's that?

PAUL
A tattoo.

MARTY
Wow! Can I see?

Paul bends over and let's Marty take a good look at it.

MARTY (CONT'D)
What is it?

PAUL
A rose.

MARTY
I never saw a rose like that before.
Can I get one too?

Paul goes back to his hair.

PAUL
Maybe when you're a little older.

Marty's dejected.

MARTY
It's always "maybe when you're a little
older." I never get to do anything.

Marty sulks out the door. Paul just looks after him and laughs.

EXT. ARCADE - DAY

Steve and Abbey are coming out the arcade just as Paul pulls up in his car and gets out.

PAUL
Hey, guys, long time no see.

STEVE
Yeah, how you doing?

PAUL
Great, great. Abbey, you like my wheels?

ABBEY
(very unenthusiastic)
Nice.

PAUL
What's the matter? You don't like the
car?

STEVE
Maybe it's you we don't like.

Paul is about to argue when Justin arrives, breathing hard,
like he's been running.

STEVE (CONT'D)
What happened to you?

JUSTIN
(trying to catch his
breath)
Tully.

STEVE
Again? That's the third time this week.

PAUL
That motherfucker just never learns.

The others pause, they're not used to Paul cursing.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(to Justin)
You want me to take care of him for
you?

ABBEY
Leave him alone. He doesn't need
anything from you.

PAUL
I'm talking to Justin.

STEVE
Fine. Let's go, Abbey.

They leave. Paul watches them go.

Justin notices Paul's car.

JUSTIN
Whoa, is this yours?

PAUL
Yup.

JUSTIN
How'd you afford this?

PAUL
The same way I learned how to deal with
Tully.

Justin is in awe.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You want to know more?

Justin smiles.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET -- DAY

STANLEY, about 60, is scrubbing down the brick face of his hardware store, which has been marked by Caruso graffiti.

Another MIDDLE-AGED MAN walks up.

WALKING GUY.
Stanley, looks like somebody has mistaken
your store for a canvas.

STANLEY
Yeah, I've seen this same thing all
over town.

WALKING GUY.
Probably just some kids having fun.
Mostly harmless, I guess.

STANLEY
Harmless? You come here and try to
wash it off. Harmless my foot.

WALKING GUY.
I'm sure you can handle it.

He walks off while Stanley continues to scrub, cursing to himself the whole time.

EXT. CLAY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Paul and Justin walking to the door.

JUSTIN
I don't know Paul? Selling drugs? I
don't want to get into trouble.

PAUL
Trust me, the police don't know anything
about it. It's the easiest money you'll
ever make.

JUSTIN

But, drugs?

PAUL

You don't have to take them. All we're doing is selling them to the people who already do. Hell, they're gonna get them from somebody, might as well be us.

Paul rings the bell, and after a moment or two Clay greets them.

CLAY

You're just in time.

INT. CLAY'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Paul and Justin follow Clay into his bedroom, where two girls, about 20, barely dressed in lingerie, are sitting on his bed.

Paul and Justin stop, not quite sure believing what they are seeing.

CLAY

(to Paul)

I was just about to join Loretta and Charlene here, but we got business to discuss first.

(to the girls)

Don't wait for me.

He takes Paul's arm as the girls start kissing each other.

CLAY (CONT'D)

(to Justin)

You want a piece of that? Help yourself.

Justin can barely answer.

The girls are starting to remove the little clothing they have on.

JUSTIN

Maybe I'll just watch.

CLAY

Suit yourself.

(to Paul)

C'mon, man.

Paul can't tear himself away.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Don't worry, they ain't going no place.

(to the girls)

Are you girls?

The girls are too interested in each other to answer.

Justin looks like his eyes may explode.

Clay takes Paul's arm and leads him from the room.

INT. CLAY'S APARTMENT -- FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Clay and Paul return and the girls are still going at it, heavier than ever.

Justin is sitting in a chair now, sweat running down his forehead.

JUSTIN
(to Paul and Clay)
I want in!

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET -- MORNING

Stanley is at it again, trying to wash the graffiti off of the wall, when Tweeter approaches him.

TWEETER
Looks like you got a mess on your store there, old man.

STANLEY
What do you want?

TWEETER
This your store?

STANLEY
Yeah, I open at 10.

TWEETER
Good, I need some spray paint.

STANLEY
Spray paint? You responsible for this?

TWEETER
No, sir, you'd never catch me spraying that kind of crap on a wall.

STANLEY
Then what do you need the spray paint for?

TWEETER
Let's just say, I'm redecorating.

Tweeter smiles wide at Stanley.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- DAY

Paul and Justin are walking down the street. Justin, sporting his new blue baseball cap has one sleeve rolled up and is examining his arm.

JUSTIN

This is so cool.

(beat)

You won't tell, will you, Paul?

PAUL

Of course not.

JUSTIN

I couldn't get a real tattoo, I just couldn't. My Mom would kill me.

PAUL

You remind me of my brother.

JUSTIN

Huh?

PAUL

Nothing. You don't have to get a tattoo, Just.

JUSTIN

But I want to fit in. Look at it, will you? Does it look real?

Paul examines Justin's arm.

PAUL

Looks real to me, man.

JUSTIN

That's great, that's really great.

On Justin's arm sits the Caruso Rose.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

As long as you can't tell it's just temporary.

From behind them, Steve's voice is heard.

STEVE

Well, if it isn't the James Brothers.

Paul and Justin stop.

JUSTIN

Steve, you have to look at this.

Again he rolls up his sleeve, this time showing the emblem to Steve, who doesn't even look.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

It looks real, doesn't it? You couldn't tell it's not real, could you?

STEVE

(to Paul)

Bad enough you're into this shit, but you had to drag him into it too?

PAUL

Nobody dragged anybody into anything.

STEVE

(to Justin)

Is this what you want? To be in a gang? A fucking gang? You want to get shot, Justin? You want to get killed?

Justin is confused.

PAUL

Don't listen to him, man. He doesn't know what he's talking about?

STEVE

Don't I?

PAUL

Instead of shooting off your mouth, why don't you get off your ass and join us. See what we do, what we're all about,

STEVE

I've seen enough.

(beat)

You, know, I'm at the point where I don't give a shit what happens to you. But you get Justin hurt, and you and your "friends" are going to hear from me.

Steve storms off.

JUSTIN

Paul, what he said...

PAUL

Don't worry about it, Justin.

INT. HAYWOOD'S CAR -- DAY

Haywood is cruising around Burlington. She stops at a traffic light, listening to a rap station. She glances to her left, stops and looks again. She's still staring when the driver behind her leans on the HORN.

Haywood looks back, then looks around and finally pulls onto the shoulder. She gets out of the car, engine still running.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Haywood, only casually watching the traffic, crosses the street. She's drawn to something.

Painted on an abandoned storefront is the now-familiar Caruso sign. The only difference is, another symbol in another color - bright orange - has been painted over the emblem.

Haywood rubs her fingers over the new symbol - the paint is still wet.

She stares at it.

HAYWOOD

Fuck.

EXT. PARK -- DAY

Tweeter looks in disgust at a Caruso sign on the outside of a public rest room, near a basketball court. He fishes under his coat for his spray paint can when a voice interrupts.

TULLY

You with the assholes who painted that?

Tweeter turns, sizes up Tully.

TWEETER

Why, are you?

TULLY

Hell, no, I hate those sons-of-bitches.

TWEETER

Really? Tell me more.

Tweeter smiles and approaches Tully, who looks at him cautiously.

INT. BAR -- DAY

Tweeter and Tully enter and sit at the bar. Tully looks around nervously as the BARTENDER comes over.

BARTENDER
What'll it be?

TWEETER
Whiskey for my friend here, your best.

BARTENDER
He looks a little young.

TWEETER
Here's his I.D.

He slips the bartender a \$100 bill.

TWEETER (CONT'D)
I'll have the same.

The bartender gets their drinks.

Tully looks at Tweeter in amazement, then smiles.

TULLY
You ain't from around here, are you?

TWEETER
Let's just say, I'm in town on
business.

TULLY
You ain't a cop?

Tweeter likes that one.

TWEETER
Tell me what you know about the
Carusoes.

TULLY
What the fuck is a Caruso?

TWEETER
It was the Carusoes that spray-painted
that wall.

TULLY
Is that what they call themselves?

The bartender arrives with their drinks. Tweeter picks up his shot and toasts Tully, who looks at his tiny glass hesitantly. Tweeter swallows it, and Tully follows, holding back a cough.

TWEETER
Now, tell me. Where can I find the
Carusoes?

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Haywood walks in, stops a uniformed officer who points her towards Fogarty's desk. Fogarty is eating a sandwich while he fumbles through some paperwork

HAYWOOD
Lieutenant Fogarty?

FOGARTY
That's me.

HAYWOOD
I'm Cassandra Haywood, the high school teacher? I called earlier?

FOGARTY
Oh, yes, Ms. Haywood. Sit down, sit down.

Haywood sits.

The cop takes a big bite of sandwich.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)
(chewing)
Now, what can I do for you?

HAYWOOD
I think we have a problem in town.

FOGARTY
(skeptical)
What kind of problem?

HAYWOOD
The gang kind.

Fogarty stops eating. He wipes his mouth.

FOGARTY
Go on.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL -- DAY

Paul and Justin, both wearing blue caps, are leaving the mall. From the other direction, they spot Tully and his two toadies harassing "Wart" Flemming yet again. Justin turns to go back, but Paul stops him.

PAUL
Don't worry about him, you're a Caruso now. He's not going to fuck with us.

Tully sees them and stops. Justin can't believe it.

Paul gives Tully "the look," - he stares him down.

Tully turns to his toadies, says something and the three of them leave.

Paul is cool.

Justin is thrilled.

Wart is just happy he didn't get spit on again.

JUSTIN

This is absolutely the coolest thing
that has ever happened to me. I mean
it, the coolest thing ever. I mean the
girls, the tattoo and now this.

PAUL

It's cool.

JUSTIN

Thanks, Paul.

PAUL

For what?

JUSTIN

For letting me join. If not for you
I'd still be running scared from that
jerk. It's great, I mean for the first
time I feel like I'm really part of
something.

PAUL

I know what you mean.

(beat)

Listen, I got to go.

JUSTIN

Yeah, me too. I want to stop by Kelso's
on the way home.

PAUL

More G.I. Joe's?

Justin walks off

JUSTIN

They're collectibles!

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Haywood and Fogarty are still talking.

FOGARTY

Ms. Haywood, I appreciate your concern,
but this is not New York or L.A.,
this is Vermont for Christ's sake.
Who ever heard of gangs in Vermont?

HAYWOOD

Lieutenant, if you believe that gang
warfare is restricted to the cities,
I'm afraid you are sadly mistaken.

FOGARTY

Ms. Haywood, I know you mean well, but--

HAYWOOD

I'm going to bet you've seen an
increase in violent crime over the
past few weeks. Muggings, assault
and battery, burglaries.

Fogarty's face gives the answer.

FOGARTY

Okay. About this graffiti you saw.

Haywood grabs a pad and pencil off the cop's desk and draws the
gang sign. She holds it up for Fogarty to see.

HAYWOOD

They're popping up all over town. That's
the sign of the Carusoes, a fairly
notorious and violent L.A. Gang.

FOGARTY

Yeah, you know, we got a heads up from
the LAPD about a month ago. Some kid,
a gang member, they thought he was moving
here.

HAYWOOD

Well he's here, and he's not alone.

INTERCUT POLICE STATION/OUTSIDE KELSO'S

KELSO'S

Justin is leaving the store, clutching a bag tightly in his
hand. As he walks, he barley notices a group of older teens
standing nearby. One of them is Tweeter.

FOGARTY (V.O.)

What do you mean, not alone?

Tweeter and his thugs stop Justin, who's confused. He tries
to keep walking, but they quickly surround him.

HAYWOOD (V.O.)
I told you, I'm seeing evidence of gang
behavior in my classes.

POLICE STATION

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
I've even got kids doodling this sign
on their notebooks.

Again she holds up the pad.

FOGARTY
Shit.

HAYWOOD
And that's not the worst of it.

She goes back to work on the pad.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
Today, I saw this symbol painted on top
of a Caruso sign.

She hands the sketch to Fogarty. It's the same symbol Haywood
saw on the side of the road.

FOGARTY
What the hell is that supposed to be?

KELSO'S

One of the thugs rips Justin's hat off his head, then points
to his own colors. Justin is panicking but there's nowhere
to run and the street is deserted.

The gang members shove Justin hard, he drops his bag. The
gang guys close in. Justin keeps shaking his head, like he's
denying something.

HAYWOOD (V.O.)
That's a 'dis.

FOGARTY (V.O.)
A what?

POLICE STATION

HAYWOOD
It's a sign put there by another gang
to insult the Carusoes. It's like giving
the Carouses the finger, only worse.

KELSO'S

Two of the Volcs are kicking Justin, who lays on the ground trying to protect himself.

Tweeter watches the beating. He shows no emotion.

POLICE STATION

FOGARTY
Who put it there?

KELSO'S

Justin is getting the crap beat out of him.

HAYWOOD (V.O.)
It's from another gang, the Volcanoes,
or the Volcs for short. They and the
Carusoes have been killing each other
for 10 years or more.

POLICE STATION

FOGARTY
How the hell do you know all this?

Haywood hesitates before answering.

HAYWOOD
I used to be a youth counselor in Los
Angeles.

KELSO'S

HAYWOOD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Trust me, Lieutenant, you don't stop
this now, you're going to have an all-
out gang war on the streets of
Burlington.

Tweeter takes out a switchblade, he leans over and plunges the blade into Justin, who kicks violently.

HAYWOOD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...And people are going to die.

Justin stops moving.

CU

JUSTIN'S BAG

Ripped open and lying on the sidewalk, a G.I. Joe peers out from under the brown paper. The doll is wearing a tiny blue baseball hat, just like the Carusoes. As we watch, a pool of blood slowly surrounds the doll.

INT. CLAY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A knock on the door. Clay, a beer in his hand, opens it and G-FUNK, about 22 enters.

CLAY

Hey, homeboy!

G-Funk is nothing but cool. He greets Clay with a casual handshake, stops, then laughs out loud and gives his friend a big hug.

G-FUNK

What's up, motherfucker?

After a moment, G-Funk pulls back and looks closely at his friend.

CLAY

What the fuck you looking at?

G-FUNK

Nothin', nothin'. Just wanted to see if all this country livin' turned you into a farmer.

CLAY

Not yet, but yesterday, I was kickin' with some cows.

G-Funk laughs at the thought of his born-on-the-streets friend hanging out with cows.

CLAY (CONT'D)

They was cool though, they was cool.
They was homecows.

Both guys crack up.

G-Funk notices the beer.

G-FUNK

You got another one of them?

Clay grabs a beer from the refrigerator and tosses it to G-Funk.

G-FUNK (CONT'D)

Good thing. I was afraid all you had around here was effin' maple syrup.

LATER

Clay and G-Funk are chillin' after a big meal. Two empty pizza boxes and numerous empty beer bottles are scattered around the apartment.

CLAY

Now the question I got to ask you - can you get rid of this shit or can't you?

G-FUNK

The problem is, that's an awful lot of product. Too many people sniffin' around for it.

CLAY

Tell me about it. Why do you think I didn't try to sell it in L.A.?

G-FUNK

I try dealing it to the wrong person - someone connected to the Volcs, and I know the Volcs got East Coast connections, I'm going to end up fried.

CLAY

You said on the phone you had contacts out here.

G-FUNK

And I do, but they ain't homeboys or nothin'. Sure I know people in Boston, New York, but the only thing I'm sure about Boston and New York is the Red Sox and the Yankees hate each other like Crips hate Bloods. All I know, I could be walking right into a trap.

CLAY

I got that all figured out. You just get me a buyer.

G-FUNK

What'd you gonna' do?

CLAY

I got me an insurance policy, a pigeon.

G-FUNK

You serious?

CLAY

Damn straight. I've been working on this guy for weeks. He even went out and got the god-damn tattoo.

G-FUNK

Shit, I never got the tattoo. Those things hurt. I know guys been shot in the gut, say it didn't hurt as much as the fuckin' tattoo.

(beat)

What's your plan?

CLAY

I tell him about this big deal I got going. I send him down to the city with the shit. The deal goes sour, he takes the fall and we get the hell out of town. If the buyer's legit, my homeboy brings me back the cash, I give him a little something for his trouble and we're done. No risk at all. And either way, I'm out of here for good.

G-FUNK

What about your homeboy? What if he takes the money and don't come back?

Clay laughs.

G-Funk reaches for the TV remote and starts flipping channels.

CLAY

You got to meet this guy. I got him filled with all this "loyalty" and "brotherhood" bullshit. He'll come back.

G-FUNK

Sounds like you should go to work as a recruiter for the United States Army, the bullshit you've been tossin' around.

CLAY

They couldn't afford me.

Clay takes a long drink of beer, emptying another bottle.

G-Funk stops at a local news report.

G-FUNK

I think we got new problems.

G-Funk turns up the volume.

INSERT

ON THE TELEVISION

A serious looking newswoman is reading a report

NEWSWOMAN

16-year-old Justin McClain was stabbed to death on Garfield Avenue. Police have not yet released a motive, but sources told Channel 2 news that the killing may have been gang-related.

APARTMENT

G-FUNK

That your pigeon?

CLAY

No, that ain't my homeboy. Not yet it ain't. We got to hurry and get this shit out of here.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Paul pulls up in his new car, gets out, closes the door and hits the key alarm. He walks to his house.

Near the door, Steve appears from the shadows carrying a baseball bat. He looks almost deranged.

STEVE

You son-of-a-bitch.

PAUL

What the hell is going on?

STEVE

You killed him, you son-of-a-bitch, you killed him!

Steve walks to the car.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You killed him!

He swings the bat, smashing a headlight. He hits the second headlight, destroying that too.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Here's what I think of your fucking car!

He hits the windshield hard with the bat. It bounces off once, but a second blow shatters the glass.

Paul grabs the bat and the two wrestle for control of it. Finally, Paul pulls the bat away.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You got your car, you got your fucking money. You got laid. And you got your best friend killed.

PAUL

What the hell are you talking about?

STEVE

It was on the news. The whole fucking town is talking about it.

PAUL

What?

STEVE

Justin. Justin is dead. He was stabbed this afternoon.

Paul grabs Steve by the collar.

PAUL

You're insane. I was with Justin this afternoon.

Steve nearly collapses. He's mentally exhausted.

STEVE

(fading)

The cops said it was gang-related.
Gang-related, you motherfucker...you
motherfucker...

Paul lets him go.

From behind him, his mother appears.

DORIS

Paul, the police called. They want to talk to you. They're on their way over.

Marty comes out into the yard, clinging to his mother.

MARTY

What's wrong with Paul?

DORIS

Nothing, dear. Go back inside.

Paul's legs go out from under him and he lands hard on the ground, in shock.

STEVE

(quietly)

What have you done? My God, Paul, what have you done?

Paul doesn't, can't answer.

INT. POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Paul and Fogarty sit at a worn table in a small room. Paul still looks to be in shock. For a long time, Paul just stares, blank. Fogarty looks right at him.

FOGARTY

You know you're not a suspect.

Paul nods slowly.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

Then why won't you talk to me?

No answer.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

He was your friend, wasn't he?

Still nothing

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

(getting pissed)

Wasn't he?

Paul nods again.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

You're not acting like it.

(beat)

It's this gang bullshit, isn't it?

Isn't it?

Fogarty gets up and spins Paul's chair around hard so he's looking Paul right in the eye, just inches from his face.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

Look at me when I talk to you, you
son-of-a-bitch.

Paul still shows almost no emotion.

Fogarty shuffles through a file on the table, pulls out a mug shot of Clay.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

You know this guy? Name's Ricardo Lukas, alias "Clay," but you knew that didn't you? Did you know he's wanted for murder? Walked up to a kid in LA and shot him in the head. Nice guy, huh? We know he's in town and we have witnesses who say you two have been spending a lot of time together.

Paul looks at the photo.

PAUL

I may have seen him around.

That's too much for Fogarty. He sweeps the file off the table, spilling papers on the floor. He picks up the chair he was sitting in and throws it against a wall. He gets in Paul's face.

FOGARTY

You listen to me, this guy is a cold-blooded killer, and now it looks like he's brought other cold-blooded killers into town, my town. Now, I want to know where to find Ricardo "Clay" Lukas and I want to know right now.

A KNOCK on the door and Haywood enters.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

Maybe you can get something out of this kid. He doesn't seem to realize how serious this is.

HAYWOOD

(to Fogarty)

Can we have a moment alone?

Fogarty is hesitant, but he heads for the door.

FOGARTY

You got two minutes.

The cop leaves. Haywood takes a seat.

HAYWOOD

I'm sorry about Justin.

No reaction.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

You're in pretty deep, aren't you?

The comment surprises Paul.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

It starts out great, though, doesn't it? The money, the power? Feeling like there's nothing you can't do and there's nobody who can fuck with you. But then, shit starts to go down, and before you realize it, you're going down with it.

PAUL

I just don't know what happened.

HAYWOOD

You know what you gotta do?

PAUL

I don't want to talk to anymore cops.

HAYWOOD

Fuck the cops.

That really gets Paul's attention.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Justin was your homeboy. Well, wasn't he?

PAUL

Yeah.

HAYWOOD

Your homeboy got banged, now you got to go bang the motherfuckers who did this.

Haywood slams her fist hard on the table. She's practically screaming now.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Revenge, man. You know what I'm saying? It's all about revenge. They hit us, we hit them back - twice as hard. That's the way it is. You understand that don't you?

Paul's head is spinning. This woman is sounding less and less like his history teacher.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

You got to go after them. You know what happens if you don't? Do you know?

Paul doesn't answer.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
(softer, quieter)
You walk away. And you live.

PAUL
How the hell do you know all this?

Haywood rolls up her shirt sleeve to reveal a CARUSO TATTOO.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

It's 5 a.m. and Paul is tossing and turning. From outside the darkened window, a TAPPING is heard. Louder and louder, until Paul gets out of bed and goes to the window. He looks outside, then grabs some clothes and a jacket and leaves the room. He leaves his "colors" hat behind.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Paul walks into the backyard, where Clay and G-Funk are waiting.

CLAY
Hey, my man, how you holding up? Sorry
to hear about your homeboy and all.

PAUL
Yeah.

Paul looks at G-Funk, who doesn't say a word.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(to Clay)
What do you want?

CLAY
I want to know what the fuck happened.

PAUL
How should I know. All I know is
somebody stabbed Justin. Killed him.

G-FUNK
And you didn't talk to no cops about
it?

Paul waits a beat.

PAUL
I talked to the cops. Who the fuck are
you.

CLAY
This is my homeboy G-Funk, from L.A.

G-FUNK
What'd you tell them? The cops?

PAUL
None of your fucking business.

CLAY
Hey, no need to take no offense or
nothin', we just want to know what you
told them, that's all.

PAUL
I told them I didn't know anything.

CLAY
That's cool.

G-FUNK
Why did they question you, do you think?

PAUL
Because I was his friend.

G-FUNK
And no other reason?

Paul's getting pissed.

CLAY
That's okay, it's cool, it's cool. We
all been questioned by the man one time
or another. But we're Carusoes, we're
brothers. We don't tell them nothin',
right, Paulie?

Paul waits a few beats.

PAUL
Right.

Paul and G-Funk are still glaring at each other.

CLAY
Okay, okay, that's over with for right
now.

PAUL
Over with? Justin was my friend. This
isn't over with.

CLAY
I know how you feel, man.

PAUL
Do you?

CLAY

Yeah, one of my best homeboys got cut up soon after I left the 'hood. They slit his throat and left him bleedin' there in the street.

PAUL

Who's "they."

G-FUNK

Fuckin' Volcs, who do you think?

PAUL

Volcs?

CLAY

Let's just say they're a rival organization.

PAUL

What are they doing here?

G-Funk looks at Clay, who in turn quickly looks away.

CLAY

Who can say? Most likely they got the word that the Carusoes were runnin' this town, so they decide to come here and try to fuck things up for us. Only, we ain't gonna let that happen.

PAUL

So, one of these Volcs killed Justin.

CLAY

I'd bet on it. And they going to go on killing our homeboys unless we do something about it, ain't that right G-Funk?

G-FUNK

Damn straight.

PAUL

So, what do we do?

Clay lifts up his shirt to reveal 2 revolvers stuck in his belt. He takes one out and offers it to Paul. Paul hesitates, then takes the .45. He sticks it in his own pants.

CLAY

When the time's right, we'll meet at G-Funk's place.

PAUL
(determined)
You can count on me.

Clay smiles

CLAY
Good. When we're done, the only thing
those fuckin' Volcs gonna control in
this town is the cemeteries.

INT. CLAY'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Clay and G-Funk driving through dark, deserted streets.

G-FUNK
You sure you can trust him?

CLAY
As I explained to you, I need him.
(beat)
For now.

G-FUNK
Why don't we take the shit and get the
fuck out of here? Find someplace to
sell it later?

CLAY
Because that son-of-a-bitch who killed
Popeye is here and I want him. It's
personal, man. It's personal.

INT. FUNERAL HOME -- NIGHT

Justin's wake. Steve and Abbey are part of a small crowd quietly
milling about. Sitting closest to the casket, a slightly
overweight, middle-aged woman weeps. She's JUSTIN'S MOTHER.
Several of the mourners try to comfort her.

Paul Enters.

For a while, he stays near the back, afraid even to look at the
open coffin.

Steve and Abbey spot him and come over.

ABBEY
Hi, Paul.

PAUL
Abbey.

STEVE
I was wondering if you were going to
show up.

ABBHEY

Steve, not here.

STEVE

(to Paul)

Thought maybe you were too busy with
your new "friends." Seeing who else you
could get killed.

PAUL

That's enough.

STEVE

Is it? Go over there, look at him.
Look what you did to him.

PAUL

I'm warning you, man.

STEVE

Or what? You going to call your
"homeboys," have them take care of me?

Paul's had enough. He grabs Steve by the collar. Steve offers
no resistance.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Makes you feel better, do
it.

ABBHEY

Stop it, now.

Paul lets him go.

PAUL

I know what will make me feel better.

He turns and heads for the door when he's stopped by Justin's
Mother.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER

Paul, I'm so glad you came.

Paul stands there, not sure what to do. Justin's Mother reaches
out to hug him and he awkwardly returns the embrace.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Justin would be so happy to see you.

She lets go of Paul and wipes more tears from her eyes.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

You've always been such a good friend to Justin. I was always so thankful he had a friend like you. He really looked up to you, did you know that? He'd come home sometimes and it would be "Paul this and Paul that."

Suddenly, Paul looks like he may cry too.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Why would anybody do this to my son? He never hurt anyone in his life, and now look at him...

She breaks down again.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

(wiping tears)

I was waiting for you to come. I think Justin would have liked it if we both did this.

Paul just nods, not knowing what she is talking about.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Please, come with me.

She reaches out and Paul takes her hand. She leads him to the open casket, pausing near her chair to pick up a small box.

Paul still can't bring himself to look at his dead friend. Instead, he just stares at the open lid.

Justin's mother removes something from the bag and places it carefully in the casket.

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

My little boy. This one was his favorite.

Paul finally looks down. Laying next to Justin is a G.I. Joe.

Paul looks away quick

JUSTIN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I think Justin was starting to get embarrassed by his G.I Joe's, he said he was getting too old for them. But I know he still liked them. He must have a 100 or more, but this was his favorite. His father bought it for him just before...

She breaks down again, falling on her knees in front of her embalmed child.

Paul can't take anymore. He walks, almost runs for the door. He glances at Steve - who returns his look stone-faced - and is gone.

Abbey is talking with Haywood.

ABBHEY

I hate funerals.

HAYWOOD

I'm afraid we're going to have a lot of them.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM -- DAY

There's a POUNDING at the door and Clay peeks through the window curtain before opening the door. Paul enters.

CLAY

Where the fuck you been? You were supposed to meet us this morning. It was important, man.

PAUL

So was Justin's funeral. Where the hell were you?

Clay is taken aback. Paul's never talked to him like this before.

CLAY

(softer, calmer)

I'm sorry about that, man. But the cops were watching that business closely. We can't afford to be too public right now.

From the bathroom, the blonde Paul has been dating appears, she's buttoning her blouse.

After a long, awkward moment of silence, Clay ushers her out the door.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Not now, baby. We got business to discuss.

He closes the door after her.

CLAY (CONT'D)

That, that don't mean nothing, man. I think she was looking for you when...

PAUL

You piece of shit.

CLAY

C'mon, this is no time to be fightin' each other. You forget about the Volcs?

PAUL

I didn't forget.

CLAY

Look, I'm sorry about the funeral, but if we had shown up there it would have caused a whole mess of shit that nobody wanted.

Paul acts like he doesn't know whether to believe this or not.

PAUL

So what's so important?

They are interrupted by the sound of SQUEALING TIRES, followed by two car doors SLAMMING.

Clay runs to the window.

CLAY

It's the homeboys.

He opens the door long enough for G-Funk and SMALLIE-BOY to rush in. Smallie is short, about 14 with a hardened look about him

CLAY (CONT'D)

What happened?

G-FUNK

We was dissin' some Volc signs when they opened up on us.

CLAY

Shit. You guys all right?

SMALLIE-BOY

We are, but they ain't.

CLAY

You wasted 'em.

G-FUNK

One of 'em at least. He was bleeding like a son-of-a-bitch.

Clay is pleased.

CLAY

You see his face?

G-FUNK

Yeah, I seen it.

(beat)

Wasn't your man.

CLAY

That's okay.

(to Paul)

This is just the beginning.

PAUL

What are you talking about?

CLAY

Smallie got into town last night, and there's more homeboys on the way. When they get here, the Volc's won't know what hit 'em.

G-FUNK

C'mon. We got us a reason to celebrate.

He walks to the bathroom and comes back with beers. He gives one to everybody, starting with Clay and ending with Paul.

Everyone is laughing and having a great time, Smallie jumps from left to right, showing how he "dodged" the bullets before opening up on the Volcs.

Only Paul is more subdued. He watches at first, taking a few small sips of beer. Then Clay puts his arm around him, laughing and drinking. Finally, Paul takes a couple big swallows and joins the party.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Haywood is near the baggage claim scanning the crowd when she spots someone and waves. A huge, black man approaches, wearing a sport jacket over a tee-shirt, he sports a perfectly shaved head. He's DEL SAXTON. He greets Haywood with a hug and she all but disappears in his arms.

HAYWOOD

Del, how are you?

DEL

Doing fine, doing fine.

He lets her go and takes a step back.

DEL (CONT'D)

Looks to me like all this fresh air is agreeing with you.

HAYWOOD

Well, it was. But the city has a way of catching up with you, know what I mean?

DEL

I do indeed.

INT. HAYWOOD'S CAR -- DAY

Haywood and Del driving through the streets of Burlington. Del's knees are crushed against the dashboard.

DEL

So, how bad is it?

HAYWOOD

See for yourself.

She slows the car, pulling up next to a vacant building that now has both Volc and Carusoe signs on it.

DEL

Looks like you got yourself a branch of South-Central right here in Smokey-The-Bear country.

HAYWOOD

We've had a stabbing and a couple of shootings so far, but there's more to come. I've seen this too many times before.

DEL

Me, too.

She smiles at Del's remark and pulls back into the traffic.

DEL (CONT'D)

So, tell me what went down.

HAYWOOD

Local boy got cut. Died at the scene. Good kid, he was a student of mine.

DEL

Was he bangin'?

HAYWOOD

No, not the type. He just got suckered in. Remember Jose Vasquez? Same kind of thing.

Del nods

DEL
And the shooting?

HAYWOOD
You already know, Victor something-or-other.

DEL
Stefano. How's he doing?

HAYWOOD
Heard he took a .45 in the arm.

DEL
Nice to see him on the other end of a .45 for a change.

They drive for a couple of beats.

DEL (CONT'D)
What about the local cops?

HAYWOOD
In denial, mostly. Don't want to hear any of this
(with a thick phony city accent)
"Gangbangin'" bullshit from us city folk, I guess.

They both have a laugh at that.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)
You still gonna do the lecture with me tonight?

DEL
C'mon, would I let my favorite lady down?

Haywood gives him a "cut the bullshit" look and again they share a good laugh.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Paul is watching TV while Marty plays nearby. Paul's mother enters and opens the closet door, reaching for a coat.

DORIS
Paul, I want you to stay in tonight.

PAUL
Where are you going?

DORIS

To your school. After what happened to poor Justin, the police are giving a lecture on violence.

Paul seems disinterested.

DORIS (CONT'D)

They say gangs were involved.

That gets Paul's attention.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Can you believe it, gangs? Here in Vermont?

PAUL

I can't believe it.

DORIS

Anyway, watch your brother and keep the doors locked.

PAUL

Okay.

She kisses Paul and Marty good-night and is gone.

Paul sits on the couch and grabs the remote, flipping channels.

Marty sneaks up on his brother and jumps on top of him. Paul acts surprised as the two of them roll around on the floor.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You got me, you got me. I give up.

Marty is hysterical.

The brothers are interrupted by a knock on the door. Paul opens the door to find Clay.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What is it?

CLAY

We got to talk.

PAUL

Not here, not tonight. I'm baby-sitting my little brother.

CLAY

(nasty)

I said, we got to talk.

Paul looks back at Marty, who's busy playing with some toys by himself on the floor.

PAUL
Okay, let's go outside.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

PAUL
I told you not to come here.

CLAY
(pissed)
Cut the crap.

Clay's hard-ass attitude catches Paul off-guard.

CLAY (CONT'D)
I know who wasted your man.

PAUL
What?

CLAY
Same mother who killed my homeboy. I figured he was here, and now I know.

PAUL
Who is he? Tell me.

CLAY
Big-time Volc named Tweeter. Gets his kicks cuttin' people. Sick motherfucker.

Paul acts like he's just been slapped across the face.

PAUL
What are we going to do?

CLAY
Me and G-Funk, we know where he's staying, but we're gonna' need your help.

PAUL
Why don't you wait for your friends from L.A?

CLAY
Can't wait, and the cops got Smallie. We gonna do this, we gotta do it soon.

He steps up and puts both hands on Paul's shoulders.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And it's more than that. I want to give you a chance.

PAUL

A chance for what.

CLAY

Revenge, man. Revenge for your homeboy.

PAUL

Tell me what to do.

Clay is pleased.

CLAY

You'll hear from me. For now, you just keep your eyes open for any trouble. And keep that .45 close by.

PAUL

I'll be ready.

Paul walks back to his front door. Clay follows and stops at the front stoop.

CLAY

Remember, I'm counting on you, bro.

PAUL

I already have a brother.

Paul goes inside closing the door behind him.

Clay looks after him, unsure what to make of that remark. He turns and walks off down the street. Clay doesn't notice a four-door Toyota, its lights off, parked across the street a few doors away.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT

It's standing room only. Fogarty, Del and Haywood are seated at a table on the stage, a microphone in front of each of them.

A WOMAN stands at a podium on the floor, set up for audience members.

The meeting has just begun and already this woman is giving the speakers a hard time.

WOMAN

I just don't understand how this could happen here. We left the city to get away from the violence. I want to know what the police department is going to do to make sure our children are safe.

Her comments are greeted by CHEERS from the audience.

FOGARTY

Madam, I assure you, the Burlington
Police Department is working around the
clock to catch the perpetrators
responsible for this sudden rash of
violence.

Several audience members stand and YELL at Fogarty, who tries
to quiet them down.

On stage next to the cop, Del and Haywood just look at each
other.

FOGARTY (CONT'D)

Now, please, calm down. Despite what
you may have heard, we still have no
concrete evidence that these "unfortunate
incidents" are anything more than random
acts.

DEL

(to himself, but the
mike picks it up)
Bullshit.

Fogarty looks at him, pissed. Del returns the glare, and then
some.

HAYWOOD

Lieutenant? If I may?

Fogarty reluctantly lets her speak.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is
Cassandra Haywood. Some of you may
know me as a history teacher here in
the high school. I may have some of
your children in my class.

(beat)

And I was a gang member.

The audience mutters a collective gasp.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

I grew up in Los Angeles. What's happened here this week I've seen a hundred times before. Kids, good kids, many of them innocent kids, dying violent horrible deaths.

(she turns to Fogarty)

With all due respect, Lieutenant, these aren't "random acts of violence" we're seeing.

(to the audience)

They are cold, calculated acts, carried out by well-organized, well armed, highly dangerous individuals. And they are not going to stop unless we as a community see to it that they do.

The audience is quiet.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

When I first suspected a gang presence here in town, I reached out to the man who probably knows more about the dynamics of street gangs than anyone else. Like me, he was a gang member, and like me, he was lucky enough to survive. Today, he fights gangs and the influence they have on our young people as a member of the Los Angeles Police Department's Gang Strike Force. I'd like to introduce you to Detective Del Saxton.

The audience is silent as the huge black man gets up from his seat and walks to the end of the stage, looking out on the almost all-white audience.

DEL

You all hear me all right?

The audience mumbles that they can.

DEL (CONT'D)

My friend Cass is right. You people don't just have a gang problem, you have a gang war.

More stunned silence.

DEL (CONT'D)

I'm not going to go into the details of how they got here, it's enough that they're here. The Carusoes and the Volcs - that's short for Volcanoes. While not two of the most well-known gangs in Los Angeles, they are two of the most violent, as you've already learned. Volcs and Carusoes are sworn enemies. When these rival gangs meet, people die. And I'm sorry to say, it's not always the gang members who get killed. Too often, the victims, the innocent victims, are your neighbors, your loved ones. Both gangs are well armed with automatic weapons and hatred enough to use them. After looking at the evidence, talking with Lieutenant Fogarty and his men, and Ms. Haywood, I'm convinced leaders of both gangs are here to establish new territory.

A man in the audience stands to ask a question.

MAN 1

What does that mean, exactly? Establish new territory?

DEL

A lot of the L.A. gangs already have spread out across the country and established branches in smaller towns. In some towns, more than one gang may be trying to get a foothold. When that happens, war breaks out. I believe that's what's happening here.

This time, a woman in the audience shouts out a question.

WOMAN 1

The boy who was killed? He didn't come from Los Angeles. How did he get involved in all this.

DEL

Well, I don't know the exact details, but I can tell you that one of the first things a gang will do when moving into a new town is to send a few established members from the city out ahead to act as recruiters.

WOMAN 1

Recruiters?

DEL

Yes. They'll hang around the schools, the mall, targeting kids with offers of easy money, power, girls. Whatever it takes.

Another woman gets up.

WOMAN 2

But aren't gangs a minority thing? You know, blacks and Hispanics, mainly?

(beat)

No offense or nothing.

DEL

No. Gang members come in all colors. Today, many traditionally black, white or Hispanic gangs have members of all races. It's all about the money. Gangs sell drugs and drugs are money.

WOMAN 2

Well, no children in Burlington would get involved with a gang because children here don't take drugs.

Haywood gets up and joins Del.

HAYWOOD

Don't be so sure of that. I've been seeing evidence of a gang membership in the high school. Good students suddenly not doing their work, losing interest in school. Wearing gang "colors." Kids showing up with expensive clothes and jewelry. These are all warning signs that you as parents must be aware off.

Seated in the audience, silent, is Paul's mother.

DORIS

She looks pale, scared to death, as she listens to Haywood and Del.

BACK TO SCENE

DEL

She's right. The best defense we have against gangs is you - the parents.

Another audience member gets up.

MAN 2

My son has been acting funny, kind of distant. But I know he'd never take drugs.

HAYWOOD

Most gang members don't take drugs, they sell drugs. That's part of the allure.

Del points to Man 2

DEL

Sir, you don't mind me asking? How much do you make a year?

The man shrugs, embarrassed by the question.

MAN2

I don't know. About \$50,000.

DEL

A gang member who's dealing to established customers can make that much in a day. A day.

Man 2 sits down, stunned.

DEL (CONT'D)

You got to watch for the changes in your children. Do they seem standoffish, have more of an attitude?

DORIS

The woman is in shock, her hands shaking. Del is describing Paul to a tee.

As Del continues to talk, his voice slowly fades as we watch Doris silently come to terms with the truth about her son.

DEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(fading)

If they suddenly show up with fancy clothes or large amounts of money you can't explain, they may be bangin'. Are they hanging out with new people, and abandoning their old friends?

DORIS

(mouthing the words)

Oh, My God.

BACK TO SCENE

As Del and Haywood continue speaking and answering questions, Paul's mother gets up, pushes her way to the aisle and quickly walks towards the exit.

STAGE

HAYWOOD

Children are also attracted to the gangs because it gives them a feeling of power and belonging.

Fogarty gets up and interrupts.

FOGARTY

Okay, I think we've heard about enough...

AUDIENCE

The audience gets restless, calling on Fogarty to let Del and Haywood speak.

INT.PAUL'S HOUSE - PAUL'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Paul is restless. Sitting on his bed, he holds the .45 Clay gave him. He looks at the gun for a few moments, then unloads it. The bullets come out easily into his hand.

From the hallway, he hears Marty approaching. Quickly, Paul hides the gun under his mattress. He gets up and dumps the bullets into his desk drawer just as Marty enters.

MARTY

Paul, guess what?

PAUL

Can it wait, kiddo? I'm kind of busy.

Marty is persistent.

MARTY

But it's just like yours.

PAUL

What's just like mine?

Marty rolls up his sleeve. On his arm, crudely drawn with a Magic Marker is a red rose, just similar enough to his own tattoo for Paul to recognize it.

Marty smiles from ear to ear. Now, he's just like his big brother.

Paul smiles too at first, but it quickly fades. He looks at his brother and doesn't know what to say.

MARTY

Do you like it?

Paul doesn't answer.

Now, Marty's smile fades too.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Doesn't it look like yours? I wanted
it to look just like yours.

Finally, Paul reacts. He looks like he might cry. He sweeps Marty up in both arms and gives him a huge hug. He holds him tight.

Marty is confused. He breaks free and looks at his brother.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I didn't do a good job, did I?
(sulking)
I wanted it to be just like yours.

PAUL

No, Marty, no. You did a great job.
It does look just like mine. It's
just that I don't think I like my
tattoo anymore.

MARTY

You don't?

PAUL

No. It was a mistake for me to get
it and I'm going to wash it off. And
I don't want you to have one either.
Do you understand?

Marty nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Will you go wash it off now?

Marty smiles. Paul gives him another hug before Marty runs towards the bathroom. He stops outside Paul's room when he hears a car pull up outside.

MARTY

Mommy!

LIVING ROOM

Marty runs to the front door, opens it and watches his mother pull up and get out of the car.

Marty pushes the screen door open and runs outside to greet her.

PAUL

Marty, get back in here.

Paul follows his brother outside.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Marty runs to his mother.

Just as Paul steps outside, a car races down the street approaching the house. At the same time, the phone rings behind Paul. He turns and steps back into the house.

From the racing car's open passenger window, a muzzle flashes and deafening automatic fire pierces the night. Paul steps back inside just as bullets tear into the house.

Paul's mother is the first to fall. Marty watches her go down and calls out for her.

MARTY

Mommy!

He takes another step towards her before bullets rip into his small body and he crumbles to the ground.

It's over. The car - we see now that it's the same Toyota that was parked outside earlier - screams away as Paul, unhurt, flies out of the house. From the dim street lighting and glow from the house lights, dark pools can already be seen forming around the two unmoving bodies.

PAUL

Mom! Marty!

He runs to them, falling to his knees next to his brother. He doesn't know whether to touch him or not.

A NEIGHBOR and HIS WIFE arrive, looking in disbelief at the bloody scene before them.

Paul begs them for help.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Call an ambulance. Please call an ambulance.

The neighbor's wife, her hand at her mouth, nods and runs back to her house.

Paul tries to get up and go to his mother, but falls back near his brother.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(crying)

Marty! Marty, please get up. Please
get up.

Just visible in the dim light is the Magic Marker tattoo on
Marty's arm.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

The drab room is empty. Only the constant patter of rain against
the dark windows that line one wall breaks the silence.

A nurse walks in, looks around and leaves.

Moments later, Abbey arrives. She's soaked to the skin. Looking
unsure of what to do, she finally sits.

Abbey watches the rain, then turns towards the door.

ABBEY

Paul?

Haywood and Del enter, they are dripping wet. Abbey jumps to
her feet and runs to Haywood. They embrace.

HAYWOOD

We just heard. How are they doing?

ABBEY

I don't know, they won't tell me
anything.

DEL

Where's your friend Paul?

ABBEY

I don't know. My father's an EMT, he
called me after the shooting. But I
haven't seen Paul.

DEL

Neither have the police.

Haywood shoots him a stern look - as if saying "not now."

A DOCTOR enters.

ABBEY

Is there any news? About Mrs. Thorton
and her son.

DOCTOR

Are you family?

ABBEY
No, but--

HAYWOOD
I am.

The doctor just looks at her.

DOCTOR
You are Mrs. Thorton's...

HAYWOOD
Sister.

DOCTOR
Sister?

DEL
That's right. And I'm her brother.

The doctor looks up at Del's huge, dark frame.

DEL (CONT'D)
Is that a problem?

DOCTOR
No, no, not at all.

HAYWOOD
How are they?

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- 10 MINUTES LATER

Haywood and Abbey are sitting when Del walks back into the room.

DEL
The cops in this town don't know a damn thing.

HAYWOOD
They'll find him.

DEL
They better do it soon.

ABBEY
What does that mean?

HAYWOOD
Nothing. Don't worry, Paul will be okay.

Haywood rises and stares out the window. She looks close. Did something move out there?

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The rain is torrential. A few cars and minivans are scattered throughout the dreary lot, which is barely illuminated by a few scattered street lights.

A covered bus stop sits under one dull light. Haywood, wrapped in a hooded parka, runs to the bus stop. Paul is there, huddled in the corner. He looks up at his teacher but doesn't say a word.

She sits down next to him and waits.

HAYWOOD

It's really coming down.

He doesn't answer.

She looks around the bus stop.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

I think you missed the last bus.

PAUL

What?

HAYWOOD

I don't think there's another bus tonight.

For a long time, Paul says nothing. Then...

PAUL

I can't go in there.

HAYWOOD

I talked to the doctor.

Paul looks up, he wants to ask, but there's too much fear.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

You're mother is going to be okay, the bullet just grazed her.

PAUL

And my brother?

Haywood searches for the right words.

HAYWOOD

They don't know. He's very critical. Doctor says there was a lot of bleeding.

Paul sobs

PAUL

Oh, God.

Haywood puts an arm around him.

HAYWOOD

It'll be okay, Paul. It'll be okay.

That sets him off. He pushes her away and stands, enraged.

PAUL

No, it's not, and it never will be again.
You tried to tell me. Abbey, Steve,
you all tried.

HAYWOOD

Paul, now's not the time to blame
yourself.

PAUL

Do you know why I joined that gang? Do
you know?

Haywood shakes her head.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Because, I wanted to protect Mom and
Marty. I wanted to protect them.

(laughing)

Can you believe that? Jesus, and now,
because of me...

HAYWOOD

Paul, I...

PAUL

I gotta go.

Haywood reaches for him.

HAYWOOD

Where are you going.

PAUL

You know where.

He breaks free of her hold and is gone.

Haywood stares out into the night, absently rubbing her arm
near her gang tattoo.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Haywood enters, drenched. Del is on his cell phone and Abbey
is still seated.

DEL
(into the phone)
Hold on...
(to Haywood)
You see him?

Haywood waits a beat, then shakes her head.

HAYWOOD
No, I didn't see him.

Del goes back to his phone conversation. Haywood walks over to Abbey and stares out the window.

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL - NIGHT

Paul, drenched by the still-falling rain, approaches G-Funk's room and pounds on the door.

No answer.

He pounds with both fists.

Nothing.

PAUL
(screaming)
Open the fucking door!

Still nothing. He goes to the window, but the curtain is closed and no light is visible.

In a rage, Paul kicks the door, then kicks it again and again until the lock finally gives and it flies open. He races into the room, fumbles for the light and...

...the room is empty.

He races to the bathroom and throws that door open too.

Nothing.

Exhausted, dejected, furious, he sits on the bed.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Shit.

TWEETER
I could'a told you they ain't here.

Tweeter appears in the open doorway and steps inside. On his head, the Volc's trademark orange baseball cap.

Instantly, Paul is on his feet, and just as fast, Tweeter draws a gun. Paul stops, struggling to control his anger.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

Now, it will probably be best for everybody if you just take it down a notch.

PAUL

You killed Justin. You sot my mother and my brother.

TWEETER

Actually, I was aiming for you.

He closes the door, but keeps the gun pointed at Paul.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

Effin' cold up here. Don't you got no spring in New England?

(beat)

Sit down, motherfucker.

Paul doesn't move.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

(threatening)

I said, sit down.

Paul sits on the edge of the bed, but never takes his eyes off Tweeter.

TWEETER (CONT'D)

Now, I'm going to tell you why I'm here, 'cause I don't think you fully understand the situation. Things have changed a bit.

EXT. STORAGE SHED -- NIGHT

The rain has stopped, but Paul is now wearing a jacket as he walks to the shed door and knocks. After a beat, he knocks a second time and the door opens a crack, then all the way and Paul enters.

INT. STORAGE SHED -- CONTINUOUS

Clay and G-Funk, gun drawn, are here, along with the coolers full of drugs.

CLAY

What the hell you doing here?

G-Funk puts the gun back in his belt and goes back to helping Clay move the drugs from the coolers to several large duffel bags.

PAUL

My mother and my brother were shot tonight.

That gets Clay's and G-Funk's attention.

CLAY

That was them? Shit. We heard there was a drive-by, but we didn't know who.

PAUL

Didn't bother to check either, huh? My brother may die. He's five years old.

Clay barely looks up from what he's doing.

CLAY

That's rough, man. That's rough.

PAUL

You don't give a shit, you son-of-a-bitch.

Clay stops, but G-Funk keeps working.

CLAY

We've all lost people. Homeboys, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers. It just goes with 'bangin' that's all. And right now, we got some important shit to do.

PAUL

You're scared.

Clay chuckles a little - a nervous laugh. He gets back to work.

G-FUNK

We ain't scared of nothin', especially no motherfuckin' Volcs.

PAUL

Then where are you going?

CLAY

Don't you worry about that. We're gettin' out of town for a few days, that's all.

PAUL

I think it's too late for that.

That really gets their attention. Clay and G-Funk drop the drugs and confront Paul.

CLAY

You never said, how did you know where
to find us?

G-FUNK

And how do we know you weren't followed?

PAUL

I wasn't followed.

G-Funk again draws his gun and points it at Paul.

G-FUNK

How the fuck do we know that?

PAUL

Because Tweeter said this is where I'd
find you.

G-FUNK

Holy shit.

He goes to the door and peaks outside.

G-FUNK (CONT'D)

(to clay)

I don't believe him. If those fuckin'
Volcs are here, it's because he led
them here.

CLAY

It don't matter now.

Clay goes back to loading the drugs into the bags.

G-FUNK

The fuck it don't. I'm going to waste
this motherfucker right now. I told
you he was no good.

G-Funk takes aim at Paul and a deafening shot fills the shed.

G-Funk, confused, looks down at a gaping black hole in his chest.
He lowers the gun and looks at Clay, who's holding a smoking
revolver.

G-Funk falls to the floor.

Paul just watches, confused.

CLAY

(to G-Funk)

Nice try, man. But it was you who told the Volcs where we were. They offer you a bigger cut? So you figured you'd smoke Paul and me here, then take the money from the fuckin' Volcs?

(screaming)

The Volcs?

G-Funk is gasping for breath.

CLAY (CONT'D)

You know what I do to people who betray me?

G-Funk tries to shake his head as he gasps.

Clay stands over him, points the gun down and shoots him again.

CLAY (CONT'D)

We got to get this shit out of here.

PAUL

What about your friends from Los Angeles.

Clay doesn't answer.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Nobody else is coming, are they?

CLAY

I said, we got to get this shit out of here before the fuckin' Volcs show.

PAUL

They're not coming.

CLAY

You sure of that?

PAUL

I took care of it. For Marty, for my Mom, I took care of it.

Clay considers this.

CLAY

We still got to go.

PAUL

I know a place.

Paul opens the door and grabs a duffel bag. Clay does not follow.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You coming or not?

CLAY
How do I know I can trust you? Maybe
you cut a deal with the Volcs too.

PAUL
I know a place where we can take these
drugs, someplace where nobody will ever
find them. I give you my word.

CLAY
(laughing)
Your word? Fuck, man, where I come
from that don't mean shit.

PAUL
That's okay - it means something where
I come from.

Paul takes the bag and leaves. He doesn't wait for Clay to follow.

EXT. OLD BOATHOUSE -- NIGHT

Paul and Clay pull up in an old pickup, the duffel bags in the rear. Paul jumps out and opens the double doors as Clay backs the truck in.

INT. OLD BOATHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Paul finds a light switch. A single dull bare bulb glows overhead, reflecting off the still, black lake water. The boat slips are empty.

Clay stops the engine and jumps out of the truck.

CLAY
This is perfect, man. Perfect. I knew
I could count on you.

From behind Clay, Tweeter's voice is heard.

TWEETER
Clay - short for Claymore.

Clay spins, fumbling for his gun. He freezes when he sees Tweeter pointing an automatic at him.

TWEETER (CONT'D)
Long time no see.

Cautiously, with eyes on steel on Clay, Tweeter takes the gun from Clay's hand and puts it in his own belt. Clay doesn't resist.

CLAY

(to Paul)

You motherfucking traitor! You gave me your word.

PAUL

I promised I would take you somewhere where no one would find your drugs. No one will find them here.

TWEETER

Don't blame your homeboy, here. I made him a deal he couldn't refuse,

(to Paul)

Ain't that right?

CLAY

What kind of deal?

PAUL

He told me that if I gave him the drugs, he and his gang would leave town.

(looking at Tweeter)

And wouldn't come back.

TWEETER

That's right. This town, it's nice. It don't need no 'bangers bringin' things down. So I tell him, give me what I want,

(to clay)

What you stole from me, and I'm gone.

CLAY

What about G-Funk? You knew where we were. Why didn't you just come and take the shit?

TWEETER

That motherfucker tried to cut a deal, but I figured he'd fuck it up and we'd end up with bullets flying all over the place. Next thing you know the cops is there and that's the end of the shit. G-Funk.

(he laughs)

Never know why'd you want baggage like that in your organization.

(turns to Paul)

Now, your man here. He got brains. He's smart enough to take a good deal when he sees it and not try to screw me over.

CLAY

So that's it? You take the shit and go. Just like that?

TWEETER

Not exactly. I like it here. Fresh air, friendly people. I think I may stick around after all. Besides, I hear you got some good buyers for this shit. They gonna be needin' a dealer now that the fuckin' Carusoes are history.

CLAY

(to Paul)

I could'a told you, there ain't no dealing with the fuckin' Volcs.

Tweeter is feeling cocky, waving his gun around.

TWEETER

Now all I got to do is waste both of you mother...

Seeing his chance, Clay lunges at Tweeter, who fires at him but misses.

Clay knocks Tweeter down and Tweeter's gun slides off the dock and into the water.

Tweeter and Clay struggle. Both landing punches. In the melee, the second gun - in Tweeter's belt - comes loose and falls to the ground. Clay leaps for it, but Tweeter is on top of him and that gun too goes flying into the lake.

As the two gang leaders continue to pummel each other, neither one gaining the upper hand, they don't notice Paul, who has taken the .45 Clay gave him days earlier out from under his jacket.

Paul raises the gun and points it in their direction.

Clay sees him first.

CLAY

Shoot him! Shoot his ass!

Tweeter sees the gun too and lunges at Paul, but Clay tackles him and struggles to hold him back.

CLAY (CONT'D)

(to Paul)

Paul, we're Carusoes, we're brothers. Shoot the motherfucker. Now!

Paul has Tweeter in his sights, but doesn't pull the trigger.

The two gangsters break free of each other and get to their feet.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Shoot him!

Still, Paul does not move, but keeps the gun ready and aimed in front of him.

Tweeter looks at Paul, then charges Clay. For a moment, the two are in a bizarre embrace. They spin, as if dancing, and Tweeter's back is to Paul.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Waste him!

Paul fires and the strange dance ends, both thugs stand where they are, still locked in an embrace.

A large hole has opened in Tweeter's back and blood quickly coats his jacket. He lets go of Clay, and stands there silently for a beat or two before falling to the ground.

PAUL

He shows no expression. He still holds the gun in front of him.

CLAY

His expression is one of confusion. What's happened? He looks down and sees a bullet hole in his own chest.

Slowly, Clay too begins to stagger. He looks at Paul, smiles and takes a step. Then he falls, landing on top of Tweeter. In Clay's back is another large gaping wound - an exit wound - from which blood flows.

The two gangsters, fallen and unmoving in their twisted embrace. Their blood mixing from the still-oozing wounds.

PAUL

Finally, he lowers the gun.

PAUL

Stay the fuck out of my town.

PICK-UP -- MOMENTS LATER

Paul, armed with a large knife, is in the bed of the truck slashing open the bags of cocaine from the duffel bags. It's raining again and the water pounds the roof of the boathouse. Like a crazy man, he stabs again and again, yelling as he vivisects the bags of coke, spreading white powder all over the bed of the truck.

Finally, he jumps out of the bed and into the cab. He starts the truck and pulls out of the boathouse.

OLD BOATHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Outside, the rain is torrential. Paul guns the truck for 50 yards or so, then turns the wheel hard. The truck spins and is pointed at the boathouse. Paul floors it and the truck picks up speed fast.

Paul leaps from the truck moments before it enters the boathouse.

INT. OLD BOATHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The driverless truck flies through the boathouse, sails over the dock and into the ink-black lake waters. It floats for a moment before sinking, leaving behind a thick white slick.

Paul, muddled from his fall, walks to the dock and looks at the white bubbles breaking the surface. A fortune in drugs and an eternity of pain is quickly scattered by the currents. Nearby, together in death, are the bodies of the two gang leaders.

EXT. OLD BOATHOUSE -- NIGHT

Numerous police cars, unmarked cars and news vans are here now. The red lights flash as cops rope off the scene.

INT. OLD BOATHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Two cops are examining the bodies when Fogarty enters.

FOGARTY

What the hell is going on?

COP 1

Looks like our two gang lords. The guys LAPD warned us about.

FOGARTY

They shoot each other?

COP 2

No, it's weird, but it looks like one shot took them both down.

FOGARTY

What?

COP 2

Forty-five caliber, went right through both of them.

COP 1

Yeah. Look how they fell. They must have been facing each other, and pretty close, when it happened.

Fogarty looks at the two bodies and sees that the patrolmen are right.

FOGARTY

What the hell were they doing, Dancing?

INT. MARTY'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

Paul, still muddled, walks into the dimly lit room. Marty is barely visible, nearly swallowed up in the large bed, tangled in tubes and wires of every kind.

His face just visible under the respirator tube, which looks too big for the little boy, Paul bends down and kisses his cheek. He finds his brother's tiny hand and takes it in his own.

PAUL

Marty, I'm so sorry. I am so sorry.

He weeps quietly, saying a silent prayer for his brother.

CU MARTY'S FACE

Even in the dim light and from behind the respirator, Marty's face beams innocence.

BACK TO SCENE

Paul doesn't notice a large shadow in the door. The shadow takes two steps into the room and Del's face comes into view.

Paul looks at the cop, then back at his brother, not saying a word.

Del waits a few beats, then...

DEL

Okay, son. Let's go.

Paul waits another few moments, then kisses his brother's hand and places it gently on the bed. He turns to Del and they make eye contact.

Together, they leave the hospital room.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Paul, handcuffed now, exits with Del and is greeted by a mob of reporters, television cameras, bright lights and microphones.

Reporters SHOUT questions at him while Del pushes his way through the crowd to a waiting patrol car.

He stops for a moment when he sees Haywood. Their eyes meet, then Paul looks at his feet.

He gets in the back seat of the cop car and the door closes.

INT.PATROL CAR -- CONTINUOUS

PAUL'S POV

Reporters push against the door window, still screaming questions.

Behind them, Haywood, still looking at him, compassion in her eyes.

EXT. PATROL CAR -- CONTINUOUS

The car, lights flashing, pulls away.

TELEVISION CREW

NEWSWOMAN

(speaking into camera;
arrogant)

Police confirmed they have arrested one of the key players in Burlington's ongoing gang wars. Sources tell us that 17-year-old Paul Thorton was a loner who kept to himself, had few friends and a long history of drug use and run-ins with the police. Obviously, a very troubled youth with a violent past. We can only guess if his arrest will bring to an end the violence plaguing our community.

A FIST appears, striking the news reporter square in the jaw. The reporter hits the ground.

Haywood is standing over her.

HAYWOOD

Damn reporters. Why don't you try getting the story right just once.

She turns to the shocked cameraman.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Did you get that?

He doesn't answer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - THREE YEARS LATER -- DAY

Paul, his hair cut short and neatly trimmed, is speaking to a classroom of students. Three years have past since the shooting at the lake, but it seems as if Paul has aged even more. He is soft-spoken, but conveys a maturity and confidence we haven't heard before.

PAUL

You may think it's cool, I know I did.
But it's not. Gangs aren't like
cigarettes or drugs or alcohol. You
don't "experiment" with gangs. You
join, and there's no going back. You're
in for life, and I guarantee you, it
will be a very short life.

The bell RINGS and the kids get up to leave, but Paul raises his voice just enough to stop them.

PAUL (CONT'D)

There's one last thing I want to say.
When I joined a gang, I thought I'd be
part of something. I wanted to belong.
I learned the hard way that I didn't
need a gang. I was already part of
something, something very special - my
family. And the gang almost took that
away from me.

(beat)

Thank you.

The class shuffles out.

Paul is joined by Haywood.

HAYWOOD

Excellent job, Paul. I really think
you got through to these kids.

PAUL

I hope so. I would hate to think my
parole is going to waste.

(beat)

By the way, how's my Mom working out?

HAYWOOD

Great. She's a natural-born teacher.

On cue, Paul's mother enters.

HAYWOOD (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil.

Paul gives his mother a hug.

DORIS
Looks like we have a family affair in
the school today.

PAUL
Huh?

DORIS
Look who else stopped by for a visit.

At the door is Marty, eight years old now, but with the same
unforgettable smile. Even the wheelchair he's confined to
doesn't suppress his grin.

PAUL
Hey, big guy!

MARTY
Paul!

The brothers embrace.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Mom, did you tell Paul what I can do?

DORIS
No. I thought you'd like to show him.

Marty nods enthusiastically as his mother fishes two crutches
out from behind his wheelchair. She hands them to Marty, who
carefully braces himself, and stands.

He wobbles a bit and Paul and his mother take a step towards
him, but he steadies himself. Finally, Marty takes several
small steps. He smiles again.

His smile is contagious.

MARTY
Doctor Smith says that pretty soon I
won't need my chair at all. Isn't that
great, Paul?

PAUL
(fighting back his
emotions)
That's great, Marty.

DORIS
How about some lunch, you guys?

MARTY
Hot dogs?

DORIS
Hot dogs it is.

Marty gets back in his wheelchair Paul pushes him to the door.

DORIS (CONT'D)
Will you join us, Cass?

HAYWOOD
(making an excuse)
Thanks, but I have some papers to grade.

Marty, Paul and Doris leave.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL -- MOMENTS LATER

It's a beautiful warm spring day as the family makes their way across the school grounds.

DORIS
It's good to have you back, Paul.

PAUL
It's good to be back.
(beat)
I just hope I can do some good.

DORIS
You will, you will.

As they walk, they don't notice a group of students near a table. Several of the kids move away, exposing a boy, 18, sitting on a bench, his back facing us. He wears a blue baseball cap.

As he turns, the familiar Carusoe rose tattoo is visible on his arm.

He turns some more and we see his face, a face with a large, unmistakable birthmark on his right cheek.

"Wart" Flemming is a senior now, and he's not being beat up by the school bully anymore.

FADE OUT.

"The End"