

ABSTRACT

Walls Can Talk

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Director: Coretta Pittman

Upon learning that a large factory in small-town Ohio is closing, tension between employees develops into violence. Though corporate greed is ultimately to blame, racial and social tensions result in a rage-fueled murder as once-friends struggle to support both their families and their dignity. Divided into three sections, *Walls Can Talk* is a feature length screenplay that focuses on the institutional and social powers that result in systemic poverty and discrimination, from corporate avarice to drug addiction to racial and class-fueled conflict. By portraying characters in a way that both realistically captures the nuance of intersectional communities and avoids the racial conciliation fantasies that dominant contemporary filmmaking, *Walls Can Talk* explores the divisions that define American society in the Trump era and the circumstances that influence individuals on all sides of the sociopolitical spectrum. Additionally, the film offers hope in the lessons learned by its characters about the value of friendship and love amidst the spread of hate.

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WALLS CAN TALK

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By

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FADE IN:

INT. EMPTY FACTORY ROOM - DAY

A single, flickering industrial light hangs from the ceiling of a musty, abandoned factory room.

SUPER (AS IF BEING TYPED ON A TYPEWRITER): On December 23rd, 2008, Watts Manufacturing of Higgs, Ohio announced that it would be outsourcing its labor to Mexico.

EXT. ROTTING MOBILE HOME - DAY

An old, abandoned mobile home sits in a small wooded alcove covered with spots of snow. The yard is littered with a few turned over lawn chairs, a deflated basketball, and a broken toy airplane.

The remnants of a tire swing hang from a tree in the foreground. The tire itself rests a few yards away on the dirt lawn.

SUPER (AS IF BEING TYPED ON A TYPEWRITER): Almost all of its employees were let go with little to no severance.

EXT. VAST SNOWY FIELD - DAY

Snow flutters to the ground, coating the dry brown dirt of the fields with a thin layer of white. A bent barbed wire fence separates the field from the adjacent road.

SUPER (AS IF BEING TYPED ON A TYPEWRITER): This is their story.

INT. OLD BLACK CAR - DAY

Through the cracked driver's side window of a cluttered old station wagon, a large African American man in his early thirties can be seen beating something on the ground with his fist.

He stands shocked in the crowded parking lot of a gas station for a moment as red and blue lights flicker on his face with increasing intensity.

He briefly turns his gaze from the ground to the car window, his eyes flooded with anger and fear.

TITLE OVER: WALLS CAN TALK

TITLE FADES TO:

I. WALLS

(July 2008)

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

HAZEL, a blond woman in her late-twenties with a calm, confident demeanor, smokes a cigarette as she sits on the edge of a bed with a messy red and gold comforter.

She dons a worn, off-white crop top and thick red lipstick, which leaves red stains on the end of her cigarette as it touches her lips.

She looks blankly through an open bedroom door at STEVIE, an angsty thirteen year old boy with a thin build and oversized clothes.

His hair is unkempt, and his teeth yellowed.

He sits at the end of a table in the kitchen with a microwave dinner, staring mindlessly at his plate while turning over a pile of mashed potatoes with his fork.

Both sweat from the heat as a rotating fan manages to cool everything but them.

STEVIE

Are you fucking my Dad?

Hazel chuckles before taking a drag of her cigarette.

HAZEL

I think your Dad might be fucking me.

Stevie looks toward Hazel in the bedroom with subtle dissatisfaction.

STEVIE

Isn't that the point?

HAZEL

How old are you?

STEVIE

Older than I look.

HAZEL

Well older than I look, your Dad -

Hazel gestures to her right. Stevie looks out the screen window in the kitchen to see CAIN, his father.

Cain is gritty and unshaven, a mid-thirties product of a few too many twelve hour shifts. His hair and eyes are a tired, hollow brown, and the lankiness of his frame is exaggerated by his navy blue work button-up his wiry build.

He throws rocks at a flock of pigeons in the yard between spits of tobacco into a Pepsi bottle, as if warding off an invading army.

He has lived in Higgs his whole life.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Cain counts his orgasms like his pennies.

She takes another drag of her cigarette.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Ain't sure he feels any of em.

Stevie looks back at his food.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE - DUSK

A dirty hand fumbles a pile of change onto the store's counter.

Behind the counter is BALDIE, a thin, comic, mid-twenties white man and employee at the blue-collar frequented drinking spot.

He is covered in bad tattoos, he is often high, and, as might be expected, he is bald.

He strums an old guitar and sits in a lawn chair with only half a back.

BALDIE

Got enough there chief?

The man counting his change is Cain, who is joined by his pet pit bull Polly.

He wears a blue work uniform.

CAIN
(sighing)
Hey Baldie.

Baldie grabs a couple of drinks from an open cooler and a pack of cigarettes from a shelf behind the counter.

BALDIE
You know the government loads those up with all kind of chemicals, right? Tryin' to control the minds and such. Might as well hand 'em your social security number too while you're at it.

Cain takes the merchandise from the counter.

CAIN
Ain't the government already got my social security number?

Baldie scratches his head for a moment as Cain backs away from the counter.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Later Baldie.

BALDIE
(loudly)
Hey, I still got a few more of those half-price gift cards back here if you want one! 100% authentic!

Cain waves without turning around as he exits the store.

Baldie slumps back into his seat and flips a book of gift cards (probably used) onto the counter.

He continues to strum his guitar.

BALDIE (CONT'D)
(singing)
I'd smoked my mind the night before, with cigarettes and the songs I'd been singing. But I lit my first and watched a small kid, playing with a can that he was kicking.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - NIGHT

Cain sits alongside CRICKET, WILLIE, JAIRUS, and BEANIE, four of his co-workers at Watts Manufacturing, inside a small shed set up outside the general store. They are all in their work uniforms.

The shed is lit by a couple of gas lanterns hanging from the ceiling and a makeshift fire pit in the center of the dirt floor.

The group sits on logs around the fire.

Hazel's brother Willie, a short but well-built veteran in his mid 30's with a thick beard, puts a cigarette butt out near the knee of his canvas pants. The light of the fire illuminates a snake tattoo on his forearm.

WILLIE

Cain, you still fuckin' that blond bitch?

Cain takes a drag of his cigarette.

CAIN

Willie, you keep talkin' about your own goddamn sister like that I'mma kick your ass.

Willie laughs as he flicks the butt into the fire.

Baldie's fraternal twin brother Cricket, a wiry white man in his late 20's with a thin face and a thick drawl, is putting in a lip-full of dip as he talks. He is always cracking jokes.

CRICKET

(to Cain)

Cain, you keep your talking all you want, Willie'd have you down in a second.

He spits a wad into an empty beer bottle.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

Matter fact, fuck kind of a name is Cain anyway? Your mom knew who Cain was right? I think you're on the wrong side of this story bud. I mean damn, what's your brother's name? Judas?

Cricket is cracking himself up.

CRICKET (CONT'D)
Pontius Pilate? Benedict Arnold?

Willie looks at Cricket, unconvinced.

WILLIE
Cricket, I bet you don't even know
how to spell Pontius Pilate.

CRICKET
Maybe not, but at least I got the
common sense not to name my kid
John Wayne Gacey or some shit.

Beanie, a white woman in her mid 40's, takes some dip from
Cricket's tin. She has worked at the factory since she
graduated high school.

BEANIE
And sweetheart, it's a good thing
no chick with her head screwed on
straight would ever give you the
chance.

CRICKET
Shit, with the money I'll be
gettin' from this promotion, I'll
have every soccer mommy in 100
miles with their tongue hangin'
out.

The group collectively winces as Cricket makes a crude
gesture.

CAIN
And you can have us all over to
your lake house while you're at it,
and show us your wine cellar.

Jairus, the man from the parking lot, drinks a beer as he
stares into the fire, his eyes absent from the conversation.

He has a number of tattoos and a booming voice.

Though he is imposing in appearance, he is jovial and gentle,
and he is known as one of the kindest guys around.

JAIRUS
I tell you what, if Cricket the one
ends up in management after all
this, I'll quit right now.
(MORE)

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

You mean to tell me we ain't got no benefits, ain't got no healthcare, ain't got no vacation, and this sorry ass is getting a promotion.

CRICKET

Hey, don't count me out fellas. Once I get Wilson in the sack, ain't no telling what kind of money she'll throw at me.

JAIRUS

The only thing anyone's throwing at you is a severance package.

BEANIE

And maybe a couple harassment charges.

The group laughs collectively.

WILLIE

Honestly, if management keeps up like this, the only one without a severance package is gonna be Polly.

Polly whimpers as the group's mood becomes increasingly somber.

Cain puts his cigarette out in an ash tray to his right.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING FACTORY BREAK ROOM - DAY

Through a greasy window, we see the employees of Watts Manufacturing gathered on the factory floor.

A large manufacturer of machine presses and other metalworking equipment, Watts neither produces an end nor serves as an end in itself - it is a true cog in the system.

The employees on the floor are about half African American and half white. A small number of Hispanics pepper the remainder of the crowd.

They all wear navy blue work uniforms with the Watts insignia embroidered on the chest pocket. Many of the uniforms are tattered due to overuse.

They stand around a raised scissor lift in the center of the factory floor, on which stands two of their supervising managers.

The fluorescent factory lights overhead cast a sterile glow over the old, outdated machinery in the room.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Cain stands next to Cricket while Jairus stands a few rows ahead with some of the other black employees. Cain and Jairus each have orange name badges labeled "LINE MANAGER," while the other workers' badges are blue.

The crowd waits somewhat impatiently as the managers finish giving their morning run-through.

WILSON, a cold-faced and broad-shouldered white woman in her mid-forties, looks over a clip board as she speaks loudly to the crowd.

WILSON

And finally, it's come to the attention of management that uncertainty surrounding the future of Watts has caused some unrest. While it's no secret that we've been forced to make some cuts and change some of your shifts, the only threat to your jobs is, as usual, poor performance.

RUSS, an equally intimidating black man with a square chin and arresting yellow-brown eyes, is not so sparing.

He speaks with uncomfortable formality, as if attempting to compensate for the expectations placed on a black man in management.

RUSS

That being said, any form of organized revolt will be met with the harshest of consequences. Thank you all.

LATER

Cain stands next to Cricket in front of a large machine. It rumbles and steams as it presses new parts out of steel, making a loud grinding sound in the process.

As Cain monitors the machine at its control station, Cricket leans on it and spits dip into a plastic water bottle. Both wear protective headphones.

CRICKET

(shouting)

So me and Cynthia were watching the Browns game on cable TV a few nights ago -

Cain turns to Cricket, clearly having missed his comment.

CAIN

What was that?

Cricket continues without clarification.

CRICKET

And the darn signal kept cutting out on us. So I go outside to look at the antenna, and what do you know it, but a damn coon crawled up on the roof and gnawed the wire up.

CAIN

What?

CRICKET

So I puts out a trap for 'im, and when I went and checked it the next day, the coon's just sitting next to it and reachin' in for the food through the side!

The machine powers down, and the loud sound subsides. Cain removes his headphones.

CAIN

What the hell you sayin' man?

Cricket's headphones remain on. He repeats himself with animated hand gestures.

CRICKET

(still shouting)

Yeah, I said the darn thing was just reaching in through the side!

EXT. ROADSIDE WOODS - DAY

Stevie kicks a can as he hikes through the woods near Watts Manufacturing with Jairus's ten year old son DRE.

They are killing time while they wait for their dads to get off work.

Dre, or D for short, is quiet and unsure of himself. A blank canvas.

Each clothed in plain tank tops and oversized basketball shoes, they climb down slabs of graffitied concrete toward the runoff creek that runs along the road.

DRE
Hey Stevie -

Stevie turns to address Dre behind him.

DRE (CONT'D)
What does this mean?

Dre points out a word on the concrete:

CUNT.

STEVIE
That's what you call your girl when
she ain't listening, I think.

Dre drags his finger across the graffiti.

EXT. RUNOFF CREEK - DAY

The boys wrestle in the creek, splashing as they attempt to drag one another into the brown water.

Aside from their briefs, their clothes sit on a concrete slab on the shore.

Due to his small frame, Dre has a difficult time pushing Stevie into the water, but he eventually manages to down him by diving backwards into the water with Stevie on his back.

Dre comes up from the water laughing, but soon realizes that Stevie has not surfaced.

DRE
Stevie!

Nothing. The water is still.

DRE (CONT'D)
Stevie!

Suddenly, Stevie surfaces just behind Dre and wraps his hands around his back.

STEVIE
Watch your back!

The boys laugh and continue to wrestle.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Cain helps DARIUS, another employee at Watts, push a large steel slab across the room on a dolly. They move the slab underneath a large chain lift, which is operated by Cricket.

Cain shouts to Willie from across the room.

CAIN
Hey Will, you mind giving us a hand
with the lift?

Willie runs over, removing an old pair of earbuds.

WILLIE
What's that?

CAIN
Could you go tighten up the chain
while we lift this slab?

WILLIE
For sure.

DARIUS
And Willie, don't forget to keep
your eye on that switch once you
tighten it up, it lets up on its
own sometimes if you ain't careful.

Willie turns without responding, but gives an affirmative gesture with his hand.

Willie flicks a switch on the control panel, and the sound of the chain tightening can be heard from the lift.

CRICKET (O.S.)
Alright, we're liftin' her up.
Lookin' good from down there Cain?

CAIN (O.S.)
Sure does.

Willie pulls his hand from the switch, putting his headphones back in and scrolling through songs on his mp3 player. The switch remains in the tightened position for a few seconds, before it falls to the slack position.

CRASH

WE HOLD on the switch as Cain screams from off screen.

EXT. RUNOFF CREEK SHORE - DAY

The boys sit on a muddy slab of concrete next to the creek. Their shorts and shoes are back on, but their shirts remain on the ground next to them.

Stevie eats a candy bar as they sit.

STEVIE

Hey, you wanna see something?

Dre turns toward Stevie, who pulls a silver dollar from his pocket. He flicks it to Dre.

DRE

Where'd you get it?

STEVIE

Took it from that pawn shop next to the gas station. You know, across the street from Benson's?

Dre turns the coin over in his hand.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

You can have it if you want.

Dre smiles and tucks the coin in his pocket. Just as he starts to thank Stevie, he is interrupted.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Check it out.

A long black snake slithers toward the boys through the ditch.

Though Stevie becomes apprehensive toward the snake, Dre hops down the concrete slab toward it.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Hey lil D, what you doing?

Dre reaches his hand toward the snake, which disregards his presence. Dre's finger drags along the snake's spine as it slithers by.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

You ain't think it was gonna bite you?

Dre continues to look at the snake as it disappears into the brush.

DRE
Why would it?

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DUSK (LATER)

Stevie tosses pebbles on the ground while he waits next to Cain's old brown Ford truck.

He hears yelling coming from the factory doors, and turns to see Cain shoving Willie with his left arm. His right arm hangs limp at his side.

CAIN
(shouting)
You could've gotten us both killed!

WILLIE
It's that damn machine could've
gotten us both killed! How am I
supposed to do my job with shit
that ain't even up to code!

Jairus rushes up behind the men to intervene.

JAIRUS
Hey C, get on home. Come on man.
Not worth it.

Cain spits in Willie's direction as Jairus holds him back.

Finally, Cain turns away and walks toward the truck.

CAIN
(to Stevie)
Get on in the truck!

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

There is a palpable tension in the air as Stevie and Cain ride home from the factory.

Cain drives with his left hand while his right arm rests tenderly on the seat. His facial expression indicates the suppression of pain.

STEVIE
(hesitantly)
Are you...okay?

Cain stares ahead, expressionless.

CAIN

I think I'm gonna go by the store
for a bit. Get a couple of drinks.
You gon' be fine at home?

STEVIE

I guess.

Stevie hesitates for a moment before deciding to ask again.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

You get yourself hurt?

CAIN

Just a couple guys ain't know how
to do their fuckin' jobs. You want
me to pick up a pizza, or
somethin'?

STEVIE

Nah, I'm fine.

EXT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Cain's truck pulls out of the dirt lot to reveal Stevie standing in its place.

He trudges toward the mobile home lazily, opening the door and walking immediately to the tattered tweed couch in the foyer.

He tosses his shirt to the floor as a black cat jumps up on his lap.

He pets it gently, as if protecting it from a danger that doesn't exist.

STEVIE

Hey bud.

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Cain drives with a painful expression on his face, the dim street lamps from outside faintly illuminating the beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

He fumbles for a small piece of notebook paper that had been folded up in his wallet.

It reads:

HR - (783) 837 - 3827

He types the number in on his flip phone and sets the phone on his dash.

The dial tone can be heard over the speakerphone.

The soft, grizzled voice of RICK, Beanie's husband and the HR rep at Watts, answers the call.

RICK (V.O.)
This is Rick.

CAIN
Hey Rick, this is, uh, Cain, I just
was wonderin'...

Cain hesitates for a moment.

RICK (V.O.)
Hey Cain, you get that arm looked
at? Beanie was tellin' me over
dinner you took a nasty fall.

CAIN
Well that's actually what I was
calling about. You think Watt's
would process an injury report?

RICK (V.O.)
Look, legally they'd have to
process it, but I'd say to try not
to if you want to keep your ass
working. Honestly, we're barely
payin' the employees we got, the
last thing management want to hear
about is a work injury. How bad is
it?

CAIN
I just ain't got insurance on it,
and -

RICK
You can file if you want. But I'm
telling you, if it were me, I'd try
and keep it under wraps. This
company ain't rushing to pay
someone who can't work.

Cain looks lifelessly at the road.

RICK (CONT'D)
Well, I hope you get it figured out
bud. Let me know what you need.

The phone beeps as Rick hangs up.

Cain looks angrily at the phone on the dash.

EXT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Cain fumbles out of his truck and anxiously searches the bed.

He pulls a used paint stick from a black tool bag.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Baldie sits behind the counter of the general store. He is giving himself a stick and poke tattoo and listening to music through an old pair of earbuds.

Cain walks through the door of the store, clearly anxious. He is sweating profusely.

Baldie remains oblivious to his presence as "Candyman" by The Grateful Dead rings in his ears.

He looks up to see a frantic Cain yelling in his direction.

BALDIE
Sorry chief, I didn't see you
there. You need -

CAIN
Can you get me a bottle of gin?

BALDIE
You ain't usually much a drinker,
right Cain?

CAIN
Well, I am tonight.

Cain looks at Baldie's tattoo as Baldie reaches for the liquor.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Baldie...the hell is that?

BALDIE
It's a corn cob. Second most
lucrative cash crop in the state of
Ohio, you know.

Cain takes the bottle from Baldie and walks toward the back of the store.

CAIN
Do yourself a favor and don't
finish that.

Baldie removes an earbud.

BALDIE
What's that?

He looks around for a moment, but seeing that Cain is gone, he gets back to work on his tattoo.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cain opens the bottle of gin and takes a swig before removing his jacket and work uniform.

He pulls a pocket knife from his jeans and cuts around the arm of his long-sleeved white undershirt.

The sleeve falls away, revealing a clear break in the bone of his right forearm.

CAIN
(exasperated)
Shit.

He looks over to the wall, and then back to his arm.

He holds his arm up against the wall for a moment before throwing his body against it to set the bone.

He lets out a loud moan due to the pain of the impact.

Now wincing in pain, Cain looks down to see that the bone has yet to set.

He puts his arm back against the wall, and prepares to try again.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Baldie continues to work on his tattoo with extreme care. He is entirely oblivious to the noises being made in the bathroom.

"Candyman" continues to blare in his ears.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE BATHROOM

With increased force, Cain throws himself into the wall, resulting in a noticeable pop. The bone is set.

Still wincing in pain, Cain takes the paint stick from his back pocket and uses his torn sleeve to tie it to his arm.

He leans his left hand on the sink in momentary relief, and takes another swig of the gin before looking up at himself in the mirror. His face is beaded with sweat.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE

Cain walks through the store toward the exit. He passes Baldie without a word. Though Baldie is still engrossed in his tattoo, he notices Cain in the corner of his eye and shouts over his music.

BALDIE

Later Cain!

EXT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Stevie rides his skateboard on the small patch of concrete that constitutes his driveway.

The driveway is only partially illuminated by the street light overhead, giving Stevie a stage to cut through the honey-thick summer night air on his board.

He listens to static-filled punk music through a worn pair of earbuds as he rides.

He attempts to land a kick-flip, but falls with a thud.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - NIGHT

Fireflies appear sporadically over an otherwise dimly lit stretch of road.

Cain's brown truck pulls into view, and WE FOLLOW from behind as it swerves subtly down the road. Its right taillight is broken, but the red light from its left taillight illuminates the road beneath.

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

A box of pizza sits on the torn vinyl passenger seat.

EXT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Cain's truck pulls into the dirt lot.

Stevie steps off his board and kicks it into his hand, looking at Cain from across the yard before turning his attention back to his mp3 player.

Cain stumbles out of the truck, dropping the pizza on the ground in the process.

Stevie jogs over to help him up, dropping his skateboard in the process and removing his earbuds.

He extends an arm to Cain, who waves him aside.

STEVIE

You good?

Cain picks up the pizza and gets up on his own. He walks quickly toward the house, leaving Stevie alone in the yard once again.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

Dad!

Cain turns just before he reaches the stairs to the door.

CAIN

(angrily)

You ain't need to be worrying about me! You hear me? That ain't your fuckin' job.

Cain stands silently for a beat, the sweat beads on his face intensifying the already frantic look in his eyes.

CAIN (CONT'D)

Come eat some food.

Cain turns and enters the house, closing the door lazily behind him. Rather than clicking shut, it bounces off the door frame and sways back and forth in the wind.

Lacking the motivation to chase him inside, Stevie sits down on his skateboard and looks up at the sky with a sigh.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Cain sets the pizza on the counter before walking out of view.

The black cat creeps toward the pizza, jumping from the kitchen table to the pizza box on the counter.

It claws at the open box.

INT. CAIN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cain frantically opens drawers in his bathroom, fumbling through empty pill bottles before finding a bottle of ibuprofen in the cabinet behind the mirror.

He struggles to open the child-proof lid, getting increasingly agitated before finally getting it off.

He looks into the bottle to find it...

Empty.

Cain yells as he throws the bottle on the floor.

CAIN (O.S.)

Fuck!

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

The cat continues to claw at the box, picking at it insistently before moving closer to the pizza itself.

It paws at a pepperoni before starting to eat at the pizza from the middle out.

The sink can be heard in the bathroom.

The cat continues to eat.

Cain comes out of the room to see the cat on top of the pizza. His eyes fill with rage.

EXT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Stevie continues to look up at the sky.

In a disruptive crash, the cat flies through one of the mobile home's glass windows.

Stevie sits up in shock, looking at the cat from across the lot.

A few drops of blood drip from its gash-filled body onto the dirt.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. JAIRUS'S APARTMENT MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Blue light peeks through the yellow blinds covering the window adjacent to Jairus's bed.

An old brown alarm clock sits on the bedside table, along with a bible. It reads:

5:45 A.M.

INT. JAIRUS'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

Jairus looks into the musty, blotted mirror over his sink as he buttons his work uniform.

The bathroom is yellowed and outdated, and a constant drip can be heard from the shower. The only light comes from the open door to the bedroom.

INT. JAIRUS'S APARTMENT DRE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jairus walks into Dre's dark bedroom to find him asleep, his stained white sheets wrapped around his torso like a sleeping bag.

The room is bare, with only a few toys scattered across the floor.

A fan spins in the corner of the room as a makeshift air conditioner.

Jairus sits down on the bed and sets a hand on Dre.

JAIRUS
You gon' get up this morning little
man?

Dre rolls over on his side.

The coin given to Dre by Stevie sits on the bedside table.

FADE TO:

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - MORNING

Dre toys with the coin as he rides in the passenger's seat of Jairus's car. The sun peaks over the horizon, illuminating the trees on the side of the road in a faint orange light.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MORNING

The car pulls into the driveway of an old house. The windows of the house are boarded up, and the lawn is patchy. The paint on the house is an oppressive shade of white.

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - MORNING

Jairus turns to address Dre, who is still distracted by his coin.

JAIRUS
I'm gon' run inside, okay? Sit
tight.

No answer.

Jairus grabs a brown paper bag from the back seat, the top of which is rolled up.

Jairus gets out of the car and walks toward the house, which we see through the cracked driver's side window.

He pulls one of the boards off of the window nearest to the door, and climbs inside.

Dre watches for a moment before turning his attention back to the coin.

INT. OLD WHITE HOUSE - MORNING

Jairus enters into a bare living room. The wood flooring is splintered and peeling, with the occasional nail jutting up from a loose board.

A ladder sits in the corner of the room, with a few scattered tools on the ground beside it.

Jairus trudges down the dimly lit hallway extending from the living room, his steps creaking as the floor gives way to his large frame.

The sound of a television can be heard from the nearest room, and faint lights flicker from the open doorway down the hall.

Jairus enters the room to reveal...

DOROTHY, a 70 year old black woman and Jairus's mother, who sits in a tattered green armchair.

She is large like Jairus, and sports thick black curls and even thicker glasses.

She is covered in an old Mexican blanket despite the hot temperature of the room, which is cooled only by a sputtering window unit.

The tone of the room starkly contrasts that of the bare living room, as Dorothy's presence adds life and warmth to an otherwise mundane room, which is decorated by only a few still-life paintings and lit by a lamp in the corner.

DOROTHY

Son I swear to God if you keep climbing through that window one of these days I'mma call the cops on your ass. And lord knows they're the last people I'm tryin' to call around here.

JAIRUS

Forgot my key.

DOROTHY

Hell there ain't a week you ain't forgot your key, I'm starting to wonder why you even got a key made in the first place.

Jairus sits on a flimsy table-chair next to Dorothy and opens the contents of the brown paper bag.

He pulls out a prescription pill bottle. It's Dorothy's medication.

JAIRUS

You been good ma?

He takes a pill out of the bottle and offers it to Dorothy, who swallows it down with a gulp of Pepsi.

DOROTHY

Oh, you know I been fine. Real question is how you been doin' over there...seems like they really doin' a number on the employees.

JAIRUS

Well, they aren't doin' us any favors. Cain got himself hurt pretty bad yesterday, faulty equipment.

DOROTHY

And they ain't gonna do you no favors anytime soon neither, understand?

Dorothy takes another drink of soda.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Gotta take what the big man gives ya.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING PAY WINDOW - DAY

Jairus and Cain stand in a long line of Watts employees waiting to get their paychecks. The grey concrete walls lead to the pay window like rail tracks, funneling workers one-by-one down the despotic corridor.

Cain struggles to remove an orange vest from over his uniform, working tenderly around his right arm.

JAIRUS

You know someone's gonna notice that, right?

CAIN

Ain't nothin' I can do different.

Jairus laughs.

JAIRUS

Look, I ain't saying you gotta report nothin'. But you gotta do something. That arms gonna get you in some trouble.

Willie, standing behind them, inserts himself into the conversation.

He looks nervously around the room.

WILLIE

(whispering)

Fuck man, the way I see it, they're gonna keep treating us like shit regardless. Injury, no injury.

(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)

What you really ought to do is march your ass upstairs and file a claim - it was their faulty machinery that caused this shit in the first place.

Jairus and Cain look apprehensively at Willie.

CAIN

If they ain't give a shit about me yesterday, I don't think a claim'll change their mind today.

WILLIE

Maybe not. But they're fooling themselves if they think they really have the power here. They ain't got shit without us. What we really ought to do is organize.

JAIRUS

(laughing)

Shit man, this exactly the kind of talk gonna get us in trouble.

Willie looks ahead bluntly, refusing to make eye contact with Jairus.

WILLIE

(aside)

Sometimes I think a little trouble's what we need around here.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

Stevie and Dre sit on parking blocks outside, tossing rocks with a group of other boys with parents at the factory.

Dre continues to finger the coin.

Among them are DOMO, a thin, ratty ten year old boy with greasy brown hair and brown eyes, J.D., a twelve year old natural leader with an overconfident grin and cold stare, and KORINE, a large fourteen year old with empty eyes.

All are white.

They are dressed mostly in torn or second hand clothing. Korine fingers a pocket knife while they chat.

KORINE

No really, I swear to God, me and my cousin lined em' up, frog by frog, and I nailed every single one in the ground.

Korine gestures as if throwing his knife at something.

KORINE (CONT'D)

Got em right in the skull.

DOMO

Bull shit you done that, ain't no way you could hit somethin' that small.

Korine once again gestures with his knife, this time in Domo's direction.

KORINE

Well why don't you give me a shot at that tiny dick of yours and I'll prove it to ya.

The boys laugh unconfidently.

J.D.

(to Dre)

What's your bald ass laughing at little man? Tryna' play like you any better?

Dre retreats into himself, looking away from the group toward the ground. He mumbles something inaudibly.

DOMO

What was that?

DRE

Nothin.

The group turns its collective attention to Dre.

KORINE

What's that stupid thing you been playing with anyway? Huh?

Dre tucks the coin in the loose pocket of his mesh shorts.

Korine lunges at Dre intensely, prompting Dre to fall backwards over the parking block.

STEVIE

Come on K, go easy on the kid.

KORINE
And what's it to you, huh? You his
little buddy now?

Korine spits at the pavement.

KORINE (CONT'D)
Nah, I'm just playin'. I wasn't
gonna hurt the little nigger.

Korine turns and begins to walk away from Dre, just before
Dre stands and shoves him in the back.

Dre has an enraged expression on his face.

KORINE (CONT'D)
Okay then.

Korine levels Dre with a swift right hook to the face.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING PAY WINDOW - DAY

Willie takes his check from beneath the glass dividing the
employees from the office.

WE FOLLOW from behind as he walks through a door to his right
and down another grey hallway. Windows line the walls,
revealing the inner-workings of the factory:

Assembly lines. Machines. Smoke. Laborers.

Eventually Willie comes to the dressing room at the end of
the hallway, walking up to locker 101 and opening it up.

Willie takes off his shirt and hangs it in his locker,
revealing a back full of tattoos.

FADE TO:

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

Korine sits on his knees above Dre, who he has pinned to the
ground. The other boys stand around Korine, watching him like
a television screen.

Stevie stands off to the side by himself.

STEVIE
Come on guys, why don't you lay off
the kid?

Korine turns to Stevie with an accusatory expression.

KORINE

And what's your problem, huh?

Stevie tries to play his cool.

STEVIE

No problems. Just think he's got enough for the day.

J.D.

You know what I think?

Stevie looks dryly at J.D.

J.D. (CONT'D)

I think since you want him off the hook so bad, you should give him the last punch.

Stevie looks at Dre, who wears a hardened expression. His eyes expect the worst.

STEVIE

Nah, man.

KORINE

Cm' on bro. Thought you didn't have no problems.

Stevie walks up to Dre and grabs him by the collar.

He looks into Dre's eyes with fear, his own trembling for a moment before he pulls himself together.

Dre's face remains hardened.

With as much force as he can muster, Stevie drives his fist into Dre's nose.

Dre falls into a puddle in the parking lot, the blood from his nose spreading through the dirty water like oil.

The blood flows across the pavement steadily, following a thin stream toward Dre's coin.

FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY POND - DAY

A small pond is nestled peacefully in a wooded alcove. The morning sun beats down with an unrelenting intensity, causing steam to rise from the pond's surface. The water is still, and the pond is lined with cat-tails and weeds.

A turtle rises from the water, its head poking up from the depths for air. Its shell is green and detailed with orange speckles.

BANG.

The turtle's head is blown away, and its shell cracked into various pieces.

The remains float on the surface of the pond just as peacefully as before. Steam rises from the holes in the shell.

Cain and Stevie sit on the unfolded tailgate of Cain's truck, which is parked on the grass next to the pond, shotguns in hand.

Cain sets down his gun before using his left hand to sip from a can of beer in a koozie that reads "CHEVY SUCKS ASS."

Stevie puts the butt of his gun against his shoulder, aiming carefully, before taking a shot of his own. The bullet splashes into the water.

CAIN

Get him?

Stevie looks carefully through the smoke.

STEVIE

Can't tell.

Cain aims his gun at the pond before ripping off a first, then a second, then a third shot.

CAIN

Oughta do it.

Cain takes another sip of beer.

LATER

Stevie stands on the bank of the pond, scooping a dead turtle out of the water with a net at the end of a long wooden pole.

Polly aggressively barks at her own reflection in the water.

Cain whistles from the truck, and the truck's loud engine roars to a start.

Polly runs to the truck and jumps in through the driver's side door.

LATER

A disfigured turtle, still barely alive, thumps into the truck bed as it falls from the net onto a bed of algae and blood.

There are ten other corpses in the bed, their colorfully dismembered shells creating a mosaic against the dented aluminum canvas.

Stevie watches as the turtle scrapes at the bed with its nose, trying desperately to escape despite its cracked shell.

He yells toward the cabin to get Cain's attention.

STEVIE

This one still alive.

Cain's voice is muffled, but it manages to ring through the half-open driver's side window.

CAIN

So kill it.

Stevie stares at the turtle, unable to act.

WE HOLD on Stevie as the truck door opens and slams closed.

Cain walks into view, pulling a Bowie knife from the worn leather sheath on his hip.

Cringing slightly in pain, he uses his right arm to pull the turtle onto the tailgate.

It's legs flail and scrape against the truck.

CAIN (CONT'D)

Look here son. Sometimes -

Cain uses the knife to saw off the turtle's head.

CAIN (CONT'D)

You gotta kill a thing, 'cause
that's its place in the world.
Ain't gotta be happy, ain't gotta
be sad. Just the way it works.

Cain wipes the blood from his knife with his hand and flicks it onto the grass.

CAIN (CONT'D)

The only thing winnin' the food
chain is the thing on top.

He tosses the shell into the truck bed with the others before walking back to the cabin of the truck.

CAIN (CONT'D)
(walking away)
But ain't nothing ever deserve to
suffer.

Stevie looks numbly at the pile of turtles before closing the tailgate.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - NIGHT

A large, rusty pot boils over the fire pit in the middle of the shed. Jairus and Cricket sit on stumps around the pit as they warm their hands over the fire.

WE PAN across the room to a wooden picnic table, around which sits Willie, Cain, Stevie, Beanie, and Beanie's friend DARLENE, who are sharing in some drinks. Willie has clearly had a few too many.

A dirty white bucket filled with broken shells and turtle parts sits on the ground next to the table.

Baldie smokes a cigarette as he leans on the wall next to the creaky shed door.

BEANIE
God Cain, been some time since you
brought Stevie down here. Last time
I remember he was about this tall.

Stevie laughs awkwardly.

Darlene is in her mid to late 60's, and she is definitely too old for the far-too-revealing crop top that she is wearing.

She speaks with a raspy smoker's voice and a fading Chicago accent, and wears lipstick in the deepest shade of red.

DARLENE
(to Stevie)
You ought to be in the Macy's
catalogue, model underwear or
somethin'. You ever look in the
Macy's catalogue?

Stevie doesn't say anything.

Cain nudges him in the shoulder.

STEVIE

No.

BEANIE

Jesus Christ Darlene, the boy's thirteen.

DARLENE

What difference does that make to me, I'm not getting any younger! All I'm saying is I've been a cougar before, I'd be happy to do it again.

Darlene drunkenly winks at Stevie.

Cricket chuckles.

CRICKET

Hear that Stevie?

He cups his hand to his ear.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

That's the sound of all seven Darlene's ex-husbands runnin' over here to kick your ass!

Stevie could not look or feel more awkward.

DARLENE

That's actually the sound of all EIGHT of my ex-husbands runnin' over here after the smell of that soup!

Darlene stands and walks slowly over to the boiling pot, grabbing a bowl from the stump next to Jairus and ladling in a serving.

BALDIE

You know, in India they got this folk story that the earth is held up on the backs of four elephants, and the elephants are all standing on the backs of one big turtle.

Baldie illustrates his tale by delicately stacking rocks on top of one another in his hand.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

So maybe these here turtles are all just incarnations of the one transcendent turtle, whose one and only ambition in life is to give itself so that we...

Baldie tries to stack a final pebble onto his statue, only to knock the entire structure to the ground.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

Can live.

Everyone in the shed wears the same blank, incredulous expression, sitting silently until...

HAHAHAHA

Jairus doubles over in laughter.

JAIRUS

Baldie, that is the dumbest ass thing you've ever said. I guarantee you, nobody in here got the faintest idea what in the shit you talkin' about my man. Whooo. God damn.

CAIN

And I'll tell ya Baldie -

Cain spits dip into an empty water bottle.

CAIN (CONT'D)

Those turtles were gonna be sittin' in the bed of my truck whether they planned to or not. Ain't no martyr that didn't have a choice in the matter.

Willie lifts his hand drunkenly from the picnic table, reaching for an idea before deciding to speak.

WILLIE

You know why I hate turtles?

The attention of the room shifts to Willie, who stutters over a few words.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Ain't no turtle I've ever seen give a damn about nothin'.

Willie's gestures become more animated as a fire lights in his eyes.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

No... not turtles. The fuckin' cowards. Perfectly happy doin' nothin' all day. Sit holed up in their shells cuz they know they ain't got power outside 'em.

Willie knocks over a half empty bottle of beer before pointing a finger aggressively at Baldie.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

And I'll tell you why too. 'Cause every time they try and come out of that shell, there's a dozen hawks around waitin' to claw their fuckin' eyes out. Bull shit, man.

Beanie laughs.

BEANIE

You have some turtle issues growin' up, bud?

Willie sits back in his seat, speaking in a quieter and more sober tone as he looks down at his bowl of soup.

WILLIE

I'm just sick of bein' the one on the bottom, man. These goddamn company plants don't want to leave their offices any more than we want to get paid. They know they ain't got no power we ain't give 'em. We just gotta grow some fuckin' claws for a change.

Everyone except Jairus looks straight down at their bowls.

JAIRUS

Look Will, they might be management but we all a team here -

WILLIE

You really still believe that? What the hell else those niggers feedin' you?

Jairus stands up from his seat and approaches Willie aggressively.

JAIRUS

The fuck you say to me?

Willie remains seated. He takes a sip of his soup.

Jairus knocks the soup out of his hand onto the floor.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

(yelling)

I might be black. But I ain't no
nigger. Especially not to you. We
out here scrapin' the bottom of the
same goddamn bowl.

Willie's confidence quickly fades from his face as Jairus's
daunting figure looms over him.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Look.

Jairus puts a finger down on the table in front of Willie and
looks him straight in the eye.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

I ain't opposed to startin' a
union. In fact, I'm for it. I'm
just as sick of these bosses
walkin' around with they pockets
stuffed as you are.

Willie takes a step back from the table.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

But we ain't got to villainize each
other to get there. The world ain't
all in black and white.

Jairus grabs his beer from the stump and walks to the
doorway, before turning and addressing Willie one last time.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

And whether you like it or not,
this ain't your world anymore.
Y'all ain't gettin' shit done
alone. You know that.

Jairus walks out of the shed.

Willie looks down at his soup on the ground, his eyes
reflecting the fire from the pit.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The faint sounds of moans and a squeaky mattress can be heard reverberating through the walls of Cain's mobile home.

Stevie lies in bed with his eyes open wide, struggling to sleep over the sounds from the other room.

INT. CAIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Under the harsh light of a florescent bedside lamp, Hazel and Cain have sex.

She sits on top of him, holding his chest forcefully against the bed as she moves up and down passionately.

HAZEL

Fuck yeah, oh fuck, fuuuckkkkk.

Her left hand moves steadily from his chest to his arm as their movement becomes more intense. Beads of sweat drip from their skin, further staining the already yellowed white sheets on Cain's mattress.

When her hand reaches Cain's arm, he begins to wince.

CAIN

Ow, babe.

Hazel only presses more forcefully as she nears her climax.

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stevie remains in bed, donning a frustrated expression as the sounds intensify in the adjacent room.

CAIN (O.S.)

Damn it!

CRASH

Stevie sits up and looks into the kitchen through the crack in his door.

INT. CAIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A disheveled Hazel sits on the floor next to Cain's bed, while Cain remains on the bed, grasping his arm.

HAZEL
(embarrassed)
I'm sorry...I didn't mean to -

CAIN
No. It's fine.

An uncomfortable silence hangs over the room until Hazel leans forward and stretches her arm across the bed.

She touches Cain's arm gently.

HAZEL
You know, you can play Mr. Tough Guy all you want, but eventually you're gonna have to take care of this.

She leans further over the bed, her face nearing Cain's.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Me and Will can get you something, you know, down by the store. Real easy. It'll take the pain away.

Cain moves Hazel's hand away from his arm.

CAIN
Nah, I don't want that shit. I'm clean.

Cain rolls over his left shoulder, turning away from Hazel.

Her eyes turn to the ground, expressing a tired helplessness.

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stevie continues to watch through the crack in the door as Hazel walks into the kitchen and leans her back against the counter. She is now wearing a pair of blue jeans, but remains topless.

She attempts to light a cigarette, but her hand continually slips over the ignitor, leaving her without a clear path to pleasure.

She puts her hand against her face, holding back tears in an attempt to maintain her dignity.

Suddenly, she looks over at Stevie, noticing his shadowy figure through the crack in the door.

Hazel wipes her cheek with a dishtowel and waves an embarrassed goodbye as they lock eyes for a brief moment.

She grabs a black hoodie from one of the chairs around the kitchen table, slips it on, and walks outside. The door slams shut behind her.

INT. CAIN'S BATHROOM NIGHT

The light to Cain's bathroom flickers on, strobing for a few moments before finally lighting the bathroom in a blue-green glow.

Cain walks into the bathroom and sits on the edge of his bathtub. He takes a pair of scissors from a drawer under the sink, and carefully begins to cut the homemade wrap around his right arm.

His forehead sweats profusely, and he breathes heavily in pain as he moves the scissors down his arm.

He sets the scissors on the sink before pulling the remains of the wrap off of his arm.

The injury has worsened considerably, and bruise-like streaks extend up his arm from the break.

Cain looks at the injury fearfully, beginning to cry as he slams his left fist against the toilet.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Russ can be seen through the window of his office sitting pensively at his desk. He wears an expensive looking suit, which dramatically juxtaposes the rotting factory around him.

A hand twists the doorknob of his office door open.

INT. RUSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Cain enters Russ's office. Despite wearing his work uniform, he carries himself with a heightened professionalism.

Russ looks hurried and unconcerned about Cain's presence.

RUSS

What can I do for you Cain?

Cain sits down in a chair in front of Russ's desk. His hand trembles against the armrest, and he continues to sweat profusely.

CAIN
Well, I -

RUSS
You doing alright?

CAIN
I'm fine. Thanks, I uh, I was wonderin' if I could fill out an injury report.

RUSS
Depends. What'd you hurt?

CAIN
My arm, I, uh, I got it crushed up under a palette.

Cain gestures to his arm, though the wrap is concealed by his long sleeves.

RUSS
Well, we're sorry to hear that.
When did the injury occur?

CAIN
Around a couple of weeks ago. Ten days, I think.

Russ continues to appear largely disinterested, despite Cain's growing anxiety.

RUSS
Well, Cain, you know our policy.
How long have you been with us?
Five years?

CAIN
Uh, eight, eight years.

RUSS
Eight years. Huh. Well, you ought to know then, by know, that injury reports can't be filed beyond 24 hours of the incident.

CAIN
I understand the policy, I just thought -

Russ leans forward toward Cain, finally appearing to give him his full attention.

RUSS

Cain, we aren't in the business of making exceptions. Quite the contrary, in fact. So I'm afraid that there's nothing we can do for you.

Cain looks down at his palms, his vision blurring. He stands up quickly and heads for the door.

CAIN

(over his shoulder)

You know its no shit people want to take some of the power for themselves around here.

As Cain reaches for the door, Russ stands calmly.

RUSS

Stop.

Cain turns back to the desk.

RUSS (CONT'D)

(gestures toward window)

Tell me again, please. What is it that *they* want?

CAIN

Look, they're just tired, man. Tired of working their asses off for you every day and not having your support. The company's support.

Russ walks slowly toward Cain.

RUSS

Let me tell you something Cain. And listen closely, because this is important. Unions are a wolf in sheep's clothing. You *will not* win. Because the promise of power from a peasant will get you nothing more than mud. And the promise of power from a whole hoard of peasants? Like mice scurrying around in a basement for scraps? Well Cain. That'll get you killed.

Russ returns to his desk and stares out his window toward the factory floor.

RUSS (CONT'D)
That'll be all.

The door slams closed as Cain exits.

Russ remains in his seat, chewing on the end of a pen as he looks over his domain.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Cain sits on a bench in front of his locker. His work shirt hangs in his locker, and he wears a torn white tank top underneath. Beads of sweat trickle down his back.

Jairus walks into view, carrying a piece of paper toward Cain with urgency.

JAIRUS
Yo C, you see this?

Cain looks up at Jairus, whose body blurs in and out of focus.

Cain takes the paper from Jairus, straining his eyes to read it:

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM MANAGEMENT

DUE TO RECENT REPORTS OF LABOR ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT WILL BEGIN TO EVALUATE ALL PRESENT EMPLOYEES IMMEDIATELY IN PREPARATION FOR FURTHER LAYOFFS. MORE DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.

CAIN
What...is this?

JAIRUS
The hell do you think it is man?
Somebody a rat! From what I'm
hearing it's gonna be wide-scale
too, they ain't messing around.

Cain looks back at the note, the letters running into one another like glue.

INTERCOM (V.O.)
Jairus Robinson, please report to
Russ's office immediately. Thank
you.

JAIRUS
Shit man, already? Wish me luck
bro.

Cain nods wearily as Jairus rushes out of the locker room.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING HALLWAY - DAY

Jairus nervously walks down the hallway toward Russ's office.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Cain grabs his bag from his locker and stumbles toward the door, sweat pouring down his face as his arm winces in pain.

INT. RUSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Jairus enters Russ's office, who gestures for him to take a seat.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING HALLWAY - DAY

Cain walks down the grey hallway toward the exit of the factory, growing fainter by the second.

INT. RUSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Jairus leans back in his seat in relief, laughing in disbelief and leaning forward to shake Russ's hand. Russ's grin stretches from one ear to the other.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

Cain stumbles as he walks toward his truck.

His vision gets blurrier, and blurrier, and blurrier, until he plummets slowly into the asphalt.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN OVER BLACK:

II. LINES

(September 2008)

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Red and orange leaves drift to the ground, dancing in the air as the cool autumn wind shakes the trees.

Locusts chase one another through the air, their acrobatics saturating the newly lit forest with a loud buzz.

Kernels of corn fall to the muddy forest floor in a thin line as Cain pours them out from a straw sack.

He is wearing his work uniform, and his right arm is braced by a thin black cast.

INT. CAIN'S SHED - MORNING

Cain tosses the sack of corn onto a table in the shed, wiping sweat from his forehead as the sun begins to pour through the shed's broken window.

EXT. CAIN'S YARD - MORNING

Cain closes the garage-style door to the shed before walking toward his mobile home.

He slides the glass door of the home open quietly and slips inside.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Cain grabs a small glass from the cabinet above the sink and pours himself a cup of water.

INT. CAIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

He takes the water into his bedroom, where a suspiciously unrecognizable woman lays asleep in his bed. She has long brown hair, which falls gently over her topless figure.

This is CRYSTAL.

She rolls over toward him as he sits down on the opposite side of the bed.

CRYSTAL
(mumbling)
Hey baby.

Cain does not acknowledge her, instead reaching for the tattered backpack next to his bedside table, from which he pulls a bottle of pills.

He opens the bottle and pours one of the pills into his palm.

He looks at the pill for a moment before tossing it into his mouth and downing his water with a single gulp.

He exhales tiredly, allowing his head to droop toward his knees.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)
You gon' get back in bed with me or
what?

Cain sets the pill bottle down on the bedside table before taking his backpack and company ID from the table and leaving the room.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)
Uhhg.

Crystal rolls back over in bed, pulling the bedspread with her. The back end of the blanket slides over the bedside table, knocking the bottle of pills onto the carpet and spreading the pills across the floor.

She sits up, frustrated.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)
Shit.

She stands up from the bed and walks to the other side of the room, getting down on her knees to scoop up the pills. After collecting them in her hand and putting them back in the bottle, she sits back on the bed.

She looks curiously at the bottle.

It reads:

OXYCONTIN - 2x PER DAY

She sets the bottle back on the table and looks around the room. She bites her lip anxiously before looking back toward the bottle.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME KITCHEN - MORNING

Stevie stands in front of his near-empty fridge in boxers, searching through the beer stained shelves for breakfast.

Crystal emerges from the bedroom, now wearing a light blue crop-top blouse and holding a purse in her hand. She shuts Cain's door quietly behind her, having not seen Stevie at the table.

Stevie pulls a bottle of orange juice from the fridge and shuts the door, which frightens Crystal.

CRYSTAL

Oh!

Stevie looks unamused - he's clearly seen this before.

STEVIE

Morning.

Though startled at first, Crystal approaches Stevie with an uncomfortable confidence, dragging her perfectly manicured nails slowly across the kitchen table as she approaches him.

CRYSTAL

Well you're cute. What's your name?

Stevie sits down at the table and takes a swig of orange juice.

Crystal weaves around the table and leans down next to him.

Stevie looks intensely into her eyes.

STEVIE

Are you a whore?

Crystal recoils sharply.

CRYSTAL

Excuse me?!

Annoyed, she storms out of the mobile home, slamming the screen door behind her.

Stevie shrugs and takes another drink of orange juice.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Stevie watches intently as a locust breaks through its thick shell and crawls onto a tree branch that overhangs the road.

Korine stands behind him, exerting more force than necessary to shove a thick wad of dip into his lip.

The boys both wear backpacks.

KORINE

What, you ain't never seen one of those before?

Stevie continues to look at the shell.

STEVIE

No, I have. Just like 'em.

Korine turns and begins to walk away.

KORINE

Fuckin' annoying if you ask me.

Stevie takes the shell from the branch before reluctantly following.

KORINE (CONT'D)

Always buzzin' in my fuckin' ear.

Stevie looks at the shell in his hand.

STEVIE

My dad used to say that was the sound of all the bugs in Ohio fuckin' each other to death.

Korine laughs.

KORINE

That's fuckin' weird, man.

INT. JAIRUS'S OFFICE AT WATTS - DAY

A box filled with office supplies is dropped onto a desk, landing with a thump.

A picture of Jairus and Dre is propped up on the desk.

CAIN

Last one, I think.

Cain stands in Jairus's new office with Beanie, Darius, Jairus, and a few other co-workers. The office is on the second floor, and overlooks the factory floor from a large window in the front of the room.

Darius crinkles a handful of packing tape into a ball and shoots it into the trash can across the room, falling into a rolling chair as he fades away.

The tape clinks off of the side of the can.

DARIUS

Damn, boy. You got that high life up here.

Jairus walks behind his desk.

JAIRUS

Hey, you ain't even seen the first of it man.

He opens the small mini fridge behind his desk.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

I got a company fridge with Pepsi and Sprite.

He tosses a can to Darius.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

I got a ceiling fan with a fucking controller. Look at this shit.

He presses a button on the controller, and the ceiling fan grinds to a start.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

And bro, check this out.

He sits behind his computer, and the others in the room crowd behind him. The computer slowly loads to a start before revealing...

WINDOWS VISTA.

ALL

DAMNNNNNN!

DARIUS

Yo, you got that Vista?!

Jairus gets serious for a moment.

JAIRUS
(whispering)
Yeah, but you got to keep it on the
DL though, 'cause most everyone
else still on that XP shit.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Stevie and Korine continue to walk down the street.

As they walk, a car passes by with Dre in the back seat. The boys make eye contact, watching as he disappears into the distance.

Korine spits onto the ground.

KORINE
Fuck man, all I know is that I'm
sick of this damn place. Sick of
the same shit school, with the same
shit people, and the same shit
weed.

Stevie kicks a can off of the road.

STEVIE
You don't like high school?

KORINE
Helllllll no, dude. I got it worked
out though. In a couple of months
I'll drop out and shack up with my
cousin in Akron. He say they got it
all up there man. The weed. The
bitches. Hell, they got fuckin'
jobs and everything. Shit bro, I'd
go right now.

STEVIE
Why don't you?

Korine looks annoyed.

KORINE
What the hell kind of - I mean I
can't just go. I gotta save up some
first. Why I'm workin' down at the
Hucks on weekends. Plus they got
that truancy shit. My cousin tried
to run out on my aunt like that,
really fucked both of 'em over.

STEVIE
Where was he going?

KORINE
What do you mean?

STEVIE
If he has it so great up there,
then why'd he try to leave?

Korine spits again onto the street.

KORINE
Fuck, man. Different cousin.

Singing can be heard off screen.

MAN (O.S.)
No weapon, formed against me, shall
prosper!

The boys look ahead to see an old, black man stumbling toward them. He holds a brown paper bag in one hand and a doll in the other. He is clearly drunk, and hasn't showered in days.

This is SAMUEL.

KORINE
(to Stevie)
Ey, take a look at this fucker.

SAMUEL
(singing)
No weapon, formed against me, shall
prosper!

The boys continue to approach the man.

KORINE
What up Samuel! What you drinkin'
today big boy?

Korine takes the paper bag from Samuel's hand and pulls out a bottle of whiskey.

Samuel reaches after the bottle and mumbles angrily at Korine.

KORINE (CONT'D)
Whoooo, you living large today! How
bout you share some of this with
the rest of us, huh?

Though Samuel continues to reach for the bottle, Korine holds him back and takes a large swig of the drink.

Angrily, Samuel lunges at Korine, but Korine takes a step back and Samuel falls onto the road.

KORINE (CONT'D)

Fuck, man. Ain't very nice to come
at people like that.

Stevie stares at Samuel with fascination, hovering passively behind the conflict.

KORINE (CONT'D)

Hey, check this out.

Korine puts the whiskey back in the paper bag and pulls a match out of his pocket. He lights the bag on fire, and throws it onto the ground in front of Samuel.

As the bottle breaks, the whiskey ignites on the pavement, creating a short wall of flames between Samuel and the boys.

Stevie stares into the flames curiously as Samuel crawls back away from them.

SAMUEL

(singing)

He's not a man that should lie. He
will come through. God will do what
he said he would do!

Korine chuckles as the boys turn away.

INT. JAIRUS'S OFFICE AT WATTS - DAY

The group is beginning to stand to leave the office.

BEANIE

You know, I been here twenty-two
years, and I ain't never seen one
of us upstairs. You make us proud
J.

Jairus embraces Beanie.

JAIRUS

Thanks, miss B. You come up here
and visit, okay?

The group slowly files out of the office.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Hey Cain!

Jairus follows Cain out of the office and catches him near the balcony that overlooks the factory floor.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Man, look. I know either one of us could've gotten this job. Hell, out of the two of us, you probably deserve it the most.

Cain looks out over the factory, watching as man and machine move fluidly across the floor in a noticeable rhythm.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

But bro. We up here. We did it.

Jairus puts his hand on Cain's shoulder.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

So you got me up here if you need me. Cool?

Cain nods and continues to look over the factory as Jairus walks back to his office.

INT. LOCAL BAR - EVENING

Cricket sits alone at the bar of a local dive. The room is dimly lit, but crowded.

He wears street clothes - jeans and a torn polo. He plays with his small napkin awkwardly as he sits.

BARTENDER

You good, hun?

Cricket smiles and nods, his face doing a poor job at hiding its melancholy.

Willie sits a few tables back of Cricket alongside two intimidating looking white men, the large and hairy MARTIN and the thin and bald DENNY.

They appear to be making a plan of some sort, as Willie draws in the air with his hands.

Cricket looks down into his drink before...

CAIN

Who's this guy?

Cricket stands and embraces Cain, who takes a seat next to him at the bar.

LATER

CAIN (CONT'D)

Kate and the girls holding up okay?

CRICKET

Yeah, you know. They like havin' me around more. I been doing a lot of cooking.

CAIN

Anything good?

CRICKET

Nah, not really.

Cain looks awkwardly at his drink.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

But Baldie said he'd give me some shifts at the store, so that'll keep me busy till I get back on my feet.

Cain sighs.

CAIN

We miss havin' you down by the plant.

CRICKET

Well I'd be lyin' if I said I didn't miss bein' there.

He takes a drink.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

I been at Watts for 11 years. Can you believe that? 11. All I done since I graduate from high school. Hell, it's all I ever really done.

Cain runs his hand through his beard.

CRICKET (CONT'D)

But it's really a wake up call, you know? You can't give all your cards to other people. Gotta make something for yourself.

LATER

The men are noticeably more drunk.

WILLIE
Gentlemen!

Willie puts his arms around Cain and Cricket.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
Couple more rounds on me!

LATER

Willie slides a sheet of notebook paper to Cain, which lists plans for a worker walkout.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
(slurred)
Hell man, I'm tellin' you, this is gonna work. This is gonna fuckin' work.

Cain laughs.

CAIN
(also slurred)
I don't know, man. I really ain't got much to worry about right now. Jairus up in management. They even refurbished me for those prescriptions last month. Can't get much worse than it was.

Willie scoffs.

WILLIE
Worse? Fuck man, it better not get any fuckin' worse. It needs to get fuckin' better is what it needs. And if you think your buddy is gonna change anything, you're fuckin' wrong man. Now is when we gotta do this the *most*. We got all the power.

Cricket belches loudly.

CRICKET
Why ain't you just come by tomorrow? See what we got goin'?

Cain nods, laughing.

WILLIE
This is gonna be big, man.

CAIN

Alright, alright. I might stop by.

Cain looks down at his watch before turning behind him and reaching into his backpack.

While turning, his hand knocks the sheet of notebook paper off of the table. It flutters slowly to the ground, landing in a small puddle of spilled beer.

Not finding what he wants, he grabs the bag and searches more thoroughly.

CRICKET

You good, C?

Cain puts the backpack behind him again.

CAIN

(hiding his concern)

Yeah, yeah. It's nothin'.

INT. CAIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cain enters his dark mobile home quietly, making his way to the bedroom and flicking on the lamp in the corner of the room.

He looks immediately to the bedside table, which is empty.

CAIN

Shit.

He sets his backpack down on the floor and walks toward the bed, looking underneath both the bed and the bedside table.

He opens the drawers of the table and looks meticulously through the objects inside, growing increasingly upset as he searches.

He stands anxiously and throws the blankets off of his bed, again unable to find the pills.

Now sweating and becoming increasingly jittery, Cain flings open his dresser drawers and begins to throw his clothes across the room.

He goes into his bathroom and searches furiously through the cabinets above and below the sink.

He runs back to his room and grabs his backpack, dumping its contents onto his now cleared off bed.

Though he searches through the contents thoroughly, the pills are no where to be found.

CAIN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Fuck, fuck, fuck!

STEVIE (O.S.)
Dad?

Cain jumps and looks toward Stevie with fearful eyes.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
You good?

Cain sits on his bed and rests his hands on his knees, though his fingers continue to shake.

Stevie walks toward him slowly before taking a seat on the bed next to him.

He leans his head on his Dad's shoulder and puts his hand on his knee.

CAIN
Yeah. Um, yeah, I'm good.

Cain leans over and kisses Stevie's head.

CAIN (CONT'D)
You have a good day at school today?

STEVIE
It was alright.

Cain nods uncomfortably.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
You?

Cain thinks for a moment.

CAIN
Yeah. Okay.

EXT. OLD WHITE HOUSE - MORNING

Dorothy's house is still - it's white walls shaded by the pink and purple hues of the morning. Birds chirp in the yard.

The board that typically covers the front window has been set aside on the porch.

INT. DOROTHY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Jairus, dressed in a full grey Sunday suit, scoops a spoonful of applesauce for Dorothy, who sits in her recliner.

She is also wearing her church clothes: a salmon pink suit with a tilted pink sunhat.

The sun is just beginning to rise, and its warm rays peak through Dorothy's yellowed blinds.

JAIRUS

You're lookin' thin, ma. You sure
you been eatin' those meals doc had
me pick up?

Dorothy eats a spoonful of the applesauce.

DOROTHY

Son, I been feedin' your fat ass
for almost forty years now. You
ain't got no room to tell me 'bout
no eatin'.

Jairus isn't laughing.

JAIRUS

Ma. We just got to make sure you
taken care of.

Dorothy scoffs jokingly.

DOROTHY

Ohh, the good lord gonna do with me
what the good lord gonna do. Ain't
no cardboard-ass meal gonna fix
that.

Jairus feeds her another bite.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

How the new job been treatin' you?

Jairus looks down at his watch.

JAIRUS

I don't know. Good, I guess.

DOROTHY

(sarcastic tone)

Well that ain't sound all that good
to me.

JAIRUS

It's just weird not bein' down with the guys. You know? And now their union talk is pickin' up steam. I just don't want to be another, I don't know, big shot boss standing in the way.

Dorothy laughs.

DOROTHY

Boyyy, I know you did not just call yourself a big shot.

She turns to him lovingly, her expression becoming more serious.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Look, son. People like us, we ain't given nothin'. We ain't inherit nothin'. We ain't entitled to nothin'. The lord done gave you a damn good job. And a damn good kid. You don't just throw that away. Those union boys, they just tryin' to take care of they families, same as you. They'll understand.

EXT. BARN - MORNING

Willie swings open the tall doors of an old brown barn.

Dust swirls in the air as light pours in to the dirty interior.

EXT. MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

A young black deacon of the church, dressed in a fine black suit and slick leather shoes, props the front door of the church open as its steeple bells indicate the passing of the hour.

He straightens a pile of bulletins just inside the door.

INT. BARN - DAY

Men come through the doors single file, signing their names on a piece of paper at a wood table just inside the barn.

Cricket sits behind the table and directs the men inside.

Willie sits on a hay bale in the back of the barn, speaking quietly with Beanie and Denny - the bald man from the bar.

WILLIE

So on the 24th, we'll cut workers
out of manufacturing and
production, and then move up onto
the line after that.

BEANIE

Are you sure we have enough people?

WILLIE

Should, if we keep moving at the
same pace.

INT. MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The sanctuary of the church is beginning to fill with
congregants - all black.

They are dressed in various shades of spring, their pastel
suits dotting the wood brown pews with color.

Jairus holds Dorothy's elbow in his own as he leads her to
the door of the church.

Inside, an USHER greets Jairus with a hug.

USHER

What's goin' on big J? Hey, I heard
you finally moved upstairs,
congratulations brother.

Jairus smiles and accepts the embrace.

JAIRUS

Movin' on up!

The usher takes Dorothy's arm.

USHER

And how are you doin' today miss
Dorothy?

Dorothy smiles and walks with him into the sanctuary.

DOROTHY

Still movin' my feet!

LATER

A large, elaborately suited pastor stands boisterously in front of the pulpit of the church. His voice echoes through the sanctuary, which is now filled to capacity.

PASTOR

And let us give thanks this morning
for all that the Lord provides, the
trials and the successes. Because
God is good!

The congregation responds in unison.

CONGREGATION

All the time!

PASTOR

And all the time!

CONGREGATION

God is good!

INT. BARN

Now filled with primarily white men and women from the factory, a quiet energy hangs over the barn.

The small crowd stands in a semicircle around Willie, who sits on an old, rusted piece of machinery.

His quiet, southern-tinged voice starkly contrasts that of the pastor.

WILLIE

Why is it that we're here today?
Hm?

Mumbles pass through the crowd, but the room remains silent.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

There's got to be some reason, for
this congregation. No?

A scratchy, deep voice finds its way out of the crowd.

OLD MAN

Well, I'm here 'cause my daughter
been sick, and I can't afford to
keep workin' this job with no
healthcare.

Willie scratches his arm.

WILLIE

Mm. No benefits. And it'd be nice
if we all had benefits, wouldn't it
Jay?

JAY, a thin man in the front row of the group, answers
angrily.

JAY

Hell yeah it would.

A WOMAN behind Jay steps forward with more confidence.

WOMAN

I'm here 'cause I'm tired of
working on rusty equipment that
puts my life in danger.

Willie jumps down from the machine and walks to the woman.

WILLIE

Outdated equipment. And do we not
all fear for our safety?

The positive murmurs from the crowd grow steadily.

CROWD

Yeah!

A LOUD MAN in the back of the crowd yells loudly, his voice
echoing through the barn.

LOUD MAN

I'm here because I'm sick and tired
of our bosses getting bonus checks
worth more than my whole salary!

Willie increases in his anger, speaking with more charisma
than before.

WILLIE

Bonus checks! And are we not all
sick of the greed that buys them
new cars, and leaves us without the
money to buy clothes for our
families?!

The crowd has grown louder and rowdier.

CROWD

Yeah!

INT. MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The pastor continues to preach from the stage, his voice also echoing throughout the room.

PASTOR

The Lord tells us in the book of Deuteronomy, that if false prophets rise up among us, we are not to listen. It is in these moments that the Lord will test us, that he will show us through these trials and tribulations what is the true will of God. What is good, and acceptable, and perfect unto him.

A CHURCH WOMAN in the crowd voices her agreement.

CHURCH WOMAN

Amen, brother!

PASTOR

Brothers and sisters. This is a time of great division. Of great persecution. There are forces all around us, leading us to abandon our God. But what does Paul say, in the book of Thessalonians?

CHURCH WOMAN

Preach!

PASTOR

He tells us to be at peace, among ourselves. To admonish false idols. To encourage the faint of heart. To help the weak. And to see that no man repays another, evil for evil, but always seeks to do good to one another, and to everyone!

INT. BARN - DAY

Willie continues to speak to the crowd.

WILLIE

Friends! Some of our families have known one another for decades. Some of our father's fathers worked in this factory, providing their families with the things that they needed to live a happy life.

(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)
With the hopes that one day, their
grandchildren would be in a
position to do the same. But what
have we been given?!

Willie picks a shovel up from the ground.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
Table scraps from the plates of the
imports who manage us? Who know
nothing about our culture? Our way
of life?

The crowd is extremely riled up, and voices move from a
response to a shout.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
I say that it's time we take back
the power that we deserve! To take
their hands and feet away, and to
bury them into the dirt that we
have tilled, and plowed, and
harvested our whole lives!

Willie smashes the shovel into the ground as he speaks, until
eventually the end splinters away from the wooden handle of
the tool.

The crowd screams and cheers in affirmation.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Cain stands in front of a moving conveyor belt on the factory
floor.

He pulls large metal parts from an open box to his right and
sends them down the belt to Willie, who oversees a safety
analysis machine.

Willie has earbuds in, and hums along to a song while
pressing buttons on the machine.

Drops of sweat fall from Cain's forehead onto the belt. His
hands noticeably shake as he pulls the machines from the box.

Willie looks over to see Cain struggling with a part, and
takes out an earbud.

WILLIE
You okay there C?

Cain can barely hear him over the loud sounds of the machinery, but gives him a thumbs up.

Willie puts his earbuds back in and looks down the belt as parts file in toward him.

One by one, parts enter the machine, at which point Willie inspects them on a monitor and clears them for further production, until...

The parts stop coming.

Willie takes out an earbud and looks over to Cain, who has collapsed on the floor.

He runs over to him and props him up.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
You alright there, buddy?

Cain looks pale, and wipes a glaze of sweat from his forehead.

CAIN
Yeah, just got a little
lightheaded.

Willie helps Cain up from the ground.

CAIN (CONT'D)
I'm gonna grab some water from the
locker room, I'll be back in a bit.

WILLIE
Fine by me.

Willie spins around and puts an earbud in again.

INT. RUSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Russ sits at his desk patiently, apparently waiting on something. He stares into the corner of his office with a hazed glare, as though his mind is in a different place entirely.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Russ looks up to see Jairus standing outside his door.

JAIRUS

Hey...you wanted to see me?

Now snapped out of his daze, Russ motions for Jairus to sit down.

Jairus walks to Russ timidly, taking a seat in the red office chair across from him.

Russ takes a stained sheet of notebook paper from his desk and slides it across the table to Jairus.

RUSS

Do you know what this is?

Jairus looks down at the paper to see Willie's walkout notes - the same sheet that Cain dropped at the bar.

JAIRUS

I don't know. Uh, looks like some notes to me.

Russ remains silent for a moment before slamming his fist on the desk in anger.

RUSS

(loudly)

What the fuck is this?

Jairus is surprised by his anger.

JAIRUS

Look man, I ain't never seen this before. Alright? I got just as much a clue as you do.

Russ puts his finger on the paper from across the table and leans in toward Jairus.

RUSS

Listen. This. This can't happen. We can't afford this. Updated equipment, better safety precautions, maybe. But higher pay? A goddamn walkout?!

Russ takes his finger off of the sheet aggressively and stands from his desk.

He walks over to a photo hanging on the wall of him and an older white man shaking hands. Both wear Watts uniforms.

RUSS (CONT'D)

When I got this job, I was naive.
Colored by the perception of being
a black man in a white man's world.
But I was taught to see rightly. To
see that life, is a matter of
consequence. Of action, and
reaction.

Russ turns back toward Jairus.

RUSS (CONT'D)

These people -

He gestures toward the factory floor.

RUSS (CONT'D)

They'll never truly understand
consequence. The things that are at
stake here.

JAIRUS

Man, with all due respect, these
people are my friends. They're
trying to take care of their
families the same as us. I think
maybe you're selling them short.

Russ circles around the desk toward Jairus.

RUSS

Jairus. Your sympathy, well-
intentioned as it is, it means
nothing to them. It does not change
their reality. Or ours. If they get
this to union, we can't make the
cuts that we need. And yes. That
might mean that more of them keep
their jobs. It might even mean that
they get a higher wage. But
industry is delicate, Jairus.

Russ moves his hand gently, drawing a flower in the air with
his fingers.

RUSS (CONT'D)

Like a daisy, rooted in order. If
you uproot the flower, it will
collapse. You understand?

Jairus nods.

Russ moves back behind his desk and takes a seat.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Tired of waiting on Cain to return, Willie takes a pile of progress reports from the machine's cache and walks upstairs to the factory filing cabinets, which are just outside Russ's office.

He begins to sort the reports into the correct cabinets before hearing Jairus's voice coming from the office next door.

He sets the papers down for a moment and leans against the wall, where he can see Jairus and Russ through the window. He notices the notebook paper on the desk.

RUSS

(muffled)

We brought you upstairs, because you understand consequence. We need you to get them to see, the way that we do. And if you are able to do that, you and your friends jobs will be as safe as can be. Understand?

Russ's tone becomes more serious.

RUSS (CONT'D)

We cannot afford to lose this one, to them. Alright? So fucking take care of it.

Russ slides the paper toward Jairus and storms out of his office.

Willie quickly scrambles back to the cabinets and grabs the reports.

Russ turns to Willie when he enters the hallway and glares sharply in his direction.

WILLIE

Sup, man.

Russ turns and walks away with no response.

Willie takes a deep breath before angrily shoving all of the files into a cabinet.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

(whispering to himself)

Fuck!

He pulls his phone out of his pocket and walks out of view.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Cain stands in front of a sink in the locker room and looks at himself in a mirror. His eyes are red and foggy, and his head drenched in sweat. His hands shake as he holds them under the water.

He splashes water on his face, hoping to cool himself off, before rushing into a stall.

The sound of puking can be heard off-screen.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

Jairus walks toward his car in the parking lot, his blue work backpack in hand. He inserts his key into the door, unlocks it, and gets inside.

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - DAY

Jairus exhales loudly and leans his forehead on the steering wheel.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

Cain opens the factory door and walks into the parking lot. He wears his work pants and an old white tank top, his work shirt in his hand.

He notices Jairus sitting in his car from across the parking lot.

He looks down at his hand, which continues to shake, before jogging over to Jairus's car and knocking on the window.

Jairus looks up from the steering wheel and rolls down his window.

JAIRUS
Hey...you good dog?

Cain looks nervous and unsure of himself. His face is still pale.

CAIN
Look man, I don't know how to say this.

He searches the air for the right words.

CAIN (CONT'D)

Well, I somehow, I lost the meds
for my arm. Something's off man,
I'm telling you. I ain't remember
feeling like this in a while. I
know you said if I needed something
-

Jairus sighs.

JAIRUS

Bro, you was lucky enough they took
care of that the first time.
Probably wouldn't have either, if
you didn't go down on company
property.

Cain begins to plead.

CAIN

Come on, there's got to be
something -

Jairus leans out his window toward Cain.

JAIRUS

Look Cain, I'm not in any position
to make a request like that right
now, alright? Russ already down my
neck about this union stuff, which
I didn't even fucking know about.
How the hell y'all plan somethin'
like this behind my back anyway?

CAIN

Oh come on, I don't see what that -

Jairus interrupts again.

JAIRUS

Let's play a little role reversal,
huh? Remember how scared you was to
even tell anyone about yo' arm in
the first place? Well imagine the
situation I'm in right now. They
got me lookin' for money anywhere I
can find it just to save yo' jobs,
not the other way around. I'm
sorry, man.

Jairus rolls up his window and pulls away.

Cain stumbles away from the car.

CAIN
(yelling)
But that's how I got so fucked in
the first place!

Cain waves passively toward the car.

INT. HAZEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Hazel sits next to her friend HONEY in a messy living room.

Honey is younger and shorter than Hazel, but also blond.

Ripped posters hang on the walls, and clothes are scattered across the floor.

The girls sit next to each other in front of a television while they paint their nails. A sitcom plays in the background.

Hazel smokes a joint with her left hand while painting her toes with her right.

HAZEL
You goin' out tonight?

Honey blows on her fingers.

HONEY
I don't know. I thought about it. I
might go down to the lake with
Trav.

She holds her hand toward Hazel to display her work.

HONEY (CONT'D)
What do you think?

Hazel takes a long hit of the joint.

HAZEL
Well, he's got nice thighs. I've
always thought Travis was a huge
piece of shit though, personally.

A cell phone begins to ring from across the room.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Uhg.

Hazel hands her joint to Honey and blows on her toes before standing up and walking across the room.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
(over her shoulder)
Your toes look nice too, by the
way.

Hazel picks the cell phone up from the coffee table. The screen reads "INCOMING CALL FROM: CAIN".

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - DAY

Jairus drives his car home from work, moving steadily down an empty country road.

He looks up to his rearview mirror to see a black car driving a few hundred yards behind him.

He looks back to the road and fiddles with his radio before settling on a hip hop station.

He looks up to the rearview mirror again, this time to see the black car just behind him.

He slows down for a moment to allow the car to pass, but it slows along with him.

JAIRUS
The fuck...?

He rolls down his window and gestures for the car to pass.

The car pulls slowly into the opposite lane and drives next to him.

Jairus looks over to see a thin white man with ratty hair smoking a cigarette in the passenger seat.

He has an odd grin on his face, and flicks his cigarette out of the window toward Jairus as his car passes by and drives away.

INT. JAIRUS'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dre sits at the kitchen table in his apartment. His plate has green beans and a chicken leg on it. Rather than eat his food, he stirs it around his plate with a fork.

Jairus sits across from him at the table, his own plate filled with the remains of a larger portion of chicken, green beans, and biscuits.

A half-eaten rotisserie chicken sits on a plate at the center of the table between them.

The silence in the air is palpable.

JAIRUS
Ey, since when you ain't like green
beans?

Dre continues to look at his plate.

DRE
(mumbling)
I do like 'em.

JAIRUS
What was that?

DRE
(louder)
I do like them.

JAIRUS
Well why the hell you playin' with
'em instead of eatin' em then?

Dre shrugs and limps his head down, trying his best to avoid conversation.

Jairus looks at Dre apologetically, realizing that his tone was poorly received.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Hey little man, I'm sorry. You take
your time.

Dre looks up at Jairus.

DRE
I ain't little.

Jairus chuckles.

JAIRUS
Oh you ain't, are you? All four
foot eight of you gon' tell me you
ain't little? Please.

Jairus's tone shifts from joking to comforting.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
(pointing to his heart)
But just 'cause you little out
here, don't got to be little in
here. You hear me?

Dre nods.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
You ever gon' tell me what happened
with this?

Jairus gestures to his eye.

Dre looks back at his food in defiance.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Alright then. Suit yourself.

Jairus picks up his plate and walks to the sink.

He puts the plate under the faucet and begins to wash it off
with a sponge.

Suddenly, his phone rings in his pocket. He pulls the phone
out and props it between his head and his shoulder,
continuing to wash his dish in the process.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Hello? Yeah, this is him.

Jairus pauses for a few moments to listen before dropping the
sponge into the sink. His face is filled with shock.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE - DAY

Rain pounds Dorothy's house violently. The sky is a dark
shade of navy, and thick clouds suffocate the hidden sun.

Jairus pounds the board over the window with a hammer,
securely nailing it in place. He is wet from the water that
leaks through the roof onto the porch.

A sign reading "FOR SALE" is hammered down in the front lawn.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Stevie walks home from school in the rain. Water seeps
through his grey t-shirt, torn jeans, and red backpack,
leaving him soaked.

The wind is blowing violently, causing leaves and other
debris to fly past him as he walks.

LATER

He approaches his mobile home to see that the front door is wide open and swinging in the wind. His Dad's truck is parked outside.

He walks toward the door cautiously, curious of the abnormality.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - DAY

Upon entering the house, he sees Hazel sitting motionless at the kitchen table, her shoulders slumping back in the chair closest to the door. She faces away from him, so he cannot yet see her face.

He looks toward Cain's room, where he sees his Dad's arm and leg hanging off of the bed through the half-open door.

He walks slowly toward Hazel, circling around her chair until he can see her face.

A syringe and large rubber band sit on the kitchen table in front of her.

Her eyes are cracked open, though they seem lost in the distance.

STEVIE
(hesitantly)
Hazel?

Hazel turns her head toward him, her mouth creeping slowly into a molasses-glazed smile.

She speaks quietly and hazily.

HAZEL
Hey Stevie.

Stevie drags his finger across the syringe on the table.

STEVIE
Are you...okay?

Hazel responds in a thick, breathy laugh.

HAZEL
We're flyin', bud. We're flyin'.

INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

A cue ball crashes through a perfectly aligned triangle of billiard balls, scattering their bright colors across the green velvet table.

Jairus stands around a pool table in the hall with a few co-workers, including Darius, RASHEED, and MIKE.

Jairus takes a sip of a drink before setting it down on the side of the table and getting into position for a shot.

JAIRUS

Six ball, left corner.

He strikes the cue clumsily, missing the striped six ball by a mile and accidentally netting the solid four.

Darius chuckles.

DARIUS

God damn brother, I wish I could
play against you every game.
Couldn't hit the right ball if it
came up and slapped you in the
face.

Darius skillfully positions himself for a shot and sends the cue soaring toward a solid nine ball, sending it directly into the corner pocket.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

(doing his best Russ
impersonation)

Or, as our brother Russ would say,
I find your inability to function
properly in this environment to be
nothing short of comical.

The other men around the table laugh heartily.

RASHEED, a towering black man with a deep, booming voice and a pronounced beer belly, grabs a stick in preparation for his turn.

RASHEED

Man, lemme' tell you. There
somethin' wrong with that nigga'.

Darius takes a drink before flamboyantly pronouncing the beginning of a story.

DARIUS

Here, listen to this though. He come up to me the other day, and he says 'Darius!' And I says what up. And he go, he go, 'What you doin?' And I'm like "Lookin' over this line, what the hell it look like I'm doin?" 'Cept, you know, I didn't say that 'cause he my boss.

A few people appear to have checked out of his story already.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

So he go, 'Darius!' And at this point I'm like, nigga' what! And he all, 'Is there some adequate reason that you haven't made any progress on your quarterly review?' And I's like hell yeah I got a reason, I ain't made progress on that 'cause I'm over here workin' on this! 'Cept, you know, just didn't say that and all. But still got the point across.

Jairus rubs some chalk on his pool stick.

JAIRUS

Russ an okay dude, man. I know he seem all bad 'cause he upstairs and all, but he really cares.

MIKE, a large-bellied, bearded white man and employee at the factory, rolls his eyes.

MIKE

I'd have his back too if he was payin' me your salary.

Jairus sets his stick down.

JAIRUS

The hell you tryin' to say, bro?

Mike recoils back from the table.

MIKE

Hey easy man, we're good.

Darius jumps in front of Mike.

Yeah, bro. I think alls he tryin' to say is that we ain't the ones cozyin' up with that Booker T.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Washington lookin' motherfucker
upstairs all day, you feel me? We
just ain't see what you seein'.

Jairus downs the rest of his drink and sets his cup down hard on the table before taking his shot. He sinks a striped three ball in the middle pocket.

JAIRUS

Look, guys. I know how he seems,
alright. But they tryin' to look
out for us now. I'm tellin' you,
long as y'all don't find some way
to fuck this up we gon' be good.

Rasheed looks over to Jairus.

RASHEED

Man, the fuck that supposed to
mean?

Jairus takes a step in toward the table.

JAIRUS

This union shit man, its bad news.
I know it sound good, but hearing
what they sayin' upstairs, it ain't
a good move.

MIKE

Man, of course it's bad news. For
their asses.

DARIUS

(to Jairus)

Yeah man, I don't know. I mean I
ain't 'bout to get involved, just
'cause I can't afford to be takin'
any more days off, you know? But
don't seem like it hurtin' anybody.

Jairus's face gets increasingly frustrated.

JAIRUS

No, I'm serious. Y'all think you
got the power in this situation,
you don't. You think Willie gon'
keep you safe, but he can't. You
can't take on a system like Watts
from the outside. They don't care
about law, man. They'll can your
ass in a second. And they don't
have to have no reason for it
neither.

Darius shrugs.

DARIUS

He do got a point about that.

Mike slams his stick down on the table.

MIKE

Man, the hell should we listen to you anyway? You keep saying them, like you different or something. But you ain't. Not anymore.

Jairus walks toward Mike aggressively.

JAIRUS

Mike I been your friend for ten fucking years, man. How many times have I covered for your ass?

Jairus puts his stick up on the wall.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Look. I'm in they offices every day. In their meetings, in their budgets. I know how this shit works. You want power? Don't pull some goddamn walkout. 'Cause power ain't in a union. It's on the inside. And you already got someone there.

Jairus walks out of the pool hall, leaving the door open behind him.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The rain has stopped, and rays of light bleed through the recovering sky. Puddles fill the potholes that line the streets, and creeks run violently over sidewalk.

Stevie flies through the frame on his bicycle, his phone held closely to his ear. He is shirtless, but carries his red backpack. A few cans of spray paint stick through the pack's half-open zipper

STEVIE
(into phone)
Yeah, I got you. I'll be out there
in a bit.

He puts the phone into the pocket of his jeans and rides on.

LATER

Stevie rides down the lightly traveled country road, which is lined by vast expanses of flooded cornfield. Ahead of him, a truck is parked just off of the street.

Stevie slows as he approaches the truck and looks into the field to see Baldie, who wades through the water with a compound bow.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Hey Baldie!

Baldie waves Stevie over to him.

Stevie sets his bike on the side of the road and walks down from the road into the field. He wades his way over to Baldie with curiosity.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
What you up to?

Baldie holds his finger to his lips.

BALDIE
Shhh.

He draws back the string of his bow, aims toward the ground about ten yards ahead, and fires an arrow into the field.

They walk over to the arrow to find a large red carp pinned into the ground.

BALDIE (CONT'D)
See, when it floods they swim into
places they shouldn't be. Get
stuck.

He laughs and picks the fish up from the ground.

BALDIE (CONT'D)
A feast on the naive.

LATER

Stevie sits on the tailgate of Baldie's truck, where Baldie has begun to fillet his catch.

He slides a bowie knife into the fish just behind the gill and proceeds to cut away at the flesh, throwing the guts into a bucket to his right.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

I got some seaweed chips in my bag
if you want some.

Stevie takes the chips from Baldie's backpack, unraveling the half-eaten bag before recoiling from the putrid stench.

STEVIE

I'm good...

BALDIE

You sure? Great source of iodine.

STEVIE

I'm good, man.

Baldie flips the fish and begins to repeat the process on the other side.

BALDIE

How's Dad doin'?

Stevie shrugs.

STEVIE

I don't know. Fine.

BALDIE

That bad, huh?

Stevie lifts his brow and offers a reluctant nod.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, I been seein' him out back of
the store a lot lately.

Stevie looks to Baldie curiously.

STEVIE

What that got to do with it?

BALDIE

Got to get 'em from somewhere,
right?

Stevie looks down at his lap as Baldie throws another layer of guts into the bucket. He sets the knife down for a moment and leans against the tailgate.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

You know, me and Cricket's Dad, he just up and ran off when we was in high school. Hardly saw him before then either, 'cept these couple times where he come down to the house to pick up some money. We was real close when I was a kid. He was a good man. Loved real deep. But he got real bad with the drugs, you know. Found him passed out on the floor, or in the car a few times. The thing is though, I don't think it was the drugs that got him. He had a lot of issues. Money laundering, abuse was part of it. But honestly, I think one day he just stopped caring. Realized what his life was, and just didn't want it anymore. Came a point when I started expectin' to get a call he just drove off the road one day, smashed into a tree or somethin'. But nah. One day he just didn't come home.

Baldie reaches into the bag of seaweed and takes a few chips.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

I guess alls I'm tryin' to say is, there's good and bad in all of us. Bein' bad ain't especially a problem, neither. Shit don't really get bad 'till you just stop givin' a fuck.

A line of blood from the carp has dribbled down to Stevie's leg. He attempts to wipe it off, only to find it dark red on his hand.

BALDIE (CONT'D)

Your dad though, he got a lot of fight left in him. He'll pull through. Might just need a little push.

Stevie looks at Baldie thankfully, his expression indicating a tinge of relief.

EXT. WILLIE'S BACK PATIO - NIGHT

Willie sits in a musty pink and green lawn chair next to a glass table on his screened-in back patio.

Two women - a BLOND WOMAN and a BRUNETTE WOMAN - sit in adjacent chairs, both dressed in crop tops and jorts.

The room is piled with boxes and junk. A record player spins an old country song in the corner of the room. A string of flickering pink flamingo lights hang from the ceiling.

Willie smokes a blunt as he speaks.

WILLIE

I swear, the motherfucker never saw it comin' neither. Says I'm goin' down to the creek to piss, find him two hours later with a bullet in his face. Innocent bastard.

BLOND WOMAN

When'd you find him?

WILLIE

Well, couple hours later me and my buddy Swizz go down to fill up the canteens. Find him layin' there still, blood runnin' into the creek. It was a real bitch too, 'cause we had to find a new goddamn creek.

BRUNETTE WOMAN

What'd you do?

Willie laughs.

WILLIE

Oh, they gave him the full works. Big ceremony back in the states. A bit much if you ask me -

He takes a long hit of his blunt.

WILLIE

For a guy who died face down in his own piss.

Outside the patio, a black car pulls into Willie's back yard, headlights blazing a bright orange.

Willie looks at the car with concern.

Without addressing the women, he walks out the patio door.

WE CONTINUE to watch from the patio: the women smoking as the sound of the record drains out the sounds outside.

Denny steps out of the driver's seat, while the ratty-haired man from the car that passed Jairus gets out of the passenger seat.

The man mutters something to Willie, which sends him into a visceral rage.

The conversation goes on for a few moments before...

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

The record ends, stuck in a repetitive loop.

Willie's words soar through the screen windows.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

The fuck do you mean you're out?!

The bald man recoils in fear, shrugging and attempting to explain through a stuttering fit.

DENNY

Mike just told me what he said, I don't know what -

WILLIE

I don't give a hell what Jairus told them! It was a goddamn lie!

Willie shoves Denny toward the car door.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

But we ain't gonna fuckin' quit now! So take care of it!

Denny stumbles to the car door and quickly gets inside.

The car pulls quickly out of the yard.

Willie stands silently for a moment before screaming and throwing a lawn chair across the lawn.

He then briefly collects himself and returns to the patio, taking an awkward seat next to the women.

Without speaking, he reaches for the blunt and takes the longest hit imaginable, the spark burning quickly down the roll.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT

Korine, Domo, and J.D. stand behind a large road sign on a quiet, city street.

Domo sprays paint onto the back of the sign, vandalizing it with a red and white crown.

Stevie pulls up on his bike, setting it aside and hustling over to the other boys. He's got one earbud in, and his music plays loudly enough to be heard by the others.

He and Korine greet one another with a brief embrace.

KORINE

Yo Stevie, what took you so long?

STEVIE

I don't know man. Just fuckin' around.

The boys walk over to Domo and J.D.

DOMO

Steve you bring the paint?

STEVIE

Yeah, I got it.

He pulls the spray paint bottle from his backpack and hands it to Domo.

DOMO

Hell yeah, man.

He aims the can at the sign and crowns his masterpiece with a thick layer of silver paint.

LATER

The boys walk down the street, half looking for a new canvas and half killing time.

Up ahead, Stevie notices Dorothy's old house.

KORINE

Oh, shit man. Look at this fucking dump. Don't even look like anyone around here either. Perfect.

The other boys laugh and joke in agreement.

Stevie is more hesitant.

J.D.

Stevie you want this one?

STEVIE

Nah, bro. You good.

Stevie's phone vibrates in his pocket.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Yo one sec, I'll catch up with you
guys.

Hey answers the call.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Hey...what's up?

Cain's voice rings loudly through the phone. He clearly isn't sober.

CAIN
(almost incoherent
mumbling)
Hey, you uh, the fuck you, ha ha,
hey son, I just, wanted to fucking -

CRASH.

The sharp sounds from the phone sting Stevie's ear.

He hangs up angrily and slides his phone back into his pocket.

STEVIE
Yo!

Stevie walks toward the boys at the house.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Give me the paint.

He puts his other earbud in and takes the can from J.D., shaking it aggressively before beginning to paint the house.

LATER

Stevie's creation is large and intricately detailed, a mosaic of grunge and color.

Suddenly, the yard is illuminated behind the boys as a car pulls behind them.

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - NIGHT

Jairus puts his car into park and removes his key from the ignition before noticing the boys in the yard.

JAIRUS
Aw, hell no.

EXT. DOROTHY'S YARD - NIGHT

Stevie pulls an earbud out.

STEVIE

Ey K, what do you think of -

He looks to his left to see the boys running away into the darkness.

He turns to grab his bag, but Jairus grabs him by the collar at the same time.

Without turning toward him, Stevie struggles, clawing at Jairus's arm in an attempt to escape. He breaks loose for a moment before tripping and falling in the yard.

He rolls over and looks up at Jairus.

JAIRUS

The fuck do you think
you're...Stevie?

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - NIGHT

Jairus's car door slams shut.

Stevie sits in the passenger seat, his face filled with a mix of embarrassment and rage.

Jairus puts the key into the ignition before turning to Stevie.

JAIRUS

Boy, the hell made you think that
was a good idea?

STEVIE

(loudly)
I don't know! Alright. I don't
know.

JAIRUS

Well you lucky I didn't call the
goddamn police.

STEVIE

I ain't realize it was yours.

Jairus laughs sarcastically.

JAIRUS
Well you lucky it was. Could've
turned out a hell of a lot worse
for you if it wasn't.

Stevie stares silently out the window.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Man, what you got to be so angry
about anyway?

Stevie says nothing, instead looking down at his hand in his
lap, now caked in fish blood and paint.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Fine. I'll just get you home then.

STEVIE
(quickly and emphatically)
No!

JAIRUS
What you mean, no? What else am I
supposed to do with you?

STEVIE
I just don't want to go there,
alright. Just let me out here, I'll
leave, and I'll, I'll find
somewhere.

Jairus exhales sharply.

JAIRUS
You come and stay with me tonight,
alright. You gon' be back here in
the morning to help me clean this
place up though, cool?

Stevie nods.

INT. JAIRUS'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Dre sits across from Stevie at the table in Jairus's kitchen.
There is a palpable tension in the air as the two wait in
silence for Jairus to join them at the table. Both have a
bowl of cereal in front of them.

Jairus walks over from the stove with a plate of eggs and
bacon and takes a seat at the center of the table between
them.

JAIRUS

Man, the hell is wrong with you two
this morning? Run out of captain
crunch or something?

Dre twirls his cereal around in his bowl with his spoon,
continuing to look at Stevie with pain in his eyes.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Andre, you hear me? I'm gettin'
tired of this silence shit. You
answer me when I ask you a
question.

Dre pushes his bowl toward the center of the table before
standing up from his seat.

DRE

I'm fine.

He walks away to his room.

JAIRUS

(to Dre)

Well alright then, you might as
well start actin' like it!

Jairus drops his head and sighs before eating a heaping
spoonful of eggs.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Stevie go on and get your shoes on,
we 'bout ready to go.

Stevie stands and pours the remaining milk from his cereal
bowl into the sink.

FADE TO:

EXT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE - DAY

Stevie's vandalism is covered by a fresh coat of white as he
rolls a paint-covered roller over the wall.

The new white paint starkly contrasts the worn, faded paint
that covers the rest of the house.

The air is a thick, southern kind of sweet, and sweat beads
roll down Stevie's face.

Jairus brings a new paint can from his car and sets it down
next to Stevie before digging into an ice-filled cooler for a
soda.

JAIRUS

I been needin' to get this done
anyway, man. Been hard to get
anything done lately though.

Stevie continues to roll over the wall, fully absorbed in his work.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

You know, those friends you had
back there, they kind of sucked
man. Ran like mice.

Stevie responds without taking his focus from the wall.

STEVIE

Yeah. They ain't great friends, I
guess.

Jairus pops the tab of a coke can and hands it to Stevie before grabbing one for himself.

JAIRUS

Why you hangin' with 'em then?

Stevie shrugs.

STEVIE

Somethin' to do I guess.

Jairus takes a seat on the cooler and stretches out his legs.

JAIRUS

Ahh. I see. I don't imagine that
could have somethin' to do with
your pops, then?

Stevie sets his roller into the paint tray and takes a drink of soda. The wall is now completely covered in white.

STEVIE

I don't know. Maybe.

Jairus looks down at his watch and taps his foot nervously, searching for a way to respond.

JAIRUS

You know, I could use some extra
help fixin' this place up. If you
want to come by after school some
day and help out, I could use it.
Maybe spot you a little extra cash.

Stevie looks down at his drink, attempting to hide the smile that has crept onto his face.

STEVIE
Yeah...that'd be cool. Thanks.

Jairus offers a toast with his can.

JAIRUS
Gotta look out for your own, right?

Stevie clinks his can and takes a drink.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
I got to ask though, you have any
idea where your pops is? Got to get
you there eventually.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - DAY

Hazel moves her nose down a line of heroin on the picnic table, snorting it clean before leaning back in her seat and laughing playfully.

She sits next to Cain, who is also high, and RAY, a large white man with stained clothes and a pronounced beer belly. Willie sits in the corner of the room and smokes a cigarette.

The table in the shed is littered with dollar bills and baggies.

RAY
Best you're gonna find right there.

Cain's eyes are dilated and bloodshot. He sits back in his seat and exhales calmly.

EXT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE - DAY

Jairus's car pulls into the parking lot of the general store.

He and Stevie step out of the car and close the doors. Laughing can be heard from inside the shed.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - DAY

Hazel turns toward Cain intensely and looks into his eyes.

HAZEL
(laughing)
I love you.

Cain laughs along with her, responding in a false ecstasy.

CAIN
You're so beautiful.

Hazel's eyes shift slowly to the door of the shed.

Cain turns to see Stevie standing in the doorway, backpack in hand.

He stands clumsily.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Where the hell you been boy?

Stevie says nothing.

CAIN (CONT'D)
What, you just gonna run off on
your own now? Huh? 'Cause I didn't
know that's what we were doin' now.

Jairus steps into the doorway behind Stevie.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Aw, shit. So you gon' start takin'
my son now too, huh?

Jairus puts his hand on Stevie's shoulder.

JAIRUS
Come on, Cain. He don't want to
hear this right now.

Cain laughs and stumbles toward Stevie.

CAIN
Oh he don't, don't he? You gon'
speak for yourself son?

STEVIE
(nervously)
I was stayin' with Dre.

Cain's expression becomes more serious all of the sudden, and he leans down to address Stevie face to face.

CAIN
Oh you was, was you? And you
planned on lettin' me know that?

Jairus becomes increasingly defensive.

JAIRUS

Cain he's a fuckin' kid.

Cain stands and gets in Jairus's face.

CAIN

You think I don't know that? I know what he fuckin' is! Ain't need your help to know it either! Fact, you really want to help me out, you can get the hell on out of here.

Jairus takes his hand from Stevie's shoulder. He puts his hands in the air as he backs up slowly.

JAIRUS

Alright, alright. I gotchu.

Stevie turns and looks back at Jairus, clearly afraid.

Jairus looks down at him subtly, makes eye contact, and gives a brief nod.

Suddenly, Willie stands from the corner of the room, emerging from darkness to be illuminated by the window.

WILLIE

Hey Jairus.

Jairus looks afraid.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Have a good weekend, man.

Jairus turns and walks out of the shed, clearly frightened by the experience.

He heads for his car and gets in the driver's seat, taking one last look at the shed before starting his car and pulling away.

WE HOLD on the parking lot, where the black car that passed Jairus before revs to a start and pulls out of the lot behind him.

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - NIGHT

Jairus drives slowly down an empty country road. The road is covered in a dense fog, leaving visibility at a minimum.

Suddenly, his mirrors are illuminated by the flash of brights from a car behind him.

Jairus looks into his rearview mirror, but he can only make out the shape of the headlights.

He continues to drive forward, becoming noticeably more tense.

A few moments later, the car flashes its brights again and lays on its horn.

JAIRUS

Shit, man.

He pulls over to the side of the road.

The other car pulls behind him and turns off its lights. A man gets out of the driver's side of the car and walks toward Jairus. The sounds of his heavy footsteps intensify as he gets closer and closer to the car.

A fist cuts through the fog and knocks on the window.

Jairus cranks the window open cautiously.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Can I help y'all?

A ratty, long-haired man leans down toward the window. He has a thick southern accent.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

Hah. Nah, see, it's us tryin' to help you my man.

JAIRUS

You know I ain't tryin' to play no games tonight.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

It looks like you got a flat tire around back. I just thought it'd be no good drivin' that through the fog. And bein' the kind, God-fearin' citizen that I am, I figured I'd help a friend out. Why don't you come on out and help me check it out?

Jairus looks nervously to his steering wheel, contemplating an escape before turning his key to the off position. He gets out of the car and follows the man toward the trunk.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN (CONT'D)

See, it's just back here.

Jairus rounds the corner of the trunk before...

SMACK.

A crow bar flies through the fog and smashes Jairus in the nose.

EXT. DARK WOODS - NIGHT

Jairus is shaken into consciousness to see the ratty-haired man alongside Martin, who sat with Willie at the bar.

Jairus's face is bruised and blood runs from his nose. He attempts to move but finds himself tied down. Rope is wrapped around his hands and neck. His eyes frantically search for an escape.

The ratty-haired man holds a recorder in front of Jairus's face.

JAIRUS

The fuck is going on?

The ratty-haired man laughs.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

Aw, you caught me. I lied about the tire. But we're good at that around here aren't we?

JAIRUS

I don't know what the hell you're talking about man.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

How cute.

He gently strokes Jairus's cheek.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN (CONT'D)

See, we were real close to pullin' something off around here. And then all of the sudden, people didn't seem interested. We were thinkin', well gee, seems odd. Till we got wind a little somebody might have been spreadin' rumors. So we just wanted to sit down and chat, see if we can't get to the bottom of this, huh?

Jairus continues to struggle.

JAIRUS

You're fuckin' psycho, man!

Martin pulls a knife from his pocket and moves it toward Jairus's face.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

No, no no no. I'm not. But he is.

Martin lunges toward Jairus with the knife, holding it just in front of his right eye.

JAIRUS

Alright, man! I lied, okay?

Jairus is scrambled and gasping for air.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

They, they told me to lie. Told me to shut the union down. Please, I just -

The ratty-haired man smiles.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

Well why on earth would they tell you to do a little thing like that?

JAIRUS

I don't know, alright!

The ratty-haired man takes a long breath to compose himself before lashing out and tightening the rope around Jairus's neck.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

Answer the fucking question, man!

JAIRUS

They're scared! Alright! They're scared. They're scared the union's gonna get too powerful, raise wages, run down profits! That ain't good for nobody though man, I'm telling you! We's just tryin' to get people to see what -

The ratty-haired man takes a seat next to Jairus.

RATTY-HAIRED MAN

(laughing)

See, that's what I love about you upstairs niggers.

(MORE)

RATTY-HAIRED MAN (CONT'D)
Always tryin' to do everything
yourselves, so us uneducated folk
won't have learn how to make
decisions on our own. But y'all
have forgotten that education ain't
really what gives you power, see?

He nods to Martin, who punches Jairus in the face a first,
then a second, then a third time.

JAIRUS
Please -

RATTY-HAIRED MAN
If you don't want your kid endin'
up like you, I'd keep your damn
mouth shut, you hear?

He rears back for a final punch when we ...

CUT TO:

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stevie enters his bedroom in tears, aggressively slamming his
door before throwing his backpack into the wall. A lighter
falls from the pack and bounces onto the carpet floor.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN OVER BLACK:

III. RUST

(December 2008)

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. JAIRUS'S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Snow falls gently over Jairus's apartment complex, shrouding the potholed pavement in every direction.

Jairus scrapes frost from his car with increasing aggression as the thick layers of ice cling stubbornly to his windshield.

His face is noticeably bruised, the space beneath his eyes bagged with green-yellow splotches and his nose bent slightly out of form.

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - MORNING

Jairus takes a drink from his capped cup of coffee as he drives carefully over the cold winter landscape.

A static-filled news station plays quietly over the radio.

MALE NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)

In other news, the Watts
Manufacturing worker strike has now
become the longest in company
history, begging the question: just
how long can each side hold on?

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.)

And Chris, that's a situation that
we'll all be keeping our eyes on
going forward -

Jairus reaches for the radio and changes the channel calmly, selecting a country music station instead.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - MORNING

Jairus's car pulls in to one of the many unfilled spots in the near-empty Watts Manufacturing parking lot.

The black car is one of only a few specks of machinery in the broad, snow-painted lot.

INT. JAIRUS'S OLD BLACK CAR - MORNING

Jairus removes his key from the ignition and grabs his work bag from the back seat before stepping out of the car.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING HALLWAY - MORNING

Jairus flicks on the hallway light and walks toward the factory floor.

The windows that line the halls show the factory operating slowly. Some sections of the floor have been dimly lit by the few workers that remain, and others are not functioning.

INT. JAIRUS'S OFFICE AT WATTS - MORNING

Jairus unlocks his office door, turns on the light, and sits lazily in his desk chair. He looks out over the factory floor, almost all of which can be seen from his window on the second floor.

The lack of movement on the floor starkly contrasts that of the factory a month before. Additionally, almost all of the few workers that remain are black.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING DRESSING ROOM - MORNING

A single locker is open in the dressing room. A picture of Stevie hangs inside.

Cain pulls his work shirt on over his white tank top. His arm is noticeably castless, and his beard far more grizzled.

He then grabs his backpack from the bench next to him and walks into the bathroom, leaving his locker open.

He walks into one of the stalls and closes the door, sitting on the lidded toilet and dropping his backpack on the floor.

He unzips the pack and pulls out a syringe and rubber band, which he ties tightly around his left bicep.

He slides the syringe into his arm and reclines on the toilet in ecstasy, a wave of calmness rushing over his otherwise twitchy limbs.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING SECOND FLOOR - MORNING

Jairus and Russ walk side by side down the balcony overseeing the floor.

Jairus wears an anxious expression as he looks over the factory.

Russ remains in his usual state of calm.

RUSS

I wouldn't worry about too much about production right now. We have enough to keep the cogs moving for now.

Jairus shakes his head in frustration.

JAIRUS

For now? Man, I got guys doin' the work of three or four right now. How long are we going to drag this thing out?

Russ stops and leans over the balcony, gesturing with his hand to the floor.

RUSS

There's a reason why unions are difficult to get off the ground in places like this. You can have all the passion, all the anger. But eventually, everybody got to eat. Pay rent.

He pats Jairus on the shoulder.

RUSS (CONT'D)

The money always wins Jairus. The money always wins.

Jairus sighs, clearly conflicted about the responsibilities of his job.

FADE TO:

INT. BARN - DAY

The sound of Jairus's voice echoes through the rotting walls of a dimly lit barn, this time filled with a large hoard of white workers.

JAIRUS (O.S.)
 "...I lied, okay? They told me to lie! Told me to shut the union down!"

The walls of the barn are filled with jeers and boos.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
 "They're scared, alright? They're scared."

Willie yells from the center of the crowd.

WILLIE
 This, my friends, is not the respect that I was promised! Is this what you were promised?

The crowd answers in a resounding no.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 Is this the Watts that our parents left us? That our brothers and sisters fought to preserve?

More boos echo through the barn.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 And what have we done to deserve this neglect? Open our doors to others? Treat them like friends?

He gestures to the recorder.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 Because this doesn't sound like a friend to me!

An isolated "fuck them!" rises from the bustle of the crowd.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 Friends, sides have been chosen. Those who once promised us unity have abandoned us, and jumped on the opportunity to provide for themselves. I know that it's difficult to leave our home at Watts.

(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)

But we cannot live another day only to suffer! So that our bosses can cheat and lie our families out of a living, and so that our friends can get in bed with our problems for fatter paychecks!

The crowd yells violently in response.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING HALLWAY - EVENING

Now dressed in jeans and his white tank top, Cain walks toward the exit of the factory, backpack in hand.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING FACTORY FLOOR - EVENING

Jairus, who had been shutting down a machine downstairs, sees Cain walk by through the window. He looks to the machine for a moment before setting his clipboard on the machine and running to the hallway.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING HALLWAY - EVENING

Cain continues to walk down the hallway.

Jairus runs from behind to catch up with him.

JAIRUS

Yo, Cain!

Cain ignores Jairus, continuing toward the door at the same pace without hesitation.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Ey, man!

Jairus finally catches up to Cain, just as he reaches the door and steps outside.

He reaches out and grabs Cain by the shoulder.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Man, I got to talk to you!

Cain shoves Jairus's hand from his shoulder and continues to walk toward his car in the parking lot.

CAIN

I ain't got nothin' to talk about.

Cain reaches his car and takes his keys from his pocket. His hand trembles slightly as he struggles to get his car key into the lock.

CAIN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Fuck man.

Jairus leans on the car next to Cain.

JAIRUS
I appreciate you showin' up is all
I'm tryin' to say.

Cain drops his keys on the ground and turns to Jairus in a fit.

CAIN
Well I ain't here for you. I'm here
'cause I can't afford not to be.
That's it, man. I'm just tryin' to
mind my own fuckin' business.

He reaches to the ground and picks up his keys. He tries again to get the key in the door, this time successfully.

JAIRUS
Look, I know you strugglin' with
some stuff right now. We want to
help you out. We can pay for a
rehab program, get you cleaned up.
If you could just try to reach out
to Willie for us -

Cain turns to Jairus and looks directly into his eyes, taking him off guard.

CAIN
A fuckin' rehab program? Are you
fuckin' kidding me? Man, y'all
could've just helped me out, got me
to a fuckin' doctor in the first
place! Don't you see how backwards
that is?

JAIRUS
Come on, I -

CAIN
Jairus, you were our friend man! I
thought you were gonna look out for
us when you got this job! Not bribe
us off like fucking pawns!

Cain gets in his car and slams the door. Jairus just moves his hand out of the doorway.

Jairus yells after the car as Cain pulls away.

JAIRUS
I'm tryin' to help you, man!

INT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Stevie nails drywall onto the exposed wooden frame of Dorothy's living room.

Dre sits in the corner of room next to a ladder and paint tray, carefully painting the trim that lines the floor.

Stevie finishes driving a nail into the drywall before setting the hammer down for a moment and taking a long breath. He looks at Dre in the corner, who appears closed off from the rest of the room.

He hesitates for a moment before stuttering over to him.

STEVIE
I'm sorry I hit you.

Dre stops painting for a moment and looks up at Stevie.

DRE
What?

Stevie sits down on the ground.

STEVIE
Those guys, they just wouldn't stop, man. I couldn't watch them beat on you anymore. I thought, thought if I just hit you, it'd end.

Dre looks down at the floor.

DRE
That hurt.

STEVIE
Look bud, I know I -

Dre stands suddenly in aggression, his eyes welling with tears.

DRE
YOU FUCKING HURT ME!

He throws the brush across the room at Stevie, who just dodges out of the way. White paint splatters against the wall and dots Stevie's face.

STEVIE
Alright! Alright.

Stevie looks over to the entrance to see Jairus standing in the doorway, keys and a fast food bag in hand. He slowly sets the bag on the ground before walking into the room.

JAIRUS
The hell is going on?

Stevie stands nervously.

STEVIE
Nothing, I just -

JAIRUS
Dre, what you cryin' for?

Dre looks over at Stevie.

Jairus is getting increasingly upset, his face reddening with anger.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Son, you answer me when I'm talkin' to you now!

Dre reaches his hand up to his eye and drags his fingers across his once bruised cheek.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
Stevie the one did that to you?

Dre breaks out in tears.

STEVIE
Jairus, I promise I wasn't tryin' -

Jairus points to the door.

JAIRUS
Boy, I swear you got about five seconds to get the hell out of here.

STEVIE
But I -

JAIRUS
Stevie, goddamn it!

Holding back tears himself, Stevie walks past Jairus, bumping him on his way to the door. He slams the door shut as he leaves.

Jairus walks over to Dre and kneels next to him on the ground, embracing him in his large arms.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, son. I'm so sorry.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Stevie quietly opens the door to his mobile home and enters the house to find Cain sitting alone at the kitchen table.

Clearly drunk, he holds a bottle of whiskey and slouches back in his seat.

Stevie stops dead in his tracks.

CAIN
Where you been, son?

Stevie shrugs, desperate to hide the events of the past few hours from his dad.

STEVIE
I just been out.

Cain stands up.

CAIN
Oh, you been out, huh? The hell is
all over your face?

Stevie reaches to his face and pulls his hand away to see white paint smudged on his fingers.

STEVIE
Alright, I, uh, I been over with
Jairus at Dorothy's house. I been
helpin' him fix the place up.

Cain walks slowly toward Stevie.

CAIN
The fuck you just say?

STEVIE
I, I been over with Jairus to -

CAIN

And why the hell you think he need
your help for?

Stevie steps backwards before bumping into the wall behind
him.

STEVIE

I don't know, alright! He said he'd
give me some money if I helped him
out, it was just somethin' to do.

Cain begins to laugh.

CAIN

Of course he fuckin' -

STEVIE

I wasn't doin' anything wrong
alright, I just thought I could
help with the money -

Cain grabs Stevie by the shirt collar.

CAIN

You want to fuckin' help? Huh? Why
don't you get your friend to turn
our heat on, huh? To get us some
food in the goddamn fridge!

Stevie's eyes begin to well with a mix of anger and tears.

STEVIE

Please get away from me.

Cain takes a drink from the whiskey bottle.

CAIN

What's the problem, son? Huh?

STEVIE

I don't want to be around you like
this.

CAIN

Oh, I see. I see, like this. This
is his fuckin' fault you know.

Cain gestures to the bottle.

CAIN (CONT'D)

Why don't you go and ask him next
time you're hangin' out, huh? He'll
tell you.

As Cain takes another drink from the bottle, Stevie finds a moment to escape, breaking free from Cain's grasp and running to his bedroom.

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He locks the door behind him before collapsing onto the floor.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Outside, Cain slouches back into his seat clumsily.

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Now kneeling on his bedroom floor, Stevie screams as loud as he can, allowing his pain to echo off of the walls around him.

His lighter sits on the carpet a few feet away.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - NIGHT

Willie drinks from a bottle of beer as he sits around the fire pit in the shed with a number of co-workers, including Denny, Mike, Cricket, and Ray.

The mood in the room is somber, and the mens' breath hangs in the air due to the cold.

Cricket spits tobacco into a plastic bottle.

CRICKET

Man, if you woulda' told me a couple of months ago that I'd be the only one in here gettin' a paycheck right now, Id'a laughed my ass off at all y'all.

Mike takes a swig from a large beer can.

MIKE

You're tellin' me. Me and Jess had to take out a loan last week just to pay electric, and that ain't gonna last long.

CRICKET

How 'bout you Ray? You and Cass doin' alright?

Ray takes a drag of a cigarette before answering.

RAY

To be honest Crick, we ain't playin' it too well neither. The girls been sick on and off all winter with this cold, and I ain't sure how many more trips to the clinic we can afford.

Willie leans forward and warms his hands over the fire.

WILLIE

I'm tellin' you boys, they wilting over there just as bad as we are. We're fuckin' close to winnin' this thing.

Ray shrugs.

RAY

That may be the case, and I hope it is. But I'm not sure how much longer we're gonna be able to hold out.

MIKE

(to Willie)

I mean, if they're strugglin' as bad as you're sayin', why don't we just go on down to the plant and listen to their offer? If they've heard us, it wouldn't be a total loss.

Willie scoffs at Mike's suggestion.

WILLIE

Man, are you fuckin' kiddin' me? Wouldn't be a loss? We didn't organize a fuckin' worker strike just to let them make all the fuckin' calls!

Ray takes another drag before grabbing his coat.

RAY

Look, I'm not sayin' it's what I wanted. And if you have any other ideas I'm all ears, really, but this is gettin' too hard on the girls.

Ray stands up to leave.

MIKE

I ought to get goin' too, since
 Jess been doublin' up and takin'
 the night shift at work, I gotta
 pick the kids up from their
 grandma's.

As they walk out of the shed, Willie stands and pleads after them.

WILLIE

Guys, come on! Man we're this
 fuckin' close! I can taste it on my
 goddamn lips!

He slumps back onto his stump near the fire, defeated by their apparent lack of resolve.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

(to Denny)

Fuck, man. It's too fuckin' soon.

Denny smokes a cigarette in the corner of the room.

Cricket puts another wad of tobacco under his lip.

CRICKET

Does seem like y'all gone through
 an awful lot of trouble to give up
 now.

Willie leans forward and looks intensely into the fire before downing the rest of his beer.

WILLIE

No, we can't do that. Just need a
 little push. Somethin' to show how
 close we are. Remind them who the
 enemy is.

INT. STEVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stevie's alarm clock reads: 1:21 A.M.

Dressed and out of bed, he grabs his backpack and lighter off of the ground and walks slowly out of his bedroom.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Stevie quietly closes his bedroom door, noticing the lights and sounds of a TV coming from Cain's doorway.

He walks over to the cabinet above the fridge and opens it up, revealing a host of various liquor bottles.

EXT. DARK STREET - NIGHT

Stevie walks cautiously down a dark street, backpack in hand. He takes his mp3 player from his pocket, puts in his earbuds, and turns on a heavy-metal song.

INT. DOROTHY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sitting in Dorothy's recliner, Jairus watches an old black and white movie on the television. Dre lays asleep on his lap.

Jairus looks down at Dre fondly as he squeezes Dre's small hand in his own.

EXT. DARK STREET - NIGHT

Stevie squats to the ground on the street under a large street light, which just illuminates the pavement around him.

He removes his white t-shirt and rips strips of fabric from the waist area before opening his backpack to reveal Cain's liquor bottles inside.

He takes them out one by one, opens them, and dips the fabric inside such that a strip of dry fabric hangs from each bottle.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - NIGHT

Willie is passed out at the picnic table in the shed, his head pinned down to the table like a paperweight. A turned over bottle of beer lies on the table next to him.

EXT. DARK STREET - NIGHT

Stevie takes one of the bottles from the ground and lights the fabric with his lighter. The flame creeps slowly toward the bottle until Stevie heaves it ahead of him.

BOOM.

The light from the explosion illuminates Stevie's pale, shirtless figure in bright hues of red and orange.

The flames catch in his eyes.

He takes another bottle, lights it, and throws it ahead.

BOOM.

The colors of the flames increase in intensity as Stevie becomes more and more angry.

He takes the last bottle, lights it, and throws it with all of his might.

BOOM.

He breathes loudly, exhilarated by the act of arson.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL STORE SHED - NIGHT

Willie picks his head up from the table, sniffing slowly before looking around him to see the room engulfed in flames.

Afraid, he turns toward the open doorway, where he sees Stevie standing shirtless across the street.

EXT. DARK STREET - NIGHT

Stevie makes eye contact with the now awakened Willie. Afraid, he runs down the street into the darkness.

WE HOLD on Willie in the doorway, whose fear transforms into an eerie grin.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. STEVIE'S SHOWER - MORNING

Steam surrounds Stevie, who leans against a wall. His hair and face are covered in ashes.

WE ZOOM OUT to see Stevie in the shower. He washes the ashes from his face as pink morning light streams through his cracked bathroom window and forms beams in the steam.

His mp3 player plays a happy and upbeat song from the sink.

He looks out the window to see Cain setting out corn in his work uniform.

EXT. CAIN'S YARD - MORNING

Cain carries a bag of corn from the woods to his shed. Polly follows close behind.

INT. CAIN'S SHED - MORNING

Once inside, he tosses the bag of kernels onto his aluminum-legged worktable and sits on a wooden stool nearby.

An old radio plays from a bench in the corner of the shed.

Cain rubs his eyes with his dirt-covered hands, clearly too busy nursing his hangover from the night before to care, before grabbing a beer bottle from the table and taking a drink.

He looks down at his watch, which reads 7:55.

CAIN

Damn Pol, looks like we got to go.

He takes the beer bottle from the table and stands to leave, but trips over the table as he heads for the door, knocking one of the aluminum legs crooked.

He stumbles forward, catching himself before continuing to walk out of the shed.

The bag of corn slides subtly down the now off-balance tabletop, allowing a few kernels of corn to fall to the ground.

INT. HIGGS GENERAL HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Willie lays still in a hospital bed, a white gauze bandage covering half of his face.

A police officer sits in a chair next to the bed, taking notes on a clipboard as she talks to Willie.

The room is empty and sterile. A single, flickering fluorescent light hangs from the ceiling.

POLICE OFFICER

And did you see who threw the
bottles?

Willie slowly adjusts his head to face her, wincing tenderly as he turns.

WILLIE

Well, yeah, uh. It was dark, so, you know, not perfect. But it looked to me like, uh, two black dudes. About yay high, I'd say.

He holds his hand above him to approximate a height.

The officer writes his observations in her notebook.

POLICE OFFICER

And do you have any idea why someone might have done this?

Willie begins to lean further in to the theatrics.

WILLIE

Well, no, I couldn't imagine why - well, no, it couldn't be that.

The police officer looks at him sternly.

POLICE OFFICER

Sir, if you have any information that could be of use in this investigation, I ask that you please turn it over.

WILLIE

Well, tensions been real high since we started the worker strike, you know. The guys at the factory been real upset. But I don't know, I'm sure they wouldn't of done something like that.

The police officer sets the clipboard down on her lap.

POLICE OFFICER

Well we'll just have to see. We appreciate it Willie.

Willie smiles before turning and once again wincing in pain.

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - MORNING

Cain eats a granola bar as he drives his truck down the road on his way to work.

He comes around a corner to hear sirens and see lights flashing in the distance.

As he gets closer to the commotion, he realizes that the emergency vehicles are parked outside of the store, including multiple police cars and fire trucks.

CAIN

Shit..

He pulls his truck to the side of the road and walks toward the store.

Firemen spray the charred remains of the shed and store with water, and smoke and steam saturate the air around it.

Police officers have the area around the shed taped in, and scour the ground for evidence.

As Cain gets closer to the buildings, a fireman runs over and grabs him.

FIREMAN

Sir, this area hasn't been cleared yet, we're gonna have to ask you to stand back.

Cain's face develops a look of terror.

CAIN

No, wait you don't understand, I've got -

The fireman continues to hold Cain back.

FIREMAN

Sir, we're going to have to ask you to return to your vehicle, alright?

Cain struggles to break free, but the fireman's grasp is too tight.

He pushes himself off of the fireman and turns aggressively back toward his truck, now shaking anxiously.

CAIN

Fuck off me, man!

Baldie walks toward him from the street and holds out a hand.

BALDIE

Cain, are you good -

Cain bumps into Baldie, knocking him out of the way without a word, and continues to walk to his truck.

Baldie watches as Cain gets in his truck, slams the door, and pulls a tight u-turn before peeling away.

INT. HAZEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hazel and Honey lay together on Hazel's bed, looking up at the wobbly ceiling fan as they talk. The room is filthy and piled up with clothes.

HONEY

You ever meet Jerry, that blond who works down at the meat market?

HAZEL

Sure, I know him.

HONEY

Well I used to have the hots for him, you know. Thought he looked like a surfer, made me feel like I was on the beach.

Hazel laughs.

HAZEL

So what?

HONEY

Well I used to go down to the store a lot, buy a lot of salami, pork chops, ham. Barbecue, sometimes, just to get a look at him. But then one time I was talkin' to my friend Stacey, who was friends with his little sister, and it turns out a few years prior he got his junk caught up in some rocks while he was cliff jumpin'. Tore the whole thing right off!

HAZEL

Shit...the whole thing?

HONEY

Yeah, ain't it a shame? Couldn't get meats anymore without thinkin' about it.

HAZEL

Hah. The beach is overrated anyway.

Through Hazel's bedroom window, the girls see Cain's truck pull up to the curb. He gets out of the truck aggressively, slamming the door as he walks up to the house.

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Honey why don't you go on in your room, alright?

Cain knocks loudly on the door.

HONEY
I'm good babe, you go on and talk to him.

Cain continues to knock.

CAIN
HAZEL!!

Hazel becomes more frantic as she ushers Honey out of the room.

HAZEL
Not askin' hon, go on.

Honey reluctantly stands and leaves the room. Hazel takes a second to compose herself before going to the door.

INT. HAZEL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hazel yells to Cain through the screen door.

HAZEL
You better have a good reason showin' up actin' like this.

CAIN
Just open the damn door!

She cautiously unlocks the door, allowing Cain to barge in to the living room.

He grabs her by the shoulders and stares intensely into her eyes as he talks.

CAIN (CONT'D)
The store, it's gone.

Hazel chuckles.

HAZEL
What do you mean it's gone? It can't be gone.

CAIN
Hazel it's burned to the fuckin'
ground! Scorched! Alright?

Hazel struggles to make sense of the news.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Look, I need some of your stash.
Where is it.

Hazel appears dumbfounded.

HAZEL
I ain't got a stash...everything
was there.

Cain's eyes are twitchy and aggressive.

CAIN
The fuck do you mean everything?

Hazel sits on her couch in disbelief.

HAZEL
I mean everything. I don't have any
more, alright?

Cain walks to the couch angrily.

CAIN
Hazel don't play games with me.

HAZEL
No, I swear, I -

CAIN
Where the fuck is it!

HAZEL
Cain, I -

Suddenly, Honey appears behind Cain, pistol cocked and loaded.

Noticing Hazel's eyes shifting behind him, he turns slowly and puts his hands in the air.

HONEY
Get the fuck out of the house.

Cain tries to become more composed.

CAIN
Come on now, that's not -

HONEY

Cain!

He backs carefully toward the door, opens it, and steps outside, closing it slowly behind him.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Frost creeps up the windows of Cain's truck as the night becomes colder and colder. A light layer of snow coats the ground.

Cain sits in the driver's seat of his truck. He grasps the steering wheel in his hands with all his strength, as though he would sink into the ground if not for its presence.

The truck remains on, and the red/orange glow of its headlights reflect off of the white walls of his mobile home to cast his figure in a deep red tint.

He looks ahead crazily, as though his longing might somehow impact his reality, and screams loudly. His cold breath fills the truck like smoke.

Cain's gaze is interrupted by the whimpers of Polly from outside, who scratches at the door and whines for Cain's presence.

He opens the door gently and gestures for her to jump up on his lap. She does so happily, resting her head lovingly across his thighs.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

A large, angry crowd of people stands in the parking lot of Watts Manufacturing, yelling loudly toward the factory doors. Still composed of the white employees of the factory, the crowd is larger than it has ever been.

They hold signs and throw rocks toward the factory, screaming profanities and heckling employees as they cross the picket line to go to work.

Willie stands in the bed of a large truck parked in front of the crowd. Though he is dressed in street clothes, half of his face remains bandaged and his right arm is in a sling.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING SECOND FLOOR - DAY

From the balcony window that overlooks the parking lot, Jairus looks sullenly at the crowd.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

Willie yells to the crowd as people continue to gather.

WILLE

We have been taken advantage of for the last time! This company has taken our safety, taken away our dignity, and now, even, entered our places of sanctuary and come for our lives!

The crowd screams in discontent.

WILLIE

But we will not be pawns any longer! We will not continue to remain indifferent to our own suffering, as our home is taken from us by people who were never here to begin with!

As Willie continues to talk, Cain walks up to the back of the crowd, joining the protestors in their effort.

INT. WATTS MANUFACTURING SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Jairus continues to watch from the window.

Suddenly, Russ walks out from the shadows behind him to join him at the window, leaning next to him as he talks.

JAIRUS

I just don't see how this happened, man.

RUSS

I should be asking you the same question, shouldn't I?

Jairus turns to Russ, offended at the implication.

JAIRUS

Man, what are you tryin' to say?

Russ remains calm.

RUSS

These were your people, were they not? I don't think that it's much of a secret that we brought you up here to deal with them, is it?

JAIRUS

You brought me up here to do what was best for the company.

Russ sneers.

RUSS

Yes. And in this case, we had hoped that the two would go hand in hand. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem that we were correct in our assessment, does it?

Jairus looks angrily out the window.

RUSS (CONT'D)

It's a shame, too. A lot of families will hurt for it.

Jairus turns in confusion.

JAIRUS

Well...what do you mean? I mean, they've held out. They're doing it.

Russ chuckles.

RUSS

They have...haven't they? Hmm. Quite touching, really. Unfortunately, ownership has decided to sell. The profit is no longer worth the struggle I'm afraid. What becomes of them is no longer in our hands.

Jairus pauses for a beat as a look of defeat clouds his eyes.

JAIRUS

All those people, man...

Russ turns his attention from the window to Jairus.

RUSS

Oh, it's not just them. The entire
employee base at Watts will
be...reevaluated.

A fire lights in Jairus's expression.

JAIRUS

What you say?

RUSS

Well surely you didn't think they'd
be partial.

JAIRUS

Man, you told me the guys I kept
out would be safe, that our jobs
would be okay!

RUSS

And I wish that that were the case,
I really do. But rest assured,
we'll be able to find room for you
in the transition.

Jairus turns angrily.

JAIRUS

Are you fucking kidding me?

Russ's face remains serious.

Jairus becomes increasingly volatile as the reality of his
position begins to set in.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Fuck. Man, fuck! I can't believe
you! I can't believe that I trusted
you!

Jairus turns and begins to walk away down the hall.

RUSS

(shouting calmly after
him)

Jairus, if you walk out that door,
your future here is over!

Jairus throws up his middle finger and proceeds down the
stairs.

EXT. WATTS PARKING LOT - DAY

WE ZOOM OUT from the window, where Russ continues to look over the crowd, to see the workers continue to yell and fight.

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Stevie eats a cup of microwave mac n' cheese as he sits next to the fire place in the living room, his breath visible in the cold mobile home. The fire rages over a few half-baked logs, giving off a bright orange light.

Stevie has a brown cotton blanket wrapped around his shoulders, which he uses to supplement the heat of the fire. A few fresh logs sit next to the fire for extra fuel.

Suddenly, the sound of a closing truck door rattles the room. Stevie looks anxiously to the door, where the lock begins to rattle before Cain enters the room.

Stevie stands and looks at his father, afraid.

Cain looks back to him, sober and defeated.

As Cain walks toward the living room, Stevie recoils slightly in defense.

CAIN
Hey, Stevie.

Stevie nods reluctantly.

CAIN (CONT'D)
You okay son?

Stevie pulls a his blanket tighter around his shoulders.

STEVIE
Yeah, Dad. I'm okay.

Cain sits on the floor next to Stevie and warms his tremoring hands over the fire.

Stevie looks over to his father before responding in turn.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Are you okay, Dad?

Cain looks into the fireplace painfully.

CAIN
Well, we'll see bud. We got to see.

The men sit silently for a moment, both wrestling with their own forms of trauma.

CAIN (CONT'D)
It's a cold night, ain't it?

Stevie nods, and even offers a faint smile.

STEVIE
Yeah, it is.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. CAIN'S MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Stevie lies on the ground next to the fireplace, where he fell asleep the night before. He is still wrapped in his blanket, and his empty bowl of mac n' cheese sits on the floor in front of him.

The fire has gone out, leaving only a few glowing embers in the fireplace. Stevie sits up, at which point his breath becomes noticeably visible.

He looks to the pile of logs next to the fireplace, which has dwindled to one. He tosses it in the fireplace before standing to go outside.

EXT. CAIN'S YARD - MORNING

Stevie walks over to the firewood bin behind the mobile home, only to find that it is also empty.

He turns to walk to the shed for an ax, but stops in his tracks when he sees blood leaking from the doorway onto the white snow.

He approaches the shed cautiously, at which point he hears a quiet whimper. He opens the door to see the work table collapsed on the floor.

Kernels of corn are scattered throughout the shed, and under the collapsed corner of the table lies Polly - pinned by her leg to the cold floor.

EXT. CAIN'S TRUCK - MORNING

Wearing only jeans, a t-shirt, and a light brown jacket, Cain drives his truck toward the factory.

He pulls into the lot to find it mostly empty. The few cars in the lot are already leaving, and a few people walk from the factory doors back to the parking lot.

He gets out of his truck and stumbles quickly toward the factory through the snow.

A few employees walk past him on their way back to the parking lot, but seem disappointed and disinterested in his presence.

CAIN
Hey, what's going on?

The men walk by without addressing Cain.

RUDE MAN
(to his friend)
Bullshit, man.

Now even more curious, Cain picks up his pace and gets up close to the door. There is a small crowd of employees, including Darius and Rasheed, standing next to the door.

DARIUS
I can't believe they gon' pull this
shit on us man. God damn.

Cain pushes his way through the crowd to get a look at the doors.

On the door hangs a single sheet of copy paper on which is printed a note from management.

It reads: BEGINNING ON THIS DAY DECEMBER 23, 2008, WATTS MANUFACTURING OF HIGGS, OHIO WILL BE PLACED UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP. ALL REMAINING EMPLOYEES WILL BE PLACED ON INDEFINITE LEAVE AS WE UNDERGO THIS TRANSITION. PLEASE STAY POSTED REGARDING A SEVERANCE. CONTACT MANAGER JAIRUS ROBINSON WITH QUESTIONS.

Cain backs away from the door, shocked.

He turns sullenly, sifts back through the crowd, and trudges back through the snow to his truck.

EXT. CAIN'S SHED - DAY

Stevie sits on the ground next to Polly, who continues to whimper as her leg bleeds onto the snow.

He has moved the table off of her, but she is still in too much pain to move.

He steadily wraps a torn rag around her leg in an attempt to stop the bleeding.

STEVIE

It's okay, girl. I know it hurts, I know. It's okay.

He ties the rag tightly, causing Polly to wince.

STEVIE (CONT'D)

We'll be okay, girl. We'll be okay.

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - DAY

Cain drives through town on his way home from the factory, his entire being worn by the news of his firing.

He looks quietly out his window as buildings and trees fly by in a blur, until he spots something on the side of the road.

Filling up her SUV with fuel at a small gas station is Crystal, the woman who stole Cain's pills a couple of months before.

CAIN

Hey...HEY!

He pulls off of the road and jumps out of his truck in a fit of rage.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

CAIN

Hey, you!

Crystal looks over at him unsuspectingly.

CRYSTAL

(to herself)

Oh, fuck.

She struggles to get the gas pump out of the tank as quickly as possible, but Cain catches up to her and grabs her arm before she can get back in her car.

CAIN

You fuckin' owe me for those pills!

Crystal struggles unsuccessfully to break free from his grip.

CRYSTAL

I, I don't know what you're talking about!

CAIN

Bullshit!

Cain pushes the woman up against the car aggressively, causing her to cry out in pain.

A few people have gotten out of their cars, and they look toward Cain and Crystal apprehensively.

A large man with a receding hairline dials 911 to request support.

INT. POOL HALL - DAY

Jairus sits on a stool at the bar of the pool hall. He toys with a glass of whiskey on the counter.

Dre sits on a stool next to him, struggling to reach over the counter to drink his soda.

Jairus downs the whiskey in one gulp before pushing the glass across the counter to the bartender GENE.

GENE

Tough day, J?

Jairus laughs sarcastically.

JAIRUS

Man. You got no idea.

GENE

(laughing)

I'm sure I don't. You want another?

Jairus stands and takes his coat out from underneath him.

JAIRUS

Not today, Gene.

He slides a \$20 down the counter.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Dre, go on and finish your drink now. It's time to go.

Dre takes a large sip of his soda before waving goodbye to the bartender.

DRE
Bye, Mr. Gene.

GENE
See you soon, bud.

EXT. POOL HALL - DAY

Jairus and Dre exit the pool hall and walk into the parking lot.

Jairus hears yelling from the gas station across the street, and turns to see Cain's truck on the side of the road.

JAIRUS
Dre, go on and get in the car now.
Here, take my keys. Stay in there
'till I come back okay?

DRE
Okay.

Jairus kneels down and grabs his shoulders.

JAIRUS
You promise me you'll stay in that
car.

DRE
I promise.

Jairus hurries across the street, leaving Dre behind with the keys.

Dre walks over to the car and gets in the passenger seat, taking care to lock the doors around him.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Cain holds Crystal on the ground, shouting at her aggressively.

CAIN
You stole my pills, damn it! You
stole my fucking pills!

Suddenly, Cain flies off of Crystal, rolling across the parking lot as Jairus powerfully shoves him off.

JAIRUS
(to Crystal)
You go on ahead and get out of
here, okay?

She nods and gets in her car.

Cain stands and runs after the car.

CAIN
Wait! Goddamn it, wait!

Cain wipes dirt from his face before turning to Jairus.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Man, when the hell are you gonna
learn how to stay out of my fuckin'
life!

He runs to Jairus and shoves him violently.

CAIN (CONT'D)
The one time I needed you, you
weren't there! The one fuckin'
time! I ain't never asked you to
take care of my kid!

He shoves Jairus again.

Jairus remains calm.

JAIRUS
Cain, go on and stop this right
now, alright?

CAIN
Ain't never asked you to tell me
how to live my life! Ain't never
asked you to get me no fuckin'
rehab, man!

JAIRUS
Come on Cain, lets talk about this!

Cain throws a punch at Jairus, but Jairus ducks out of the
way.

CAIN
Can't you see? All I want is
happiness, man! All I ever wanted
was to mind my own goddamn
business! I come to work every day,
I take care of my kid!

Cain throws another punch, this time hitting Jairus square in the jaw. He stumbles backward, surprised at the strength of the blow.

JAIRUS

Cain, man, I asked you to fuckin' stop!

CAIN

And I get fuckin' fired!

Cain swings another punch, but Jairus grabs his arm and twists Cain onto the ground, snapping the arm like a twig.

Cain screams out in pain.

JAIRUS

Goddamn it, man! Can't you see I was tryin' to help you!

Jairus drives his fist into Cain's nose.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

I asked you to fucking stop!

He throws another punch.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Why wouldn't!

Punch.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

You just!

Punch.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Fucking!

Punch.

JAIRUS (CONT'D)

Listen!

CAIN

Wait!

Jairus thrusts his fist into Cain's jaw one last time, separating it from his skull. A pool of blood surrounds his head.

Jairus stands slowly to see a large crowd of people surrounding him in the parking lot. They wear shocked expressions as they watch fearfully.

Red and blue lights flash on Jairus's face as he stands in the middle of the crowd.

JAIRUS

No, wait -

His face drenched in fear, he looks toward his car in the pool hall parking lot.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE FIELD - DAY

A large, empty cornfield bakes under the hot summer sun.

SUPER (AS IF BEING TYPED ON A TYPEWRITER): JULY 2012

EXT. POND - DAY

Ripples spread through a pond as wind speckles the blue water with leaves. A turtle pops its head up from the depths for air.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

A couple of doe graze on the side of an empty country road.

Suddenly, Cain's truck flies through the frame, country music playing through the open windows.

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - DAY

Driving the truck is Stevie, who is now seventeen. His hair is longer than before, but he's maintained his skater persona.

Sitting in the passenger seat is Hazel, who is dressed in a waitress uniform. She looks silently out the window as they drive.

Polly lays quietly in the space between them.

Stevie takes a pack of cigarettes from the dash, removes a cigarette, and puts it in his mouth.

He then grabs a lighter from one of the cupholders and lights the cigarette, blowing the smoke out the window.

Hazel looks over to him, surprised.

HAZEL

What, you smokin' now?

Stevie continues to look forward at the road.

STEVIE

Yeah, I guess. Sometimes.

Hazel snickers and nods semi-sarcastically.

HAZEL

Hm.

They return to their silence for a few moments before Stevie asks a question in turn.

STEVIE

You still part time down there?

She gestures to her badge, which reads MANAGER.

HAZEL

No, I'm a manager now, actually.

Stevie nods and takes another drag of his cigarette.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

(apologetically)

I usually have a co-worker pick me up, but, anyways, thanks.

STEVIE

Sure.

He takes his cigarette from his mouth and offers it to Hazel.

She waves it off.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The truck pulls up to the curb of a small barbecue restaurant.

INT. CAR - DAY

Stevie jams the gearshift into the park position.

Hazel puts her hand on the door to leave before turning back toward Stevie one last time.

HAZEL

I know it's been a minute...but
that futon in the spare bedroom
still got your name on it, if you
ever need it.

Stevie smiles.

STEVIE

Thanks.

Hazel smiles sheepishly before stepping out of the car and walking to the restaurant.

Stevie leans his head back in his seat, taking another long drag of his cigarette before flicking it out the window and shifting back into drive.

INT. CAIN'S TRUCK - EVENING

Stevie drives through town on his way home. His windows are open, and the warm summer air blows his long hair behind him.

He looks out the window to see Dorothy's old house, now overgrown with weeds and foreclosed.

He initially drives past the house before pulling a u-turn and parking on the curb outside it.

EXT. DOROTHY'S PORCH - EVENING

Stevie pulls the wooden board, now rotting away, from the window.

He steps through the window into the living room to find the house almost unchanged.

INT. DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

He looks around the room to see things as he left them. The back wall is still stained by a white paint splotch, and the brush that Dre threw at him sits on the ground below.

He walks to the corner of the room, where his hammer sits on the middle step of a ladder. He takes a nail from a box on the ladder, holds it against the now broken drywall, and hits it with the hammer.

He hits it again, this time harder and with more aggression.

His expression shifts from stoic to pained as he continues to bash the nail into the drywall.

He hits the wall until the nail is firmly buried inside, and keeps hitting, creating hole after hole in the drywall.

His eyes begin to well with tears.

EXT. PARK BASKETBALL COURT - DAY (EARLIER)

A group of boys play a heated game of pickup ball. At the center of the group is Dre, who is now much taller.

He dribbles the ball toward the basket with impressive speed, pushing off of another boy near the rim before drilling a fadeaway jump shot.

DRE

That's game, boys.

He walks over to the boy on the ground and offers him a hand, lifting him from the ground before shaking hands.

DRE (CONT'D)

Ey, good game bro.

The boy laughs sarcastically.

BOY

You gon' get one in the chest for that push off next game though.

Dre dribbles the ball through his legs and turns toward the fence.

DRE

(over his shoulder)

You keep talkin'.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Dre dribbles the ball down the sidewalk on his way home, carefully spinning around cracks and stop signs as he maneuvers down the street.

He dribbles past Dorothy's old house as well, initially ignoring it before noticing a light shining through the window.

He stops and looks curiously at the house before picking up his ball and walking toward it.

INT. DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Stevie continues to slam the hammer into the drywall, creating a large hole where the nail used to be.

He is now crying intensely and screaming as he hits the wall.

Suddenly, Dre appears and restrains Stevie from behind, holding his arms tight against his side.

DRE

Ey!

Stevie struggles through the embrace and throws the hammer into the wall.

DRE (CONT'D)

Stevie, man stop!

Finally, Stevie stops struggling and falls against the wall, leaning his tear stained cheeks against his arm as he continues to weep.

Dre picks the hammer up from the ground and sets it back on the ladder.

DRE (CONT'D)

Bro, if I'd known we were gonna
tear this place up, I woulda' been
here sooner.

Stevie takes a deep breath and wipes his eyes before laughing quietly.

STEVIE

I'm sorry, man.

He leans back against the wall and looks at Dre, who now stands eye to eye beside him.

DRE

(empathetically)

Nah...man. Sometimes a thought just
catch me. Tie a rope around my head
and pull me up so far from reality,
it feel like I'm floatin'.

The boys stand for a moment in silence.

DRE (CONT'D)
I got this trick I use though, when
I get lost up there.

He pulls the silver dollar out of his pocket and flicks it to Stevie.

DRE (CONT'D)
I just give it a rub, feel the way
it felt. Let it pull me back down.

Stevie rubs his thumb across the coin.

STEVIE
You still got this?

Dre laughs.

DRE
Yeah...found it in the parking lot
once after class.

Dre leans against the wall next to Stevie.

DRE (CONT'D)
I used to go down there a lot, just
sit. Think. I'd try to put myself
in those walls, feel what they was
feeling. After a while, just
sittin' there, you start to hear
them. Like they speakin' to you.

Stevie flicks the coin back to Dre.

He takes a cigarette out of his pocket and lights it.

STEVIE
You think this place woulda' ever
got fixed?

Dre laughs.

DRE
I don't know man.

He takes the hammer from the ladder and tosses it back to Stevie.

DRE (CONT'D)
Never too late, though.

Stevie grins.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.