

BLACK LIGHTNING

Written by

Salim Akil

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. WATTS POLICE STATION - NIGHT

JEFFERSON PIERCE (40s) dressed in his well tailored black tux, looks out of place sitting alone in this Watts police station with a look of concern etched on his face. A NEWSCASTER on the television attached to the wall is reporting protests, some violent, that have been happening since the recent killing of an unarmed black man by the LAPD. A WATTS MOTHER, dressed in her Metro uniform, gives her opinion to a local news station.

WATTS MOTHER

The ONE HUNDRED shot and killed my son right out here ten months ago. My baby wasn't in no gang, he had a job with the city and a little boy. If we ain't killing each other with this gang banging, the police killing us. It's a shame.

The news program cuts to an older Watts resident who remembers the days of Black Lightning.

WATTS RESIDENT #7

They didn't have to shoot that brother like that, he was running away. We didn't have all this when Black Lightning was around. We had our problems but not like it is now. I ain't saying he was perfect but Black Lightning actually gave a damn. Now they just leave us here to do for ourselves.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON (50), made somewhat handsome by age, appears on the television.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

There is no dash cam or body cam footage of the incident but we are investigating vigorously. I want to be clear though, we will not tolerate rioting, looting or violence.

A local NEWSCASTER talks to the viewers.

NEWSCASTER

Many Watts residents say they have lost faith in Inspector Henderson, a twenty-three year veteran of the LAPD. He came up through the Rampart Division with his fierce opposition to civil vigilantes and became the first Mexican-American to hold his position...

The DESK SERGEANT angrily turns the T.V. Off.

DESK SERGEANT

One day I wish these assholes would give us credit for all the "black lives" we've saved in WATTS.

The Desk Sergeant cuts his eyes at Jefferson but Jefferson doesn't bite. Jefferson switches his attention to the wanted posters on the wall, some new, some old. One poster in particular catches his eye, it's a nine year old sketch of Black Lightning. It reads: BLACK LIGHTNING, WANTED FOR THE MURDER OF EARL CLIFFORD.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: WATTS 2008

INT. GARFIELD HIGH/HALLWAY - NIGHT

C.U. on Black Lightning, it's clearly been a battle, a spot of blood soaks the mask that covers his face, the hint of a golden light in his eyes fades and dimly returns as he tries to get up off his hands and knees.

Five members of Watt's notorious gang the ONE HUNDRED are also in the hallway. Four of them lay on the floor unconscious and smoldering. The fifth one struggles to stand up before Black Lightning does. Both men make it to their feet. As he absorbs the energy around him, the subtle glow in Black Lightning's eyes grows stronger and causes the florescent lights above him to flicker. The two men rush each other, their hand to hand combat is fierce. Black Lightning's martial arts style of fighting serves him well but his opponent is no pushover. Black Lightning, depleted, manages to summon his powers which make his blows look like he's hitting his opponent with two thousand volt defibrillating fists. The current makes the man convulse, sending him crashing into a trophy case.

Black Lightning gathers himself, makes his way to the end of the hallway and opens the double doors to the gym.

INT. GARFIELD HIGH GYM - DAY

He looks up and sees the teenage boy mentioned in the wanted poster, EARL CLIFFORD. He's tied to the backboard of the basketball goal, like a crucifixion. As Black Lightning stares up at Earl, a drop of blood falls from his drenched mask onto the floor. Black Lightning slowly pulls off his mask and we reveal that Jefferson Pierce IS Black Lightning.

ANISSA (PRE-LAP)

Dad.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. WATTS POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Jefferson's thoughts are interrupted by his daughter ANISSA (22), a brown-skinned beauty with intense eyes and a quick mind. She's clearly just been released from jail. Their eyes meet, hers a bit tired, his full of relief.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSON'S CAR - NIGHT

As he drives, the silence is heavy, Jefferson can sense the halo of anger around Anissa.

JEFFERSON

So you looked at your schedule tonight and it said, protest the One Hundred or attend Garfield High's Fund-raiser. And you figured it was best to choose the path that leads to you getting arrested?

ANNISA

It wasn't a choice, dad.

JEFFERSON

No, it was a choice, Annisa.

ANISSA

I should have never been arrested. It was a peaceful protest.

JEFFERSON

Burning police cars, breaking windows, yeah that's the definition of peaceful.

ANISSA

I guess it depends on what your definition of peace is. People in Watts haven't had peace with police or the gangs in generations.

JEFFERSON

"Non-violence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time: the need for man to overcome oppression and violence. Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation for such method is love."

Jefferson looks at Anissa, anticipating a response. This is a game they play which keeps the debates respectful.

ANISSA

Martin Luther King Jr. (beat) "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired."

JEFFERSON

Fannie Lou Hamer.

In his rearview mirror, Jefferson notices the blue lights on top of a police car light up the night.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

This night just keeps getting better.

Jefferson pulls his car to the curb, the LAPD pull their car close behind his.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. JEFFERSON'S CAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

TWO OFFICERS approach Jefferson's car, their hands on their guns. Their flashlights, pointed in Jefferson and Anissa's eyes, are blinding.

OFFICER #1

Step out of the car.

JEFFERSON
Officer, my name is...

Officer #1 ignores Jefferson and opens his car door.

OFFICER #1
Get out please.

Jefferson gets out of the car as Anissa watches. Jefferson speaks through his frustration.

JEFFERSON
This is getting out of hand, it's
the third time this month I've been
pulled over.

Jefferson is immediately pushed against his car and handcuffed. Anissa begins to protest.

ANISSA
What are you doing!?

Anissa, still in the passenger seat, moves to pick up her phone and start video taping what's going on but Officer #2, on the passenger side of the car, pulls his gun.

OFFICER #2
Don't move!

Jefferson panics.

JEFFERSON
Stop! Don't shoot!

Jefferson is thrown on the hood of the police car but still manages to speak.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)
Anissa put your hands on the
dashboard!

ANISSA
I have the right--

JEFFERSON
Dammit Anissa, do it now!

Anissa stares down the barrel of the gun, the anger in her eyes palpable, but she does as she's told. She looks Officer #2 in his eyes, takes note of his brown skin. Anissa speaks in Spanish, we see subtitles.

ANISSA

So he's the overseer and you're the slave, huh?

OFFICER #2

Lucky for you, I don't speak Spanish.

Officer #1 pulls Jefferson to the back of the police car where we see a KOREAN WOMAN sitting in the back seat, she takes a good look at Jefferson and shakes her head no. The Officer walks Jefferson back to his car and unlocks the handcuffs. Jefferson is livid.

JEFFERSON

You're not going to tell me what all this is about?

OFFICER #1

Have a good night, Sir.

JEFFERSON

I asked you a question.

The officer takes offense to Jefferson's tone, he turns and looks Jefferson up and down.

OFFICER #1

Nice monkey suit.

JEFFERSON

What did you just say?

The officer's smile is subtle but it speaks volumes. He's close to his limit and Jefferson knows it. The street lights begin to flicker, but no one flinches. It gives the night a surreal ambiance.

OFFICER #1

I said, nice monkey suit.

The two men stare each other down until the officer chuckles, then heads back to the squad car. Jefferson looks at his daughter, she's okay and that's what counts. As the lights continue to flicker, Jefferson's eyes begin to turn the same golden hazel we saw in the flash back. His anger is palpable. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes, when he opens them the color in his eyes are back to normal.

THE TITLE SLOWLY FADES UP OVER THE IMAGE -

"BLACK LIGHTNING"

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. GARFIELD HIGH GYM - NIGHT

The FOX news logo and theme song fills the screen as local Los Angeles news anchor TONY MCEWING's profile of JEFFERSON and GARFIELD HIGH SCHOOL puts everything and everyone in context. Tony, looking into the camera, begins his profile.

TONY MCEWING

For the last nine years, Watts' predominant gang, The One Hundred, have been winning the war against the LAPD and its citizens. Thirty-seven shootings in a weekend, graduation rates at an all time low, Watts, a stone's throw away from the riches of Hollywood, is in crisis.

The profile cuts from Tony to Jefferson as he walks the halls of GARFIELD HIGH talking to his students.

TONY MCEWING (V.O.)

But under the leadership of Principal Jefferson Pierce, Garfield High is an oasis of hope in this neglected neighborhood. One of the roughest parts of South Central Los Angeles.

Video of Jefferson receiving his gold Medal light up the screen.

TONY MCEWING (V.O.)

A three time Gold Medal winner in the decathlon, Jefferson Pierce is a father figure for his students and hero to the community.

The package cuts from the file footage of Jefferson to Tony looking into the camera as he stands outside of Garfield High.

TONY MCEWING

With a graduation rate in the nineties, Jefferson does it all with the help of his family.

Video of Anissa teaching a class at Garfield High.

TONY MCEWING (V.O.)
His daughter Anissa, is in medical school and teaches three days a week as the school's health educator and...

Footage of Jennifer setting herself in her sprinting blocks.

TONY MCEWING (V.O.)
...his younger daughter JENNIFER is a scholar athlete at Garfield, just like her father was.

Back to the profile. Tony McEwing talks directly into the camera.

TONY MCEWING
But with decreased funding and increased violence, will the community be able to depend on Jefferson Pierce and Garfield High to continue to provide an oasis of knowledge and safety to a city in crisis? Only time will tell. But with your support, I think the answer just may be yes.

As the screen goes black, the lights come up in the gym and the donors applaud. Tony, now live and in person, stands on stage at a microphone.

TONY MCEWING (CONT'D)
Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome to the stage Principal Jefferson Pierce.

The audience begins to applaud, Jefferson walks onto the stage and steps to the mic. He scans the audience for a moment. A hint of concern crosses his face but he keeps it to himself. He leans into the mic.

JEFFERSON
Where is the future?

All the Garfield High Students in the audience, at different tables around the room, stand like soldiers. They look beautiful in their uniforms. Girls in sweaters and ties with plaid skirts. Boys in jackets and ties with khaki pants. They all speak in unison.

STUDENTS
Standing right here!

JEFFERSON
Whose life is this?

STUDENTS
Mine!

JEFFERSON
What you gonna do with it?

STUDENTS
Live it "By Any Means Necessary!"

Off of Jefferson's warm and proud smile.

CUT TO:

INT. GARFIELD HIGH GYM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Anissa, now all dolled up in a beautiful gown, is standing in the corner of the room talking to a beautiful Indian woman. Jefferson steps up beside Anissa.

JEFFERSON
Excuse me, can I borrow my daughter for just a second.

Jefferson pulls Anissa a step away.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)
Have you seen your sister? She was supposed to stand with the other students.

ANISSA
Earlier. She wasn't feeling well so she went home to lay down.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB 100 - NIGHT

Club 100 is more like a warehouse than a proper club. It's a place where LA hip-hop heads and hipsters stand packed shoulder to shoulder with gang bangers in the mosh pit to witness the West Coast's cutting edge music.

JENNIFER (16), is beautiful and brown like her older sister. She's the entitled feminist in the family. Braids, lip gloss, hoop earrings, and throwback Nikes all in her gorgeous dress. Jennifer is dancing in the middle of it all enjoying life. She takes a hit off a blunt then passes it back to her female friend.

While letting the smoke into the air, Jennifer notices a handsome YOUNG MAN looking at her from across the room. He smiles and she smiles in return.

INT. CLUB 100 - NIGHT

The music moves the crowd but Jennifer is sitting at a VIP-booth with same young man she shared a smile with. This is WILL, a handsome, charming twenty year old, with rough edges. He's leaning into her ear. We can't hear what he's saying but after a beat Jennifer breaks out laughing.

JENNIFER

Are you serious? Don't think that because I'm a little stoned that means you gonna get some. I'm not having sex in a club bathroom with somebody I just met. You're crazy.

WILL

I was just playing.

Jennifer is enjoying the flirtation.

JENNIFER

No, you weren't. If I had said yes you would have been all over it. And just in case I talk to you after tonight, so that we're clear-- it's never going to go down at somebody's mama's house, the back of a car or a homie's couch. I want all the accoutrements of romance.

Will laughs. He's completely smitten.

INT. GARFIELD HIGH GYM - NIGHT

The three-piece student band plays an instrumental rendition of Tupac's "California Love". The small dance floor is full. The students, parents and donors get a kick out of watching Jefferson dance with one of his students. The song comes to an end, Jefferson and the student laugh as he escorts her off the dance floor. Inspector Henderson claps along with the rest of the crowd and makes his way over to Jefferson.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

Television news profile, Hollywood liberals, sprinkle in a few politicians, don't let this high class ass kissing go to your head.

Jefferson laughs, but nearby guests that overhear Henderson's comments are a bit taken aback by the cop's gruffness. Jefferson turns his attention to his friend. They always enjoy ribbing each other.

JEFFERSON

Henderson, my students would define your comments as "hating."

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

Most of these people haven't been past the ten freeway since it was built.

Both men laugh.

JEFFERSON

Well, thank you for supporting and most importantly for pulling strings to get Anissa released.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

No problem. It's getting crazy out there, Jefferson, it's different. The rules of the streets don't apply anymore. Protest the police, we'll tear gas you, arrest you, maybe even put a knot on your head, but protest the One Hundred they'll kill you. Tell Anissa she's needed more in the emergency rooms than in the streets protesting.

Jefferson takes this in for a moment.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON (CONT'D)

I have to get back to work, I'll check on those guys who pulled you over but they don't sound like mine.

JEFFERSON

Thank you.

Inspector Henderson takes in the crowd, shakes his head and smiles.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

You should start a church Jefferson, at least you'd make more money.

JEFFERSON

It's the ubiquitous nature of your hate that makes it so impressive.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

I'll look that word up later.

Henderson walks away laughing. Jefferson sees one of his teachers and Vice Principal MS. FOWDY (36), an attractive woman with that fancy pant suit style, approaching with a purpose.

MS. FOWDY

Enjoying yourself, Mr. Pierce?

JEFFERSON

I will if we hit our goal tonight.

MS. FOWDY

Well, turn on the charm, I have some people you should meet.

She looks towards a wealthy looking black couple in their fifties, Jefferson follows her gaze.

MS. FOWDY (CONT'D)

Mr. And Mrs. Mathews. They own Rose Manor Funeral Parlor. Deep, deep pockets.

She gives him an excited look. Jefferson spots a beautiful woman across the room.

JEFFERSON

Ok, give me a moment. I'll be right over.

Mrs. Fowdy watches Jefferson cross the room to LYNN (40's), a gorgeous redbone who exudes confidence and intelligence. Jefferson gives her a polite kiss on the cheek, the love between them still electric.

LYNN

I heard your daughter went to jail tonight, not a good look.

JEFFERSON

My daughter? You're funny. She can really test my patience sometimes.

LYNN

Sometimes? They treat you like you walk on water and me like I'm the evil witch of Baldwin Hills.

JEFFERSON

Well just remember, we have joint custody so half of her attitude and her bail is your responsibility.

Lynn gives Jefferson an "are you serious" look.

LYNN

Jeff, Anissa hasn't been in "our custody" for a few years now. I know it's hard for you to swallow but she's not a child anymore. She's a grown woman.

JEFFERSON

Legally true, but emotionally and financially she still remains in my care and in my wallet.

They both laugh. Jefferson takes her in. She catches him looking deep into her eyes.

LYNN

Don't start, Jeff.

JEFFERSON

What?

LYNN

You know what.

JEFFERSON

Where is he anyway?

LYNN

You know exactly where he is.

They both take a glance at LYNN'S BOYFRIEND across the room in the buffet line. He used to be handsome until age and a bit of weight caught up with him.

JEFFERSON

I see he hasn't been missing many meals.

LYNN

He's stressed, a lot going on at the bank. And maybe you should stop kissing me in front of him.

JEFFERSON

I just gave you a peck on the cheek.

(MORE)

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

But I did pick up on the fact that you just said stop kissing you "in front of him."

LYNN

Ms. Fowdy is waiting on you.

Jefferson turns to see Ms. Fowdy quickly look the other way. Lynn smiles mischievously, grabs a couple of drinks.

LYNN (CONT'D)

All of a sudden cat got your tongue.

Lynn puts a little swing in her hips as she makes her way back to her boyfriend. Jefferson can't help but smile.

INT/EXT. JEFFERSON'S CAR - NIGHT

Stopped at a red light, Jefferson watches a skinny, twelve year old boy cross the street carrying a cardboard box full of different types of candy. He pushes the car's voice control button.

JEFFERSON

Call home.

The phone rings but no one picks up. Jefferson pushes the button again.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

Call, "Pain in my ass number two."

The phone dials, it rings, then voice mail picks up. Jefferson listens to the outgoing message. It's Rihanna's "Bitch Better Have My Money." The tone to leave a message finally beeps.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

Jennifer this is your father. First of all, what the hell kind of message is that? Second, why aren't you picking up the phone?

The light turns green, Jefferson hangs up and as he drives through the streets of black Los Angeles a thought crosses his mind. He pulls the car over, logs into family sharing on his iPhone and pushes LOCATE MY PHONE. He selects Jennifer's phone. After a beat he lets out that sigh of frustration that every parent knows and makes a u-turn.

INT. CLUB 100 - NIGHT

Jennifer and Will are where we left them, sitting in their booth, talking.

JENNIFER

Afro Punk over Coachella any day.
Please, Grace Jones? Bad Brains?
T.V. On The Radio? Come on.

WILL

Oh, you one of them alternative
sistahs. How old are you?

JENNIFER

Eighteen. How old are you?

WILL

Twenty-two. For real though, how
old are you?

JENNIFER

I told you. I'm eighteen.

Their conversation is interrupted by two One Hundred gang members, the YOUNGSTERS. They both look like your average college freshman who are dressed for a Yeezy concert. One of them even wears a backpack. One plops down next to Jennifer, the other next to Will.

YOUNGSTER #1

What's good bruh?

WILL

What's up?

Jennifer's face has wrong place, wrong time written all over it.

JENNIFER

I'm going to go to the bathroom
while you talk to your friends.

Jennifer moves to scoot out but Youngster #1 doesn't move.

YOUNGSTER #1

No, you're not.

JENNIFER

Umm, excuse you.

The Youngster cuts a look at Jennifer, Will sees things are getting tense.

WILL
(to Jennifer) Chill.

Off of Jennifer knowing she's found herself in way over her head.

INT. CLUB 100 - NIGHT

The crowd moves in sync as the artist on stage performs with passion. Jefferson ignores the partying going on around him while standing in a corner scanning the room. After a beat he notices Jennifer walking through the club with strange men.

She's being escorted, along with her new friend Will, through the club by the Youngsters. Jefferson watches in horror as Jennifer tries to make a detour but is grabbed forcefully by one of the Youngsters. The fear in her eyes makes him desperate to get to her. CLUB SECURITY opens a door for them marked PRIVATE. The group disappears behind it as Jefferson wades through the crowd, headed for the same door.

INT. CLUB 100 - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

The Youngsters keep a watchful eye alongside LALA (24), whose boy-next-door handsomeness hides the fact that he is the brutal General of the Watts' gang, the One Hundred. Lala and his soldier, Will, talk money. Jennifer is afraid, she listens while trying to figure out what she should do next.

LALA
Will, why I got to chase you down
to have a conversation?

WILL
You ain't got to chase me down,
Lala. I'm out here hustling trying
to get the money you say I owe you.

LALA
The money "I say" you owe me? Bruh,
did LAPD steal a hundred grand
worth of product from you when you
got popped?

With mention of police, drugs and money...

JENNIFER
See, this right here is none of my
business. I'm--

LALA
I'm talking.

Jennifer shuts her mouth, Lala puts his attention back on Will.

LALA (CONT'D)

'Cause I want us to be clear on this point. Did you not have commissary money? Did you not have The Stephen Barnes as your lawyer? The money "I say" you owe me?

Will doesn't have a response, Lala slaps the W out of Will's name, leaving him ill.

LALA (CONT'D)

I'm talking to you!

Will tries his best to hang on to his manhood in front of Jennifer.

WILL

You didn't have to do that in front of my girl like that man. You know I'm going to pay you.

JENNIFER

I am definitely NOT his girl. I just met him tonight.

LALA

Shut up.

JENNIFER

Like, really before tonight I didn't know he existed.

Lala gives Jennifer the shut the hell up look.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Ok.

LALA

Matter of fact I think "your girl" should put in some work over at the Snooty Fox to pay down some of your debt.

Jennifer's fear grows as the room becomes even more tense. Will looks Lala in the eyes, quietly asking if he's kidding. He gets his answer.

LALA (CONT'D)

What's good?

Powerless and with embarrassment.

WILL

Yeah man, that's cool.

JENNIFER

No the hell it's not, it's not cool! I ain't hoeing for nobody! I don't even know this dude!

Will tries to calm Jennifer down by grabbing her but she slaps Will with the power of concrete. Lala laughs at Will as he tires to get control of Jennifer.

INT. CLUB 100 - NIGHT

Jefferson approaches the door marked private, he's about to open it when he's pinned to the wall.

CLUB SECURITY

(re: his tux) Where you think you going Bojangles?

JEFFERSON

Why is everyone hating on my tux?

Jefferson slips out of his grip, Club Security immediately pulls his gun and points it at him. They both freeze. Suddenly the lights in the club flicker then go out. Everyone in the club stands still, confused by the darkness.

INT. CLUB 100 - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

The meeting of the minds is disrupted by the sounds of gunfire and screams. The Youngsters pull out their weapons but not before the screaming and gunfire abruptly ends. The quiet is more menacing than the chaos that preceded it.

LALA

Go check it out.

The Youngsters slowly exit the room...

INT. CLUB 100 - MOMENTS LATER

...into the darkness of the club. The Youngsters move in separate directions. It all happens quickly. Youngster #1 sees something move through the darkness and empties his gun erratically in that direction, his partner does the same. The glow from the barrel of their guns create a strobe light effect, which allows us to see quick moments of the fight and of club goers trying to escape the chaos. Without seeing Jefferson, Youngster #1 watches in fear as Youngster #2's body is hit by a golden light that leaves him on the ground convulsing and smoldering.

Trying to reload but too nervous to get the clip in his gun, Youngster #1 is hit once, then again, by punches that illuminate his body and leaves him unconscious on the floor.

INT. CLUB 100 - PRIVATE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

It's quiet again, everyone in the room is still, Lala looks around and sees a way out. He kicks a vent window open, jumps up and climbs through it. Will looks to Jennifer who is crouched down behind a desk. He tries to do the same as Lala but is too short to jump as high. Will pulls a gun from his waist.

WILL

Come on. I got you.

JENNIFER

You really think I'm going anywhere with you?

WILL

How else you think you gonna get out of here? Now come on.

Will tries to grab Jennifer but she pulls away.

JENNIFER

Ok, but don't touch me!

Will takes a moment to get his courage up.

WILL

Let's go.

Will enters the club with gusto, expecting Jennifer to follow behind him but the joke is on him, she never moves. There's no gun shots just the thud and rustle of someone getting their ass kicked. Fear fills Jennifer's eyes then comes a voice, deep and soulful.

JEFFERSON (O.S.)

It's safe, you can come out now.

INT. CLUB 100 - NIGHT

Sirens can be heard in the distance as Jennifer manages enough courage to exit into the club. She stands alone, her nervous eyes searching the room. Jefferson stands hidden in the shadows on the balcony.

JEFFERSON (O.S.)

Is this the life you want?

Jennifer doesn't speak, she just shakes her head no.

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

Go home.

Jennifer exits the club as Jefferson watches from the shadows.

EXT. CLUB 100/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jefferson watches unseen as Jennifer's walking quickly turns into a run towards her car. She along with a few others get into their cars and leave the drama of the night behind them as police cars finally begin to arrive.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATTS STREETS/ALLEY - NIGHT

C.U. on Jefferson walking briskly down a back alley. His anger at Jennifer, at himself and the world consumes his thoughts so that it takes him a beat to notice the police car spotlight shining in his direction. The blue lights on top of the car pop on and the police officers issue commands over the loud speaker.

OFFICER #3

Stop, put your hands where we can see them.

Jefferson stops, he tries to shield his eyes from the blinding light.

OFFICER #4

Lay on the ground face down!

JEFFERSON

I haven't done anything.

OFFICER #4

Dammit I said lay on the ground, face down!

Jefferson can't speak, his patience and anger have reached their limits. He slowly raises his hands above his head. They both see his blood stained shirt, the officers glance at each other.

OFFICER #3

This guy is on something.

The police get out of the car and as the officers approach, Jefferson puts his hands in the air.

The officers pull their tasers, with Jefferson's hands raised high above his head, they pull their triggers. Taser pins attach themselves to Jefferson's chest, the pain of the pins is intense but instead of dropping to the ground, Jefferson absorbs the electricity.

Confused and frightened the officers back away while increasing the voltage, Jefferson snatches the pins from his chest and through the dash cam view we witness him reverse the electrical energy in the tasers. The reversed voltage hit the officers hard, lifting them momentarily off their feet and planting them on the ground. "GET GOD ON THE PHONE!" Kendrick Lamar's voice invades the image. The passion and anger in his voice matches Jefferson's mood.

Jefferson stands in the middle of the road, angry that he's succumb to his powers. As he walks back to his car the anger grows and he takes it out on the police car. He sends a bolt of electrical energy from his hands to set the car ablaze. As we watch through the view of the dash cam, Kendrick's voice narrates Jefferson's walk back to his car. Behind him the car smolders as the officers struggle to get away from the blaze. The dash cam flickers then goes black.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. WATTS STREET/GAMBI'S TAILOR SHOP - NIGHT

GAMBI (60s), a white, blue collar vet with soulful eyes and Yoda wisdom, walks down the street carrying his Jamaican take out. He passes the corner liquor store and is greeted by the men who stand outside waiting for a handout. Gambi takes a glance at the Spanish speaking congregation sitting in the small storefront church next to the liquor store. They still find a reason to praise the Lord. Gambi pulls out his keys but then notices that the door to his tailor shop is a bit ajar. He enters with caution.

INT. GAMBI'S TAILOR SHOP - NIGHT

Gambi enters the shop, turns on the lights and sees Jefferson unconscious on the floor.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: WATTS 1977

EXT. WATTS STREET - NIGHT

C.U. on a small twelve year old JEFFERSON PIERCE as he runs for his life, away from something dangerous that we don't see. He spots a fence he can jump to get away but doesn't see the sign that warns that it is electrified. He jumps high atop the fence and is hit by the electricity immediately.

Young Jefferson's jaw muscles clinch tight, his body shakes as he holds onto the fence longer than one would think he could. He finally passes out and falls to the ground. Two mysterious men almost run past young Jefferson. We only see them from the back of the knees down. They stop to make sure the boy is dead. One of them bends over to get a closer look.

BAD MAN #1

Fried like a chicken wing.

The men walk away leaving the boy where he is. A young Gambi, carrying Chinese takeout, watches from the shadows. Gambi makes sure the men are gone, then runs over to young Jefferson. He kneels beside him, hoping he's alive. Gambi crosses himself like a good Catholic. A beat after, he watches as the young man's veins begin to glow with a subtle golden light. Gambi falls backwards but doesn't leave.

After gathering his courage, Gambi picks the boy up and makes his way to his tailor shop.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. GAMBI'S TAILOR SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Gambi kneels next to Jefferson, the overwhelming pain in his face is obvious.

INT. JEFFERSON'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

The television drones in the background as Jennifer excitedly recounts the events of the night while Anissa wraps her hair.

JENNIFER

...and I was like I don't even know this guy. Then all of sudden we hear gun shots, then it's quiet.

Jennifer notices that Anissa is giving her a look.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

What?

ANISSA

This is not cool, Jen. What you're telling me is crazy. You're lucky you didn't get shot, or end up in some motel room right now all drugged up and being ran through.

JENNIFER

You going too far with it.

ANISSA

No I'm not, it's happening everyday. Plus you lied to me, I told dad you were at home.

JENNIFER

You think if I asked dad if I could go he would've let me?

ANISSA

Your fast ass shouldn't be going there. You're only sixteen.

JENNIFER

All he wants me to do is go to school, run track and...

Jennifer mocks her father's voice and throws up air quotes.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

...set an example for the other girls.

ANISSA

When did that become a bad thing? Besides, this is not about Dad. This is about you and me, and the fact that you're trying to act grown when clearly you're not.

JENNIFER

Why are you being such a bitch right now? Calm down.

ANNISA

Why are you being such an asshole?

JENNIFER

I shouldn't have even told you!

ANNISA

You didn't. You walked in this house shaking because you were scared, that's what told me. Now you want to act all cool like it was just some great adventure.

JENNIFER

Fuck off!

Jennifer storms out of the room, Annisa takes a deep breath. She notices inspector Henderson on the T.V., grabs the remote and turns up the volume.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

Both officers are in stable condition.

REPORTER#1

Inspector, Witnesses at Club 100 tonight...

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

I'm not here to talk about Club 100.

(MORE)

INSPECTOR HENDERSON (CONT'D)

We are here because two officers were viciously attacked tonight while on the job serving and protecting this community, plain and simple.

REPORTER #1

Witnesses say that it looked a lot like Black Lightning was involved with the incident at Club One Hundred. Considering that you were one of his main adversaries, are you concerned that...

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

This is what you guys do. You take any opportunity to turn fantasy into a story. Black Lightning? You're really reaching. There's a shooting at Club 100 almost every week. Where have you been? I want to repeat, we're looking for a regular HUMAN black male responsible for an attack on two of LA's finest officers. Not some FREAK of nature who disappeared years ago. The suspect is about six feet tall, dark skin...

INT. GAMBI'S TAILOR SHOP - NIGHT

Another news station's report is playing on a small television behind the counter.

WATTS RESIDENT #5

I hope he is back, so he can whoop some of these kids' asses around here. That's what's wrong, these parents too damn scared to discipline their children. So let Black Lightning take care of it.

Jefferson, now sitting in a chair by the fitting rooms, comes to consciousness. Gambi sits across from him.

GAMBI

I thought you were done being a hero.

JEFFERSON

I am.

Gambi points to his freshly bandaged wound.

GAMBI
Doesn't look like it.

Gambi takes a beat, he looks genuinely concerned.

GAMBI (CONT'D)
You have powers Jefferson, but
you're still human. It's dangerous
to be out there without body armor.
You know that.

JEFFERSON
Believe me, I didn't plan on being
out there.

GAMBI
Luckily it's just a flesh wound.

JEFFERSON
Doesn't feel like a flesh wound.

Jefferson quickly grabs the garbage can near him and throws
up into it. Gambi calmly grabs Jefferson something to wipe
his mouth.

GAMBI
It's been a while. Your body isn't
strong enough to handle the surge
of energy.

Jefferson takes the rag. His mind clouded from using his
powers makes him seem like he's hungover. He struggles a bit,
but manages to remind himself of some reasons why he stopped
using his powers.

JEFFERSON
Nine years Gambi. It's been nine
years since I've even come close to
using my powers.

GAMBI
Without a suit you're like a live
wire, unpredictable and raw. The
powers drain you both physically
and mentally much more rapidly. The
more power you use, the longer it
takes for you to replenish.

JEFFERSON
Lynn told me and the girls that we
all needed to get to know each
other.

(MORE)

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

At the risk of damaging her relationship with them forever, she moved them in with me. She did that because I promised her I would never let this consume me the way it did when we were together.

GAMBI

Your cells are like mini receptors that can absorb the electrical energy around you. The suit is like a grounding wire, it gives you better control and protects your body from any side effects.

JEFFERSON

Godamit Gambi, stop talking about the damn suit! I did not come here to resurrect Black Lightning! Don't you think I know all that? You think I wanted this to happen? I didn't have a choice. Jennifer could have been killed. I had to use...

Jefferson can't finish the sentence.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

Lynn is close to coming back to me, I have a shot at putting my family back together. Black Lightning is not going to jeopardize that.

Gambi lets this settle in.

GAMBI

I love Lynn and those girls, but we knew this day would come Jefferson. I've known you since you were twelve years old, you're like my son. So I have to tell you the truth. The promise you made Lynn was well intentioned but it always had an expiration date.

Gambi leans in closer.

GAMBI (CONT'D)

Your power is a gift that was meant to be used for the people. You can't bury it for sentimentality.

Jefferson takes this in, he looks at the man he's trusted for years and confesses.

JEFFERSON

It felt good, Gambi. It felt really good, the energy pumping through my veins... Something that feels so damn good has to be wrong.

Off Jefferson.

INT. JEFFERSON'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Jefferson enters his house and finds Lynn sitting alone in his living room. He plays it cool and tries to turn on the charm.

JEFFERSON

I was just thinking about you.

LYNN

Is that right? What were you thinking?

JEFFERSON

Things that you're not supposed to say to your ex-wife when she has a boyfriend. Everything ok?

LYNN

Yeah, I came over to calm Jennifer down. She was pretty shook up.

JEFFERSON

Why, what happened?

LYNN

She was at Club 100 when all that mess went down. Plus her and Annisa got into it.

JEFFERSON

She was there?

LYNN

She's fine. We tried calling you, even tried the school.

JEFFERSON

Damn, the board had me hemmed up. They're trying to-- it doesn't matter. I tell you these girls. One gets arrested, the other sneaking off to a club. They are...

LYNN

Are just being girls, so don't take it personal and start having catastrophic thoughts.

JEFFERSON

It's hard not to.

LYNN

I agree, but I snuck into a few clubs when I was her age. Now she knows what can happen.

JEFFERSON

You're right.

LYNN

I played bad parent tonight, gave her the speech. "You lied, you put yourself in danger, this speaks to your character, no social media for a month." So you're good on that front.

JEFFERSON

Wow, a month. You're not playing.

LYNN

No, I am not.

JEFFERSON

Thank you.

LYNN

You're welcome.

It's clear that Lynn has something else on her mind.

LYNN (CONT'D)

So... I was watching the news tonight.

Jefferson knows where this is going but doesn't let on.

LYNN (CONT'D)

They were talking about Black Lightning.

JEFFERSON

What were they saying?

LYNN

People are saying he's back. Is he?

JEFFERSON

Of course not Lynn, you know better than that.

LYNN

The girls are older now. We're not together, seems the world is getting crazier and crazier. Thought maybe you felt it was time to help.

JEFFERSON

I am helping. I've saved more lives as a principal than I ever would have as Black Lightning. I'm not looking to go backwards.

LYNN

I pray that's true.

JEFFERSON

It is.

LYNN

I just don't want to see you like that again, ever. It was too painful.

JEFFERSON

You're talking like you care about me.

Lynn walks over to Jefferson. She takes his hands in hers and takes a glance at them. She's looking for bruises on Jefferson's hands and for a moment he gets caught up in the emotion of her touch.

LYNN

I do.

Lynn slowly unbuttons his shirt enough to run her hands over his stomach and chest looking for any signs of wounds or bruises. Jefferson enjoys her touch but he's nervous she may discover his bandages. She stops and smiles at him.

LYNN (CONT'D)

I better go.

Lynn heads for the door, but she stops midway.

LYNN (CONT'D)

By the way, who is she?

JEFFERSON

Who's who?

LYNN

The woman you must have been with --
who is she?

JEFFERSON

Oh, is that jealousy in your voice?

LYNN

Goodnight.

Lynn exits the house. Jefferson unbuttons his shirt all the way and inspects his wound, then watches from the window as Lynn walks to her car. Off of Jefferson watching the woman he loves.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: 2008

INT. LYNN AND JEFFERSON'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

C.U. on Jefferson's wet face. He can barely speak but he manages to get the words out.

JEFFERSON

They murdered him.

Jefferson is in a bathtub full of water tainted with blood. Lynn attends to the wound on his head, she washes his chest then takes both his hands in hers. They're noticeably swollen.

LYNN

Murdered who, baby? Who?

JEFFERSON

Earl.

Lynn's eyes swell with tears. The sadness in her face devastating. She tries to gather her thoughts.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

His death is on me Lynn. I told him
I would protect him from the One
Hundred.

LYNN

You can't do this anymore, Jeff.
You have to promise me you won't.

The desperation in Lynn's face is convincing.

JEFFERSON

I promise, no more.

Fully clothed, she climbs in the tub with him then gently kisses his wounded lips.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. JEFFERSON'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jefferson is standing where we left him. He watches as Lynn pulls away in her car.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. GARFIELD HIGH TRACK FEILD - MORNING

C.U. on Jennifer in her Garfield High hoodie, music fills her earphones and determination covers her face as she sprints around the track. After a few moments she notices that Jefferson is running next to her. She speeds up to try and get away from him but he manages to keep up. They eventually break out into a full on race that ends with her winning.

EXT. GARFIELD HIGH TRACK FIELD - MORNING

Jefferson and Jennifer are now sitting on the sidelines trying to catch their breath.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry.

JEFFERSON

I know.

JENNIFER

I just wanted to have some fun. I started talking to this guy and then things just went wrong.

JEFFERSON

This is a cliché Jennifer. The rebellious daughter, the dad who is too strict on his growing teen. We can play this narrative out, probably easier. But I don't think there is anything about you that's cliché.

JENNIFER

Well that's true.

Jefferson can't help but smile.

JEFFERSON

Then let's just skip this part and create our own story. Something like, non-clichè daughter is honest and open with her father and father listens before reacting to growing teen's wants and needs?

JENNIFER

That sounds good.

Jefferson and Jennifer hug it out.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
So, since we're being honest and open... never wear those hot pants again, in public or anywhere else.

At this moment, maybe for the first time we realize that Jefferson's running shorts are a bit short and tight. Jefferson chuckles.

JEFFERSON
I guess you have a point.

Jefferson looks across the feild and sees Gambi headed their way.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)
You better go get ready for your next class.

Jennifer jumps up, grabs her gym bag.

JENNIFER
Can you talk to mom about getting me off punishment?

JEFFERSON
Nope.

Jennifer walks away having given it a try. Jefferson watches their exchange as she stops to give Gambi a kiss on the cheek. Gambi makes his way over to Jefferson.

GAMBI
Man, she's grown. Looks just like Lynn. It's scary.

JEFFERSON
More than you know.

GAMBI
How're you doing?

JEFFERSON
Better.

GAMBI
Good.

Gambi takes a moment to get the next words out.

GAMBI (CONT'D)

I wanted to say I'm sorry about last night. I could have been... well I could have been better at listening.

JEFFERSON

I appreciate it.

Jefferson starts packing up his gym bag.

GAMBI

So what's next, Jefferson?

JEFFERSON

If you're talking about Black Lightning, there is no next. I had a relapse, it's over and now I move on with my life.

GAMBI

Do you remember why you became Black Lightning?

JEFFERSON

You just don't quit do you?

GAMBI

"Justice like lightning should ever appear to some men hope and other men fear." You wanted to give the people hope. You wanted the evil that's out there to have something to fear. The evil out there now has nothing to fear and it's running rampant like a plague through this city, hell, through this world.

JEFFERSON

I can't save the world, Gambi. I've learned that lesson.

GAMBI

But you can save your piece of it.

JEFFERSON

Ok, let's cut the poetry and get real. The reason I became Black Lightning was because I wanted to kill Tobias and the One Hundred for murdering my father. Then it was because they killed Earl.

(MORE)

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

Then it was crime bosses, crooked politicians and every small time street thug that snatched a purse or robbed a store. See Gambi, there is no end, no bottom. And the only loser in all of this is me. So drop it. Please.

GAMBI

I just don't want you to be blind sided by this thing. Call it God or whatever you want but it's coming at you from every direction. And it will use the school, the girls, Lynn, anything it can to... to get you to do what you were intended to do. To get you to be who you were intended to be.

JEFFERSON

I'm fine old man.

GAMBI

It's ironic don't you think? That nothing could make you hang up the suit, not even Lynn. It took the fear you saw in Jennifer's eyes when she was a little girl to kill Black Lightning. And now the fear you saw in her eyes at the club is what resurrected him.

JEFFERSON

Come on, I'll walk you back to your car.

As the two men walk away, Gambi is not so sure.

CUT TO:

INT. GARFIELD HIGH/JEFFERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Jefferson is back in his suit and tie, he's mid-conversation with Mrs. Fowdy as they walk down the hallway.

JEFFERSON

There has not been one incident at this school that could justify shutting down the program.

MRS. FOWDY

They just want to quit while they're ahead.

JEFFERSON

Ahead of what?

MRS. FOWDY

Of all the things they see happening at schools across the country. Bullying, drugs, social shaming and God forbid, a school shooting.

JEFFERSON

And they think by shutting down the foster care program that's going to...

MRS. FOWDY

Cut down the risks. Those kids come with a lot of issues. The program covers all their therapy, tutoring and even gives a credit for all outside activities. That's expensive.

JEFFERSON

It's also needed. You're right, the kids come with a lot of issues and it is expensive, but so is the moral cost of not doing anything to help.

They enter Jefferson's office.

INT. JEFFERSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MRS. FOWDY

Considering the rise in violence in the area, we could use the extra money to upgrade the security system and install metal detectors.

JEFFERSON

That's what this is really about, right? The Board wanting metal detectors.

The look on her face says it's true.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

I'm not treating my students like suspects. Do you know almost every one of these kids knows someone in jail? A mother, father, uncle, auntie, cousins, friends.

(MORE)

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

I'm not turning this school into another jail and I'm not shutting down the foster care program, Carol.

The look on his face tells her the conversation is over.

MRS. FOWDY

I'll let the board know.

JEFFERSON

Thank you.

Mrs. Fowdy exits the office. Jefferson lets out a long sigh and sits down in his chair. An alert on his computer chimes and he sees that it's an e-mail from Gambi. "I'M JUST SAYING." He clicks on a link, it's a local news station's report about an old STORE OWNER from some years ago. He's trying to get a VHS tape into a VCR as he recounts his run in with Black Lightning. Jefferson chuckles to himself.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

You don't quit, do you old man?

Jefferson watches the report.

STORE OWNER

The lights started flickering man, I tell you. When you staring down the barrel of a gun you don't care if the person saving you is Christian, Muslim or Jew. White or Black. You just want to be saved. So all this talk about is it good or bad he's back is just that. Talk man. Okay here it is.

The Store Owner pushes the play button and we can see in black and white surveillance footage two men in hoodies. One is cleaning out the register while another has his gun pointed at the Store Owner's head. After a beat we see Black Lightning come into frame. He quickly disarms and beats the would be thieves into submission, then the tape flickers and goes black.

WATTS RESIDENT #6

That was back in the nineties and I've watched this every year on my birthday since then. I'm eighty-one years old now. I wouldn't have seen my kids graduate college, the first black president, or my grandkids if it wasn't for Black Lightning.

This lands on Jefferson. Seeing himself as a hero brings a slight smile across his face. Jefferson lets his eyes wander the photos in his office. Photos of him shaking hands with Obama, fake sparring with Ali... but the photo that he lingers on is a family photo that includes Earl and his mother.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: 2008

INT. EARL'S MOTHER'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's the post-funeral repass, Earl's mother's apartment is small, crowded and people have already started eating. Jefferson sits next to his YOUNGER SISTER-- Earl's mother, SHAQUANDALYNN.

JEFFERSON

How you holding up, Sis?

She quietly pushes the food around her plate with a fork.

SHAQUANDALYNN

Earl wanted to be just like you. To him you were like Black Jesus. But come to find out, you just like these white folk out here. You come preach to us about what we should be doing to lift ourselves up then you take your black ass back to Baldwin Hills, shake your head and throw your hands up when we die. Because that's the one thing we do good, right? We die.

Jefferson is clearly taken off guard by his sister.

JEFFERSON

Quan, what are you talking about?

SHAQUANDALYNN

You wanted him to testify and he did. You told me everything would be alright. And it's not. Now my baby is gone, and what do I do, Jeff? You and Lynn got your girls. What do I do now?

Jefferson doesn't have an answer, he tries to look her in her eyes but can't.

SHAQUANDALYNN (CONT'D)
I don't ever need to see you again.

JEFFERSON
Just listen, I--

SHAQUANDALYNN
It's taking everything in me right now not to put this fork in your eye, Jeff. So please leave before I have to go back to jail.

Jefferson, stunned, can't move.

SHAQUANDALYNN (CONT'D)
Get out!

Everyone in the apartment stops to look towards the yelling, including Lynn. Jefferson manages to get up. He walks past the mourners and Lynn takes him by the hand as Shaquandalynn watches them walk out of her life. Lynn stops, looks Jefferson in the eyes.

LYNN
You did what you could. This is not your fault.

JEFFERSON
Then whose fault is it?

Lynn doesn't have an answer.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY

INT. JEFFERSON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jefferson is where we left him. Off Jefferson.

EXT. GARFIELD HIGH - DAY

Anissa is getting out of her car and gathering her things when she spots Jennifer across the school, arguing with Will. We follow her across campus towards Jennifer.

JENNIFER
What are you even doing here?

WILL

Damn, I told you. I just came to make sure you were cool. I found your IG page, had to zoom in on those school initials from your uniform, but I found you.

JENNIFER

First, that's called stalking. Second, it's creepy. Now leave me alone.

Jennifer begins to walk away when Will grabs her by the arm.

WILL

Why black girls always got so much attitude? I tried to help yo ass.

ANISSA

Let her go and leave.

Will turns around to see Anissa.

WILL

You better get out of my face.

ANISSA

You are not a student here and I'm asking you to leave before I call the police.

Will turns around and steps to Anissa.

WILL

Bitch, I told you to get out of my face.

ANISSA

That's it, I'm calling the police.

Will goes to grab Anissa but she uses her defense training to put him on his ass. Will jumps up as Jefferson makes his way through the crowd of students. Will moves to pull his gun from his belly but Jefferson grabs his hand in time to keep it from moving. As they struggle against each other, Garfield Security and Ms. Fowdy push everyone back while Jefferson concentrates on Will.

JEFFERSON

What happens after you pull this gun? You going to shoot her? In front of the entire school? You're on parole right?

Jefferson looks into Will's eyes.

JEFFERSON (CONT'D)

Yeah. There are cameras all over this school. You ready to go back to jail for a school shooting? That's life with no possibility of getting out.

WILL

You don't know who you're messing with, bruh.

JEFFERSON

You're right I don't, but the police are already on their way and they don't care who you are.

Will relaxes, he knows he's beat. They both let go of the gun, Will looks Jennifer and Anissa up and down. He gets into his car and pulls away. Leaving everyone in shock, stunned with fear. The look on Mrs. Fowdy's face isn't an I told you so, but it's close. Off of Jefferson's concern.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. JEFFERSON'S CAR - DAY

Talk radio is debating the idea of Black Lightning's return. Jefferson's mind is someplace else as he drives.

RADIO HOST

But Dr. Allen, couldn't Black Lightning be helpful in the fight against the One Hundred? They're completely out of control.

DR. ALLEN

But once you open that door you can't close it. If society validates the presence of someone like Black Lightning, then how long is it before others who are Ability Enhanced show up? The term Outsiders was used not as a pejorative, but was used because they're not like us. A.E.'s don't share our same values. They are super predators, no conscience, no empathy. I'm good with the devil I know.

INT. LALA'S COMMUNITY CENTER/BACK ROOM - DAY

C.U. Youngster #1, we follow his hands as he unbuttons his shirt. He pulls his shirt off and we can see his chest is wrapped with gauze. Lala is sitting with a few of his soldiers, quietly watching as the Youngster peels the gauze back. Every one except for Lala, reacts like they just watched a amazing dunk. DAMN!

YOUNGSTER #1

Second degree burns. This Black Lightning shit is real.

Everyone goes quiet, Lala can see the fear in their faces. He is concerned, but tries hard to not let it show.

LALA

Does it really matter? Whoever and whatever it is we just have to be ready because this was just a warning. So I want everybody, at every trap spot on point.

(MORE)

LALA (CONT'D)
Here at the Center, the street
vendors, Club 100 and Snooty Fox.

CUT TO:

INT. LALA'S COMMUNITY CENTER/DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

It's mealtime for the neighborhood kids (7-13). Jefferson watches as the kids finish their meals and begin hitting the streets. The younger kids pick up cardboard boxes of candy to sell in affluent neighborhoods and they load up in vans. The older kids pick up packets of drugs and hit the streets. Lala emerges from the back.

LALA
Mr. Jefferson.

JEFFERSON
Latavious.

LALA
Wow, Latavious. Nobody's called me
that since I graduated from
Garfield.

Lala sits across from Jefferson.

LALA (CONT'D)
I'm kind of busy so let's jump
right in. I heard about what
happened with Will. Not cool,
especially at the school.

JEFFERSON
Especially stalking my daughter. I
don't want him thinking that he has
an issue with my girls because that
will lead to issues with me and he
doesn't want that.

LALA
That's exactly how he feels. You
already to know that.

JEFFERSON
I've had an unwritten agreement
with all the gangs that Garfield is
a safe zone. He broke that. I'm
trying not to drag the police into
this because I don't want things to
escalate. But I need you to keep
Will away from my girls. And from
Garfield.

Lala thinks for a moment.

LALA

Will been kinda lost since he got out of jail. He's not as tough as he pretends to be, more reckless than anything. He had a rough time while he was locked up, became somebody's bitch. So getting beat up by a female ain't doing a whole lot for his self esteem.

Lala looks for a response from Jefferson, but doesn't get a thing.

LALA (CONT'D)

But you don't want to hear all that.

Lala notices a kid out the corner of his eye and calls him over. Jefferson notices it's the skinny kid from the crosswalk. MALIK (12).

LALA (CONT'D)

Come here.

Malik walks over.

LALA (CONT'D)

You're late, van's already gone.

Malik doesn't say a word.

LALA (CONT'D)

This is Mr. Jefferson.

MALIK

Hi.

LALA

Come on man, you know that's not how we do. Look Mr. Jefferson in his eyes, shake his hand and introduce yourself.

Malik does as he's told, extends his hand.

MALIK

Hi Mr. Jefferson. My name is Malik, pleasure to meet you.

Lala smiles, gives Malik some dap.

LALA

That's what I'm talking about. Everything okay?

Malik shakes his head yeah.

LALA (CONT'D)
Come on, man. Use your words.

MALIK
Yes. Everything is good.

LALA
Excellent.

Lala grabs Malik by the arm, pulls him close and tightens his grip so that Malik winces in pain. Jefferson reacts immediately.

JEFFERSON
Latavious.

Lala ignores Jefferson.

LALA
Cause I was told you spent most of yesterday playing games on your phone.

Malik doesn't say a word.

LALA (CONT'D)
Look man, you don't have to sell all the product, I'm not asking you to be perfect. What pisses me off is when you don't do your best, Malik. When you don't put in the effort to succeed. I always tell yawl, if you sweep floors be the best damn floor sweeper in the world. Period.

Lala squeezes tighter. Malik begins to get tears in his eyes. Jefferson's anger is growing and his patience for the moment is quickly dissipating as the lights in the room begin to flicker with his anxiety.

LALA (CONT'D)
There's a time to play games and a time to focus on reality. And the reality of the situation is while you got your mind buried in video games, them white boys up in those neighborhoods you selling in are being prepared to run the world and your black ass.

JEFFERSON

Latavious, that's enough!

It all happens in a flash. Jefferson reaches over and pulls Lala away from Malik. As Lala turns to face Jefferson, his gun is already in his hand. Malik holds his breath and Jefferson looks Lala in his eyes.

LALA

You know my damn name, now say it.

Jefferson hesitates.

LALA (CONT'D)

Say it!

Jefferson looks at the gun in Lala's hand and at the child standing next to him and uses all his strength to resist action.

JEFFERSON

Lala.

LALA

Don't ever put your hands on me again.

After a beat, Lala puts his gun away. He looks at Malik.

LALA (CONT'D)

Give me your phone.

Malik wipes the tears from his eyes and hands over his phone.

LALA (CONT'D)

Go over there and grab that broom, I want these floors swept. And don't even ask me about this damn phone.

Jefferson watches Malik as he walks away. He came here to protect his daughters, but now he wonders about Malik and all the kids like him.

LALA (CONT'D)

I'll do you this favor, but that means you owe me. We good?

Jefferson knows he's making a deal with the devil but he needs to protect his girls.

JEFFERSON

We're good.

LaLa makes good on his promise, he uses Malik's phone to dial Will.

INT/EXT. WILL'S CAR - GARFIELD HIGH - DAY

First it's the swirling violin intro, then James Brown's voice screams out, "THIS IS A MAN'S WORLD!" Will and two of his BOYS pull up in front of Garfield High. He sees his phone ringing, doesn't recognize the number so he ignores it. We watch as they all exit the car.

INT. GARFIELD HIGH - DAY

The song narrates the moment. Will and his boys walk down the school hallway, guns in hand, the unconscious body of school security lay on the floor in the background.

INT. GARFIELD HIGH CLASSROOM - DAY

Anissa stands in front of about twenty uniform wearing students, an all-girls class that includes Jennifer. Suddenly the doors bust open and Will enters, gun in hand. He points it at Anissa's head and snatches her at gunpoint, his boys pull Jennifer out of her chair and they all exit the classroom. As James continues to narrate the terror, the other students run to the door and watch helplessly as Will and his victims make their way down the hall.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. GARFIELD HIGH - JEFFERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Garfield High is on lockdown and swarming with police. Jefferson is barely able to sit still and Lynn is upset, trying to temper her anger as she challenges Henderson.

LYNN

You know exactly where they are. This kid is One Hundred so it's no mystery. Everyone in this community knows, including the police.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

This could literally turn into a shit show if we're not careful, Lynn. Let me at least confirm they're at the Snooty Fox before we go in.

LYNN

How long does "confirm" take Henderson?

Jefferson has lost his patience.

JEFFERSON

We're talking about our daughters. Our daughters! If you won't go I'll go my damn self and take care of it...

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

How Jefferson? How!? We're at this point right now because you didn't come to me in the first place. You know as well as I do you can't reason with these people. Come on, let me take care of it. Let me do my job.

Jefferson takes a moment, takes a breath and relents.

JEFFERSON

You do your job and as a father, I'll do mine.

INSPECTOR HENDERSON

Stay in your lane, Jeff. I told you these kids are different.

Henderson exits. Jefferson tries to remain calm but the florescent lights above in his office begin to flicker. Lynn notices, she hasn't seen this in a while. Then the bulbs explode, Jefferson gets up out of his seat and heads for the door.

LYNN

Jeff, where are going?

JEFFERSON

To get our girls.

Off Lynn's concern...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JEFFERSON'S CAR - DAY

As Jefferson drives, his eyes begin to turn a subtle golden hazel. With his daughters consuming his thoughts, he drives like a man on a mission.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: 2008

INT. LYNN AND JEFFERSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jefferson sits naked on the edge of his bed. Towels stained with blood are on the floor. Lynn attends to the wounds as best she can, but she's pissed, arguing in a whisper so she doesn't wake the girls.

LYNN

You promised me you were done with this. You promised. You may as well be one of these damn crackheads out in the streets. Look at you...

Lynn pulls Jefferson to the mirror, she makes him look at the cuts and bruises on his body. She looks him hard in the eyes and speaks through her anger.

LYNN (CONT'D)

You're addicted Jeff, you're addicted to your powers, addicted to the violence. Even if you kill every last one of the One Hundred, it still won't bring Earl back.

JEFFERSON

Damn, what do you want me to do,
Lynn? Just let them get away with
it?

LYNN

Yes.

JEFFERSON

The city is safer with Black
Lightning, Lynn.

LYNN

I don't give a damn about the city!
I'm trying to save my marriage, I'm
trying to save your life, protect
my girls and you are just shitting
all over it.

They both notice, a seven year old Jennifer standing in the doorway. The fear in her eyes makes her parents' knees weak.

JENNIFER (7)

Why you bleeding so much, daddy?

Jefferson grabs a towel and tries to cover his wounds. We can see that this moment is having a profound effect on him. Tears well up in his eyes, he can't find the words to lie to his daughter. Jefferson glances at Lynn.

LYNN

I want you out of the house.

JEFFERSON

Lynn, I promise this...

LYNN

Don't bother.

Lynn exits the bedroom and scoops up Jennifer. Jefferson is left standing in the mirror, staring at his broken image, physically and emotionally wrecked. Tears fall down his face and we know this is the moment Gambi referenced earlier, the moment Jefferson was done with Black Lightning.

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY:

EXT/INT. GAMBI'S TAILOR SHOP - DAY

Jefferson walks through downtown Watts. The people seem different, they seem to look at him differently. It's almost like he can hear and see their fears. He enters Gambi's tailor shop. Gambi turns to see Jefferson.

JEFFERSON

The One Hundred have Jennifer and Anissa.

Gambi gets up and locks the doors. They walk up a flight of stairs and step into a room that looks more like a workshop. It's filled with a table saw, drill, diagrams and what look like gadgets for battle. Jefferson notices his old Black Lightning suit laying in a corner. He picks it up and feels the weight of this moment, but knows it's necessary.

GAMBI

I've been working on something. Something better.

JEFFERSON

I hope it's a few sizes bigger than this one.

INT. SNOOTY FOX MOTOR INN - NIGHT

The Snooty Fox is a one way in one way out, hour by hour spot. A giant fox with a cane, bow tie and Bowler on his head sits atop a pole, welcoming its patrons. Inside one of the rooms, Lala is chewing out a battered and bruised Will.

LALA

So your dumb ass thought that bringing them here was actually a good idea?

WILL

Yes.

Lala looks around at the Youngster #2 and shakes his head. He slaps Will hard across the face with the butt of his gun.

LALA

I went to school with one of them girls. Her father was my principal. You trying to get us both sent to San Quentin? You know damn well you don't make a move like this without permission!

Lala hits Will again. Will speaks through his pain.

WILL

Lala, you said you wanted me to pay my debt, just the other night you were ready to put that girl to work. Put em both to work and we even.

LALA

I gave my word.

WILL

See what I mean? Forget that dude man. What about your word to me, to us?

LALA

There are rules to this game Will, relationships and business to protect.

WILL

You want me to pay you for doing what we always been doing. Holding each other down when we in trouble. I know it's tight out in these streets but don't take it out on fam man, you starting to treat us like slaves rather than family bruh. So either put that teacher bitch and her sister in one of these rooms so they can work down my debt or go ahead and kill me.

LALA

Or all of the above.

Lala pulls out his gun and shoots Will.

EXT. SNOOTY FOX MOTOR INN/ROOF - NIGHT

Bad Brains "Re-Ignition" fills the night air. First, we only see the back of Black Lightning. The montage shows that his broad shoulders, tight ass and muscular legs fit perfectly into the new suit. Then C.U. on his face hidden by the new mask. Then close on the new Black Lightning symbol on his chest.

From head to toe, we see the suit for the first time. It's DOPE! After a beat, Black Lightning stealthily jumps off the roof, down into the hotels entry and begins to whoop everybody's ass.

Black Lightning fights an intense hand to hand combat in the narrow corridors of the hotel. Using his powers makes his opponents' bodies look like they are being hit with a two thousand volt defibrillating fist. Black Lightning opens doors looking for Anissa and Jennifer, some rooms are occupied by more battle worthy opponents and some have GIRLS in them servicing JOHNS. Black Lightning doesn't spare the Johns, they get an ass whipping too.

INT. SNOOTY FOX MOTOR INN - NIGHT

Anissa and Jennifer are being held in yet another room with a few other girls by one of Lala's boys who has his gun in hand. Anissa and Jennifer make eye contact, they both know this is the time to take advantage of the chaos.

JENNIFER

Yo punk ass just going to sit there? Don't you hear what's going on out there?

The gang member gets up and walks towards Jennifer, gun in hand.

GANG MEMBER

You want me to shoot your black ass?

Almost simultaneously, Jennifer kicks him in his balls and Annisa grabs him around the neck. He gets one shot off that hits the ceiling before Annisa choke holds him to sleep. Anissa, Jennifer and the other girls quickly run out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOOTY FOX MOTOR INN/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

As the girls run, they hear gun shots. They look around and see Lala and his Youngsters standing upstairs with AR15s- America's favorite gun, pointed directly at them.

There are no more than ten girls but they part like the Red Sea as Black Lightning steps to the front. Lala sizes up Black Lightning, his mind calculates and accepts what he sees.

LALA

They said you were back, but I didn't believe it.

BLACK LIGHTNING

You should have. Considering there's no more Obamacare, it would have been better for your long term health.

LALA

Shoot this niggah, man.

The bullets from the guns fly towards Black Lightning and the girls but Black Lightning raises his hands and releases the full force of his powers like we haven't seen before. He creates a shield of energy that the bullets can't penetrate. As the bullets fly, Jennifer, Anissa and the girls scatter to safety in different directions.

Black Lightning releases a stream of lightning bolts that puts LaLa and his men on their asses. Now his powers have depleted, there is no light in his eyes. To finish what he started, Black Lightning manages to climb the stairs, kneel down and pull Lala up by the collar. He hits him hard across the face.

Just as he is about to hit Lala again, Black Lightning is blown back onto the ground by a shot to the chest. Thank God Gambi's new suit includes body armor that absorbs the impact of the bullet, but not without pain, knocking the wind out of Black Lightning. He looks up and is surprised to see Youngster #1 holding a gun to Anissa's head. Black Lightning passes out momentarily. Youngster #1 helps Lala to his feet.

LALA (CONT'D)

This is Black Lightning. This is who everybody been talking about?

Lala steps towards Black Lightning, he reaches down, curious about what's under the mask... But sirens can be heard in the distance and they're getting closer.

Black Lightning comes to and through his blurred vision, he sees Lala and the Youngster escaping, dragging Anissa along with them. He pulls himself to his feet and tries to follow.

EXT. SNOOTY FOX ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Lala, laboring from his wounds, slides into the driver's seat of his car. The Youngster tries to shove Anissa in the car, but she fights back. Suddenly, Black Lightning appears out of the darkness, lit by the headlights of the car. Lala floors the gas trying to run him over but Black Lightning evades the car and Lala keeps going.

Black Lightning turns his attention to the Youngster, he sees Jennifer come out of nowhere and knock the Youngster to the ground. Anissa and Jennifer run out of the alley to safety. Black Lightning and the Youngster face each other, then get into a brutal hand to hand battle. In the end Black Lightning is victorious. He stands over the Youngster's unconscious body, catches his breath, then disappears into the night.

INT. TOBIAS' PLACE/HALLWAY - DAY

A man with a black leather muzzle around his mouth and eyes is being escorted down a hallway well appointed with expensive art and impeccable chandeliers. The man is led by Joey Toledo.

INT. TOBIAS WHALE'S OFFICE - DAY

Joey unbuckles the muzzle and we discover LaLa finding himself inside an office with a nautical feel. Sitting behind a large desk is TOBIAS WHALE, a large, intimidating, black albino, who rules the One Hundred with an invisible hand. The room is filled with a quiet tension that is broken by the sound of a small harpoon cutting through the air and finding its way into LaLa's shoulder. Tobias pushes a button and the cord attached to the harpoon reels LaLa in like a small fish. LaLa lands on his knees in front of Tobias' desk.

TOBIAS

Do you believe in the resurrection
Latavious?

LaLa is already sweating from the pain.

TOBIAS (CONT'D)

The concept itself is beautiful.
One I could never fully appreciate
until now. I killed Black Lightning
some years ago but it seems he has
risen.

LaLa begins to speak, Tobias pulls the cord to stop him from speaking. LaLa almost passes out. Tobias pulls the cord sharply to keep him conscious.

TOBIAS (CONT'D)

It seems that you and Black
Lightning have developed an
adversarial relationship and what I
need to know is, *why did he choose
you?*

INT. WORLD ON WHEELS SKATING RINK - DAY

C.U. on Jefferson who's gliding strangely through time and space until we realize that he and his girls are roller-skating together, each showing off their best move.

WATTS RESIDENT #1 (O.S.)

What I wanna know is what took the niggah so damn long.

Neither of his daughters can beat the old school pro Jefferson, who skates backwards with style and ease as his girls look on impressed.

INT. LYNN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Lynn sits at her kitchen counter and drinks her coffee watching the local news. She watches the Watts resident give his opinion.

WATTS RESIDENT #1

Things been bad out here for ages, ain't nobody got time for no decade long lunch breaks.

Lynn watches, grateful that her children are safe, but fearful of what the future holds. Another woman gives her thoughts.

WATTS RESIDENT #6

I'm just gon' be honest, this is not the work of God. 'Vengeance is mine,' said the Lord. He didn't say vengeance is some freak running around in a Halloween costume.

INT. GAMBI'S TAILOR SHOP - DAY

Gambi's sense of satisfaction is written all over his face as he watches the same news report. But there is a different person on the screen now. It's the woman we saw on T.V. at the police station, she's dressed different but her pain is the same.

WATTS MOTHER

The One Hundred shot and killed my oldest son right out here ten months ago. A month ago, my youngest son was killed.

Her V.O. continues over the following scenes:

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - DAY

Jennifer, earphones in her ears, jogs down the beach path with her other track teammates.

WATTS MOTHER (V.O.)

I've tried to pray the pain away,
drink it away but don't nothin'
help. Unless a child has come out
of you, and then he die, don't
nobody know that pain. A mama's
pain.

INT. GARFIELD HIGH GYM - NIGHT

It's an after-school meeting with a group of parents. Blue collar workers, mothers on aid and older ex gang members. Jefferson is at a white board, his tie loosened, his sleeves rolled up. We see written on it, "SAFE PASSAGE: PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN WITH A COMMUNITY BASED NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM." Ms. Fowdy stands at the back of the room, with a "it ain't metal detectors" look on her face. She watches skeptically as Jefferson explains the program.

WATTS MOTHER (V.O.)

I prayed to God every night that he
would kill the people who took my
babies. And I don't care how old
they get, they still your babies.

EXT. WATTS STREETS - NIGHT

Anissa is in the middle of a protest against the One Hundred. She holds hands with a beautiful BLACK WOMAN with cornrows. When the police shoot tear gas, Anissa grabs her new girlfriend by the hand and they run away from the chaos.

Anissa and her girlfriend notice all the car alarms on the block are blaring. They stop and look behind them and notice that car windows are shattered and a crack in the ground trails Anissa. Both her and her girl look at each other curious about how this could happen. But as a SWAT tank rolls past them they assume it's the cause, rather than a hint of Anissa's own latent superhuman abilities.

WATTS MOTHER (V.O.)

Maybe Black Lightning is an answer
to my prayers.

CUT TO:

EXT. LALA'S COMMUNITY CENTER - LATER THAT NIGHT

A long beat of silence gives the night an uncomfortable feeling. Malik sits on the curb across the street, his box of candy by his side, the bruises on his face are fresh. He watches the rest of the kids from the community center pile into a van, when he hears Black Lightning's voice behind him.

BLACK LIGHTNING

You got a Kit Kat? The little ones,
not the value pack size.

Nervous, excited and afraid at the sight of Black Lightning, Malik manages and answer.

MALIK

All I got left is Almond Joy.

BLACK LIGHTNING

I'm allergic to coconut. Time for
you to go home. Don't come back.
If you do I'll come looking for
you.

As Black Lightning walks across the street, Sly & The Family Stone's "Stand!" scores the moment like a modern day Shaft. Malik takes one last look at Black Lightning, then runs off. As he's running, he notices the street lights begin to flicker. He watches Black Lightning enter the community center and the lights in the building fall to darkness. Malik can't help himself, he stops to watch from a distance. Through the windows he can see flashes of light illuminate like fireworks. With Sly's voice as our anthem, we watch a beautiful smile of hope spread across Malik's face.

TO BE CONTINUED...

END OF SHOW