

DEADLY CLASS

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Based on the comic DEADLY CLASS
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* 10202 West Washington Boulevard * Culver City, CA 90232 *

ACT 1

INT. AP BLACK ARTS CLASSROOM - DAY

We open on the handsome face of our hero **MARCUS LOPEZ ARGUELLO** (17, Nicaraguan, scarred, in a PREP UNIFORM).

MASTER LIN (O.S.)
World War One was started by a
teenager with a pistol.

MASTER LIN (Chinese, shaved head, cold eyes, sharp suit, 40s) is lecturing in an old Victorian hall adorned with ancient masks and statues of death.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
A Serbian peasant who *chose* to
assassinate Archduke Ferdinand.

Marcus clocks various TEENS, in PREP UNIFORMS. All races/80s subcultures present, PUNK, YUPPIE, GOTH, JOCK, HIP HOP. They betray no emotion.

Marcus catches the eye of **BRANDY** (blonde, quintessential cheerleader type.) She smiles at him. He's drawn in by her gaze.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
That one *choice* set in motion a
chain reaction culminating in two
world wars and today's Cold War.

Brandy writes a NOTE. To Marcus' surprise, stealthily slides the note onto his desk.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
They say character is revealed
through choice. So, consider for a
moment...

Marcus reaches for the note but suddenly Master Lin's cane comes down on top of it, THWAK, almost taking Marcus' finger.

Marcus is caught. Lin stares daggers at Marcus.

MARCUS
Sorry I was just...

Suddenly Lin spins and brutally SMASHES Brandy's nose with his cane. SCRAK!

Blood splatters across Marcus' horrified face. He jumps back.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Jesus!

Blood spurts from Brandy's face. No one in the class reacts. Lin calmly continues on as if nothing's happened.

MASTER LIN

Who would be the recipient of your
rage? The thief? The child
molester? The world leader?

Brandy's face oozes blood all over her uniform. Marcus wants to run and get help but he's frozen.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

This one decision betrays all
secrets and unveils true motive.

Lin calmly turns to Marcus.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

Faced with the choice, on that dark
ledge, poised to strike with clean
opportunity...

TIGHT ON Marcus' stunned, blood splattered face.

MASTER LIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...Who would you kill?

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOY'S HOME - DAY

Marcus (dirty, clearly homeless, wearing a ratty jacket) looks at us with SPITE through a chain link fence.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Happiness is just the absence of
pain. These days, that's the best I
can hope for.

REVERSE to see he's standing in front of a BURNT DOWN BUILDING. Old police TAPE hangs from the entrance.

FEATURE a soot covered sign on the ground: SUNSET BOY'S HOME.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Jesus Christ. I've become an Ian
Curtis lyric.

Marcus lights a cigarette, eyes locked on the burnt building.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Dad would tell me to lighten up.
 Life's not a dress rehearsal. Trust
 in God's plan.

A SQUAD CAR rounds a corner coming Marcus' way.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Wonder what he'd think about "God's
 plan" if he'd lived to see what
 went on in that Boy's Home.
 (beat)
 Or the gnarly shit I had to do to
 escape.

Marcus slowly turns his back to the cops, throws his hood up.
 Ducks into an alley as the cop drives by.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Maybe this *is* God's plan for me.

Coast clear, Marcus heads the other way. Hitting play on his
 beat up WALKMAN. The Cure's "*Other Voices*" hits.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Hungry, homeless, and wanted for a
 half dozen murders...

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY - LATER

Marcus sits at a bus stop plastered with a dozen PUNK FLYERS:
 RONALD REAGAN in front of a mushroom cloud. "*Tonight: Dead
 Kennedys, Flipper and Alien Sex Fiend*".

Marcus writes in a beat up JOURNAL. A panhandling cup sits in
 front of him. No offers.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Normal life goes on around me,
 friends, family, a safe place to
 sleep...

Over Marcus' shoulder: he's writing the V.O. we're hearing in
 the journal.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 ...all the mundane shit people take
 for granted.

A YOUNG FAMILY with a LITTLE BOY passes the bus stop. Marcus
 stares, they represent everything he wants. He locks eyes on
 the little boy who seems afraid of him.

Someone tosses half a BURGER in a trash can. Marcus grabs it. People watch in disgust as he takes a bite.

MARCUS (V.O.)
See it in their eyes. They wonder
why I *let* this happen to me.

EXT. STREET - DAY - LATER

Marcus approaches some SKATE RATS on a stoop smoking a joint. He holds out his panhandling cup.

SKATER
Fuck off, gutter punk.

Clumsy Marcus trips on a curb, knocks right into one of them.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Easier to think I've done something
to deserve this.

He motions an apology as he moves on and jumps onto the back of a passing BUS.

MARCUS (V.O.)
And in my case...

He smiles and looks down at the JOINT he stole.

MARCUS (V.O.)
...maybe they're right.

CHYRON: San Francisco, 1987

EXT. SHANTY TOWN - UNDER THE BAY BRIDGE - NIGHT

MARCUS walks through rows of tents. HOMELESS people are everywhere, eating, sleeping, pissing. Marcus makes his way through the maze to his little TENT--

MARCUS
The hell?

Marcus finds an INTRUDER rifling through the contents of his tent, crouched over, back to us. Marcus' shit: blankets and clothes strewn across the wet ground.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Rory?

Marcus approaches cautiously. RORY, (39, matted hair, dirty Giants cap) finds a few dollars in Marcus' tent, pockets it.

Then Rory finds a weathered PHOTOGRAPH: Young Marcus with his PARENTS. Sunday suits, big smiles.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
This is my stuff, man...

RORY
The fuck you say?

MARCUS
Nothing, Rory... I just...

RORY
You forgot who runs shit 'round here?

Marcus moves in slowly, cautious with this lunatic --

MARCUS
Look... keep the cash. I just want the picture. It's all I've got left.

Rory spins towards Marcus and pulls a military issue HUNTING KNIFE from his waistband.

RORY
I was the fuckin' Colonel of Mai Lai, boy. I don't take orders from no mud people.

Marcus eyes the blade, then glares at Rory who grins, revealing a mouthful of rotten teeth.

MARCUS
OK. It's cool. OK? Take it easy--

Rory lunges for Marcus who turns to run but--

Rory knocks Marcus to the ground. Marcus twists, avoiding the knife as it comes down. Rory pulls the blade back up--

Before Rory can strike again, Marcus kicks him in the face.

Marcus scrambles to his feet, Rory slashes the knife blindly. Marcus sprints away like a bat out of hell.

From behind a nearby pylon Marcus watches Rory hold his picture. No way to get it back, Marcus hesitates a long, helpless beat, then moves on.

EXT. STREET - MISSION DIST. - NIGHT

Marcus scuttles down the street, hood up, hiding his face. Muttering in frustration and rage.

His eyes drift to his pocket as he remembers the medicine. He reaches in and pulls out his stolen joint. He smiles, a bit of good news.

He lights it, takes a few hits. Sweet relief from a bad night. He coughs.

He passes pedestrians in DAY OF THE DEAD costumes. As he watches them they begin to MORPH into demons.

He winces. Blinks frantically... Psychedelics fully kick in. The world becomes brightly colored, tracers and distortion.

MARCUS

Shit...

He stumbles down the street, something is very wrong.

As Marcus passes a PAWN SHOP, 80's TV SETS show RONALD REAGAN giving a speech.

TV Reagan turns, speaks directly to Marcus, who's all pupils.

RONALD REAGAN (TV)

Looks like that joint was laced
with Angel Dust, son.

Marcus is frozen, is the TV talking to him? Suddenly-

Reagan crawls out of the television. The walking, pixilated Reagan walks up to Marcus.

RONALD REAGAN (CONT'D)

Just say no. I tried to tell you.

Marcus moves faster, desperate to get away him.

RONALD REAGAN (CONT'D)

Run from your problems, loser...

A rattled Marcus breaks into a sprint. Reagan yelling after him as he heads towards a festive street party up ahead.

RONALD REAGAN (CONT'D)

...but you'll never get away from
what you are!

EXT. MISSION DAY OF THE DEAD FEST - NIGHT

Frantic Marcus runs into a vibrant, neon, DAY OF THE DEAD PARADE. SKULL FACED PARTIERS, the air filled with FIRE CRACKERS and MARIACHI MUSIC, all feeding his hallucination.

Marcus stumbles through, trying to shake off his drug trip.

Marcus stops, through the chaos he zeroes in on beautiful **MARIA** (17, Latina, fierce, in full Day of the Dead regalia, her face painted with a SUGAR SKULL but still stunning to a teenage boy.) Oozing femininity, owns it.

Maria dances to the quick STRUMMING of a FLAMENCO guitar, mesmerizing him, she spins ornate FANS around herself. Then-

WILLIE, (17, short, black kid with a RAIDERS CAP over his do-rag) bumps into Marcus, hard.

WILLIE

(Talking quiet but fast)

It's a set up, yo. Meet behind the Taqueria.

MARCUS

The hell are you doing?

Willie grabs Marcus by the collar of his shirt and points towards three UNIFORMED COPS coming Marcus' way.

WILLIE

Saving your ass. Now run, bitch!

Marcus runs. Agent Orange's "*Too Young to Die*" hits. The cops give chase, pushing PARTIERS aside.

COP 1

Target on the move!

As the cops get closer to Marcus, Maria blows a white POWDER off her fans. A cloud of SMOKE envelops the cops, buying Marcus some time. The cops cough, they can't see anything.

COP 1 (CONT'D)

Shit. Lost contact!

As the smoke clears, Maria is gone, like a ghost.

INT. ARCADE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

BILLY (Punker, green mohawk, white, thin) plays 720 (ARCADE GAME.) Marcus sprints by outside the main window.

BILLY
 (To himself)
 Suck! Now he shows up? Never passed
 the fourth ramp park before!

GAME
 Skate or Die!

Billy pulls himself from the game, braces himself by the door, his disappointed eyes still on the game ending.

EXT. ARCADE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Billy emerges from the arcade slamming the door into two pursuing COPS. CRASH! The cops tumble, Billy takes off.

In the distance Marcus sees the TAQUERIA... He makes the choice to go inside.

INT. EL TAQUERIA - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marcus sprints through the crowded Taqueria, cops behind him.

COP 2
 Freeze, shit heel!

Marcus doesn't. He leaps over the counter and cuts through the kitchen, knocking over the COOK.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marcus barrels out the back door to see SAYA (17, Japanese, covered in tats) waiting on a red HONDA SPORTSBIKE. In spite of the adrenaline coursing through him, Marcus freezes. Instantly smitten by Saya: A tough, beautiful punker girl on a souped up bike.

SAYA
 Get on.

Marcus hesitates, immobilized by uncertainty. Glances back at the fast approaching cops, their GUNS DRAWN.

SAYA (CONT'D)
 Roll the dice with us... or with
 the cops. Your call.

He looks back at Saya. Only one real option.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Saya and Marcus rocket down the street, 100 miles per hour, scaring a group of MOD GIRLS who jump out of the way.

Marcus holds Saya tight as she drives, expertly turning the bike into a sharp corner past a theater showing: *Platoon*.

MARCUS
(Screaming)
What the fuck is going on?! Who are you?!

SAYA
Saya -- a girl who hates people screaming in her ear!

MARCUS
(Still screaming)
Sorry! I'm super, super high!

Marcus turns around to see a SQUAD CAR racing after them.

COPS (PA)
Pull over!

Saya opens the throttle full, turns hard into the Tenderloin.

EXT. THE TENDERLOIN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marcus and Saya speed past the O'Farrell Theater, the cop car's bumper almost hits Saya's back tire. One of the cops leans out the window, opens FIRE--

Saya turns hard into an ALLEYWAY, tires SCREAMING. The cops stay right on top of them. Screams over her shoulder:

SAYA
Drive.

MARCUS
I don't know how-

She puts his hands on the handlebars. Leaps up onto the seat.

SAYA
Better learn.

Saya jumps off the bike, grabbing a fire escape LADDER. Marcus takes control of the speeding motorcycle. Stealing a QUICK GLANCE BACK, in awe of Saya's graceful acrobatics.

Saya swings off the fire escape, flipping her body towards the cop car pursuing them. The COPS see Saya flying into them-

CRASH. Saya comes through the windshield, kicking the driver in the face, shattering his nose.

SLOW MOTION - Saya is inside the cop car, floating pieces of glass all around her. The other cop, sitting shotgun, goes for his gun but before he can shoot...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS - REAL TIME

Saya leaps out the driver side window as the police car CRUMPLES into a telephone pole behind her. She rolls across the concrete and lands like a cat. She sees Marcus speeding away, out of control.

MARCUS

Oh, shit--

Marcus rockets out of the alleyway onto a busy street. Tries to evade a TRUCK and loses control. The bike topples, sliding on its side through oncoming traffic, sparks erupting.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marcus and the bike crash into a parking garage, Marcus is separated from his all-important backpack.

Marcus pushes through the pain, hobbling to pick it up. He sees DETECTIVE BAUTISTA (40's, gaunt, Filipino) approaching and tries to flee through a maze of cars-- but Bautista corners him. Marcus has no way out. Shows his empty hands.

MARCUS

I surrender.

BAUTISTA

You murdered six kids at that Boy's Home. I'll never unsee what you did to them... their burned up faces.

Bautista aims his GUN at Marcus' head.

BAUTISTA (CONT'D)

No. You don't get to surrender...

A katana blade PIERCES through Bautista's chest. He looks down in shock... and falls forward, revealing Saya.

Before Marcus can react, a BAG is thrown over his head and the world goes BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. DINGY APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

LONG SILENT BEAT, OVER BLACK: TEEN VOICES talk about Marcus.

WILLIE
(fading in)
Don't look like no psychopath.

MARIA
Can't judge a book by its cover.

BILLY
What if it's a picture of a grown
man in a rad diaper riding a
unicorn?

MARCUS POV - Someone pulls the bag off of his head revealing:
Willie, Maria, Saya, and Billy staring at him.

WILLIE
Put the bag back over his head, mad
dog's scarin' me, yos.

Marcus is tied to a chair, fronts tough, pisses off Willie.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
What do you say jerk off, you the
psycho did the "Boy's Home
Massacre?"

MARCUS
You look pretty bad barking at a
dude tied to a chair.

Willie jolts up, fists clenched, ready to kill Marcus...

WILLIE
You buggin'? Untie this mother
fucker.

MASTER LIN (O.C.)
Forgive my students...

Master Lin emerges from the darkness, drinking TEA. Willie
instantly backs down.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
...They forget that being vicious
only makes them look weak.

The teens bow to Lin who paces, considering.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

Tell me, are you satisfied with your life?

MARCUS

Me? Yeah. *Totally*. I eat trash and sleep in shit-- everything according to plan. What is this? Who are you?

MASTER LIN

What's important is that I know who you are, Marcus. And that I know what you've done.

Master Lin leans down, looks into Marcus' eyes, searching...

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

You're a killer.

(sips tea)

Few value your particular *proficiency*... but I do.

Master Lin gestures to Billy who cuts Marcus free from the chair. Marcus rubs his raw wrists.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

What if I told you there's a home for people like you, a place you'd be surrounded by your peers?

MARCUS

(nervous sarcasm)

And all I have to do is what? Dress up like a Viking and let you take tasteful pictures?

MASTER LIN

I'm offering you a chance to be something in this world, to harness that fire in your heart, to taste real power...

Master Lin goes dead cold.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

...to become an assassin.

Marcus is frozen by the craziness of this. Marcus looks around at the other kids, dead serious. He considers for a long moment...

MARCUS

Yeah. Look, that... that all sounds great. I mean, hey, I do appreciate your help, but whatever this is...

Marcus grabs his bag. Stone faces all around. Marcus walks towards the door, careful not to turn his back on this group.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

...later days.

Master Lin and Saya share a loaded look as Marcus leaves.

EXT. SHANTY TOWN - UNDER THE BAY BRIDGE - NIGHT

Marcus approaches his old camp ground. Defeated, utterly exhausted. He rounds a pylon and finds UNIFORMED COPS with FLASHLIGHTS tearing through his campsite.

He quickly hides.

Marcus watches as they intently search his few possessions. Carelessly trampling his tent in the process.

EXT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

Marcus walks up, shivering cold, to see a sign on the door: FULL FOR THE NIGHT.

He pounds fists on the door in rage and frustration. We see tears fill his eyes.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - MORNING

Marcus tries to sleep on a park bench, shivering. A cold, wet, San Francisco fog hangs over him.

INT. FILTHY DRUG SQUAT - NIGHT

Marcus sits awake, hopeless and terrified, in a corner of a decrepit squat. HOMELESS and JUNKIES on infested couches and mattresses. The vacancy in his eyes says it all: I'm done.

EXT. BAY BRIDGE - NIGHT

HEAVY RAIN falls as MARCUS walks against traffic on the bridge. A CAR splashes him with rain water. He climbs over the guard rail.

He looks down, contemplating the abyss. A long torturous beat, then Marcus steps closer to the edge.

DAD (PRE-LAP)
C'mon, buddy.

EXT. FERRY DECK - DAY - FLASHBACK

A perfect sunny day, YOUNG MARCUS (he's nine) is on a ferry, it chugs towards the BAY BRIDGE, he holds a red balloon. Dad leans down, smiling with a kind face.

DAD
Things are better now. Just like I promised. We earned it, buddy.

EXT. BRIDGE / FERRY - NOW/ THEN - INTERCUT

NOW: Marcus stares down at the black water below. He lets go of the girder, leans forward, hanging out over the water.

THEN: Dad smiles, walks over to MOM, takes her hand.

DAD
No matter what we do, what we think, who we love...

Young Marcus stumbles, releases the balloon on accident.

DAD (CONT'D)
*Everyone just gets one shot at it.
(beat)
You either find a way to be happy and enjoy it or you don't...*

NOW: Marcus' FACE full of exhaustion, depression. What does he have left to live for? No family. No hope. No purpose. His foot hangs off the ledge...

DAD (V.O.)
Life isn't a dress rehearsal.

THEN: The balloon drifts up, passes a CRAZED WOMAN perched on the bridge. She JUMPS...

Marcus stands, watching his parents, hand in hand. The shadow of the falling woman grows around them.

She's going to crush them. Young Marcus is terrified--

SAYA (O.C.)
What're ya waiting for?

NOW: Shocked Marcus turns to see Saya fearlessly perched on the ledge nearby, cool, calm, chewing gum.

MARCUS
Jesus Christ. What the fuck?

SAYA
Sorry. Kind of a private moment.

Marcus is irritated, his moment is being cruelly ridiculed.

SAYA (CONT'D)
(mocking air quotes)
You seem like a spaz but Master Lin
"sees something in you..." so I
gotta bring you back.

MARCUS
I'm not going to murder school.

SAYA
You make it sound so seedy. It's
more than that... For a lot of us
it's a home.

Marcus reacts to this. Saya sees her opening.

SAYA (CONT'D)
Lin can protect you from the
cops... and after he's done with
you, you'll be able to protect
yourself from anyone.
(Marcus turns away)
Not to be a dick, but you've got
nothing to lose.

Marcus looks down at the water. Moves to jump, feet teetering precariously on the edge.

TIGHT ON Saya, struggling with a decision. She stares at Marcus. The pain in his eyes, the anguish in his face. There's something about him.

SAYA (CONT'D)
Wait! I'm sorry. Just... hear me
out.

Saya starts towards Marcus. Softens...

SAYA (CONT'D)
Look, I get it. I've been where
you're at. Know all that terrible
shit in your head.
(getting closer)
Thinking there's no way things'll
ever get better. That there's no
reason to even keep trying.

She's right next to him now. Looks into his eyes, he's fighting tears. Gaze fixed on the water below.

SAYA (CONT'D)
But there is. I promise.

Marcus shifts his emotion-streaked eyes to her's. Clearly moved by her words, but still not convinced.

Saya leans in close to him. Her hand moves to his cheek.

SAYA (CONT'D)
You don't have to be alone.

She kisses him tenderly. Everything else fades away in this moment and they're just two teenagers, the SF skyline twinkling behind them.

She pulls out of the kiss slowly. Eyes still locked on his for a beat, caught off guard, she can't hide her surprise: she actually *felt* something. She recovers, shakes it off...

SAYA (CONT'D)
You comin' or what?

She holds out her hand for him to take it.

He looks at her hand, considering for a long, tense beat...

Then he grabs it. A street animal being tamed. She guides him back over the guard rail.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - CHINATOWN - NIGHT - LATER

Marcus follows Saya down a dirty TENEMENT HALLWAY, long neglected projects, peeling wallpaper, music THUMPING through the walls.

At the end of the hall a hooded MONK unlocks a red door.

INT. SHITTY APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Saya places a thumb on the eye of a STONE DRAGON sculpture.

The FLOOR begins to lower, the apartment is an elevator. They descend into a room covered in ornate tiles, adorned with ancient, Chinese MASKS.

INT. STONE TUNNEL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

To Marcus' surprise, MASTER LIN is waiting here, eyes on an ANTIQUE POCKET WATCH. He doesn't look up at Marcus, as:

MASTER LIN

Reveal our secret location...

Lin turns away and they follow him through a stone tunnel, covered in CHINESE WRITING. Their way lit by torches.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

...and you'll be eviscerated.

(beat)

Always remember that admission is a privilege for someone like you.

Two more MONK GUARDS wait at the end of the hall. They see Lin and open a heavy WOODEN DOOR for them.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)

My family's school has a long and proud reputation among world leaders.

(beat)

Embrace our program and you will find purpose here.

EXT. KINGS DOMINION - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The wooden doorway opens onto an ancient and somewhat creepy looking campus hidden behind the regular Chinatown buildings.

The school is an entire city block. A cobblestone path snakes towards a black, Gothic church with various spires. The school is surrounded by gnarled trees and stone sculptures of legendary WARRIORS.

MASTER LIN

Welcome to Kings Dominion School for the Deadly Arts.

Marcus takes a breath, then steps through the doors into an uncertain future.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. SHOWER - DAY - MONTAGE**

Marcus leans in, enjoying the hot water. His body is badly SCARRED, signs of violence and abuse.

MASTER LIN (V.O.)
 Our mission is to teach you to
 become creative "problem solvers,"
 in service to criminal and global
 leaders.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

Marcus combs hair. Brushes teeth. Aerosol sprays underarms.

MASTER LIN (V.O.)
 This is an art and a craft.
 Assassins are the nails that secure
 the balance of world power.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

Marcus puts on his suit. Billy on the bed nearby plays Mario on NES, his room is covered in punk rock and skate POSTERS.

MASTER LIN (V.O.)
 One day you will protect your
 employer's interests, offering a
 level field and distribution of
 power through force and fear.

Marcus ties his new shoes. Throws on a crisp, new uniform.

MASTER LIN
 We have a code, a strict discipline
 you will uphold during your
 academic pursuit.
 (beat)
 Killing another student is grounds
 for immediate expulsion or worse.

He looks in the mirror, he cleans up nice, he looks proud.

MASTER LIN (V.O.)
 Refrain from drugs and alcohol.
 Never question your instructors.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY - MONTAGE

Marcus is handed a pile of BOOKS, then a KNIFE, then NUNCHUCKS, a VHS of FACES OF DEATH, then a BOW and ARROWS...

MASTER LIN (V.O.)
 You come to me weak and ready to
 die. But I will make you strong and
 teach you to truly live.

EXT. KINGS DOMINION - FRONT STEPS - DAY

Marcus walks towards the front of the school. It looks giant,
 terrifying. He looks up at the crown shaped school CREST:
 "Established 1842: IN VITAM MORTEM."

MASTER LIN (V.O.)
 I'll shape you into something
 precise... something lethal.

Marcus opens the double doors.

INT. KINGS DOMINION - HALLWAY - DAY

Marcus carries his pile of books down the crowded hallway
 past various CLIQUES of STUDENTS wearing the school uniform
 with 80s accoutrement: leggings, Swatches, sun glasses.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Heart racing like I've got a knife
 to my throat. This is insane. Did I
 just join a cult? Fuck, I think I
 just joined a cult.

Every kid he passes stops what they're doing and looks at him
 like he's a total piece of shit.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Maybe it'll be rad. Maybe I'll get
 to make out with Saya again before
 they bring out the Kool-Aid.

Marcus stops and reads a FLYER for: MOPE DANCE '87! THE CURE!
 LOVE AND ROCKETS! PSYCHEDELIC FURS!

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Should I tell her that was my first
 kiss...?
 (beat)
 Yeah. Nothing girls like more than
 an overly grateful virgin.

Marcus gets shoulder checked by Willie, as he pretends to
 mindlessly check his PAGER. Marcus drops his books.

MARCUS
 The fuck is your problem?

WILLIE
 (eyes on his pager)
 Punk ass bitches who don't belong
 here.

Willie moves on. Marcus gathers his books. Everyone
 WHISPERING about him as he continues down the hall.

He passes SHABNAM, a tubby kid in glasses, wearing a vest
 that's too small and an out of fashion piano key tie.

Shabnam's campaigning for STUDENT COUNCIL. A speaker blaers
 U2's "*I Still Haven't Found What I'm looking For*" a
 desperate, failed bid to look cool. He hands Marcus a BUTTON.

SHABNAM
 Still haven't found what you're
 looking for?

On the button: The album cover for U2's JOSHUA TREE but all
 the band members' faces replaced with Shabnam's face.

SHABNAM (CONT'D)
 Vote Shabnam for student council
 president and there'll be no more
 power wedgies-- no more stabbings
 in the shower--

VIKTOR (huge, Russian, jock) casually picks up the nerdy
 Shabnam and dumps him head first into a trash can. No one
 skips a beat as a muffled Shabnam calls out from the can:

VIKTOR
 I have found what I am looking for.

SHABNAM
 Take a chill pill, Viktor!

Marcus checks a piece of paper with his LOCKER NUMBER. In the
 BG a PUNKER loudly hits on a gorgeous VALLEY GIRL.

Marcus is confused, the locker numbers are all in Chinese. He
 looks back up to see Saya, relieved to see a familiar face.
 As she draws closer:

MARCUS
 Hey, Saya. Saya!

Nothing. She completely ignores him, keeps walking and
 talking to her group of friends. She's too cool for him.

Across the hallway, Marcus sees Willie and crew point and
 laugh at his rejection.

WILLIE
Shorty ain't down, loser.

Mortified, Marcus moves on. Finding sanctuary at his LOCKER.

MARCUS (V.O.)
What did you expect?

He spins the combination, opens the locker-

MARCUS (V.O.)
People are all poser assholes, just
stoked to have a weaker animal in
the heard...

Inside: someone has put a BUCK KNIFE in a CABBAGE PATCH DOLL
with a note: "Child Killer."

MARCUS (V.O.)
...Someone else to be the target.

MARIA (O.S.)
You Mexican?

Marcus, confused, turns to see Maria, close. She's now
wearing an Esprit crop top under her school blazer, big
pastel Madonna bow in her hair.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Nationality. What are you?

MARCUS
Nicaraguan.

MARIA
Some rep you got, Nicaraguan.
Half the class is scared
shitless... The other half wanna
see if your rep is for real. I kid
you not.

Marcus turns back to his locker, starts loading his books.

MARIA (CONT'D)
What's your story? Central America
cartel?

MARCUS
I-I'm... not affiliated.

Across the hall CHICO, (big, scary, Mexican kid, tatted from
neck to toe) picks up how Maria is looking at Marcus.

MARIA

You are now. I'm Maria. You can hang with SOTO VATO-

MARCUS

I'm probably not joining a gang.

MARIA

Sweetie, being in a gang is mandatory for survival. You'll be safer with your own people.

(leans in, flirtatious)

Plus... it'll make it easier for me to get to *know* you--

Chico grabs her from behind and SLAMS her against the lockers, his hand tightens around her throat.

CHICO

The fuck you talkin' to him? You like this pendejo?

MARIA

As if... just lookin' for recruits, baby...

Marcus pushes Chico off of Maria.

MARCUS

What's your damage, dickhead!

Chico is caught off guard. He looks at his boys who are all shocked someone stepped to him...

CHICO

You know who you're fuckin' with?

MARCUS

(Puffing up)

You know who *you're* fuckin' with?

Chico is frozen, not sure what to make of this new challenger.

The student body bristles with excitement. Chico's boys give him a look: "Do something. Save face."

Chico HITS Marcus in the gut, knocking him to the ground before he can put his hands up. This gives Chico confidence.

CHICO

Meet my other lady.

He pulls his "other lady": an IVORY HANDLED BOWIE KNIFE with Santa Muerte painted on it, gut hooks along the blade.

Marcus' eyes go wide. Fuck. But one of CHICO'S BOYS steps in.

CHICO'S BOY
Not here. Lin'll bug.

Chico notices a stone faced MONK at the end of the hall. Realizing the consequences, Chico pockets the knife.

CHICO
After school, goob. 3 o'clock. You show or I'll find you.

Chico grabs a THIRST BUSTER full of COKE from another student and empties it over Marcus' head.

Chico laughs as he stalks off, followed by Maria and the cartel crew. Maria looks sorry for Marcus.

The BELL goes off, everyone marches out like programmed robots, leaving Marcus alone, humiliated.

INT. PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVAL 101 - 1ST PERIOD - DAY

MS. DE LUCA (Italian, gorgeous, with an eye patch) lectures. *

We drift across the students, every male is hypnotized and totally smitten by De Luca, Billy tucks his hand suspiciously in the pocket of his jeans, a cheerleader contemptuously sticks GUM under her desk, another girl doesn't take her eyes off of the clock, we end on Marcus who's stealing glances of beautiful Saya as he SKETCHES. *

MRS. DE LUCA
...when the Republic of Texas decided to kill off all Indians. One of the few *declared* genocides.

Marcus lost in his sketchbook, we see he's drawing Saya. De Luca approaches.

MRS. DE LUCA (CONT'D)
Which Indian tribe survived for another forty years?
(beat)
Anyone?

De Luca now next to Marcus, lost in his sketches.

MRS. DE LUCA (CONT'D)
The Comanche. They were fierce warriors.

(MORE)

MRS. DE LUCA (CONT'D)

The lesson: soft hand ringing
liberal ideals won't keep you safe.
The world protects those who are
ready for war-

De Luca grabs Marcus' pencil, flips him backwards in his chair and stabs the pencil down towards his face, stopping the sharpened POINT a millimeter from his terrified eye.

MRS. DE LUCA (CONT'D)

-those who assume everyone is a
threat.

The bell rings. De Luca, retracts the pencil. The students leave, no one seems to think it's weird. Willie stands above him, grinning.

WILLIE

Nice first impression, yo.

OFF: Willie, laughing at Marcus' misfortune.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Marcus at a drinking fountain, he splashes water on his face. He looks up, his expression says it all: What the fuck am I doing here? He squints, something on the wall -- *

ANGLE ON a posted FLYER: Shabnam's face and U2 campaign slogan have been defaced. A DICK drawn near Shabnam's mouth. A word balloon reads: "I've found what I was looking for." *

INT. GYM - DAY - LATER

MASTER ZANE (40's, wiry, Brooklynite, white guy) is teaching a sparring class. Everyone's wearing karate gear. Marcus tries hard to remain unnoticed in a corner.

MASTER ZANE

...Every opponent, big, fast,
trained or not -- they all got a
weakness. Pick a partner, find
theirs.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Oh, fuck you, Jewish Bruce Lee...

Shabnam steps forward holding a NOTE up. *

SHABNAM *

Master Zane, I have a nurse's note.
Can't participate 'cause of my
asthma. *

Disgusted, Zane motions for Shabnam to sit out while everyone pairs up... except Marcus. He keeps his eyes down, until Maria suddenly grabs him by the wrist, drags him onto the mat with her. Standing face to face:

MARIA

Hey. Sorry about Chico. Look, I know you're crazy or whatever, but you shouldn't fight him.

MARCUS

You shouldn't date such an asshole.

MARIA

It's... complicated.

Marcus looks off, SEES Saya KICK over her sparring partner.

MARCUS

Girls always go for dickheads.

Maria tracks his longing gaze, picking up on the chemistry.

MARIA

Guys always go for girls they *can't* have.

Saya catches Marcus watching her, throwing off her concentration, her partner slams her down.

Marcus quickly turns, breaks eye contact. He sees Billy, clowning, doing the Karate Kid fight stance. He's quickly taken down and pinned by Viktor, the big Russian jock.

Viktor twists Billy's arm, taking him to the ground. Viktor sits down on Billy's chest, smiling, victorious.

BILLY

Dude, I know you communists like to share, but your boner's digging into my chest cavity.

The class laughs at Viktor.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I get it, I use lotion, soft, warm-

VIKTOR

We hate those who succeed--

Furious, Viktor uses his full strength to SNAP Billy's arm at the elbow. The BONE punches out of the skin.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)
Because so few do.

Billy wails. Viktor laughs. The students keep sparring.

Marcus looks around at the class, is he the only one who sees that Billy needs medical attention...

BILLY
(Weakly)
Gnarly...

MARCUS
Jesus! Shouldn't someone help him?

MARIA
(stops him from helping)
Bogus move. Should've done a
shoulder take down to an arm bar.

Marcus is horrified, eyes still on Billy's bloody wound.
Maria puts his hands on her ribs, the other hand on her leg.

MARIA (CONT'D)
I'll show you. Hand here and here.

Maria smiles seductively. Marcus steps towards her, drawn in.

She places his hands on her body, she presses herself into him. He can't hide his nerves, attraction... and arousal.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Why'd you decide to come back?

MARCUS
I... just needed a place to hide
from the pigs.

Maria flips Marcus over onto the mat. She ends up directly on top of him, PINS his hands above his head, wrists to the mat. Face to face, peering intently into his eyes... And his soul.

MARIA
You need a better reason to stay.

Marcus stares back at her, feeling the powerful chemistry.
She smiles down at him, oozing sexual energy.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Think of any?

INT. BEHEADING 101 - DAY - LATER

Marcus watches a shirtless, muscular INDIAN MAN brandish a SABER. He circles a DUMMY in front of him.

INDIAN MAN

To sever a human head entails a full commitment of strength. Enough to pass through the vertebrate.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Perfectly normal...

The teacher swings the blade and cuts the dummy's head clean off. The teacher hands Marcus a sword.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Just a dude teaching kids how to chop someone's head off.

INDIAN MAN

If you miss by even a millimeter, if you don't truly commit, the target will suffer excruciating agony.

(looks to Marcus)

New boy. Go.

Marcus takes the blade, walks towards another dummy. The class waits to see how the new kid handles it.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Nothing crazy about this. I've clearly made a real smart decision.

He swings the blade, completely missing the neck, burying it in the HEAD of the mannequin. Everyone winces.

The teacher stares at him, waiting. Marcus tries to pull the blade out but he can't...

He pulls, still stuck. He comically struggles, puts a foot on the mannequin, fights to pull it out. Finally the blade pops free and Marcus ends up on his ass.

INDIAN MAN

That was... *not* a clean kill.

Marcus shamefully walks back to his seat. Kids laugh at his very comedic display. Not Chico. He just locks onto Marcus, tracking him like a caged animal.

CHICO

That was fresh.

The Indian man motions for Saya. Marcus is mesmerized by Saya as she walks towards the dummies, in one lightning motion, draws her sword and slices the head off of TWO dummies.

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE - LATER

A NURSE finishes the CAST on Billy's arm. The room is full of STUDENTS, some severely injured, being given medical treatment for broken bones, stab wounds, one kid has a blood soaked towel covering her face, another boy in a body cast...

Marcus enters, looks at the hectic triage... he sees Billy.

BILLY

Hey. Kid hobo. Lookin' for something? You get hurt?

MARCUS

(turns back)

Uh, is *this* the nurse's office?

BILLY

(sarcasm)

Nah, this is the Model UN meeting.

Marcus shakes off the goof, offers Billy an army style BOOK BAG covered in Punk PATCHES and PINS.

MARCUS

You forgot this in class.

Billy looks at the bag, STUNNED by the misguided kindness. He looks up at nervous Marcus clearly looking for a friend.

BILLY

(Southern Belle)

My, oh my, you're givin' me a case o' the vapors, young man. A beautiful act o' kindness in a world gone mad.

Marcus turns to leave, vulnerability met by sarcasm.

MARCUS

Rad.

(beat)

Later.

BILLY

Free advice, since we're roommates an' all. Kindness is the same as weakness 'round here. Both will get you hurt.

MARCUS

I'm not the one in a cast.

BILLY

Dude. I didn't pop off at Viktor on accident.

Marcus doesn't buy it. Billy kisses his cast.

MARCUS

You wanted a broken arm?

BILLY

Fuckin' A. This righteous beaut' gets me out of sparring for three weeks. Saves me a half dozen ass kickings.

Marcus shakes his head and walks out. Billy yelling advice.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Just stop trying to make friends.
No one likes that. Act like a dick.
Everyone loves a dick!

INT. KINGS DOMINION - HALLWAY - DAY

Marcus looks at his schedule, hunting for his next class. He passes a group of STUDENTS toting MACES and SHIELDS.

Marcus follows a sign that leads him outside.

EXT. KINGS DOMINION - FRONT STEPS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

He walks towards a gothic, BLACK CHURCH. A giant statue of GUAN YU (a feared Chinese warrior who fought with a Green Dragon crescent blade) looms above the door.

The door wears a simple PLAQUE that reads: "AP Black Arts"

INT. KINGS DOMINION - AP BLACK ARTS BUILDING - DAY

Marcus walks into the foyer. Sees a wall covered in WEAPONS and a GLASS CASE full of trophies and old class photos...

He looks closer, one of the kids is LEE HARVEY OSWALD. An older photo shows JOHN WILKES BOOTH posing in front of this very building...

Marcus is startled as a MONK, face covered by a hood, emerges from the darkness and thrusts a small wooden box at him.

MONK

Bear the mark, boy.

MARCUS

Thanks?

Marcus opens the box to see a RAT SKELETON inside.

VIKTOR (O.S.)

What is this?

Marcus turns to see Viktor, Saya, Willie, Chico and two other KIDS coming in for class.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Lin is letting in peasant boys now?
Do you know how hard Viktor works
to be invited to AP Black Arts?!

CHICO

Don't sweat it, Vik. First day's
his last. Rules or no, I'm killing
that punk today.

The two bullies high five and walk past laughing. Willie watches them with disgust.

WILLIE

You best win that fight, got five
ridin' on your ass.

Marcus ignores Willie, loads a CASSETTE TAPE into his Walkman: *THE SMITHS 'LOUDER THAN BOMBS.'*

WILLIE (CONT'D)

The Smiths? That's some pretty gay
shit.

MARCUS

(can't help himself)
If by "gay" you mean "brave."
(Off Willie's look)
What's harder than being honest
about sadness?

WILLIE

Honest sadness? You fer real?

MARCUS

Everyone hides it, pretends they're
tough. Better to expose your ankles
and see which snakes bite.

WILLIE

Well, let me save you some time, at
Kings Dominion...

ON tough Willie, fronting cold as ice as he walks into class.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
...we all bite.

INT. AP BLACK ARTS 101 - DAY - LATER

We're catching back up to the top of the pilot. Marcus watches Brandy write the note. She smiles at him.

MASTER LIN
One *choice* that set in motion a
chain reaction culminating in two
world wars and today's Cold War.

Brandy stealthily slides the note onto his desk.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
Character is revealed through
choice. Consider for a moment...

Marcus reaches for it but suddenly Master Lin's cane comes down on top of the note, THWAK, almost taking Marcus' finger.

MARCUS
Sorry, I was just...

Suddenly Lin spins, brutally SMASHES Brandy's nose with his cane. SCRAK! Blood splatters across Marcus' horrified face.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Jesus!

Blood spurts from Brandy's face. No one in the class reacts. Lin calmly continues on as if nothing's happened.

MASTER LIN
Who would be the recipient of your
rage? The thief? The child
molester? The world leader?

Brandy's face oozes blood all over her uniform, she looks at Marcus, takes a long beat, then and suggestively licks the blood off her fingers.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
...Ask yourself, faced with the
choice, on that dark ledge, poised
to strike with clean opportunity...

Brandy motions for Marcus to read the note anyway.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
...Who would you kill?

Marcus opens the note and it says: "You're dead, beaner."
Lots of little SWASTIKAS doodled around the sides.

Marcus looks at bloody Brandy, she mugs him hard, not so cute
or sweet after all.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
Your homework tonight, half your
semester grade, will tell me who
you really are...

This gets their attention.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
Use your training, search the city
for a worthy target... Someone you
think deserves to die and...
(stares at Marcus)
Kill them.

Marcus is shocked. Wasn't expecting that. The BELL RINGS.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
Bury the body. Hide all evidence.
If you fail... you'll be expelled
from Kings Dominion.

Everyone heads out. As he leaves Marcus looks to Willie.

MARCUS
He... he's serious?

WILLIE
No problem for a blood thirsty
killer like you. Right?

MARCUS
(beat, then:)
Yeah. Cool...

OFF Marcus, wheels churning...

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. POISON 101 - DAY - LATER**

Old school, Frankenstein style lab beakers bubble and froth. The POISON TEACHER lectures. Every student has a caged RABBIT on their lab TABLE.

POISON TEACHER

...in this case the victim will die
in a spectacularly nasty fashion,
as blood seeps from every orifice.

Marcus, still stunned from the last class, stares at the doomed rabbit on his desk. Billy sits nearby, his arm is in a CAST already covered in DRAWINGS, Black Flag, Toy Dolls etc.

MARCUS in a dreamlike state, absorbing the insanity of this place while staring into death row rabbit's eyes. Marcus is considering the act of murder, the soul of the victim.

PUSH IN on the rabbit's EYES. Darting. Fear.

BILLY

(Whispers)

Marcus?

Billy mixes chemicals. Marcus is in another world, hypnotized by the eyes of the doomed rabbit.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Dude! Hey! Hello?!

(Marcus looks up)

Did I see you coming out of the
Black Arts building?

MARCUS

Huh? Yeah.

BILLY

On your first day? Lin only invites
the top of the class. Pretty
wicked.

MARCUS

If you say so.

BILLY

Dude, be rad, get Viktor's
attention for me.

MARCUS

Why?

BILLY

The good of the common people.

Marcus shrugs. Then drops his book next to Viktor.

MARCUS

Sorry. Can you grab that for me?

Billy pours something into Viktor's JOLT COLA as he turns.

VIKTOR

Pick up your own book, peasant.

MARCUS

Yeah. Sure. Thanks.

Marcus picks up the book as Billy moves back to his seat. The teacher prepares to administer poison to his rabbit.

POISON TEACHER

Name one poison ideal for making a statement.

Viktor shoots his hand up.

VIKTOR

Sodium cyanide, common industrial reactant, sweet smell then your victim is dead in seconds.

PETRA (Goth, black hair, heavy make up) disagrees with him.

PETRA

That could be ingested on accident.
If you want to make a statement:
Strychnine. It attacks the nerves.
Leaves your victim contorted and
convulsing for hours.

Viktor takes a sip of Jolt. Billy can barely contain himself.

POISON TEACHER

Good, Petra. And why do we want it known that this wasn't an accident?

PETRA

Poison sends a clear message: No one is safe from you. Anywhere.

POISON TEACHER

Excellent.

Viktor has been shown up... But he's impressed.

VIKTOR
 You know this method well.
 (Flirting)
 Maybe you and me, we study tonight.

PETRA
 Are you like, serious?

VIKTOR
 Pale face and heavy make up. Here
 they say Goth. In Russia they would
 call you beautiful--

Petra is caught off guard by his advance, maybe intrigued.

The moment is broken by a pained GROAN from Viktor. He suddenly jumps up out of his seat.

POISON TEACHER
 Sit down, Viktor.

VIKTOR
 I must use the lavatory.

POISON TEACHER	VIKTOR (CONT'D)
After we-	I must go now-

POISON TEACHER	VIKTOR (CONT'D)
Sit down-	Ghragh--

Viktor uncontrollably SHITS HIS PANTS. The class lets out collective disgust. Petra is repulsed.

PETRA
 Grodie.

For the first time we see Marcus stifle a small laugh.

Then Billy rushes to exit. Viktor shoots him a deadly expression from his puddle of shame. He watches Petra take up a new seat across the room.

INT. KINGS DOMINION CAFETERIA - DAY - LATER

Marcus carries his tray through a cold and sterile cafeteria. Stone-faced CLIQUES make it clear there's no place for him.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Why do I overanalyze every
 interaction I ever have?

The Mexicans sit together, so do the black gangsters, so do the preppie kids, mods, and rednecks. At the hip-hop table a BOOM BOX plays: Run-D.M.C's "Walk This Way."

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Agonizing over every thing I say,
 every choice I make.

Each of their tables are CARVED with insignias and symbols of their groups. Groups Marcus doesn't belong to...

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Constantly wondering what I'm doing
 wrong...

Marcus acts indifferent, but we can see he's shaken by the long walk of shame that leads him to an EMPTY and unmarked table in the back of the cafeteria.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 ...why I never fit in?

Marcus in the food line. Pizza, tots, coke all being piled on. Shabnam and another NERD look at Marcus as if he's a hot girl, their chance to bolster their numbers.

SHABNAM
 Uh, hey.

MARCUS
 Hey.

They move down the line, junk food piling up. Shabnam nervous like he's picking up a girl.

SHABNAM
 I, uh, was speaking with my
 associate and we were wondering, do
 you enjoy Dungeons and Dragons?

MARCUS
 Uhm... never played it. *

SHABNAM
 Well, don't knock it till you've
 tried it! We're having a righteous
 campaign this Friday--

MARCUS
 I'll let you know.

Marcus walks off, he needs a friend, but not this badly. The nerds are deflated, being pushed out of line by a giant BASKETBALL PLAYER.

Marcus sits alone, writing in his journal the entry we've been hearing in the V.O.

BILLY (O.S.)

I think he's got a crush on you.

Billy sits down and gestures over his shoulder to Chico, who is glaring at Marcus. Billy picks up Marcus' MILK.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Or he wants to kill you. You know, probably kill.

Billy takes a sip, sees a "MISSING KID" on the carton.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey, just think, tomorrow this could be you. Famous.

MARCUS

Fuck that bully. He pushed a girl.

BILLY

Crazy Maria? Dude. You got pulled into bipolar girl's sticky swamp?

Billy eats Marcus' tatter tots.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(full mouth)

Chico's cartel crew. They act like the star football dicks in any normal school. Numero uno on campus. Top of the legacies.

MARCUS

Legacies?

BILLY

Kids from government or criminal organizations. Didn't anyone tell you anything?

Billy thumps his chest, like he's Tarzan talking to Jane.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Me son of corrupt cop who like to drink and beat boy. Leave boy with much baggage, big trouble with authority.

(He points to Marcus)

You murderous teen hobo. Losers.

Billy points to a group of preppie CIA kids.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Those kids over there are the preps, rich kids, mostly CIA and FBI... IRS. Elitist fascist types.

Billy points to a group of REDNECKS, the Dixie Mob kids.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Over there. The Dixie Mob, confederate holdouts, run-of-the-mill cousin diddling, science denying, racist rednecks.

Brandy flips Billy off for making eye contact.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey, Brandy.

Billy points to the Italian MOBSTERS.

BILLY (CONT'D)

The Jersey Kings. Hessians. Metal heads. Burnout in the Iron Maiden shirt is the son of Paulie Caravaggio. Lower on the totem pole but be nice, he's got weed.

An awkward laugh draws Billy's attention to the table of NERDS. Shabnam's cracking up, very grating. *

BILLY (CONT'D) *

The Goob Patrol. I'm not down with the hierarchy, normally never shit on the physically unattractive, but they're *highly* annoying. Shabnam's ol' man is some heavy Iranian banker. Rest are kids of Mafia accountants, drug lawyers, NASA... *

MARCUS *

NASA? *

BILLY *

Oh, there's a lot they're not telling you. *

He points to Willie and the black GANGSTER kids. *

BILLY (CONT'D)

F.W.O., Final World Order out of Watts. Party bummers. Don't play well with others.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Leader's Willie, killed five
 hardcores before his tenth
 birthday. You know Bill Cosby?

MARCUS
 Yeah.

BILLY
 Willie's not like Bill Cosby.

Marcus motions to Saya and her CREW.

MARCUS
 What about her?

BILLY
 Ah, yes, the young man has his eye
 on the unobtainable Saya, part
 valedictorian, part prom queen,
 100% bitch. Leads the Kuroki
 Syndicate, Yakuza gangster kids.
Gnarly.

Saya looks up, Marcus waves to her. Billy can't believe it.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 No. Dude... No.

Saya shoots him a cold look, "don't talk to me." Marcus
 shrivels.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Numb nuts-- You're a rat.

MARCUS
 Screw you.

BILLY
 No. Like as in not from a "Legacy."
 Didn't you get the welcoming rat
 bones and chocolates basket?

Marcus flips open his box with the dead rat skeleton.

MARCUS
 Guess they forgot the chocolate.
 What does it mean?

BILLY
 Some kind of hazing to remind us
 we're "Rats," no affiliation,
 bottom of the food chain.

Billy finishes Marcus' entire lunch.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Good news is we're not solo. C'mon,
our people are in the graveyard...

Off Billy's mischievous grin --

EXT. KINGS DOMINION - GRAVEYARD - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Billy slowly skateboards next to Marcus through a creepy cemetery behind the school. Dark and foreboding. *

Marcus' eyes scan a sea of TOMBSTONES -- some ancient, and some BRAND NEW. Marcus is clearly unsettled but Billy is unfazed. *

BILLY
 So, word is black arts homework is
 to kill somebody tonight?

MARCUS
 Yeah. I'm not doing that.

BILLY
 If you don't...
 (Full Metal Jacket
 impression)
 "You will be living in a world of
 shit."
 (Off Marcus' surprise)
 Lin's a calculating dick. Prolly
 cooked this up just to screw with
 you.

A loud thud directs Marcus to football practice on the far end of the cemetery. Viktor lords over a downed opponent. *

MARCUS
 What's the spin you guys put on
 football? Spikes on the shoulder
 pads? The ball's a bomb? *

Marcus chuckles as they approach a towering GOTHIC MAUSOLEUM. *

BILLY
 Nah. That jock shit is barbaric
 enough as is. *

A handful of OUTCAST STUDENTS hang on the roof listening to:
Sister of Mercy's "Fix."

BILLY (CONT'D)
 The Mausoleum! Home of the kooks,
 subculture elitists, and
 disenfranchised substance abusers.
 (MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

Those who, in general, don't mix well with others. Rats.

MARCUS

(understands)

Our people.

Marcus and Billy climb up the mausoleum to join the other kids on the roof. FEATURE: LEX (UK, asshole, hardcore, Billy Idol snarl) and Petra from poison class.

PETRA

...John Hughes screenings bring out the absolute worst in humanity. New Wave Quaffton and his preppie gal Esprit De Neon, Vuarnet sunglasses and Swatch watches. All gleeful at imagined identification with white teens of affluence--

Marcus and Billy step forward. They stare at Marcus.

MARCUS

We should have a John Hughes movie fest in a theater-shaped furnace. Torch one crowd after another until our generation's finally safe of Baby Boomer influence.

No one laughs. They aren't sure what to make of him. Was he joking... Or are the rumors true?

BILLY

Lex, Petra. Meet my new roomie, Marcus. You know? The "Orphanage Killer." Petra's head of the Glee Club.

*
*

Goth Petra shoots Billy a look as she hands the joint to Marcus, Lex grabs it first.

*

LEX

This is the kid that's gonna fight Chico?

(Takes a hit)

Looks like a *proper* asshole.

MARCUS

Yeah. Nice to meet you too, Captain Civility.

LEX

Civility's just lying to people about your true feelings, wanker.

MARCUS

Tres hardcore, really sticking it
to manners.

*
*

Everyone laughs at Lex, even Petra breaks and smiles.

*

BILLY

Extra credit for making Siouxsie
Sue smile.

*
*

A tense beat between Marcus and Lex. Then Lex smiles, hands Marcus the joint. The gesture says he's accepting Marcus.

Billy hits eject on the boom box, Petra isn't stoked. He puts in *Bad Religion's "Latch Key Kids"* turns things up.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Holy Mope, Batman. Rain check on
the black celebration.

PETRA

(Eyeing Marcus)

Last kid had this much buzz was the
son of that hippie serial killer.

LEX

Acted tough, but it was all a pose.

PETRA

Turns out Patchouli, pony tails,
Birkenstocks don't help against a
mace to the head. Or anything
really.

She points to a blank tombstone. As Marcus considers it:

*

LEX

Does that scare you, asshole?

MARCUS

Patchouli? Absolutely.

PETRA

Don't listen to Lex. You'll be
fine. Hide back here with us and
these "most awesome years of your
life" will fly by.

BILLY

You can even use this place to do
some good. "Change the world with a
bullet," as Lin loves to say.

Lex pretends he's holding a rifle, aims at Marcus.

LEX

I plan on changing a proper big bit
of it. Heads of states BLAM!
Bankers BLAM! Oil executives-

BILLY

Bono. Don't forget Bono.

PETRA

I'm gonna kill the patriarchy.

Everyone looks at Marcus. He pauses to think for a second. *

MARCUS

I'm gonna get the guy who killed my
parents... Ronald Reagan. *

The whole crew cracks up. They can barely breathe.

LEX

He said he's gonna kill the bloody
Gipper!

PETRA *

Better get it done before your hot
date with Chico.

MARCUS

That guy's all talk.

Lex and Petra share a look of astonishment. They both turn
back to Marcus. They are suddenly dead serious.

LEX

Last guy looked at Maria was
Chico's cousin. Chico jammed a BBQ
fork into his back. Left 'em a
bloody paraplegic.

MARCUS

You're fuckin' with me?

PETRA

Are you blind or stupid, new
friend? Chico's a *butcher*. No joke.

OFF: Lex, very intense, like he's telling a ghost story.

LEX

And ready or not, at 3 o'clock
today, one of you's gonna die.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**INT. KINGS DOMINION - GIRL'S BATHROOM - LATER**

Maria in a stall, sitting on the closed toilet. She's shaking, hair messy, covering her face.

She pulls a bottle of PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION out of her purse. Eyes the bottle, conflicted. Something on the stall wall catches her eye... *
*

ANGLE ON stall: a sharpie drawing of Maria, crazy hair and googly eyes, above it: "Manic Maria." *

Maria flinches at the cruel graffiti, furiously tries to open the bottle, but it slips from her trembling hands, drops and rolls under the door. Shit. *

Maria jumps up, pulls the stall door open -- FINDS Saya standing there. Saya bends to pick it up...

SAYA
(re: the bottle)
Valproate? What's this for?

MARIA
Just give it back!

Saya offers it to Maria but pulls it away before Maria can grab it. Maria's anxiety is palpable.

SAYA
Psych.

Maria lunges and violently grabs the bottle back.

SAYA (CONT'D)
Fuck, Maria. Chill.

Maria returns to her bathroom stall, SLAMS the door. Saya looks at the stall with an expression that screams: *Weirdo*.

Marcus bursts in, panicked, looking for Saya:

MARCUS
Saya! I gotta talk to you.

SAYA
Pretty sure this is the *girls*
bathroom.

From the stall crevice Maria watches the exchange between Saya and Marcus.

MARCUS

Please. It's important...

Saya looks at the stall then drags Marcus off to end the embarrassing moment.

EXT. KINGS DOMINION - ROOF - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Saya is horrified, barking at Marcus who is pacing nervously. From up here they can see all of San Francisco.

SAYA

Chico?! You started shit with
Chico?!

MARCUS

Wasn't like I was trying to. He was
choking Maria...

SAYA

Maria, huh? Well, you must know
what you're doing, "psycho."

Saya, turns and walks away, hiding a tinge of jealousy she can't suppress.

MARCUS

Everyone needs to stop calling me
that.

Marcus struggles to say hard words...

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It's all bullshit. My whole rep...

Saya turns to Marcus with a cocked eyebrow.

SAYA

What?

Marcus paces, lights a cigarette, considering if he should trust her. Looking at her he realizes he has no choice.

MARCUS

When I was nine... my parents died
right in front of me.

(beat)

Courts sent me to the Sunset Boy's
Home. Place was just a sweatshop.

(beat)

They tortured us, they did... a lot
of bad shit. I had to get out.

Marcus looks to Saya, desperate to unburden himself.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Look, I hurt some guards when I escaped, but I didn't kill those kids.

SAYA

The newspapers, the cops...

MARCUS

Got it wrong. That's not the point! I mean, what is wrong with you people?! Lin wants me to kill someone, a teacher put a fucking pencil in my eye, Chico wants to murder me--

SAYA

(Furious)

Why the hell did you come here then?

Marcus is caught for a moment. Vulnerable. Struggles...

MARCUS

You told me to. You kissed me--

SAYA

Dude. That was an assignment. Lin would've failed me if I didn't bring you back.

MARCUS

(shattered)

You told me I didn't have to be alone...

SAYA

I didn't tell you to get chivalrous and start shit with the cartel!

MARCUS

I didn't know--

SAYA

Didn't know what?! That the tatted up vato was a legitimate killer and not a theater kid? You have any idea *where* you are, Marcus?

Saya can see Marcus is a scared kid.

MARCUS

Fuck. I'm asking for help and you're yelling at me.

Anger shifts to pity. She seems genuinely concerned for him and clearly cares more than she wants let on. Softens:

SAYA
He's going to kill you, Marcus.

MARCUS
So *what* do I do?

SAYA
Only thing you can...

Saya levels her cold gaze on Marcus.

SAYA (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
Run.

INT. KINGS DOMINION - STAIRWELL - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Marcus, scared, barrels down the stairs two at a time.

INT. KINGS DOMINION - HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Runs past the CHEERLEADER DEATH SQUAD, pretty girls in cheer uniforms, dancing, smiling, shaking barbed wire pom poms. Billy Idol's "*Mony Mony*" blaring as they practice.

CHEERLEADERS
Two, four, six, eight! Who do we
decapitate?!

Suddenly Viktor appears, he grabs Marcus by the arm. Gets in his face. Murderous intensity:

VIKTOR
You and the punk rock queer tricked
me. After the fight with Chico... I
will break you, fuck boy--

Marcus yanks his arm away and runs. Rounding a corner, collides with Maria. She drops her books.

MARCUS
Shit. Sorry. I--

Marcus sees Maria has an ugly BLACK EYE.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Jesus.

Maria tries to hide her face with her hair as they get up.

MARIA
It's nothing.

Marcus pulls her hair back to investigate.

MARIA (CONT'D)
He said he'll do a lot worse to
you. So, just forget it, okay?

Marcus can't hide his rage. A side of him we haven't seen. He suddenly storms off --

OFF Maria, unable to contain a slight smile.

EXT. KINGS DOMINION - FRONT STEPS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Marcus busts out the front doors. He walks down the steps, upsetting some STUDENTS doing homework. He's headed towards the graveyard, a crowd of students follow him.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Chico and the CARTEL CREW play dice on a gravestone.

CHICO
...it's bullshit, ese. Trickle
down? That shit don't trickle--
it's stuck up there-

MARCUS (O.S.)
Hey.

Chico stands up and turns just as Marcus elbow SLAMS him in the face Richard Spencer style.

Marcus throws another punch but Chico catches his arm mid swing. Marcus' eyes go wide, shit. Chico smiles.

CHICO
Good on you... Taking the
initiative.

Chico HITS him in the face. Chico shoves Marcus backwards, knocking him down a small hill.

Marcus rolls down into the:

EXT. ARCHERY RANGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Marcus crashes near some TARGET DUMMIES, just avoiding arrows whizzing past his head as KIDS practice with CROSSBOWS.

Chico marches down the hill, followed by the excited crowd. Marcus is still stunned. Chico slams Marcus against the target dummy, his hand on his throat.

Saya watches, something eating her, she wants to stop this.

CHICO
 Beg me, bitch. *Beg.*

Chico pulls his KNIFE, the crowd bristles.

CHICO (CONT'D)
 Say Chico's the man and you're his
 sweet lady bitch or I cut you.

Marcus strains to breath, his eyes dart, considering his
 situation. Something snaps, his eyes compress in rage.

MARCUS
 You're a dickless, rich kid in a
 prep school, playing the role daddy
 assigned you...

Crowd reacts to the dis. Chico shaken, embarrassed.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 Following rules so you don't get
 expelled. Not very gangster.

CHICO
 The fuck you know about being
 gangster, Rat? You're not one of
 us.

MARCUS
 I'm nothing like you. You have
 something to lose...

Marcus grabs Chico's wrist pulling the knife to his own
 throat.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 ...I *don't*. You sleep in a silk
 bed, I sleep under a bridge.

CHICO
 You're 'bout to sleep forever--

MARCUS
 (bloody smile)
 I fought a real killer, guy who
 carves people up for fun. You?
 You're just a fucking poser.

Chico laughs.

CHICO
 You think they'll kick me out for
 gutting a rat like you?
 (MORE)

CHICO (CONT'D)
 I'm son of Alma De Diablo. I'm
 fucking royalty. You? You're
 nothing.

Marcus looks crazy, he's not bluffing, he pulls Chico's knife tight against his own throat.

MARCUS
 Go on then, mouth. Show 'em you
 don't care.
 (screaming)
 Do it!

Crazy Chico considers, begins to push the knife up when something catches his eye.

Chico freezes. Lin walks down the hill, the students all lower their eyes, busted.

Chico smiles, way too big. He wipes some of the blood from Marcus' face.

CHICO
 Good. You're learning. Just a
 friendly spar with my new amigo.

Chico brushes some dirt off of Marcus, helpfully.

CHICO (CONT'D)
 Get some rest, bud. We'll finish
 this later.

Chico gives Marcus a hard look, letting him know they're far from finished. Marcus pulls away to leave.

Marcus staggers past Lin and the other students, including Saya. She steps forward, searching for something to say.

This time Marcus walks right past her without a word.

OFF: Lin watches Marcus go. Assessing him.

INT. MARCUS' DORM - DAY - LATER

Marcus throws on his old jacket. He quickly packs his few possessions into his backpack. He's clearly leaving.

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING - DAY

Marcus marches past the monks who guard the school's secret entrance. He finds Master Lin waiting for him by the exit.

MASTER LIN
 So you've chosen to keep running?

MARCUS
It's not your problem.

Master Lin steps aside. As Marcus moves to the door:

MASTER LIN
You don't have a monopoly on
sorrow, Marcus.

Marcus hesitates, cranes back.

MARCUS
Yeah? Did you watch your parents
die?

MASTER LIN
No. But I had to bury my wife and
daughter. Nahia was nine.
(beat)
Two innocent lives stolen by the
faulty brakes of a semi-truck.

Marcus reacts to the sobering truth, as:

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
Tragedy spares no one in this
world, Marcus. It's how we respond
to it that defines us.

MARCUS
What did you do?

Master Lin hesitates a long beat.

MASTER LIN
I found the driver of the truck,
the CEO who wanted to save money by
checking the brake lines every
other year... and the judge who
called my child's murder an "act of
God..."
(beat)
...and I killed them all.

Lin puts a comforting hand on Marcus' shoulder.

MASTER LIN (CONT'D)
There are people who add no value
to our society, Marcus. People who
deserve to die... like the man
responsible for taking your family.
Don't you want to see him suffer?

Marcus stares at Lin, considering for a long beat.

MARCUS

Yeah. But not enough to stay here.

Marcus pushes out the front door, leaving Lin disappointed.

EXT. CHINATOWN, DINGY STOREFRONT - DAY

Marcus steps out of the storefront that acts as a disguise for the school's entrance. He turns, walks up the street.

WILLIE (O.C)

Why you back in that buck ass jacket?

Marcus turns to see Willie in a powder blue, 1987 CHEVY CAPRICE with hydraulics bumping "*Public Enemy No. 1*"

MARCUS

(keeps walking)
Fuck off.

Willie accelerates hard, then slams on the brakes, blocking Marcus with the car.

WILLIE

No can do, homey. I gotta ace this Black Arts assignment. You're my new lab partner.

MARCUS

Why would I help you?

Willie raises a GLOCK 9MM from his lap, a clear threat.

WILLIE

Out of the kindness of your heart?

Marcus looks at Willie, his eyes are ice cold.

INT./EXT. WILLIE'S CHEVY - SF STREETS - INTERCUT - DAY

Willie drives with the GUN in his lap. Marcus holds his bag, looking out the window at SF whipping past. Marcus is quiet, nervous, as they drive through TENDERLOIN.

WILLIE

I get it. First day's tough.
Jitters is normal.
(beat)
'Member my first day. Mesmerized by that phat ass on Miss De Luca.

They pass a movie theater playing: *EVIL DEAD II*.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 Deluca's my new white whale. Was
 that redneck hoe, Brandy, till I
 broke through the Mason-Dixie line.

Marcus turns to Willie, unable to help himself:

MARCUS
 Brandy's *your* girlfriend?

WILLIE
 Girlfriend? Hell no.
 (Like he's an idiot)
 She's a Nazi, Marcus. She's not
 girlfriend material. We knocked
 boots a few times.
 (Dreamin')
 Now Deluca, I'd wife that up.

Marcus is silent. Willie turns the car into the Tenderloin.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 You don't wanna chit chat, wanna
 act a punk, that's cool. But so
 we're clear, you gonna help me cap
 that *bad hombre* you was tellin'
 Chico about. 'Less that was
 bullshit.

MARCUS
 He's real. Son of a bitch almost
 cut my throat.
 (Warning)
 Rory's no joke.

WILLIE
 Oooh. Scary. What's this nigga look
 like?

The low rider drifts through the SF slums. Marcus opens his
 sketchbook to a DRAWING of Rory.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 (Sneering)
 Good thing you ain't tryin' to be
 no artist. That's some wack indie
 type shit.

MARCUS
 (Quietly)
 Best comics are indie.

WILLIE
 What's up, mumbles?

MARCUS
 Indie comics are better. Flaming
 Carrot, American Flagg--

WILLIE
 X-Men? Dark Phoenix? That bitch be
 jackin' everybody up.

MARCUS
 (Rolling his eyes)
 Male fantasy, mainstream, melodrama
 bullshit.

Willie hits the breaks, they SCREECH to a halt. Willie pulls
 the gun and presses it to Marcus' head.

WILLIE
 Dark Phoenix saga owns on all that!
 Chris Claremont and John Byrne
 mother fucker! Say it!

MARCUS
 Alright! Alright! It's better.

Willie slowly pulls the gun away. Smiles at his own victory

WILLIE
 Damn straight.

They drive in uncomfortable silence for a long beat.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 Here's the deal: you help me do
 this, I drop you anywhere you wanna
 go and you never have see my black
 ass or Kings Dominion again.
 (beat)
 Scouts honor.

Off Marcus, staring silently ahead. Stoic and focused on the
 shit storm he knows is coming.

MARCUS
 Make a left.

EXT. SHANTY TOWN - NIGHT

MOVING through the deep shadows to FIND Marcus and Willie
 creeping through a sea of tents. They navigate past HOMELESS
 PEOPLE, piles of debris and human filth.

Willie taking it all in.

Marcus' POV on a DIRTY WOMAN huddled in newspapers. An OLD MAN drinking Night Train. A KID his own age looks up from a tent.

Each of them retract as soon as they hear someone outside, all terrified. Willie shoots Marcus a confused look.

MARCUS

Everybody out here's scared of him.
Anyone goes missing, everyone knows
who did it.

WILLIE

This is what you're runnin' back
to?

Marcus can't hide his reservations now that he's been reminded of the reality out here. Marcus shakes it off.

MARCUS

C'mon. Be quiet.

They take up a clandestine position behind a pylon. They peek around to see Rory huddled over a fire cooking chili, radio playing some Freedom Rock.

Marcus nods at Willie: That's him.

Willie pulls out the gun, looks at it, then back at the target, the weight of this hitting him. Long beat, then he shoves the gun into Marcus' hand:

WILLIE

Do it.

Marcus shoots Willie a hard look, then stares down at the gun. His eyes shift back to Rory.

Marcus shoves the gun back to Willie. They whisper...

MARCUS

I'm not doin' this. You're the down-
by-law gangbanger--you want to pass
the class... kill him yourself.

WILLIE

Fine. Pussy. I ain't need no rat.

Willie snatches the gun back. Steps forward. Sights up Rory for an easy shot and gets ready to pull the trigger.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX**EXT. SHANTY TOWN - NIGHT**

Beads of sweat build around his forehead. Marcus watches intently, waiting for the shot, beat by beat the tension builds...

Willie tries to pull the trigger, willing his finger to move, but he can't do it. He glares at the gun, as if it's the gun's fault.

WILLIE

Goddamnit! Be a fuckin' man!

His hand is now trembling. Tries to steady it, but it only gets worse. A raging internal struggle, until he suddenly turns away with a frustrated GROWL, throws the gun far away. It PLOPS into the nearby BAY.

Willie tears up. Marcus is confused.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Go on, call me a punk. Go on. I know you're dyin' to.

MARCUS

Dude. I'm not the one who brought you out here...

WILLIE

Frontin' this OG shit-- I hate it! It's not me-- None of this shit's me. I'm a fuckin' pacifist, man.

MARCUS

(incredulous)

A pacifist?

Rory suddenly appears from behind the pylon, feet away, terrifying them. The fear magnified by the giant hunting knife in his fist. Rory's eyes on Marcus.

RORY

You...

Rory charges at them with his knife.

MARCUS

Run!

The boys take off. Rory in pursuit. They barrel past tents, leaping over trash and knocking over passing HOMELESS. It's chaotic, frantic.

Rory keeps pace until the boys split directions. Can only follow one. Goes after Willie, down an alley.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Willie sprints down the alley. Rory chases him into a dead end covered in barbed wire. Willie has no way out.

Willie turns as Rory approaches, twirling the knife. Maniacal satisfaction in his eyes.

RORY

You boys come lookin' ta' steal
from me? In *my* camp?

Willie's fear is palpable, his eyes frantically searching for a weapon, a way out... anything.

RORY (CONT'D)

You like thievin'...

Willie lifts his trembling fists. Rory raises the knife, the attack now imminent --

RORY (CONT'D)

Ol' Rory'll steal your fuckin'
heart...

SHRUK! Marcus appears behind Rory, SLAMS a section of 2x4 across his back. Sending Rory sprawling to the ground.

Willie, relieved, joins Marcus.

WILLIE

Yo! Lets get outta here.

Willie starts to go, but Marcus hesitates -- looking down at Rory, writhing and moaning in pain. The picture of Marcus and his family pokes out of Rory's shirt pocket.

TIGHT on Marcus. Wrestling with an impossible choice. Flooded with a deluge of conflicting impulses. Emotions.

Willie, glances back, sees Marcus not moving.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Marcus! Lets go--

Marcus suddenly SWINGS the 2x4 with everything he's got... into Rory's head. CRUNCH! Caving in his skull with a propulsive splatter of blood and brain matter.

Marcus lifts the 2x4 over his head, ready to hit Rory again. But he doesn't need to... Rory's not moving. He's dead.

Marcus looms over the body, face covered in blood, full of determination and purpose.

Willie steps up behind him, shocked, terrified. Willie's eyes fixed on dead Rory, blood pooling around his crushed skull.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
Shit... Oh, shit...

Marcus kneels down next to the dead man and takes his picture from Rory's pocket.

Marcus stares at his family, he misses them desperately, he's been alone so long.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
You... you...

Marcus, covered in blood, looks back at Willie.

MARCUS
Killed someone who deserves it.

A powerful beat between them.

PRE-LAP: The sound of SHOVELS hitting dirt.

EXT. RED WOOD FOREST - NIGHT - LATER

Moonlight shines through the trees.

THUD - Rory's body lands in the bottom of a freshly dug hole.

Marcus and Willie are drenched in sweat, Willie down to a beater. The Chevy's headlights illuminate their work site.

They grab their shovels and begin tossing dirt onto Rory's body. Willie breaks the silence.

WILLIE
My moms, she's the OG, fer real.
Just ain't in me... An' she knows
it.
(beat)
Sent me to Kings to "make me a
man." But she's right... I'm just a
punk.

Marcus stops shoveling for a beat, turns to Willie.

MARCUS

You're not a punk. Your mom's just an asshole. You're not supposed to be able to kill somebody.

Marcus tosses some more dirt.

WILLIE

Yeah, mom don't think that way.

Willie stares out at the city, bright, beautiful in the distance beyond the trees...

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Maybe you got the right idea leavin'. Nobody telling you what to do, nobody expectin' shit.

Marcus considers. Then shakes his head.

MARCUS

(remembering)

No, man. It was fucked. No one cares if I live or die, nowhere to sleep, nothing normal...

WILLIE

Shit. Nothing normal at Kings.

MARCUS

Maybe this is as close to normal as kids like us get.

Willie looks over at Marcus.

WILLIE

Thought you said...

MARCUS

(Shrugging)

The hard part's done. We passed.

WILLIE

Dude. This ain't the worst of Lin's assignments.

MARCUS

(joking)

You'll need someone to do those for you too.

(his smile fades)

And the truth of it is...

They walk back towards the car. Getting in.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I got nowhere else to go.

The Chevy pulls away from the freshly dug grave, plunging the forest back into darkness.

INT. WILLIE'S CHEVY - NIGHT - LATER

Marcus and Willie drive. They're covered in blood. The radio is on low, "*Our Lips Are Sealed*" by The Go-Go's *buzzing in the background*.

They drive in silence. Taking in the city. Absorbing it all.

Marcus' head begins to bob involuntarily, Willie's fingers tap on the steering wheel. Then-

Marcus reaches out and turns the radio up as the song hits a crescendo. The Go-Go's blares. They listen to the music together...

They exchange a glance. Maybe a friendship brewing...

INT. KINGS DOMINION - MASTER LIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Master Lin sits at his desk, in a darkened office, smoking a cigarette. He looks impatient, agitated and slightly drunk. A half bottle of Glenfiddich on his desk.

He checks his antique watch: one minute past midnight. He looks nervously at the phone. Finishes a glass of Scotch.

The phone finally RINGS. He answers before the first ring finishes.

He speaks in heated CHINESE, then after a brief silence the emotion in his face and voice softens, he's talking to someone new...

He speaks with longing and joy to the mysterious caller. The elation turns to sadness as the call is abruptly ended. The only time he uses English is at the close:

MASTER LIN
Daddy loves you, Nahia.

The call ends. Deflated Lin slowly peels the phone from his ear, and returns it to the receiver. Contrary to the lies he told Marcus... His daughter is ALIVE.

Lin sits for a beat, deeply troubled, considering. Then he grabs the bottle and -- **THROWS IT!**

The bottle smashes against a wall of SECURITY MONITORS, each showing a different section of the campus.

As Lin crumples in grief.

PUSH IN: On one of the security monitors: Marcus and Willie returning to the school grounds. They share a fist bump and part ways.

INT. MARCUS' DORM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Marcus enters, the adrenaline has died down and he notices he's shaking. He cleans his hands of the blood with his old T-Shirt, then tosses it in the trash.

He opens his sketchbook, tears out the page and TACS the image to his wall. We can't see it yet...

He stares at the drawing a long time, making a choice. Something in his eyes has changed, hope or determination simmering beneath the surface.

Maria enters, without knocking. Marcus spins around.

MARIA

You shouldn't have embarrassed
Chico. He'll never let this go.

Marcus can now see Maria doesn't have a black eye.

MARCUS

What the hell happened to your
black eye?

MARIA

Make up. You wanted to play hero. I
gave you an excuse.

Marcus realizes he's been played. No more patience for this.

MARCUS

Jesus Christ. That's why you
pretended to like me? So I'd fight
your boyfriend?

He turns his back, shutting her out.

MARIA

(Reluctantly)
So you'd kill him. I need him gone.

MARCUS

(sarcastic)
Sorry I let you down.

MARIA

You don't understand, the cartel...
They're not going to stop.

MARCUS

Thanks to you.

Maria can't hide the sympathy she feels.

MARIA

I'm sorry I tricked you.

(Beat)

But I wasn't pretending...

Maria gets closer. She puts a hand on his arm.

MARIA (CONT'D)

No one's ever fought for me before.
Chico gets in fights *about* me but
not *for* me...

He looks back at her: Notices her deep brown eyes, her pillowy lips, her breasts pressed against her sweater.

He kisses her, wrapping his arms around her. She goes with it for a few beats. It intensifies, her hands gripping his back.

Marcus pulls away. They stare at each other, both wanting more... But a major issue still hanging between them...

MARCUS

I don't need any more problems.

MARIA

Nobody has to know.

They're both dizzy, awkward for a moment.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Petra cooked up some moonshine.
Everyone's getting wasted in the
graveyard. Wanna come?

She smiles.

MARCUS

Maybe... I mean, yeah. Sure.

She offers him her hand. He takes it. She leads him outside.
The Damned's "Melody Lee" piano intro begins.

MARIA
 (mockingly)
 "I mean, yeah. Sure." You're a real
 crack up, Arguello.

The door closes. We drift up from the picture of Marcus and his family, now resting safely on his desk. The sweet picture is speckled with Rory's blood.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 An ethical compass would be fine if
 everyone had one. But there're
 monsters out there.

We finally see Marcus' drawing tacked to the wall: RONALD REAGAN, noose around his neck, arrow through his head, fire all around him, Marcus has drawn himself lording over his victim.

MARCUS (V.O.)
 Like the son of a bitch who took my
 folks.
 (beat)
 He has no idea what's coming for
 him. None of them do. I'm going to
 be ready.
 (beat)
 I'm going to grow scales and
 breathe fire...

We drift past the sketch of Reagan, out the window, and into the grave yard...

MARCUS (V.O.)
 No one is going to fuck with me
 ever again.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Marcus follows Maria across the field towards a party behind the mausoleum. MISFIT KIDS are drunk around a FIRE, surprisingly they acknowledge Marcus when he arrives. A boom box plays *The Damned* linking us to the music from last scene.

Billy slaps Marcus an ironic "bro" five. The Italian mob kid gives Marcus a respectful head nod. Petra hands him a solo cup of booze. SOMEONE does a keg stand till he can't anymore. Marcus sneers at the kid, what a tool.

Marcus looks over at Willie, he chugs a beer, shoots him a knowing wink when he sees Maria.

Maria stays close, no one can know they came together. She grazes Marcus' hand, stealing a secret touch that sends tingles through his entire body.

A feeling of belonging surges through Marcus. Then Marcus catches Saya's gaze...

She watches him from the other side of the fire, staring at him through the flames. There is a palpable tension. An unspoken spark between them. Something about him has gotten under her skin, something about her he can't shake.

She gives him the slightest smile, almost imperceptible... but the gesture is NOT wasted on Marcus. It's an opening, a hint of possibility. But before he can act --

Billy grabs Marcus' by the arm, tells him a joke. Marcus laughs. Looks back at Saya, but she is GONE.

Marcus takes a beat to process, then --

Maria leans in to WHISPER something in his ear. Distracting him from his concerns. He takes another sip of booze, growing more at ease with his surroundings. His situation.

Laughter and fun ensue, a tribe forming, maybe a new family, a new home... Finally.

Marcus smiles, brightly. It's the first time in a long time that he has some hope that tomorrow will be better.

Marcus glances across the graveyard and spots Chico, leaning against a tombstone, he's staring right at Marcus. Then he turns and walks off into the night...

Marcus takes in his surroundings, Kings Dominion, school for assassins, danger and violence roaming every dark corner of this place...

And his smile slowly begins to fade.

END OF PILOT